

Don't Shipwreck your Faith

1 Tim 1:18-20

Opening Question: Have you ever been called a quitter? When the going gets hard...Supposedly the tough gets going. And I think that's a lot of you, most people I know at this Church are pretty tough and enduring. In some sense you have to be, to be a doctor or an engineer. Or even a high school student today. I have a very low threshold when it comes to pain and endurance. Every hard job I've had I've honestly thought- man, today's the day I quit my job-I don't know if I can handle it anymore" But I had this one job in seminary, that I just could not gut through. I worked at a UPS Hub they distribute all the packages and big mail. I worked the graveyard shift--you loaded a trailer, sometimes maybe 2 or 3 trailers in one night, full of boxes of packages. 90-200 Of 20 lbs to 50 lbs of boxes coming at you, and you had to stack, tetris style. Inside a dim, hot, stuffy dank and dark no AC trailer. You sweat alot, and most people lose 10-15 lbs of water mass every night. My body and brain couldn't handle the 10 pm-3 am schedule and going to seminary, so one day I just decided "ok, I gotta find another job." I lasted barely a month. I quit, 'cuz I couldn't take it anymore. I didn't see the purpose, I found no joy in it, and I said- "hey, this isn't worth it-" I'm sure most of us have a story like that, where we've quit, to our shame--And we decided it just wasn't worth staying in that job or that program, because we decided it wasn't for us. It was

too hard. It wasn't worth the money. It was too much sweat, too annoying, etc.

How about for our faith--Have you ever had times when you wanted to quit? Some of you, quitting might mean holding the Gospel too loosely and not prioritizing it in your life. For others of you, you don't see the value in the mission of the Church. Maybe it was out of discouragement you've faced in serving the Church. It's not so easy giving and faithfully serving weekly. Or have you ever had doubts? Perhaps you are a younger Christian and you're wondering what things about the Christian faith you should "hold onto" and other things that you can compromise. You question if it's worth holding onto a genuine faith in Christ and in the Gospel. The Gospel that our faith is about what Jesus has done and is doing and will do, not on our works but all about his grace and love.

Perhaps you are a mature Christian and you wonder for your children or those that you disciple--hey, so many temptations in the world today, how do I train my sons and daughters, my students and youth to hold to their faith? Because culture today sends us one message, and the Church has another message. In all, it leads to the big fundamental question--

Big Question: How do I persevere in my faith?

And, I want to address three different types of people today--most of you will fall in one of these three categories--

One of the people is the young or growing believer→ you are a youth, one of my favorite people. A new believer or a maturing believer who has been soaking in the truth of the Bible. You guys (I mean we) are so cool 'cuz you (we) have so much energy, so much dreams and hopes. And curiosity and questioning--Perhaps you come with many questions even today. But with youth comes some warnings! I'm sure you have all been repeatedly warned to "not stray" from the faith, to be careful when you leave home and your local Church. Perhaps you're even a bit tired of older adults pestering you about "hey, be careful-for you don't want to give in to the culture around you, hold fast to the Gospel"-but with good wisdom they are giving you some warning here. So I don't want to talk down to you ('cuz I am fairly young too, so I know it doesn't feel good) but want to challenge you, hold fast to the core doctrines, the essential linchpins and beliefs of the Church.

The second group I want to address is the mature believer--ah, yes you are the wise sage, not so green anymore. But maybe you are yellow and red and ripe. I don't know if that made any sense there. But regardless, you know what I mean. For you, I hope this message serves as instruction--a prescription for your own children, and your own disciples in Christ. Because what would

the Church be without our elders, our mature in faith men and women to pass along and teach these core beliefs about God to us? The young need you. The younger people need to hear how to hold onto their faith, how to persevere well, how to wage the war against the enemy in an increasing hostile culture whose message is to "improve yourself and feel good" and "be moral good kind puppies" and understands not of the concepts of "grace" and "truth". I challenge you to listen and see who you can challenge in your own life to hold fast to the faith.

Finally, our third group is any of you who don't identify with the first two groups--maybe you are a seeker, a non believer. Maybe you are a visitor and just curious about the Church. Perhaps your co worker invited you or maybe you're trying to impress your girlfriend by coming to service. Hey, we're happy you're here. Whatever reason you are here, we hope you walk away with a few things--the main thing being--This Bible that these people talk about, the God of this Bible, Who is He and is He worth getting to know more of? Because we are unapologetically for the Bible, and the truths of the Bible. We want you to come with questions and doubts and skepticism, but our prayer is that God the Spirit would do a work through the message and the service that you would sincerely question what is being taught and informatively make a decision for yourself- "Hey, is this God worth it? Could I make a step to follow Him?" So with that said,

let's dive into our text--We will walk through our passage through the lens of seeing:

1. What is the War?
2. How are we to fight?
3. Why the Church?

We've been walking towards the book of 1 Timothy, a letter from a mentor to a protege. Instructing him to teach correct doctrine and to help the Church be ordered theologically correct as she matures. A letter from a seasoned Christian wise mentor, Paul, to a younger and less experienced Timothy.

The last few weeks we have seen that Paul is giving Timothy the challenge to protect the truth of the Gospel, to never compromise, to not steer into false teaching, but to keep on mission. So we come to our passage from v. 18-20 today, we read:

V.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"

This brings us to our first point of--

1. What is the war?

Paul says that Timothy need to wage the good warfare. Later on he is told to "fight the good fight"

So I am not familiar with military or war or the armed forces, so I can ask this-any of you seen the series "Band of Brothers"? It's an excellent show retelling a scrappy and brave unit that fought in the front lines of WWII. And in this show, you see how messy battle is, how dangerous combat can be, how savage and frightening war actually is. They are almost instinctively in this "kill or be killed" mode--and in a sense, Paul exhorts Timothy to do that here. Fighting not people, but false doctrine and teaching contrary to Scripture. Lifting up the banner of Christ in a broken world. A fallen and sinful world. Advancing the Gospel to sinners. Not making room for deceitful teaching or lifestyle in the Church. Paul also mentions in "accordance with the prophecies previously made about you--" As Paul entrusts him to be faithful to carry on his ministerial duties-Paul also wants Timothy to remember the prophecies from his past. Prophecies were made by other Christians in the early NT times to tell of other members of the Church an exhortation or a rebuke or some truth God revealed to them. My personal conviction is that today we don't have prophecies but we have God's Word, the Church, and the Pulpit-based on His Word as instruments for prophesy.

But back then this was common for the early Church. Paul reminds that there have been Christians who have made prophecies about Timothy. There was external confirmation about Timothy's gifting or his call to the ministry. Affirmation from God and the body that he is called to do the work.

All the more reminding Timothy--hey, God has called you to do this work. Not just the encouragement of men, but God has called you to be a faithful minister of the Word, to teach truth and to love well. To fight falsehood and hypocrisy and to protect the Church of any slander compromised teaching. Timothy would know he was empowered to wage this war. In protecting truth and battling lies.

When I read this passage, I picture Paul saying to Timothy-- "Hey Tim, you got to stand your ground. Teaching that is anti Gospel or watered down message, you can't allow that in here". And false teaching then came in many forms: legalism of "do this and don't do that to be saved" which adds to the Gospel. Or teachings that reduces the Gospel by saying "You don't need Jesus as the only way to eternal salvation, he's just one of many ways". In chapter 4 Paul mentions things like forbidding marriage or certain types of food like Bacon related foods we love, like pork as certain incorrect teachings of that day.

And today, we certainly have our share of false and dangerous teaching as well. The prosperity Gospel which says that God cares more about your wealth and health over His glory and His mission. There are others who say that there is no Hell, no real punishment for sin--Others who say that our Church is so inclusive, it doesn't matter who you sleep with or how often or with what gender, we aren't gonna call you out on it, 'cuz that's uncomfortable. Or maybe a subtle cultural message that says

“God owes me something!” In our wi-fi entitled generation we think God needs to give as we wish in order for Him to be good.

And I’m sure we can name more and more. For the doubting younger believer, this is a huge issue. What do I believe? Is God actually good? Is He a God that I can trust? Is He a God that won’t abandon me when I sin? Is He somebody worth more than a career or a relationship? And this is where our older mature believers, we need your help. We need you to safe guard the core beliefs and disciple our younger men and women to hold fast to these truths. We’ve all doubted, we’ve all wanted to be exceptions to the rule. “Hey, God didn’t say anything about dating in the Bible, so I make the rules and the exceptions.”

I said earlier how Paul is encouraging Timothy to be a guardian of doctrine. That’s his role as a warrior and soldier in battle. Paul wants Timothy to know he needs to fight falsehood and lies. I’ll give you two images here-one for us nerdy types and the other for us sporty types. You’re both welcome. The first image is of that from Lord of the Rings, the Fellowship of the Ring: old elf guy, Gandolf, standing on that bridge thing where that big demon thing is about to get the gang, what does he do? He strikes his staff on the ground, and says “You Shall Not Pass!” and carries the monster with him to an inferno in the ground, protecting his friends.

And the second image is that of former Houston Rockets Center Dikembe Mutombo, swatting the opposing team's lay up with his 30 foot wingspan, and going "No No No Not in My House!"

But that's the role Timothy has in this war--he's not to let the enemy pass, no false doctrine will pass, and if any teaching contrary to the Bible were being passed around, he needs to swat it out 'cuz that is not aloud in Jesus' House. So he is to keep on this battle, as we are too, in a constantly shaping culture that does not treat the Church with much respect or kindness. That is his mission as he faithfully perseveres.

V. 19- "Holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made a shipwreck of their faith"

We move onto our second point--

2. How are we to Fight?

Paul gives us two practical things here--One is that of holding onto a faith, and the second to hold onto a good conscience.

So faith meaning faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Faith in correct doctrine based on the Word of God. Believing the glory of God, His immutability, His power, His sovereignty, basically faith in that the God of this Bible as He claims to be is true and that He is the most good. Faith in the true God.

And that of a good conscience--a Holy Spirit led conscience that doesn't make compromises but stands firm in what they know. So

if faith is knowing the truth, the conscience would be the ability to apply that truth. Some things we let slide-- "Hey, I know I should not gossip about that person, but it's fine" or "Hey, even though we're not quite married yet, we're married in God's eyes, so we can _____" or "Hey, I know that it's by grace, faith, and Christ alone, but you know what? I think it's more about my performance, so I'm gonna add these rules and such..."

So Paul urges Timothy to hold to the faith, to know what it is you believe, and to practice it, listening to your good conscience, a Holy Spirit led conscience that would convict you for saying falsehood or living a hypocritical life.

The consequences of not following through on those two things? "By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith"- Paul knows a lot about shipwreck--any of you been shipwrecked before and are still alive? Maybe a show of hands? God must love you. Apparently SS Paul had been in an actual ship that's been wrecked before, a few times. Probably not a fun experience. But he uses this imagery to tell of people who appeared to have believed at one point, or were members of the Church, but fallen away. What they once seemingly had is now ruined and broken. And later on we will talk more specifically about these two individuals Paul mentions in the next verse.

But just want to clarify the stance on a believer's security-Once Saved, Always Saved, is the stance the Church has been

preaching. So I don't know the fate of these two individuals here, but I do know that those whom God holds and calls His child in salvation, He will not lose or let go of. Neither angels nor heaven or hell could separate us from the love Jesus has paid for us. So we would have to say that these two men were claiming to believe in Christ, and yet very possible that they never repented nor believed, and were led astray by some false teaching. And then further promoted lies and lived in them. They were likely never saved and regenerated by God's Spirit. Perhaps they were pretending or the Gospel was just a phase or good moral teaching for them. And it's true for us as well, just knowing theology or doing a bunch of good works doesn't equate to a saving faith. At the end of the day, only repentance and faith in a Messiah who was the God-Man, in Jesus-that's the only sure way to salvation.

So this is where our major warning comes in--Don't shipwreck your faith. I asked earlier how we are to persevere in our faith. We have seen the problem of our culture, and we have to hold fast to our belief and to apply it in our life with good conscience.

I'm sure most of you know of a friend or a student, even from this Church, that have "shipwrecked" their faith. Maybe they never believed in the first place, or maybe they are in a season of drifting, I don't know. But what I do know is that it is sad. I'm sure for parents and teachers alike it must be heart wrenching to think that those you love the most might reject or walk away from the Gospel. You don't need a stats sheet or a pie chart to

know that the percentages of those who tend to leave the Church after graduating from High School or College is staggering.

If you are a young or growing believer, we challenge you and your faith--if you have questions, if you have doubts, hey, don't just suppress them. Actually engage in those questions with a pastor, a Sunday School Teacher, a leader, a believer. Because the worst thing you could do is become more frustrated with the Church because you sense none of your doubts are being addressed. So bring it up, there is no dumb question, no thing as a silly doubt. If anything, we appreciate the sincerity of your faith as you wrestle with God.

But secondly, having to do with the good conscience--If you are compromising and unrepentant, beware. Little things and slip ups might seem ok now, but every time you compromise your theology, your sexuality, your integrity, it ultimately shapes your identity. You're going to believe things you hadn't wished before. If I believe in what my culture says, about how it's ok to sleep around before marriage, I'll make small exceptions here and there, and practice it, and be numb to certain sins and compromise my faith and it will shape me.

Older men and women of the Church--We need your prayers, we need your strength and teaching. One of the true indicators of young people sticking to their faith is shown by the amount of adults that certain student had in their formative years. Will you

be one of the many adults they need to model a real faith? But teaching that isn't just about do this or don't do that, we need grace filled teachers who understand and can empathize.

Teachers who can help our young people authentically thrive as they have room for questions but are directed towards the person of Jesus, everytime, always.

And finally, we read

V. 20- "Among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme" -

We move onto our third point, of

3. Why the Church?

So not much is known about the two people here, Hymenaeus and Alexander--but what we do learn from this passage is that they have "shipwrecked" their faith.

Both Hymenaeus and Alexander, though not clear, must have either taught false doctrine contrary to the Bible, or acted in a way that was not in alignment with the Gospel. Teachings that were either additional to the Gospel or by reducing the Gospel. It could have been teachings such as that that ultimately put them out of Paul's graces. Or by their action, seemingly confessing Jesus was God and yet living in clear, disobedient and

unrepentant sin. By claiming to be a Christian and yet clearly living opposed to what the Church would exhort a Christian to be. Which means that the handing over to Satan isn't go from Jesus to Satanism or anything like that, Paul is lifting up the protection of the Church from Hymenaeus and Alexander. They are no longer under the authority of the Church, where they can love and guide them. Paul dismissed them for their false teaching or lifestyle, and are now under the rule of the world, and its ruler, Satan. Because then at least they would not be promoting false messages inside the Church, where we protect doctrine and core teachings of the Bible.

So what does all of that mean? For one, it just goes to show that the battle is real. The enemy is wanting people to disobey Jesus, to shipwreck their faith, and destroy the Church. The enemy Satan used people like Hymenaeus and Alexander, who Paul trusted at one point, and turned them against Paul and Jesus' Church. So the battle goes on.

But second, it shows the importance of the Church in all of this. In Paul's Second letter to Timothy, Chapter 2:25-26 refers to why Paul had to exercise Church discipline to these two men- "Correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will"-Paul is actually exercising

love in kicking Hymenaeus and Alexander from the Church. It said that if a believer lived in unrepentant sin or teaches false doctrine, are removed from the authority of the Church. But instead, the prayer and hope is that they are banished from the Church with the hope that somehow by God's graces and miracle they may someday be restored after repentance.

So all that said, we see that the Church is of utmost importance. We guard the truth so others would not corrupt the teachings of the Word in the Church. But also, the Church is a place of protection for saints and confessing believers. Hymenaeus and Alexander lost that privilege when they continued with falsehood. The Church is more than an institution, it provides a system of truth and correct doctrine so that we might preserve our teaching in Christ. So that there be no room for compromise. It is actually a beautiful testimony of how God's people have passed down the truths according to Scripture, and albeit imperfectly, lived by it.

If the problem was the war against falsehood and the solution was to have sincere conscience, then our application is to stand together as the Church. To believe in the Church, to grow as the Church, to protect the integrity of the Church, and simply to be the Church, as Christ calls us to be. In this passage Paul mentions of his Church exercising discipline by kicking out those who were promoting lies or living in unrepentant sin. How about our Church? How are we to both promote true Gospel centered teaching and to protect against falsehood?

This means that we stay true to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a message of grace and about what Jesus has done for us on the cross to cleanse our sin-and to not compromise on what our culture promotes, whether that be moralistic values or feel good stories or tolerance. More than all of that, we worship Jesus, the living God who rose from the dead and gives us a new life and identity in him. The Church today is to be present one message to the world and to the divided culture, that of Jesus Christ from the scriptures. The Church is to be a place where we grow in our understanding of the Bible and to practice care and love for each other as we fail and confess and repent. We need the Church because it is so central to God's plan in all of this. We are to be witnesses of His grace and love to this world. So how are we doing that?

So for the young believer--I know it's easier for us to criticize the Church, to see it as outdated or irrelevant. But instead of putting our criticisms, how about we submit to it and learn from it? And as you question and doubt, start taking steps towards maturity. Find others who can teach you and love on you. Find a community and group of other believers who can walk with you in this season. A sure way to persevere in the faith is through the Church, through the body of believers of past and present for all generations, as they seek to proclaim the Gospel. And more than that, I challenge you to serve even if you still have questions--to help the Church grow, as you grow as a believer to further

disciple those even younger than you in the faith. Because all of us need a Paul to mentor us and a Timothy to love on.

And for the mature believer, would you also help the Church by discipling our youth, our growing believers and seekers with grace and truth? We need your help, we need your wisdom and conviction to hold on when we lose sight of the goal. By teaching them to hold onto the core convictions that that it is only by faith alone by grace alone by Christ alone we are saved. That we have One book to study, the Bible. That it is for God's glory we live. I know there might be pressing issues and differences even within a Church, but if we could see the big picture and realize the war at hand, would you help in discipling the next generation? The generation of pastors and missionaries, of husbands and wives, of fathers and mothers in the faith.

And for you still questioning, we want to offer our Church as a place where you can come and worship. You might be questioning and seeking, but we want you to know our Church follows God's mission to proclaim that He is a God who in our deepest brokenness offered His Son and we have new life in Him. Would you consider the Church? This Church, even, as some place for you to not only attend but to find out more about, to commit to in the future as you find others who can walk alongside you? To help you grow and mature so that you might know this Jesus Christ we keep talking about.

So I asked earlier how we are to persevere in the faith--we walked through the passage and saw that there is a war out there and we fight as the Church. The battle is to protect the Gospel and not to compromise it. We saw that to fight the battle we use faith and a good conscience. Not only to know correct truth but to practice it and to apply it. And finally we see that the Church is the place where all of this thrives. As we persevere in the faith, we need a generation of young and old to continue to fight for the Gospel. To advance the kingdom. To not settle for half truths or for lies. To not fall away. To not shipwreck their faith but to pass on their faith by discipling and by the grace Jesus offers us. Let's pray.