

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON- Sunday 23rd June 2024 am

TITLE: "Fight and not crash" TEXT: 1 Timothy 1 v 18-20

Series: "Guarding the deposit" Pt 4:

Scripture references from the ESV

1 Timothy 1:18-20 ¹⁸This 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, ¹⁹holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ²⁰among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Maritime history is full of stories of ships wrecked because sailors failed to follow the rules of navigation or safe operation. In some cases, the ship suffered engine failure or storm force winds drove it off course and onto the rocks, often resulting in great loss of life.

Paul uses this image to warn us that the same thing can happen to us spiritually, but what did he mean? He is telling us what happens when people turn away from the gospel of God's grace. The gospel is the good news that, through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, God is:

- Restoring the relationship between himself and all of us who have turned away from him
- Restoring his own image in us, so that we are becoming more like Jesus

Paul sums this up in 1 Timothy 1:15: **The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.** He spells out for us that this work of God is an act of God's mercy and grace alone. He, himself, received mercy (v13) and ¹⁴**and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.**

To turn away from this gospel is to make shipwreck of our faith

We know when this is happening, because we end up wrecked either by legalism or by liberalism. Legalism means that you are trying to put yourself right with God through law keeping, and it is the opposite of grace.

- Grace is God accepting you as the sinner you are, and putting you right with himself through Christ alone

- He wins your heart through his love for you, and then out of your love for him, you have the desire to obey him.
- In the strength Christ gives, you have the ability to obey him.

When someone turns to legalism and away from resting in this grace of God, then they have made shipwreck of their faith. Ironically, it is not long before they turn to liberalism, living as if God's commands do not matter, because they are exhausted from trying to keep God happy through law keeping.

That person walks away into a life of sin, having made shipwreck of their faith

This really happened to Hymenaeus and Alexander (v20) and it is a very dangerous and real possibility for us today. People who at one time appeared very godly are, today, denying the faith and living as if Christ does not matter. They have turned away from the gospel of grace and turned to legalism and/or liberalism.

- It is a very real danger for every one of us.

How are we to navigate this danger?

We are to **wage the good warfare** (v18). In this passage (above), Paul calls us to:

Fight and NOT crash

To take up the gospel of God's grace,

and fight for the sake of our faith in God and a clear conscience

- What is this fight?
 1. **It is a fight that is good.** Christians can get caught up in a bad fight that is destructive and leads to shipwreck.

A bad fight is when the church squabbles over non-gospel issues because each one of us considers our own needs and preferences more important than seeing God's kingdom extended. These fights take place over matters that Christians can legitimately disagree over. God has not made them clear, because

- he wants to teach us to show gospel grace to one another in our disagreements
- to grow us to be more like Christ through those things that strain our relationships.

We are not to tolerate sin, however.

We are to avoid bringing the world's cancel culture into the church, cutting people off publicly through social media, but instead to debate and disagree graciously, acknowledging gospel agreement above all and not dismissing those for whom Christ died.

That kind of warfare is bad because it undermines the gospel of God's grace, and can lead to onlookers walking away from Jesus when they see hostility between his followers.

We are called to wage a good warfare of the kind that rescues and protects, reaching out to people with gospel grace

Jesus engaged in good warfare when he preached and showed God's grace, welcoming sinners. He called people out of the sin of legalism and liberalism and into the freedom of living by grace and faith.

We are called to wage the kind of warfare that Christ engaged in.

- 2. It is a fight to fulfil our calling (v18).** Timothy's calling, and the charge with which Paul entrusted him, was to stop the false teachers from teaching a different gospel. That calling was given in accordance with prophecies made about him as Paul confirms again: **Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.** (1 Tim 4:14).

It would seem that the Lord gave prophecies about Timothy, which were recognised by the leaders of the church, who, consequently, laid hands on him, prayed and appointed him to that work. As they did so, Timothy was given a spiritual gift – probably that of teaching and preaching.

Paul is reminding Timothy that it is the Lord, not Paul, who has called him.

The reminder that Christ has called him is to serve as a motivation to wage this good warfare, silencing those who want to take the church away from the gospel of grace and into legalism and liberalism.

Pastor Tim (our 21st century Timothy) also had a call from the Lord to preach his word, and that call was confirmed by others and at his ordination, when the preached text was (2 Tim 4:1):

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead,

and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word;

Over the last 19 years, it has been a battle on many occasions. From the flesh came the desire to be liked which battled with the need to say hard things, and laziness and distractions have seen time frittered away. Other people have also sought to pull him away from the charge to preach the word by trying to set another agenda for him, undermining his preaching or telling him he should share this ministry out more with other people.

- It is his strong sense of God's call on his life that has kept him at the work.

**Waging the good warfare means not deserting his post
and continuing to faithfully preach the message of God's grace.**

We do not all have this same calling to preach, but we are all called to live out the truth of the gospel of grace. We are called to live holy lives, living in a Christlike way – not following a set of rules. Rather, in dependence on Christ, we are to love and serve one another, setting our hope on eternal life and not on the things of this world.

We are to wage the good warfare, fulfilling the calling of God upon our lives

- 3. It is a fight to keep faith (v19).** Paul reiterates the need to hold faith at the end of the letter: **Fight the good fight of the faith (6:12)**

The faith Paul refers to is primarily the truth that God had revealed through his apostles regarding the gospel message and its implications for daily living. Waging the good warfare will mean guarding the gospel message that we read in the Bible. That includes not changing it to say what it does not say or what we want it to say. We are to believe this message.

We are to trust God and what he says to us.

- It may go against the way want to live our lives, and against popular culture, but it is in this way that our lives are transformed.

The Bible shows us that we are made more like Christ as the Holy Spirit works in us through the word of God. We experience the Spirit's work in our lives as we believe the word of God.

Holding faith means knowing the truth as God has revealed it, and believing this revealed truth

- 4. It is a fight to hold a good conscience.** A good conscience is a God-given inner sensitivity that enables us to know the difference between right and wrong. Rejecting a good conscience makes shipwreck of our faith. (v19) A good conscience and faith in God and his word will feed off one another.

Paul warns that departing from the truth that God has revealed will result in a bad conscience so that we will not be able to tell the difference between right and wrong: **Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared. (1 Tim 4:1-2).** That same bad conscience will lead to someone denying the truth: **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth (Romans 1:18).**

- When people are determined to follow their own desires, they will either ignore or change what God says.
- The Bible shows that if we want to know more of the truth of Christ, we need a good conscience that fears the Lord and wants to obey the truth. **Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. (Psalm 25:12)**

If we disregard the voice of our conscience and allow unconfessed and unforsaken sin to remain in our hearts, then our faith will not survive for long. Hymeneaus and Alexander rejected a good conscience and made shipwreck of their faith.

We need to wage the good warfare, fighting to hold a good conscience

What must we do?

We need to cultivate a good conscience that is rightly sensitive to God's voice and knows what is truly right and wrong. That happens when four needs are met, each one leading on to the next.

- 1) The need for a regenerate heart.** The Bible tells us that the heart is the controlling centre of our lives. However, from birth, our hearts are sinful and wicked, needing

to be made new. Unless Christ gives us this new heart, we shall never have a good conscience, but only one that thinks it knows what is right and wrong.

You need to be born again by the Spirit of God

Christ must come to live in you

2) The need for God's truth. Unless we know what God says in his word, we shall never have a good conscience.

As we read God's word, the Spirit of God works to reveal right and wrong to us, guiding us safely through life.

**We need a conscience that is both alive to Christ,
and shaped and informed by God's word.**

3) The need for repentance. When our conscience begins to operate in a healthy way, we shall come to realise when we are drifting into danger. We need to remember that the way back to safety is

confession of sin, and forsaking sin.

We confess to God that we have strayed, and with his help, we determine that we will turn away from sin and walk with Christ in the safety of his word. On occasion, we may be so blind to our failing that the church has to intervene (v20). Paul is putting these men out of the fellowship of the church, but his purpose is one of grace. He wants them to understand the danger they are in so that they turn back to Christ.

Sometimes the church has to act in this way for the eternal good of those who are making shipwreck of their faith. Then courage is needed to say the hard things that the person needs to hear.

The way out of shipwreck requires repentance and church discipline

4) The need for gospel grace. We all drift and stray, running the risk of making shipwreck of our faith. The gospel assures us that Christ not only restores us but is also the one who keeps and guards us. He is able to do that because he is the only human being who never made shipwreck of his faith.

- Christ alone never rejected the voice of his perfect conscience even under the most severe temptation
- The anchor of his good conscience held him fast to his Father's will even under the extreme storm of the cross

When we come to him, he lives in us by his Spirit, and, like a pilot on board a ship, he navigates us through this life by

- applying his word to our conscience so that we begin to cultivate a good conscience
- granting us the gift of faith to trust him

To experience Christ in this way, we are called to live lives of daily repentance. We would do well to follow the example of the Puritans who, at the start of the day, committed it to the Lord, and then in the evening, before committing the night hours to him, confessed sin. As we look back over the day, we ask the Lord where we have failed him. We confess that and we turn from sin, all the while trusting Christ to make us more like himself.

As we do that, we experience the gospel grace that changes and transforms us, enabling us to navigate through life and not make shipwreck of our faith

- Take time to prayerfully consider anything that God has been speaking to you about through this.