

TEXT: 1 Timothy 6:12 (Frieda's Confirmation verse)

THEME: Fight the Good Fight of the Faith

“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

Dear Lee, Nancy, Tom, family and friends of our dear departed sister, Frieda:

“Fight the good fight of the faith.” That's part of the Confirmation verse that Pastor Zink assigned to Frieda when she was confirmed in 1931. It strikes me as very fitting, because while Frieda was diminutive in stature, she was a fighter. Born in the middle of 12 children in her family, she probably had to be a fighter to survive. She grew up on a farm and had chores from little on that needed to be completed before she walked to school at Trinity.

Speaking of Trinity Lutheran School, let me share a paragraph from our official history. “If not for a student glancing out the school window, the congregation would have needed to replace the church. In 1931, Principal Mehnert had the students stand for the Lord's Prayer when 7th grader Frieda Ebel yelled, ‘The church is on fire!’ ...The fire was quickly extinguished, but for a long time the church suffered a chronic roof leak.” Frieda saved the church building.

“Fight the good fight of the faith.” During World War II, Frieda helped fight the war in her role as a Rosie the Riveter at Prestolite or Autolite. Seven of her brothers served in that war at the same time. They were known for their fighting ability and courage, with one receiving three bronze stars. God brought all seven of them home safely. Frieda had a framed picture and article about them hanging in her living room.

In a sense, Frieda fought the temptation as we get older to just let ourselves go. She didn't wear “old lady” clothes and jewelry, and her hair was always beautifully done. She was interested in current events and not just “the past.” In 2006, she was involved in a car accident that totaled her Pontiac Bonneville. When she was finally released from the hospital, this 89 year old needed to buy a new car. After all, she had to drive her bowling team (all of whom were younger than she) to the bowling alley. She drove up to church one day in a new Pontiac G6. I remarked to her that it looked like a nice car. “Oh, I'm just testing it out,” she told me. The next time I saw her with her car, she had a G6 GT that looked quite sporty. “Wow! That's quite the car, Frieda,” I told her. She replied, “I think I'm going to keep this one. It has more zip.” I thought, “You go, girl!” Speaking of bowling, when she was 97 or 98, she told me that it was getting harder and harder for her bowling average to be better than her age.

Frieda was a “fixture” here at Trinity, faithful in weekly worship, serving as the secretary for the Ladies Aid, singing in the choir, was a member of Senior Christians at Trinity, served as the chairwoman of the Easter breakfast and ran the dishwasher, she volunteered at the Amazing Grace Bookstore, and spent time reading to our preschoolers. All of those things helped her to **“Fight the good fight of the faith.”**

I should mention that the Greek word translated **“fight”** in our text is not the Greek word for going to war and engaging in battle. Rather, it is the Greek word that refers to athletic contests, like the races and wrestling matches that were part of the Grecian games. That seems fitting to me as well with Frieda’s love of bowling and baseball games. When we sinners are brought to faith, we are enlisted in a contest in which we need to **“Fight the good fight of the faith.”** We Christians have an ongoing struggle against our own sinful flesh and Satan.

This call to **“Fight the good fight of the faith”** is, however, not a call to muster our own strength, to trust in our own powers. Relying on himself, Peter soon fell into shameful denial of his Lord. The call to battle is the call to use the weapons God places into our hands, especially the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. When Satan attacks, cut him down with **“it is written.”** Frieda could do that because she was regularly in the Word, knew Scripture, and could confidently overcome temptation with, **“it is written.”**

It is so very important that faith persevere in this life-long, even 101 years long, struggle. By faith, we **“take hold of the eternal life.”** Not merely some temporal benefit like riches or honor and fame is at stake. Nothing less than eternal life—salvation—is the prize of this contest. Our Savior reminds us: **“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).**

Our text says, **“to which you were called.”** God brought Frieda to faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus by calling, inviting her through the gospel in holy baptism to receive eternal life. Through faith this gift is received, faith that the Holy Spirit works in the sinner’s heart by the gospel’s call.

It was evident that Frieda believed, as our text says, **“when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”** In Frieda’s case, this can refer to her Confirmation, when she made her confession of faith in the presence of God and the congregation of believers at Trinity. It was a **“good confession”** in accordance with sound, biblical teaching and practice. It was how the faith that God worked in Frieda’s heart showed itself.

That faith showed itself throughout Frieda’s life in the way she conducted her Christian life, and when she fell into sin, trusting in Jesus for full and free forgiveness. Even in the last month or so when she could become restless and agitated, God’s Word, feeding her faith, always calmed her down and let her rest and even regain some strength. Today, while we mourn our loss, we rejoice for Frieda that the Lord has answered her prayer of, “Come, come, why don’t you come?” She was more than ready to go home to heaven and be with our Savior Jesus. May God grant each of us such a blessed home-going. Amen.