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“The Prescription for Timothy”

1 Timothy 1:18-20

Turn to the book of 1 Timothy chapter one. We will look at that together. We are going to finish up 1 Timothy, chapter one. We will look at the last verses, verses 18, 19 and 20, I'll read them and you can follow along in your Bibles. **“This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.”**

In this passage we have at the end of chapter one we have the sort of core command that Paul is instructing Timothy in the book. It pops up again in the end of the book and everything in the book sort of leads you to this instruction. This instruction, this responsibility that has been given to Timothy is the charge “fight the good fight.” That’s what this is building off of and the rest of the teaching will build on that, fight the good fight.

Some of your translations have “wage the good warfare,” which is really a better translation. Fight the good fight can maybe can connote an individual battle or boxing match or some argument or something. This is a word that has an imagery of the military, “wage the good warfare.” And in military it is not one fight, one battle, it’s ongoing, a campaign, a military campaign that marches forward. So to just fight the good fight at one point in time might win the battle but lose the war so this fight must continue. So if we are going to fight the good fight we need to look for the long term not the short term. Fight the good fight, wage the good warfare is a better way of putting it.

Now there are a lot of references to warfare in the Scriptures so when we find things that mirror spiritual life it is sometimes constructive to us. Consider looking at warfare even in our modern time but certainly in ancient times. There are certain things we can look and see, this is more effective, this is less effective. What is necessary for successful warfare?

If we are going to wage the good warfare what helps in this is that (well earthly speaking) you need commitment. There are many armies that fail miserably because they weren’t committed to the war. Even in the recent war that our country was in I think we can see that, but historically there have been many, many armies that did not have commitment. They are conscripts, there are people that were stuck there and as soon as they could get out of it they’re ready

So you need commitment to the task and interestingly not just a momentary commitment but a long-term commitment. A good example of commitment, initial commitment, euphoria that takes a nation to war is Britain about 100 years ago, in 1914 in World War I. There was a great euphoria in Britain to go into World War I and many, many signed up eagerly believing this was going to be a very short thing and they were sadly mistaken. In fact, there was such a euphoria that part of the way of getting people onto the front was allowing groups of friends to go together. It was called the “Pal’s Brigade” and people signed up with their friends in their home town and what that ended up with was the entire young male population of some towns being annihilated in one day.

Well, we have learned that is not a very effective way to put people into war, but this showed the enthusiasm.

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This enthusiasm began to wane when the horrors of war set in. I think the life expectancy, at least one figure I heard, for the average soldier in the front lines of World War I was 21 days. This began to wear on the population such that they then had to go to a conscription service, a draft, and found the population of not just that country but many countries decimated. So you need a commitment for the long term to see it out.

What else do you need? You need a capacity. You need a capacity to continue to do the task. And if you don't have the guns and the bullets, the weapons to pull it off, you're going to lose. You need the capacity.

And then finally, you need endurance to continue to the end. You need the ability to fight the war and you need to continue to see it to the end. Not just start out and then retreat.

Well the same thing with the Christian life. We need a commitment, a commitment of faith to believe, but a commitment to the true Christ not just an emotional reaction but a commitment to follow Christ with our life. And we need the capacity to do this, and thankfully we have the capacity to do this with the Holy Spirit. True belief leading to true commitment has a capacity with the Holy Spirit within us to keep us and to move us to continuing on in the faith. For "he who endures to the end will be saved" and those who are truly saved will have in the Holy Spirit moving us, giving us the capacity to live a life of faith. Another capacity we have is God's Word to move us to holiness.

So this is what successful warfare requires, not just physically but spiritually. This phrase "fight the good fight" refers to our battle to maintain faith. That's what fighting the good fight is referring to. This fighting the good fight of faith. It's not against a person or some spiritual being. It's with us and our faith is what this is being about and I will try and explain this more.

The context right here speaks of faith. Verse 19, "**keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.**" But this phrase "fight the good fight" occurs two other places in the Scripture and both of them happen to be in Paul's letters to Timothy.

The other one in this book occurs in 1 Timothy 6:12 "**Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**" So faith is qualifying the phrase "fight the good fight" there. It describes what we are to fight the good fight with, faith, fight the good fight of faith.

And then lastly 2 Timothy 4:7 Paul, at the end of his life, his last writings he writes, "**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.**" So fighting the good fight references faith. That is the battle we have, faith. This is the root that supports the tree that supports the limb and the leaves, everything in our life is supported by this fight of faith. Now we are going to try to build on this as time goes on this morning.

The next thing I want to highlight for you is the confidence that Paul has in this charge he gives, fight the good fight of faith. He gives it with confidence. Paul believed Timothy was able to carry this out. He entrusted this command to him. This phrase "entrust" has an imagery of banking. This

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is a word used like when you make a deposit in a bank, you entrust the bank with your money and Paul is entrusting this command with Timothy and the ministry that Paul has been doing to Timothy to continue this onward and that's why we see instructions to Timothy on how to lead churches and establish people in leadership positions. So through faith this mission can be continued. That Paul's ministry will continue through Timothy. He's entrusting him with a deposit.

Now let's look more at faith, what faith is. Faith is not dependent upon how much faith you can muster up. That's the one misconception of faith, if we just have enough faith then great things will be done. Well, Jesus put it this way. He said, **“if you have faith as small as a mustard seed you can move mountains.”**

It really isn't the quantity of our faith but the quality of our faith, who our faith is in. When we talk about faith we are talking about faith and trust in the Lord not in anything else. And not trying to muster up enough faith in our ability to believe, this is another misconception of faith. Where people will think that if I can just have enough faith then I will have faith and my faith is sufficient to accomplish this. This isn't faith in God, this is faith in your faith. Well faith in your faith is not very faithful but faith in God is. We can trust God even with a small amount of faith that He can do great things. You may fight the good fight of faith.

Faith is in things not seen. This is important. Faith, when we are speaking of faith we are talking about things not seen. It's easy to trust something that you can physically touch and handle. Jesus put it this way, remember in John 20:29 when Thomas was needing to physically touch Jesus to be convinced and what was Jesus saying to him, He said, **“because you have seen me have you believed, blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”** Genuine faith will require trust in something that is not yet seen, that has not yet come to fruition. When Christ returns is it going to hard to find people saying, “Oh yeah, this was right all along?” They will be very convinced because it will be undeniable. But true faith is of things not seen.

Here's some more passages for you: 2 Corinthians 5:7, **“for we walk by faith, not by sight.”** Very simple. If we are looking to walk by sight we will by definition not be walking in faith and we will be very earthly minded because we will be like Thomas needing to have something proven to us.

Hebrews 11:1, **“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”** The faith is in things not seen. This is the assurance, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen is what that passage says. So when we have faith, and that chapter builds on this concept, when we have faith we have a conviction of things not seen and you look at each one of those examples there and those people highlighted for us in Hebrews 11 are all acting, they're doing things on the bases of what they did not see. And they did not even have the promises yet. The promises were delayed until the foremost of time when we can join with them. But yet they acted in faith. This faith is the conviction of things not seen.

1 Peter 1:8 says it very simply. **“Though you have not seen, you've believed.”** This is true faith. Trusting in not just what we see but things that we don't see, that are told to us from God. Now faith in what's not seen still has to be in something that's reliable, in the Lord. Not what somebody says about what God says but what God himself said and this gets us to this next section.

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The Resources

Timothy had resources given to him for faith. Paul writes in verse 18, **“This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you that by them you may fight the good fight.”** These promises to Timothy were the resources by which he was encouraged to fight the good fight. Now what is this? Well it comes from 1 Timothy 4:14, **“Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.”**

Clearly he had prophecies given to him that concern his spiritual gifts and his spiritual role in the church. Now wouldn't it be nice if we had that and someone said “God says this,” and it would make it very clear, if it were truly from God. And there's lots of people this day and age who pretend to speak from God.

But the question remains, do they really speak from God? If they do we can take it to the bank. But if they don't we might find our faith misplaced. Fortunately, for you and for me, while we may not have, in fact I would say we don't have, specific prophecies given to us as individuals we have a plethora of prophecies that have been given to us in the Scriptures.

Let's read together 2 Peter 1:19-21 to show you this. And just before this passage I going to read, Peter references his seeing Christ in the transfiguration of Christ. And in light of that revelation through the majestic and the glory he saw when they were with him on the holy mountain of transfiguration, he says, **“This is my beloved son with who I am well pleased' and we heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.”**

As sure as that revelation that Peter had of Christ, we have the prophetic word made more sure, we can have the equivalent or even more conviction of the truthfulness of God's Word Verse 20, **“Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.”** In other words, this isn't just people speaking, this is God speaking, God spoke to those people. And we can look confidently at that because along with their words came miracles that were undeniable and we can say yes this is God working through these people and the record is there for us.

These prophecies are to us and we can look in passage after passage, in fact the latest CD that we released with Scripture songs. You can go to Scripture song after Scripture song in there and you will find prophecies to you instructing you on how to fight the good fight of faith and that's just a small drop in the bucket of what has been deposited to us in God's Word that will guide us and encourage us to fight the good fight of faith.

You do not lack the resources, you have the Holy Spirit in God's Word to enable you to act, to fight the good fight of faith. You have an abundance of resources, in fact you have more than Timothy did because he didn't have the New Testament compiled has we have it. At least not at this point in his life.

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Lastly, we will look at the Realm of this prescription of fighting the good fight of faith. This statement of fight the good fight of faith moves to us as individuals, our character and to our church as a whole and we will look at both of these.

Fighting the good fight of faith. What is that referencing? Well, it references keeping faith and a good conscience. Verse 19. The good fight of faith includes a good conscience. This word “conscience” often is connected to faith in the scripture. In fact even in this very chapter, verse 5, **“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”**

Later on in the book one of the qualifications of deacons says this “but holding to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience.” So the conscience is connected to faith. What is a conscience? A conscience, everyone has one, even unbelievers; the conscience is an innate sense of right and wrong.

Now no one’s conscience is perfect. All of us have a conscience that needs to be molded and shaped and matured. And some people’s conscience barely exists, they have seared their conscience greatly. But within people God has put, like a heart beating, a sense of right and wrong and though they may have suppressed it there is this sense. Well, as we come in contact with the Lord our conscience develops and when we go against our conscience we upset our faith.

This is why Romans 14:23 says it this way **“Whatever is not from faith is sin.”** When we are not able to act in faith with confidence that this is what God would be pleased with or conversely if we believe we are doing something that is against what God would have us to do we should not do that or our faith will be disrupted. Good faith, a fight the good fight of faith includes a good conscience. Being faithful to our sense of right and wrong for what ever is not from faith is sin. So we cannot violate our conscience.

The good fight of faith includes the pursuit of righteousness. And this other passage is 1 Timothy 6:12, fight the good fight of faith, is preceded with these words about the evil of the love of money. **“But flee from these things you man of God and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of eternal life to which you were called.”** We fight the good fight of faith by pursuing righteousness. That is tantamount to fighting the good fight of faith, the pursuit of righteousness. Good conscience, fleeing sin, pursuing righteousness and then enduring.

The good fight of faith includes endurance. 2 Timothy 4:7, **“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.”** And we fight the good fight of faith by enduring to the end, continuing on until the end that describes the good fight of faith. Our character will be molded by faith as long as it’s not against our conscience, as long as its pursuing righteousness and enduring till the end.

The good fight of faith will save us from the shipwreck of our faith. And then there are those men that reject it and suffered shipwreck in regards to their faith. We want to be protected against shipwreck of our faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander. These two men, Hymenaeus

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and Alexander, are two of those people who have suffered shipwreck by rejecting faith and they needed to be dealt with. It was clear that they were part of the church and Paul needed to do something about them. He delivered them over to Satan. Though in order to not be in that position of rejecting faith we need to maintain our faith and we maintain our faith by these two things.

A good conscience

God's Word. When we speak of the conscience you can elevate the conscience and some people do to really the level of the word of God and that is inappropriate. Like I said, all consciences are flawed to some degree and what we are looking to do is to make our sense of right and wrong more and more aligned with God's sense of right and wrong. We are to align our beliefs about what's right, holy, and what's sinful, unrighteous, to be identical with what Christ believes, what Christ's will is. So as we have a good conscience, that conscience should be sharpened, focused, and that's focused by God's word. God's word enables us to sharpen our conscience.

I read some statistics recently up in the Monterey area. There are a number of shipwrecks that have occurred there over the years, and all but one of them has occurred before 1942. Since 1942 there has only been one shipwreck in that area. Why the tremendous drop? And actually this is mirrored in other places, there's been a tremendous drop in the number of shipwrecks. What happened?

In 1942 there was a certain technology developed called radar and radar enables people to see when bad weather is happening, what's out there, what's hidden below the surface even. So ships are safer because of radar. Back when Paul was writing, shipping was very dangerous. In fact, Paul suffered more than one shipwreck because it was hard to see sometimes where you were going.

And even if you knew where you were going you couldn't always see below the surface. The same way with our conscience. Our conscience is sort of this ability before radar to look out there but now with God's word we can sharpen our ability to see, so we can see more clearly. We can see what really is there and avoid the shipwreck of our faith. We're maintained in our faith by our good conscience knowing the right thing to do and doing it by God's Word.

We need to not only do this individually we need to do this in our church. This speaks of discipline. These two people Hymenaeus and Alexander were two people that were dealt with by Paul. Their names come up elsewhere, very likely speaking of the same individuals, they come up in the second book that Paul wrote to Timothy, second epistle.

Hymenaeus comes up in 2 Timothy 2:17, **“and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus.”** So this fellow rejected some truth of God's Word and was upsetting the faith. And something needed to be done about it. Alexander did this 2 Timothy 4:14, **“Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.”**

People that oppose the teaching of God's Word disrupt the faith of some and must be confronted, not ignored, must be dealt with. Paul did, we too cannot ignore this because they are doing harm and damage. So Paul delivers them over to Satan. What does that mean? What is this phrase delivered over to Satan mean? He actually says this in another place, 1 Corinthians 5.

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In 1 Corinthians 5:5 there was a really highhanded immorality in the Corinthian church and Paul writes this, **“I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”** That this person was in a crises of sin and needed to be shaken up so Paul uses the same phraseology, delivered over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh. So this speaks of how we are to discipline.

How can we discipline

The phrase “delivered over to Satan” means to remove them from the church, leaving them with only their relationships with the world.

The world is controlled by the evil one according to 1 John 5:19; the world system is controlled by the evil one. And so when someone is removed from the relationship with the church all they are left with is their relationships with the world and are then thrust out into the domain where Satan has sway. They have been delivered over to him, but for a very good purpose. Not for punitive damage but there is a reason why we are doing this, a reason and it’s a good reason. The primary reason for discipline is to instruct the individual. It’s to serve, to help.

The secondary reason for discipline is to protect the church. Back in 1 Corinthians 5:5-6 Paul decides to trust this person to the domain of Satan for the destruction of his flesh that his spirit may be saved though it is still to serve him but then it says this in verse 5-6, **“I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?”**

Clean out the old leaven. What he is speaking of there is the relationships in the church, a little bit of leaven spreads and sin, and in this case vigorously apposing the teaching of God’s Word will spread and will disrupt people. Their faith will be disrupted. So people need to be protected as well. There is a secondary reason and that is to protect the church from the disruption of faith. So this is what this verse 20 is speaking of. To protect the faith, the faith of the church is important and needs to be protected.

Now there is an example that I would like to leave you with of fighting the good faith and that comes from Hebrews 11:24-26 speaks of Moses and I will read you what Moses is commended with and I think it is very instructive for us to follow in his path. **“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.”**

Moses is a great example, when he acted in faith he chose to be with humble people rather than being in an honored position. By faith, Moses when he had grown up refused his position as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, a high and lofty position, he chooses rather to be suffering with the people of God. And in faith, things not yet seen, we can choose to value the right thing and as the honored positions of this world are not that great but being with the people of God is a far greater position even if its enduring ill treatment like Moses.

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He in faith was willing to have a value system that set aside the honored position that he had and picked up the low position of being with the people of God.

That was an exercise of faith. He was not earthly minded. Faith also meant choosing the protracted place of shame over the passing pleasures of sin. When he chose to be with the people of God, choosing ill treatment, this was a lengthy degree of suffering. When they left Egypt there was no guarantees that they would flee safely, and yet he took that step of faith and as they went into the wilderness there was no guarantee that they would be able to survive there and if they had known that they would be wandering around for 40 years that might have been less of a motivation to go off into the trip to the promised land, but in spite of this he was willing to endure ill treatment choosing the place of protracted shame over the passing pleasures of sin.

And sin is passing, it maybe thought to be enjoyable for a moment, but it is passing away and in faith we will reject the passing pleasures of sin because our values will see that for what it is, something that is fading away. What we will value is something that is also temporary though it might be lasting a little longer then the passing pleasures of sin and that is being willing with Christ to endure the shame.

Christ is our example of enduring the shame as Hebrews 12 puts it. Faith means choosing future rewards over present riches, verse 26, **“considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.”** He was looking for a reward that was not yet seen, it was in the future. So he set aside the present riches for the future rewards. He valued what was lasting in the future though not yet seen over what was present and made a good choice in faith. And he didn't receive it in his lifetime. He wandered in the wilderness with the people of Israel and never entered the promise land. But his reward was in heaven, stored up and safe and secure in faith, not seen but in faith acted upon.

We can leave it this way: Fighting the good fight of faith requires choices in light of our faith. If we are going to fight the good fight of faith we will make choices according to faith that's unseen and when we do that we will be set up to mature as a Christian rather than being earthly minded.

Let's pray together. Lord, we come to you with thanksgiving that You have imparted faith to us, that You have given us the gift of faith that we can trust You. We pray, Lord, that You would help us to know You better so that we can be able to trust You more for the things not yet seen. That we can have the confidence that what You say is true and that we can live according to that rather then the weakness of our flesh. We pray that we would in Christ. Amen.