

**Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:18-20**

**Sermon: An Exhortation to Timothy, an Exhortation to Us, Fight the Good Fight**

**Theme:** Paul's exhortation to Timothy also applies to us, fight the good fight in the Christian life.

## **Opening:**

I know of a church that had someone start attending and he started to get involved in the life of the church. During this time in the church they didn't have a permanent pastor; they had an interim pastor as they were on the search for a pastor. Eventually the new member, I do believe he became a member, had some questions for the pastor, so the new member wrote a letter to the pastor and asked him questions. They were questions about the virgin birth and questions about certain miracles which are in the Bible. But when the new member received his response, it raised red flags. This certain interim pastor denied the virgin birth of Jesus. This interim pastor denied certain miracles which are in the Bible. How can this be? How can a denomination ordain a pastor like that? He wasn't a young pastor either.

In today's text, Paul comes back to and reiterates the command which he had given Timothy earlier; the command we talked about two weeks ago. Paul reminds Timothy that he must watch out for *false doctrine*; he tells Timothy to *fight-the-good-fight* as a pastor. Let's look at this passage and you will see that we must also *fight-the-good-fight* as followers of Christ, don't let your guard down with *false doctrine*.

## **Let's read 1 Timothy 1:18-20:**

*<sup>18</sup> 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, <sup>19</sup> holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, <sup>20</sup> among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

- I. In verses 18-19 we see Paul give Timothy an exhortation of what he is to do.
  - a. Paul addresses Timothy as "child" or "son."
  - b. Paul is using family language to address the young pastor.

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- c. Recall that Timothy was mentored and most likely led to Christ by Paul. Paul was Timothy's father in the Christian faith.
- d. Now Paul mentions a command or instruction which he is giving to Timothy.
- e. Paul mentions an instruction, but there is no instruction to follow. What instruction is the apostle writing about?
- f. Let me explain this: In verses 3-5 Paul wrote to Timothy with a command.
- g. We talked about that a few weeks ago. Then starting in verses 12-17 Paul digressed. Paul gave an illustration of his own life and God's grace. Now, Paul is coming back to that command.
- h. Now, what was the command? Paul says to command certain men "not to teach *false doctrines* any longer."
- i. Now, Paul is reemphasizing that command.
- j. Paul mentions this command in the light of "the prophecies once made about him."
- k. What prophecies were made about Timothy? We just don't know. They aren't recorded in Scripture.
- l. We do know that: 1 Tim 4:14 says this: *Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.*
- m. So, there was some sort of confirmation that Timothy was called as a pastor and he was called by God to work in the church in Ephesus.
- n. I believe it is critical that Paul brings this up right now. Timothy has to confront some tough issues and it is imperative that he is reminded that the Lord has called him, and this was confirmed by the church.
- o. Now, Paul tells Timothy to *fight-the-good-fight*.
- p. You must know that Paul is using military language.

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- q. It is interesting that sometimes Paul uses sports language, sometimes Paul uses agriculture language and sometimes he uses military language.
- r. MacArthur notes about this: "It is not a battle, it is not a skirmish, it is not a brief fight, it is a long-term continual campaign. So what Paul is saying to Timothy in writing this whole epistle is intended to gear him up to fight a noble warfare, to fight a noble or excellent campaign. He is calling Timothy to the realization that he is in a spiritual battle."
- s. There are other passages where Paul writes about spiritual warfare. It is believed by John MacArthur as well as another serious Bible scholar that when Paul challenges Timothy regarding this, Paul is telling him that there is a spiritual war going on here. This spiritual warfare is making it more difficult for you to be the pastor of the church at Ephesus. The spiritual war is bringing you down and putting false doctrine in.
- t. Now, Paul says *fight-the-good-fight*, using an idea of a battle.
- u. Paul is telling Timothy to fight this spiritual battle.
- v. Paul is telling Timothy to take this spiritual war seriously
- w. How serious is the spiritual war to you?
- x. Paul is telling Timothy that there is a battle going on. There is a real, continual battle. This battle is spiritual; the devil wants to hurt the church and he will do it by bringing in *false doctrine*. 1 Peter 5:7 says, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."
- y. Lastly Paul tells Timothy to hold on to faith and a good conscience.
- z. Paul told Timothy this earlier in verse 5.
  - aa. Faith and a good conscience generally go together.
  - bb. Paul is telling Timothy to hold true to the faith. Don't let *false doctrine* mess you up.

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- cc. Also, Paul is telling Timothy to keep his conscience good.
  - dd. How does he do that?
  - ee. He keeps his conscience good by keeping himself guided by the Scriptures.
- II. In verse 20 we see Paul give an extreme example of some who have not held to the faith
- a. Paul references Hymenaeus and Alexander; these are two that Paul says "shipwrecked" their faith. Further Paul says he delivered them over to satan.
  - b. Wow! That is strong. What does that mean, "deliver over to satan."
  - c. In the Bible the world is called the devil's territory; it is most likely that "deliver over to satan" means that Paul excluded them from the church.
  - d. Now, you may be thinking, "How can this be done? We need to love people?"
  - e. This is exactly true; we do need to love people.
  - f. But sometimes love is tough.
  - g. Sometimes one person teaching *false doctrine* harms so many other people, so the best thing to do is tell them that those teachings aren't compatible with Christianity.
  - h. Sometimes one person living in sin is harming the rest of the body.
  - i. In 1 Cor 5 there is a man having a sexual relationship with his step-mom, so Paul tells the church to deliver him over to satan. This man cannot live in sin without being confronted.
  - j. When there is *false doctrine* taught and condoned, or sin condoned in the church it harms the whole church.
  - k. This is not talking about someone who miss-spoke, these are two people who must have deliberately taught and proclaimed *false doctrine*.

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- III. Now what are you to do with this message? Since *fighting-the-good-fight* has to do with Paul's command to Timothy about *false doctrine*, this will be review from two weeks ago.
- a. The Bible always has something for you and every sermon should as well.
  - b. We all must *fight-the-good-fight*: remember that we are in a spiritual battle. Take this spiritual war seriously. The devil wants to bring down the church. Let me repeat, while stating that differently: the devil wants to bring down this church. The devil is on the prowl.
  - c. You will show that you are *fighting-the-good-fight* by focusing your time in prayer. Pray for the church. Pray doctrine: remember I shared this two weeks ago: pray the Scriptures. Pray for correct understanding of the Scriptures.
  - d. Read the Scriptures: don't let Sunday morning be the only time you are in God's Word
  - e. Read Theology: this is so that you are not caught in *false doctrine*
  - f. Don't permit *False Doctrine*: This must be true in your own life; this must be true in the church. Understand that sometimes the devil tries to work his way in and when that happens, the church must take action. The church, this church, cannot condone sin or the promotion of *false doctrine*.

**Conclusion:**

Now, what do you think the church did? Remember how I opened this sermon talking about a church that had a pastor who didn't believe in the virgin birth, this pastor also didn't believe in many miracles from the Bible. Recall that this man wrote a letter to the pastor asking him questions. The pastor responded to the questions showing that he didn't believe many of the core Christian doctrines. So, this new church member copied that letter and sent it to many, if not all, of the church members. Wow! How did the church respond? They dismissed the new

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church member from membership! Now, I know that this new member didn't go about things in the correct process, but the church ignored the fact that their current pastor didn't believe *true doctrine*.

How does this happen? The devil is on the attack and he is attacking our churches and our church. We must *fight-the-good-fight*; Pray; study the Scriptures; don't permit *false doctrine*.