

A High-Stakes Battle

Family of Faith, 1 Timothy 1:18-20

Introduction

- You & are in a constant battle every day between you, the earth, and gravity. The force of gravity pulls you toward the center of the earth with a force that is equal to your weight. The Earth pushes back with equal force. It feels normal because it's happening all the time. But when you climb the stairs, lift a heavy object, or jump, you have to push extra, and the struggle is more obvious.
- The Bible tells us there's another battle going on all around us – spiritual warfare – the struggle between the forces of light & the forces of darkness. Christians have taken 2 basic approaches towards it through the years.
 - The Offensive Approach sees spiritual warfare as an active, ongoing conflict involving direct confrontation with demonic forces. Proponents believe Christians have been given Christ's authority to proactively bind and cast out evil forces. (Jam. 4:7)
 - The Defensive Approach asserts that a decisive victory over evil has already been won by Christ on the cross. Believers should not chase or fight demons, but rather "stand firm" in their spiritual identity and resist deception. (Eph. 6:11)
- The Apostle Paul seems to lean towards the Defensive Approach to spiritual warfare in his opening charge to his "son in the faith." (Read passage)
 - Timothy was serving as pastor in the relatively young church of Ephesus.
 - He was sent to correct those who were teaching false doctrine.
 - He was sent with the understanding that beliefs are connected to behavior.
 - Sometimes, the way to correct false beliefs is to address poor behavior.
 - Paul addresses 2 groups in these verses: Timothy and false teachers Hymenaeus & Alexander, who have rejected their faith.
- As we study Scripture today, we must see that, like Timothy & the believers in Ephesus, **we are engaged in a spiritual battle, and the stakes are high.**
 - The souls of men & women, young & old, hang in the balance.
 - How do we fight a good fight in the midst of this conflict?
 - *This passage serves as a 4-part battle cry for everyone who is engaging in spiritual warfare.*

Body

- I. Fight with the confidence of one who has been called. (v. 18)**
- A. The "command" mentioned here is the same as the "instruction" in v. 3.
 - B. The challenge is described as a spiritual conflict executed with spiritual resources (Read 2 Cor. 10:4-5)
 - C. Paul encourages Timothy with the prophecies that were made about him.
 - 1. They are mentioned in other places in the PE: 1 Tim. 4:14 & 2 Tim. 1:6

- 2. They are related to Timothy's call to ministry & ordination.
- D. You may not be called to be a pastor, but if you are a believer, you have been called to serve in the church in some way. The Food Service Specialists in our armed forces will probably never fight on the front lines, but they must serve with the same level of purpose as those who do.
- E. You may be sitting in the pew, and you are called to serve as a pastor, or missionary, or some other Christian leader. One of our aims as a church is to help you identify that calling and send you out!

II. Keep an eye on your convictions and your character. (v. 19a)

- A. Paul encourages Timothy with 1 more phrase about him.
 - 1. "Keeping faith" refers to his personal trust & beliefs in JC.
 - 2. "Good conscience" refers to his behavior, which is free from regrets.
- B. The rest of the verse talks about those who've "rejected" their faith.
 - 1. The doctrine of perseverance teaches us that all true believers, saved by God's grace, will be kept by His power until the end. (Rom. 8:28-29)
 - 2. We're all familiar with someone who has made a profession of faith in Christ, but backed away from that commitment with their lifestyle.
- C. The application is not if it's hypothetically possible for someone to renounce their faith; it's are you are renouncing your faith! That's the battlefield!

III. Understand the consequences of defeat. (v. 19b)

- A. Paul connects the army metaphor to a navy metaphor w/ a "shipwreck."
 - 1. A wrecked ship is costly & humiliating for any navy.
 - 2. This is how Paul describes the fall of Hymenaeus & Alexander.
- B. The stakes are high! When someone embraces false teaching or embraces an unbiblical lifestyle, it says a lot about what they really believe.

IV. Show concern for your fellow soldiers. (v. 20)

- A. "Handed over to Satan" is a reference to redemptive church discipline.
 - 1. The world is enemy territory, outside the boundaries of the church.
 - 2. They are put out to learn a lesson about mocking the cause of Christ.
- B. Church discipline is misunderstood in our culture today.
 - 1. It's based on the principle that beliefs & behavior matter. (Membership!)
 - 2. It's based on another principle that addressing issues is more loving than just letting them go.
- C. We don't fight alone; we are part of a unit in the local church. We show that care by applying the truth of the gospel to one another & dismissing those who don't share our loyalty to the Lord.

Conclusion

- You thought today was ordinary, but you're wrong. **We are engaged in a spiritual battle.** The **stakes are high**, and we must all fight the good fight.
- The marching orders are so clear: everyone has a job to do today.
 - Do you need to pursue a call to ministry with confidence?
 - Do you need to bring your character in line with your convictions?
 - Do you need to show concern for a believer who is struggling?
 - At the very least, we can all invite someone to church.
 - According to our research, there are 42,000 unsaved & unchurched people who live within 3 miles of our campus.
 - Many of whom used to walk with the Lord and used to go to church before their faith ran aground and their ship was wrecked.
 - Every single one of us can search the wreckage for survivors and bring them with us next Sunday.