

Warriors and Warfare
Paul's Past and the Pattern of Gospel Faith

Introduction: Priming the pump for tonight's discussion.

- Let's begin with our own observations. Was there a moment where God spoke to you, showed you something new, or reminded you of a familiar truth through the message this week?

Exploration: Questions to guide our group discussion.

- This week we learned that Paul had a spiritual pedigree steeped in legalism. He was a Benjamite, a Pharisee, a flawless lawkeeper, and a persecutor of the church. No one could have been deeper in legalism than Paul before he met the Lord. Paul writes that his life was a pattern of moving from the dead works of legalism to a wonderful rest in the mercy, grace, and love of Christ. How does this pattern speak to our need to rest in grace, and how does it combat the temptation to take up rule keeping as a means of obtaining righteousness?
- Paul had been a blasphemer and a persecutor, yet God counted him faithful to be a servant of God and to enter into the work of the ministry. Paul's radical encounter with Jesus on the Road to Damascus changed him in a real way. What does this teach us about our troubled pasts? People may be tempted to think that they can't serve God because of their past. How does this passage inform that idea?
- Timothy was charged with the calling to fight for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. As the Bishop at Ephesus, this included confronting false doctrines and calling out false teachers in their midst. Paul notes that this calling was a form of warfare on a spiritual level. Two enemies of the gospel were named, Alexander and Hymenaeus who opposed Paul and taught false doctrines. It's possible that they had once been church members, but were put out of the church as false teachers. What does this teach us about the seriousness of Paul and Timothy in preserving the gospel doctrines at Ephesus, and what implications are there for us today?

Additional Scriptures for Deeper Study:

- Ephesians 6:10-18
- Matthew 4:1-22
- Acts 19:13-16
- Romans 12:1-2

Application: How can I apply this to my life this week?

- Paul wrote that all of the self righteous things that he had trusted in before were tossed away like rubbish when he met Jesus. Is there anything in your heart that reeks of false righteousness that needs to be tossed in the garbage?
- It is vital that we embrace the grace of God as the means of our righteousness, while avoiding the pitfalls of legalistic self-righteous religion. Are you confident that you are fully resting in His grace, and putting no confidence in the flesh?