

Let's open our Bibles to the book of 1 Timothy, and this morning we will finish chapter 1 together. Follow along as I read our text and if you remember as time I asked you a favor that I'll ask you again, after the reading of the Scripture I'll say, "This is the Word of the Lord" and then I want you to respond with me "Thanks be to God" — we'll all say that part together as an expression of gratitude for the privilege of reading and hearing the living word of God together... so follow along with me as I read 1 Tim. 1:18-20...

*"¹⁸ This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ²⁰ among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme."*¹

This is the Word of the Lord... ***Thanks be to God!***

John Hus, the chancellor of the university of Prague was condemned as a heretic by the Roman Catholic church and burned at the stake on July 6, 1415 after being guaranteed safe conduct to the council of Constance. He was not a heretic, but was outspoken against the theological errors and abuses of the Roman Catholic Church of His day. Even as they offered him a last minute pardon if he would recant, he is recorded as saying, *"I shall die with joy today in the faith of the gospel which I have preached."*² His legacy would go beyond that moment though as one historian notes, *"Hus is said to have uttered the words, 'You may roast this goose [Hus means Goose in Czech], but a hundred years from now a swan will arise whose singing you will not be able to silence.' Almost exactly a hundred years later, Martin Luther unleashed the doctrine of justification by faith alone on the world. A great admirer of Hus, Luther was ardent in his belief that he was the promised swan; after his death Lutheran churches would use swans as weather vanes, and the reformer would be portrayed with a swan."*³

Today for many churches today is celebrated as Reformation Sunday, anticipating October 31st, Reformation Day. Tomorrow marks the significance of October 31, 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his 95 thesis to the door of the church in Wittenburg, Germany sparking what we now recall as the Protestant Reformation. But what does any of that have to do with 1 Timothy 1:18-20, well I see two connections for us as we dive into this text together. First, there are times and experiences that are supernatural markers of a move of the Spirit of God. The Roman Catholic Church thought they were extinguishing the message of John Hus as they lit a flame underneath him and yet that flame would be the very catalyst for what would burn a century later and give the true church a sweeping recovery of the gospel that had been held in bondage, hidden from so many. Whether you would call Hus's words prophetic or not, what he said had a profound impact on a man not yet born, and stirred in him a zeal to contend for the gospel similar to what we will see from Paul to Timothy in our text. A second connection is this, the Christian life is a life of Spiritual warfare, as Paul wrote in Ephesians, *"¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present*

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 1:18–20.

² Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, pp. 423

³ Michael Reeves, *The Unquenchable Flame*, pp. 31-32.

darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.”⁴ Paul instructs Timothy to wage the good warfare, and the warfare was not with weapons made by human hands, but with the weapons of gospel truth or as Paul says here “faith” and a “good conscience” — John Hus and Martin Luther did what Paul called Timothy to do and I believe he is calling you and me to do even now.

So here are my three points for today’s sermon, after all, I am a Baptist pastor...

- We have a sacred trust
- We have a real battle
- We have a reason to fight

Point #1 - We have a Sacred Trust

These verses are the capstone before a major transition. Most of Paul’s letters follow the format of addressing a doctrinal matter first and then he transitions at some point to the practical matters. He is dividing them as if they don’t relate to one another, no Paul understands as we have learned even in 1 Timothy that right doctrine is the foundation for right practice, thus this opening chapter instructing Timothy to defend right theology before he moves to right practice.

You’ve heard the word “orthodox”, that’s not slang for a group of orthopedic doctors, no orthodox simply means: “*conforming to established doctrine especially in religion*”⁵ — or stated another way, orthodox means having “right belief.” Maybe you also have heard the word “orthopraxis” and I will spare you another “dad” joke, but the word means simply to have “right practice” — Put orthodoxy and orthopraxis together and you get right belief that informs right practice. And as we have seen and come to a climax here the right belief must be in place first before right practice and that effort of conforming our beliefs to the standard of the Scriptures is a sacred truth.

Look at the way our passage opens with me again, Paul writes, “*¹⁸ This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child*”(1 Ti 1:18) — What charge is Paul talking about here? ... The charge that he issued back in vs. 3-4 saying, “*³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.*”⁶ The charge is the call for Timothy to stand up for the gospel and stand against the false teachers and their errors. But then he uses the word “entrust” which is not accidental because it echoes what Paul said just a few verses prior when he is confronting the sinful patterns that the law condemns he saying that the defense of the gospel was a charge entrusted to him, look up at vs. 10-11, where Timothy is told

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Eph 6:12–13.

⁵ Inc Merriam-Webster, [*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*](#). (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 1:3–4.

to confront any behavior that is “*contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.*”⁷ Paul had been entrusted with the defense of the gospel, and he was in turn entrusting that same charge to Timothy.

Now you may be tempted to say, “welp, better him than me!” But not so fast beloved, we can say this text directly applies to Timothy, but it is consistent with a charge that is given to every Christian in other places in the New Testament, let me give you one example from Jude who wrote to a church under siege by heresies creeping in, saying, “³ *Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴ For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*”⁸

So, yes this trust is given to Timothy by Paul, but that does not mean that as a church we are not carrying the same sacred trust in ourselves. We all must endeavor to know the gospel so well that we are able to confront false teaching when it arises, but we also must see that this text doesn’t just urge Timothy to be equipped to defend the gospel, but to actively engage in defense of the gospel. He needs to understand the gospel with clarity, which he does from His time with Paul, and he needs to apply that knowledge in defense of the gospel against false teachers.

Why would we call this a **sacred** trust though? Because I am trusted with many things just like you I am entrusted by my wife to drive our kids to school and take out the trash and grill delicious meats for us to eat...but none of those are “sacred.” Well maybe the delicious meats comes close, but sacred implies a weightier and more consequential trust. What is sacred is highly valued and important in the most sincere sense of the word. So when Paul says he entrusts a charge to timothy it is a charge of the highest importance because the trust involves the confirmation and defense of the gospel, which dear church is nothing less than the confirmation and defense of God’s Word.

And before we move on from this, recognize that Timothy is being instructed as the work of a pastor by his pastoral mentor. And this helps us in two clear ways. One, pastors must never be found derelict on their charge to proclaim the gospel with clarity, truth with no mixture of error, and when error and false doctrine arises in a church the pastors are those men entrusted with leading the church to condemn falsehood and uphold what is true. Pastors may not be good administrators or accountants, but we must be good theologians. Secondly, you as a church are given a “fly on the wall” moment here as you are instructed about what you should value and expect from your pastors. You should expect your pastors to be those who carry the same sacred trust you have to be clear on the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Look, I will make mistakes and fail to meet your expectations at times, but when it comes to the defense or preservation of the true gospel it is your job to confront me and if I will not be corrected by truth from Scripture concerning the gospel, you need to remove me.

⁷ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 1:10–11.

⁸ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jud 3–4.

You see Paul is not talking about secondary theological matters where Christians can charitably agree to disagree. The false teachers were corrupting what the gospel proclaims. Theirs was a Jesus+ gospel, but church Jesus + anything equals hell. Christ alone is our only hope of salvation. Remember what Dave preached last week, the gospel in a sentence, “Christ Jesus came to save sinners” — If that glorious message is corrupted, it is the pastors job to rise and speak clearly and conviction-ally concerning what is true. And if he wont do that, you as a church know that he has failed to keep the sacred trust, and then it is your job to find a pastor who will.

Brothers and sisters we have a sacred trust, that trust is the glorious news of the gospel that sinners guilty and condemned can receive salvation through the death of Jesus on the cross in their place and his glorious resurrection. That by repenting of sin and trusting in Jesus we are saved by Christ. This is our trust, let us be found faithful to keep that charge.

But what will keeping that charge look like for Timothy, well that leads to point #2,

Point #2 — We have a real battle

Paul tells Timothy in vs 18, that the charge that has been entrusted to him is nothing less than waging warfare. But notice how he clarifies the type of warfare in his statement. He tells timothy to wage the “good” warfare. Timothy could know that the battle no matter how fierce, difficult or painful was the good fight. Paul is building confidence for endurance with these words. The fight, the warfare that Timothy faced was a fight that needed to take place. Because the stakes could not be higher, the glory of God and the purity of the gospel were the stakes of this warfare in the church.

This isn’t Paul telling Timothy to pick fights with people, but to engage in the necessary battle that lay before Him. Sometimes we are slow to use the warfare language of the Christian life because it seems so out of step with how we think of the Christian life. Yet Paul is not afraid or ashamed of drawing military language into your daily Christian life. Brothers and sisters we have a real battle, and what is made clear in 1 Timothy is that sometimes Satan brings the fight to us, even among us.

Timothy faced a real battle and Paul gives him, in these verses many supports to lean on as he steps into the ring with these false teachers. One we’ve already seen. Timothy knows Paul supports him, Paul calls him his child. More than a term of endearment that is precious, it is an affirmation that the battle he faced was not one where he was without the support of His mentor.

Another resource for Timothy in the battle is what Paul calls, “*the prophecies previously made about you*” — Now we do not know exactly what prophecies Paul is referring to, but we can piece together a pretty good idea from some other texts. Turn over to chapter 4 with me and look at vs. 13-16, Paul writes — “***13** Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. **14** Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. **15** Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. **16** Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your*

*hearers.*⁹ So from these verses it appears that this was a time when Timothy had been set apart for the work of ministry through elders, or pastors that commissioned or we might say ordained him to the work of pastoring. And the gifts seem to be surrounding his ability to clearly expound the Scriptures. Later in 2 Timothy 1:6 Paul writes, “*6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,*”¹⁰ — It seems from these two texts that Paul is calling Timothy to remember the commission he received from other pastors to do the work of the ministry that included his preaching and teaching gifts. Here, in our text, those gifts that had been highlighted by other faithful pastors, and spoken over him with the laying on of hands was a resource for strengthening him in the fight of faith.

A friend asked me last week, “Mike have you ever doubted your call to ministry?” And I said, “everyday” — sometimes multiple times a day, but then I said, but the Lord has preserved my in my doubts by regularly calling to mind the faithful pastors who were the Lord’s instruments of setting me apart for the work of ministry, and pastors who have reaffirmed my call to ministry throughout the years.

Sometimes the Lord uses spiritual markers as a ballast against the storms of life and those spiritual markers that we all have if we are in Christ are a means of strengthening us as we fight the good fight of faith. Maybe a very practical application of this sermon you can do today is to talk to your spouse, your children or parents, or friends over lunch and recount some of the spiritual markers in your life. Life moves so rapidly and pressures close in on us that sometimes the greatest way to recover strength is to remember the faithfulness of God in our lives by telling someone about his faithfulness to you. Then listen to someone else's spiritual markers and be encouraged by their faithfulness. Ask your loved ones who follow Jesus about key moments when God sustained them or spoke to them through his word or His church. Or why not read some of the accounts of God’s faithfulness to other Christian’s throughout church history. Read about the lives of Martin Luther, Elisabeth Elliot, JC Ryle and strengthen yourself for battle with the accounts of those who have gone before you in the fight.

Paul knows that, for Timothy, as it likely was for Him, remembering the key moments of his call to ministry will be a source of strength in the warfare he is called to fight.

But he gives two other resources for strength as well, he tells timothy to wage the good warfare “holding faith and a good conscience” — Again Paul draws on language he has already used in vs. 5-6 when he said, “*5 The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 6 Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion,*”¹¹ — What had these false teachers swerved from, “faith and a good conscience” — what is Paul talking about here, what is this faith and good conscience. Well “faith” refers to his belief and trust in the living Jesus, his belief in the gospel, His living trust in a living savior is a life-line for him in the fight against heresy. “Good conscience” refers to his christlike living. That Timothy must

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 4:13–16.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Ti 1:6.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 1:5–6.

maintain a trust in the Lord and manifest that trust in a life that is upright and godly. Remember what we learned just a few weeks back. What we believe is manifest in how we live. The false teachers denied the gospel in both their words and their deeds, Timothy was to fight the false teaching by faith in Jesus and a life of Christlikeness. As Timothy clings to Christ by faith and lives out his faith in Jesus, the darkness is crushed.

This is our tool for the good warfare as well brothers and sisters. If we would face the schemes of the evil one in our day to day lives we must go into battle armed with a living trust in God and a life that demonstrates that we trust Him. You know, you don't have to look far to find the connection between false teaching and death, from prosperity gospel preachers in private jets who rob the church to feed their lifestyle to charismatic earthly Messiah's who convince people to follow them even to physical death. But where you see faithful Christians holding faith and a good conscience you don't see death in their wake you see life.

This is our battle, these are our weapons, and beloved let us remember that the battle is real and finally lets remember we have a reason to fight, thats our third point...

Point #3 — We have a reason to fight

I have not had the privilege of serving in the military, but what I have gleaned from time spent speaking with active and inactive soldiers is the way they speak of the battle. They fight for our country, that is their sacred trust, it is the reason many of them join the military in the first place. Yet there is a deeper reason they fight that I have heard many of them speak of, and that is for their fellow soldier. Yes there is an enemy and yes their is a mission to accomplish, but the good soldier wants to accomplish the mission with as few casualties as a possible.

Yes our soldiers fight for our country, but they also fight for each other. And thats where I want to drill down for our last point. Paul has given the greatest reason for Timothy to engage in good warfare, there is no greater privilege and responsibility than to be counted as a faithful soldier of Christ serving our Savior and laying down our life for Him, and yet Paul directs Timothy to a painful reminder when he recounts the sad loss of Hymenaeus and Alexander. These men appear to have been seeming converts to Christ who upon further time have been exposed as not only false converts but false teachers. Paul says they've made a shipwreck of their faith. A ship that has been destroyed through a wreck is no longer a vessel that will make it to shore.

As a younger man I was a scuba diver and on a family vacation I had the chance to dive a shipwreck. Nothing cool like a pirate ship, but a tugboat that had sunk off of Key West. And as I thought of Paul's statement here I was reminded of that wreck. And the ironic reality is that the boat sitting on the ocean floor was only good for tourism not sailing. It was a spot where we who arrived in a boat, put on our wetsuits and strapped on our scuba tanks and dove down to look at what was once a boat that sailed just like the one we had jumped off of. I don't know how that boat sunk, but I do know it was a dead vessel, the only life it had was the barnacle that was growing on it and the schools of fish that were swimming through it. It looked like a ship, and it once sailed the ocean surface but here it was shipwrecked at the ocean floor...dead.

And what Paul does here is something we may not like He uses these men who have shipwrecked their faith as an example to Timothy and for us of the cost of turning away from the gospel and not preserving right doctrine in a local church. When the gospel is impure the church can become poisoned and those who do not receive the antidote become casualties. Paul references an act of church discipline where Hymenaeus & Alexander had been removed from the church or we'd use the word "excommunicated" — the closest Parallel to Paul's language here of delivering over to Satan is found in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 another text concerning what we know as "church discipline." In both texts the individuals are disciplined sadly, in hopes that they would repent and return to Jesus and to the church. One commentator notes, "*Delivering over to Satan is an act of discipline for unrepentant sin and involves putting the person out of the church, the fellowship of God's people, into the realm controlled by Satan ... The apostolic determination to deliver such a person to Satan was accomplished by the church's act of discipline.*"¹² — But the hope and intent of every painful act of church discipline is that sinners who strayed from the gospel will repent and return. We are called to put out those who refuse to repent in the prayerful hope that they will return with restored faith and consciences.

Sadly, this didn't appear to happen in the case of these two men...Hymenaeus and Alexander are mentioned in 2 Timothy as those whose opposition to Paul and Timothy only increased, listen to what Paul says about them in 2nd Timothy. First Hymenaeus in 2nd Timothy 2:16, "*16 But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.*"¹³ And then of Alexander, Paul writes in 2 Tim. 4:14, "*14 Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. 15 Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.*"¹⁴

Well then should we just give up then? The churches discipline didn't bring about the desired repentance, so why do it? Because the fight wasn't only to see them repent and learn not to blaspheme, but the fight was for the faithful impressionable members of the church. Timothy had to oppose these men and their false teaching to protect the flock he was charged to shepherd. The wolves were feeding and the shepherd needed to run the wolves off so that the rest of the sheep might live.

Church we have a reason to fight for the preservation of the true gospel in this church and that reason is sitting right next to you, just in front of you, or right behind you. Its the brother and sister you are in fellowship with here in this local church. We are not meant to be isolated Christians detached from community, no we were saved to be a part of a people who are devoted to the Lord Jesus and we are saved from the enemy and enlisted in the fight for one another as we pursue the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹² George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 111.

¹³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Ti 2:16–18.

¹⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Ti 4:14–15.

And beloved here's the promise, we are guaranteed victory through the Lord Jesus, we have a reason to fight and a promise that we cannot lose. So let our sure victory be the joyful motivation you need as you leave today to fight the schemes of the evil one and wait for the day when you see your King in glory...Let's Pray.