

**Title: A Mature Church Wages the Good Warfare**

**Text: 1 Timothy 1:18–20**

**My uncle Bill Tierman fought in the Korean War** (June 25, 1950-July 27, 1953).

It was meaningful to me to visit Washington D.C. and see the war memorial to the Korean conflict.

Sometime we think about war and we get pretty fired up and our nationalism kicks in and we celebrate how good we are, as a country when it comes to war.

**But war is messy and hard. My Uncle Bill was a mine sweep.**

That meant he would go ahead of the troops and make sure all the mines buried in the ground were disposed of so there would be no destructive explosions.

I never heard much from him about his role.

My mom said he saw a lot of ugly things in the war and never wanted to talk about them.

So, war is necessary, but not necessarily good.

But there is a good warfare that we need to talk about this morning.

Warfare against false teaching. Warfare for the faith. Warfare for a good conscience.

Absolutely, when it comes to living lives that are holy, righteous, pure and pleasing to God.

There are two ways Paul answers the question, Can Warfare Be Good? And the first is...

**1. Yes - By Holding to the Faith and a Good Conscience (vs. 18-19)**

**1 Timothy 1:18–19** (ESV)

*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, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith,*

This charge refers to the charge Paul gave Timothy at the beginning of this chapter.

**1 Timothy 1:3–4** (ESV)

*As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.*

So think of this repetitive statement as a bookend.

Paul is reiterating what Timothy's responsibility is while pastoring at the church of Ephesus.

What is that responsibility? To ensure proper doctrine is taught and that false teachers are to be silenced.

Paul says He is “*entrusting*” this project to Timothy. Paul believes that Timothy can handle this difficult task.

After all, Timothy is Paul’s child in the faith.

In other words, Paul led Timothy to faith in Jesus, the Messiah.

He most likely came to faith when he heard and responded to the gospel when Paul came through Derbe and Lystra on his first missionary journey.

**Acts 16:1–3 (ESV)**

*Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.*

Luke goes on to say how valuable Timothy was to Paul...

But what does Paul mean about “*the prophecies previously made about you...*”?

There were obviously supernatural, God ordained prophecies about Timothy regarding his call to the pastoral ministry.

**The ESV Study Bible (Chapter 1)**

*God had spoken clearly through others to set Timothy aside for his ministry (see note on 1 Cor. 12:10). This assurance of a specific divine calling is to strengthen Timothy for the work.*

I believe that this special prophetic work by God was a manifestation of the Spirit’s work back in Paul’s day.

I don’t believe God calls people to the ministry through a prophetic vision today.

However, there is a good process that people should go through for pastoral ministry.

A man is called to pastoral ministry - and admittedly this calling is a bit subjective.

My Pastor told me that “*If you can do anything else, do it.*” That is good advice.

But the calling must be validated by other people and ultimately the church...

The bottom line here is that Timothy was undoubtedly called by God to be a pastor. Others verified this calling.

**1 Timothy 4:14 (ESV)**

*Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.*

Why does Paul remind Timothy of this calling?

Because, Timothy was a pretty humble guy who struggled with timidity. Paul knew what Timothy was facing would require courage, strength, and boldness.

Calling out false teachers is a pretty scary prospect that calls for bravery.

Timothy needed to remember something very important - God called him to the ministry!

And

*If God calls you to it, God will get you through it.*

So Timothy needed to do the hard work of confronting false teachers.

Friends, we are not merely spectators in this world but soldiers in a daily war—a war that demands our unwavering commitment to the truth of Scripture. This battle compels us to hold fast to the **Faith** that redeems us and the **clear conscience** that sanctifies us.

**What is faith?** For the believer, faith is everything. It is our ticket to salvation and eternal life.

**What is a clear conscience?** For the believer - the process of growing more and more holy...

We are at war with our own sinful nature, with a world that scoffs at our belief in Jesus, and with the Evil one who seeks our downfall. We cannot afford to be complacent, for these adversaries are relentless in their pursuit of our destruction. We must remain ever watchful, lest they overcome us.

What tools do we possess to wage this battle?

We are equipped with the Word of God, a powerful sword wielded by the Spirit, which illuminates the path of righteousness.

We are fortified by the Spirit of God, who empowers us to reject sin and embrace truth.

And we are supported by the people of God, a community that inspires us to live in a manner that honors our Lord. With these formidable resources, we are more than conquerors in this spiritual warfare.

So, is war a good thing for the Christian? When it is waged against the world, the flesh, and the Devil – Absolutely!

The Christian life is a warfare. Peter warns us to be ever watchful...

**1 Peter 5:8 (ESV)**

*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

And remember, he is just one of the three adversaries you face.

I made this argument last week. But you need to hear it again.

You may not be called to full-time pastoral ministry like Timothy, or me for that matter.

But you are called to the ministry of your circle of influence.

You have your circle of influence and I have My Circle.

And we are responsible to minister to them whether it be evangelism or discipleship. We need to influence our circles for Christ.

But what reality do we face when it comes to ministering to our circles of influence?

We run into the reality that those in our circles, those in our church will reject the truth of the bible.

That's what Paul clearly says...

[1 Timothy 1:19 \(ESV\)](#)

*holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith,*

The Lord refers to this phenomenon in [Matthew 13:1-9](#) and 18-23. Let's take a look...

[Matthew 13:1-9 \(ESV\)](#)

*That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."*

[Matthew 13:18-23 \(ESV\)](#)

*"Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and*

understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

So, which one of these soils represent the genuine follower of Christ? The one who produces fruit!

Here's the point, you either have faith or you do not. You don't lose Your faith.

You can certainly, as a Christian, mess up your life by following sinful patterns, but if you are His, He will bring you back. That's the promise of [Hebrews 12:10-11](#)

[Hebrews 12:10-11](#) (ESV)

*For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

So you are either in or your out. You can't lose your faith!

And this is the point of Paul's challenge to Timothy. As the pastor of Ephesus, It was his job and the job of the fellow elders to make sure the church of Jesus Christ would HOLD to the FAITH and a GOOD CONSCIENCE! They had to protect the congregation from aberrant teachings. And stand strong in the Faith.

This is a daily warfare to ensure her purity!

And remember, preservation of our faith and a good conscience is only possible through the grace of God.

*The best of us are but poor wretches just saved from shipwreck. - George Eliot*

Our dependance is upon God, but we must be active participants.

There are a couple points of application here.

First and foremost to the Shepherd/Elders of ABC.

You and I have a HIGH and HOLY calling.

We must walk in humility and grace, but we must be ever vigilant that first we and the this congregation are HOLDING TO THE FAITH and A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

How? Walk with God.

**Elder** - are you spending significant time in God's Word, mastering the truths you discover?

Are you HOLDING to your FAITH? The FAITH (the tenants of biblical Christianity)?

How much time do you give to the disciplines that enhance your walk with Christ?

How well are you doing rolling up your sleeves and getting into the messiness of ministry with the people God has entrusted to you.

**Hebrews 13:17 (ESV)**

*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

**Congregation** - Are you making the Elder's job easy or are you causing us to groan under the agony of your sinful choices.

Please understand, your sin causes godly elders to weep, stay awake at night, and carry your burden.

Please, Christian, walk in a way that is pleasing to Christ. Please HOLD to the Faith and have a GOOD conscience that has not been seared by the deceitfulness of sin.

**Review** - Can Warfare Be Good?

Yes - By holding to the faith and a good conscience.

**2. Yes - Because Rejecting These, Causes Irreparable Damage (vs. 20)**

**1 Timothy 1:20 (ESV)**

*among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

Not everyone holds to the faith. Not everyone we minister to holds to a clear conscience.

Jesus said some very poignant Words during His incarnation. Listen to what He says about eternal life...

**Matthew 7:13 (ESV)**

*"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.*

By the way, who is the narrow gate?

**John 10:7 (NIV84)**

*Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.*

What does this mean? Jesus is the only way to the pastureland of eternal life. Not many people find this gate. And only His sheep enter through Him.

Some people try to get into this pastureland by other means, but it doesn't work.

**John 10:1 (ESV)**

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.”*

There are two men that Paul mentions by name that are thieves and robbers.

They are Hymenaeus and Alexander.

Hymenaeus was a false teacher that was mentioned in [2 Tim 2:17](#)

[2 Timothy 2:16–19](#) (ESV)

*But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”*

And Alexander - Perhaps the same Alexander mentioned in...

[2 Timothy 4:14](#) (ESV)

*Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.*

Hymenaeus and Alexander, according to this text, were handed over to Satan.

This statement should be understood within the framework of the final stage of church discipline we see laid out in [Matthew 18](#).

[Matthew 18:15–17](#) (ESV)

*“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”*

Jesus, before the church was even born (happens at Pentecost), gives this teaching on how to handle it when a brother or sister in the church is to handle the situation and all involved.

What I want you to notice is the last stage of the process - especially when dealing with a disgruntled fellow Christian. And this happens - a lot.

Why?

Because we are still sinful people who often default to our selfish desires.

The point I’d like you to see is how the unrepentant person is treated at the end. He or she is set outside, not of the church building, but of church membership.

How are they to be treated? As a gentile or a tax collector - in other words, we treat them as if they need Christ.

They are no longer considered possessing believers in Christ. They may be. They may not be. Their unrepentant life demonstrates that we can no longer trust their profession of faith.

This is what Paul means by handing them over to Satan that they may be taught how to not blaspheme.

This refers to excommunication from the congregation.

What is a congregation? A congregation is a group of believers who have committed themselves to one another through their relationship with Jesus Christ.

A congregation or church (ekklesia = called out ones) is made up of whom? Christians. People who are born again. They are committed followers of Christ.

Can the true church have unregenerate or unsaved people in it? No.

How do we know who are believers and who are not believers?

By joining membership. Through the process of membership we get to “police” or “verify” who are believers and who are not.

It is the official process of a structured church organization to allow only sheep (born-again christians) to be an official part.

This is not to say non members or regular attenders are unsaved. Not at all.

But the membership officially vets and professes the salvation of those who join her membership.

Why am I bringing this up with Hymenaeus and Alexander?

Because these professing Christians who were members of the Church of Ephesus, were now teaching false doctrine.

And just as they were officially brought into the membership based on their profession of faith, now, as they no longer profess the faith, they must be removed from the roles in the gospel.

This action keeps a pure and holy membership in the local church.

Paul says He has handed these men over to Satan so they would learn not to blaspheme (preach a false gospel).

This is what turning people out from the pure Church of Christ is to do - it is to teach them or lead them into truth while simultaneously protecting the flock of Christ.

Their “faith” may be shipwrecked, but there is always hope for restoration if they respond to the truth of the word of God.

Church discipline is not just about excommunication from the church but hopeful restoration to the church!



And this is Paul's point here. He sent Timothy to remove false teaching and false teachers. He sent Timothy to make sure the church of Christ in Ephesus remains theologically pure!

Were Alexander and Hymenaeus Christians? They had professed Christianity, but we don't know from the text.

What we do know is one cannot lose their salvation. So, they were either walking in significant disobedience, or they were never Christians to begin with.

In either case, true and genuine repentance is necessary to move forward.

What does this have to do with the second point?

Very simply when the church disregards or rejects the Faith and a Clear Conscience, it will cause irreparable damage not just to the individual believer, but to the church of Jesus Christ.

Not holding to the faith and a clear conscience that comes from faith in Christ will DESTROY any local church.

We must hold to these two basics of the faith and not reject them.

*Our Connection Group and the discussion after it with the GVSU students. I was shocked and delighted on how these wonderful students wanted to stay late and talk about deeper truths of the Scriptures.*

*At one point, I apologized and said, "I'm probably boring you to death." And they said, "No way! We could go all night talking about this stuff."*

*Wow! Do you know what that tells me? Young people are not hungry for fluff and frivolity. Young people are hungry for God's truth!*

*Young Christians want to be disciplined in God's Word and they want to hold fast to the Faith and a good conscience!*

So, what kind of a church should we be?

A church that wages war against false teaching by unashamedly, intentionally, and powerfully preaching and teaching the truth and doing so rooted in love and compassion - not arrogance and self righteousness.

The culture is putting tremendous pressure on us to bend to their whims. While we must do everything we can to be a blessing to the culture, we must never make it our purpose to be like the culture.

**Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)**

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

So what does this have to do with warfare. Well, we are to fight the good fight of faith and this is what it looks like for the believer in Christ.

Each day you and I are inundated with battles. Battles that originate from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The **World** says that Biblical Christianity is crazy and anyone following what the Bible says is out of touch, archaic, and plain foolish. Paul confirms this notion in...

**1 Corinthians 1:18 (ESV)**

*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

Our **Flesh** (sinful nature) refuses to submit to God and His way.

There is a constant battle that we wage against our flesh.

For the unbeliever there is no battle because they are already surrendered to the enemy.

But for the believer, we now have the Spirit of God living within us and because of this there is a constant tension that we have between the sinful flesh and the Holy Spirit.

What is a believer to do in light of this? Paul gives very specific instructions on how to overcome the desires of the flesh...

**Galatians 5:16–25 (ESV)**

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*

There is one more that we battle against and that is our ancient foe, **Satan**.

Ladies and gentlemen, the evil one is no one to be trifled with.

His greatest delight is your destruction and he will use whatever means at his disposal to accomplish this.

Peter warns the Christian about the Devil in...

**1 Peter 5:8 (ESV)**

*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

What are we to do? Don't give him a foothold.

Remember Jesus has won and you have God in you!

[1 John 4:4 \(ESV\)](#)

*Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

One more thing...

[James 4:7 \(ESV\)](#)

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

Christian, you have a daily choice to make. You have a battle that needs to be fought. You cannot be passive about this.

Paul was anything but passive when it came to walking in a manner worthy of his calling.

[1 Corinthians 9:27 \(NIV84\)](#)

*No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

You must, like Joshua, make a choice. [Joshua 24 15](#)

[Joshua 24:15 \(ESV\)](#)

*And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

So today

Will you choose to serve the Lord or align yourself with the author of chaos, the father of all lies, the **DEVIL** himself, Satan?

Will you choose to serve the Lord or be ashamed of His Gospel to the **WORLD**?

Will you choose to serve the Lord or give into the desires of your **FLESH**?

And do you understand that the false teaching Timothy was to eradicate was and still is rooted in the World, the Flesh and the Devil? It most certainly is.

Listen friends, we must go to war every day. Our enemies are powerful and if we are naive, they will cause great damage against us and the cause of Christ.

If you are not careful you can make a "shipwreck" of your faith.

**Review** - Can Warfare Be Good?

Yes - By Holding to The Faith and a Good Conscience

Yes - Because Rejecting These, Causes Irreparable Damage

**Conclusion**

We grieve at the concept of war. We never want to see people battle to the death.

But when it comes to our faith? We must wage war each and everyday of our lives.

Frankly, the thought of daily warfare is unrelenting and exhausting.

But we are called by Paul to hold to our Faith and a good conscience.

How?

Well, we are three powerful tools at our disposal.

We have the Word of God - master it!

We have the Spirit of God - harness him!

We have the People of God - be encouraged by them!

With these weapons at the ready, you will walk with the Lord and profoundly impact your circle for Christ.

And if you do these things, **false teaching** in the Church of Jesus Christ won't stand a chance.