

Shepherds & Servants 3

Hold To The Faith

1 Timothy 1:18-20

Memory Verses: 1 Timothy 1:19

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

I want you to think about your faith this morning. What is your faith in? What does your faith do? Who has your faith made you become? If your faith is in the power of Christ who has overcome all temptations and holds the power of life in the palm of his hands, you are redeemed, and can indeed overcome any trials or temptations you may face. Unfortunately, many do not have a faith in Christ which transforms them and empowers them. Many place their faith in their own strength and ability. Many place their faith in the pleasures of this world to power their few temporary moments of elation. Many place their faith in money. Those with the Gold make the rules. And many place their faith in false gods or false gospels. This morning our hope is two-fold. That if you haven't, you would place your faith in the only true hope of the world, Jesus Christ. And then secondly, that those of you who have placed your faith in Christ, would hold strongly to your faith as if your life depended on it. Especially, those called to be Shepherds and Servants in the church.

Two weeks ago we began a series in the book of 1 Timothy called Shepherds & Servants. The purpose of this letter is to draw the church at Ephesus back to sound doctrine and church order. In order to have sound doctrine and church order, the church must have spiritual shepherds called elders, and sacrificial servants called deacons. As we've previously seen, true elders and deacons will protect the Gospel and have a healthy understanding and praise for the mercy they've been shown by Christ.

Today we must add another element to the list. Shepherds and servants must, against the pull of a hedonistic society and the forces of hell, hold to the faith. Look with me at today's passage in **1 Timothy 1:18-20**. The multitudes that once claimed a faith in our Lord is dwindling every day. Every day we see more and more who once espoused a true love for Jesus, now deconstruct their faith and adopt the spirit of the antichrist. And they are not content to simply vanish into the shadows. They also want you to abandon your faith as well. In fact, everything in this world is combining forces for this one purpose; to pull you free from your grip on Christ. If Satan and those under his influence can pry your hands from your faith they can, at least keep you from being an effective disciple of Christ, and at worst drag you to the depths of hell. **Today our plea is simple; hold on to the faith. Against the evidences of evolutionistic**

atheism, hold to the faith. Against the sexual freedoms of hedonistic paganism, hold to the faith. Against the false gospels of new orthodox liberalism, hold to the faith. Against the pull of sinful materialism, hold to the faith. The point this morning is this; If you don't intentionally and consistently hold to your faith, the world won't need to pull it from your fingers. By loosening your grip little by little, one day it will simply fall from your hand.

Those who hold to the faith do so by fighting for it everyday!

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see today is that... **You Will Hold To The Faith When You Remember What You've Been Redeemed For**. Look again at **verse 18**. Paul, the lead elder over the church of Ephesus, commissions another elder at the church of Ephesus, Timothy, to hold to his faith. The first focus that Paul encourages Timothy with is a recollection of his calling. He tells him to remember the prophecies that were revealed to Him. Though we don't know precisely what these prophecies were, we can be assured that some of them were the same promises made to each of us. The word "prophecy" can refer to the revealed word of God. In the word of God calls each of us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ. To live with the fruit of the spirit as light in a dark and fruitless world. And the word of God promises us time and time again that we will be successful in our calling because God is with us and His Holy Spirit empowers us. Most assuredly, Timothy was specifically called to be a disciple of Paul, and an Elder of the church at Ephesus. He was called to evangelize the lost, disciple the saved, and shepherd the church to follow the Great Shepherd, Jesus.

I can personally speak to such a calling. Almost 7 years ago I was specifically called by God to be an Elder / Pastor at Third Avenue Congregational Christian Church. Against all my fleshly warnings, the Spirit of God dragged me kicking and screaming. Through the worst period of ministry a Pastor can endure, I stayed. The whole time I stayed because I knew that God had called me here and had not released me. I claimed his promises and kept to my duty. I held to the faith simply because I knew I had a calling that I had been redeemed for. And after the storm settled, it is clear that God was faithful. **When you cling to your calling regardless of the trials you face, your faith in God will increase exponentially.**

If your faith is dwindling. If the world is pulling at you to let go. If sin is beckoning you to rebel against God. Ask yourself this. What has God done for you on the cross? Why were you redeemed from your sin and the penalty of death? What were you called to in this life? What commitments have you made? What covenants have you declared? You have a purpose, you have a charge, you have a duty. Remember your calling for which you've been saved and lean into it! **Those who hold to the faith do so by fighting for it everyday.**

Secondly, we need to see that... **You Will Hold To The Faith When You Make War Against Worldliness**. At the end of **verse 18** we see the second thing Paul encourages Timothy with in order to hold to his faith. He tells him to go to war. The ESV says wage the good warfare. The NASB says fight the good fight! I like them both. As Christians we have to be aware that we are not called to take it easy in this life. Yes, there will be times of rest, but for the most part every single day we are called to wage war against the devil and the spirit of the age. **Christians, in the kindest terms possible, you have to quit living as though you are on a cruise ship vacation. On a cruise ship you are worried about yourself and your comfort. On a warship you are worried about the mission and those in harms way. On a cruise ship you are looking to be entertained and relax. On a warship you are training for war and looking to fight. We are called to war and its time to board the aircraft carrier to battle! The greatest trick of the devil is to lure you to sleep with luxury and easy living. If he can offer you enough pleasure to keep you from fighting he has already won. More entertainment means less war. More comfort means less war. More safety means less war. More casual pleasantries means less war. Satan will keep you numbed to the reality of spiritual warfare with all kinds of pleasures in order to keep you from fighting against him. If we keep living in a vacation mindset, seeking the comforts of the world above all else, the enemy will literally comfort you to death.**

But this world will not only try to comfort you to death, it will also try to lure you off the path. If satan can get you to go down the wrong road away from the battle you will be too lost to fight. You can't make war if you can't find the battlefield. So what road might they lead you down? Liberalism. The false prophets of this culture want you to chase prosperity and liberal ideals so that you don't take the word of God seriously. Atheism. The atheists want to convince you that God is dead and that there is no power greater than ourselves. Politics. The political elite want to divide you from everyone and leave you marginalized fighting the wrong fights. Casual Christianity. The socially religious want to convince you that you don't really have to live too hard for Christ. Church is fine but don't be a Jesus Freak. Listen up church; it's the Jesus Freaks like Paul, Peter, John The Baptist, Hudson Taylor, George Mueller, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Billy Graham who will win the war while you keep pretending to play church!

The only way we can hold on to our faith in the midst of this war is to strap on the armor of God, stand resolutely on the rock of Christ, fall on our knees in prayer, and keep the sword of the spirit clinched in our fists! Stay strapped or get clapped! Look at **Ephesians 6:13-18**. Look also at **2 Corinthians 10:4-5**. And then we with transformed minds and souls filled with the Holy Spirit, we destroy every lofty thing raised up against the

knowledge of God and we take every false thought captive in obedience to Christ! We put any inclination or idea that may steer our hearts from Christ in spiritual jail; on death row; and then we kill it! **In this spiritual war we don't take prisoners! It's life and death, all or nothing! Don't let your demons live! Those who hold to the faith do so by fighting for it everyday.**

The third thing we need to see is that... **You Will Hold To The Faith When You Fight The Flesh**. Look at **verse 19** again. Keep a good conscience. The third thing that Paul encourages Timothy to do is to fight the flesh. We war against outside forces and we fight inside temptation. Don't think you can win this war if you just focus on the enemy at the gate. The enemy is right here in our hearts! Though we may be saved, we are still in the flesh and until we are glorified as Christ is, we will continue to be tempted by it on a daily basis. You can't escape the temptation of your flesh and the lust of your heart, but you can deny it! That's where the real fight is. Deny yourself!

How do we deny ourselves? Paul tells us. Keep a good conscience. Meaning, stay pure, stay righteous. **Don't corrupt your worship with sinful garbage. How can you have a good conscience when you are sleeping with your boyfriend or cheating on your spouse by looking at pornography? How can you have a good conscience when you are stealing from your boss or your employees? How can you have a good conscience as a believer in Christ when you are covering up your other sins with all kinds of lies? How can you have a good conscience when you are talking about your brothers or sisters behind their backs, slandering their names? How can you have a good conscience when you are partying and getting wasted on the weekends knowing full well that that isn't the life God has for you? How can you have a good conscience when you are neglecting your commitment to the body of Christ on Sunday's for trivial excuses? YOU CAN'T! Stop trying to fool others and fool yourself. If you are Christian you can't have a good conscience when you are living in sin!** Stop entertaining the enemy! Fight it! When is the last time you fought against your sinful inclinations? When is the last time you stood toe to toe with temptation and said heck no, not this time! This time I stand my ground and I'm not backing down! Look at **Galatians 5:16-21**. You must fight your flesh. Kill your flesh or it will kill you! Look at **Romans 8:13** and **1 Corinthians 10:13**. You will be tempted with sin at every turn. So what do you do? Get out! There is a way out but you must fight your way out! Nothing will lead you astray from your faith; nothing will cause you to lose your grip on Christ faster than falling victim to sin. **Those who hold to the faith do so by fighting for it everyday.**

And the last thing we need to see is that... **You Will Hold To The Faith When You Are Conscious of The Consequences**. Lastly, lets look again

at **verses 19-20** one more time. The last thing that Paul exhorts Timothy in is the fact that those who stop holding onto their faith end up shipwrecking their faith and blaspheming God. **How does this happen to those who once claimed a faith in Christ? It is a process of rejection. In fact, underline that word in your Bible... rejection. First they reject their call to ministry. They stop sharing the gospel. They stop discipling. They stop going to small group. They stop caring about their neighbors. They stop helping the needy. Secondly they reject the duty to wage war against the world. They start listening to those who would tickle their ears. They start listening to new age podcasts. They start watching preachers and stop reading their Bibles. They stop praying. They stop taking a stand for the word of God. Thirdly they reject the charge to fight the flesh and sin. They give in to one temptation, then two, then they are out of church, then they are out of fellowship with any Christians. Before they know it they are living worse than they were before they ever knew Christ.**

And when they shipwreck their faith there is a consequence. When professing believers shipwreck their faith there must be a punishment to draw them back to Christ. When I punish my kids, its not to be vindictive or get even, its because I want them to learn from their mistakes and change course. When Jesus commands Shepherds in the church to pronounce Church Discipline upon someone it is for the same reasons. Church Discipline is always for the purpose of Church restoration. When someone shipwrecks their faith, it is our job to bring the ship into the shipyard, break of the old beams, cut out the holes, wash off the mold, and repair what can be repaired. In this case Paul says he had to hand these men over to Satan. That sounds pretty harsh but it is a way of saying that they are putting them outside of Christian fellowship inside the Church so that they will in return yearn for Christ again. Just look at **Matthew 18:15-17** and **1 Corinthians 5:1-5**. Notice that it says for the destruction of the flesh. The point is this; either your desire for the church and the spirit of Christ will be so strong that you will re-engage in your faith, or you will die outside of the church, no longer able to do any more damage to it, only yourself. Regardless the point is simple. If you call yourself a believer yet shipwreck your faith and bring disgrace to our Lord, you must repent or be put out of the fellowship. If you don't like this, don't shipwreck your faith! It's that simple. **Those who hold to the faith do so by fighting for it everyday.**

Application

I think that application has been made this morning loud and clear. Your faith is important. In fact it is the most important thing in your life. It gives you purpose and hope. It gives you meaning and a reason to live. It gives you the promise of a future, and it shields you from the

darkness of the enemy. So hold fast to it! Fight for it everyday! Cling to it with all your might. Know your calling and live accordingly. Wage war against the world and its comforts and lies. Fight the Flesh and kill your sin everyday. And keep the consequences of shipwrecking your faith in mind. If you do these things you will hold to the faith!

Conclusion

One last thing I must add as we close. I would be amiss if I didn't at least mention the fact that though we must hold to our faith, it is in fact Jesus who is holding onto us. We in our own strength could never hold to our faith outside of his grace. So, yes, determine to hold to your faith. But most of all, pray to Christ to hold on to you! David Platt says this, "Picture yourself on a dangerous journey, having guards around you to ensure you make it safely to the destination. Here you are on this long rope and the Bible says you have a guard to make sure you make it there. In other words, on that day, when you see His face and receive your inheritance, maybe then you'll think, "I held on." Then on that day, you will realize, "Wait, God was actually holding on to me." That's the promise. By His supernatural power, supernatural grace, supernatural strength, supernatural joy, God promises to hold on to you. So in the middle of trials and temptations to lose faith— small and big alike—brothers and sisters, look back, look forward and look up to the God Whose power promises to provide you everything you need. In this, have faith, continue in hope and trust in Him."