

**Wage the Good Warfare**  
1 Timothy 1:18-20

**Introduction**

- A. Imagine you are in a conversation with a person who is exploring Christianity. They would naturally have questions about the Christian life. How would you describe the Christian life?
1. There are, no doubt, numerous vistas we might survey. It would be very appropriate to mention joy, peace, love, faith and the family of God (adoption) as well as many other blessings.
  2. But, if we do not mention warfare we have not served them very well. The Christian is involved in a spiritual fight. We know this is true because the Bible tells us so. A sample:

Acts 14:19-22 (ESV) But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Matthew 7:13-14 (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. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Ephesians 6:10-13 (ESV) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

- B. The fight we are in will take many forms. Our enemies (the gospel's enemies) are the devil (real), the world (any system opposed to God), and the flesh (our old nature).
1. In our text Timothy is commanded by Paul to **Wage the Good Warfare** (my title). Timothy is given a specific charge to confront false teachers (likely by teaching).
  2. The letter will be read to the entire church in Ephesus because the entire church is involved in this spiritual battle (battles do not only affect leaders).
  3. While this particular battle may not be a part of our spiritual fight the battle is always on.

Prop: Because the gospel has enemies we must understand how to wage the good warfare.

- C. How we wage warfare in 3 points: the commands, the weapons, and the danger.

**I. We wage the good warfare by obeying the commands of God.**

- A. Isn't it obvious that disobedience is a loss? Paul is writing to his spiritual son Timothy but this letter is also the inspired Word of God (authoritative).
1. This is quite simple but if we neglect the instructions of the apostles of Jesus Christ we will surely lose the fight. In our modern arrogance we may think we know better.

- So we see once-vibrant churches closing down. They became relevant (contemporary) and time moved on (this disco used to be a cute cathedral).
  - 2. We do not have a substitute for sound doctrine. True, we are not in favor of dead orthodoxy, but lively heresy is worse if anything.
    - Encourage you to read *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem (57 chapters). In my early days I avoided doctrine. The importance of “gospel links.” Preaching matters.
  - 3. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been entrusted to every generation. We have a received a charge to be faithful. We have a charge to spread the gospel.
- B. Those who wage the good warfare are soldiers and we have a general (King Jesus) whom we follow. Every believer is involved in this warfare (which is spiritual not physical).
- 1. So as teaching reaches us we must use discernment. Is it true? As we wage the good warfare we dare not be surprised when conflict comes our way (especially with false teachers).
  - 2. False teachers will either teach a works-righteousness or license (speculations). The problem is that the cross is no longer in sight. Thus:

Where there is grace there will be conflict. J.C. Ryle in *Holiness*, p. 54

Ex: Jim Eliot (martyred at the age of 29 in Ecuador) signed his favorite verse when asked for an autograph.

2 Timothy 2:1-4 (ESV) No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

- 3. We are the soldier, not the general. We follow, Jesus leads.
- C. God gives grace to encourage us in the fight. One such means of grace is prophesy. Paul reminds timid Timothy of the prophecies he received in the past.
- 1. We don't know what the prophecies said (must have encouraged which is the purpose).

1 Corinthians 14:1-4 (ESV) Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

Ex: The benefit of prophecy in my life (you are a shepherd and Mar 31, 2007 - land ho! - and on June 12, 2007 (after 5 years of searching - land. Pursue this gift.

## II. The weapons of our warfare are two-fold.

- A. The first weapon is faith. Faith clings to Christ and Christ alone. Faith fixes a single eye on Jesus and gazes at Him. Faith never wavers.
- 1. You may notice, if you are familiar with 1 Timothy, that Paul is repeating the basic idea he communicated in verses 3-5 (repetition serves). Holding faith!
- Ex: Abraham believed “and no distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God.” We fix our eyes on Jesus and believe His precious promises by faith.

When a man receives the Gospel, his entire life begins to be lived out in a different context, and that context is Christ. Paul Washer tweet dated 28 Oct 2011

2. When we walk by faith in Jesus Christ we are not enslaved by our circumstances. We look to the promises in Scripture.

2 Corinthians 5:6-7 (ESV) So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.

Ex: Faith does not call us to flap our arms and fly. Faith calls us to fix our eyes on Jesus and follow Him. In following we become Christlike.

B. The second weapon is a good conscience.

1. Our conscience is a gift from God. Our conscience is not infallible but it speaks to us as we live the Christian life.

Ex: Let's say you're tempted to steal something (Giant gift card). Your conscience is sitting on your shoulder saying don't do it. If we go there our conscience hardens.

2. Obedience to the Word of God, springing from faith, serves to sharpen our conscience. Disobedience dulls the conscience. Conscience matters because our conscience speaks to us.

Ex: The Bible speaks of a conscience as good, weak (gray areas) or hard (seared). If we disregard the voice of our conscience our faith will not long survive.

3. Where faith and conscience are rejected one often finds a disaster (a shipwreck).

Ex: When Eve was tempted by he devil: did God really say ... ?

### III. The danger of rejecting faith and a good conscience is shipwreck.

A. The danger of shipwreck is real for the Christian.

1. Shipwrecks are less common in our time because navigation systems are advanced.

Ex: The Outer Banks of North Carolina are called the graveyard of the Atlantic. Ships going north-south would cut in as close as they believed to be safe (lives lost).

2. When we hold to false teaching a shipwreck is sure to follow because sound doctrine leads us to godly living for the glory of God.

B. The sad truth is that the love of many a Christian for God languishes because they do not know God. The eyes of their heart are drawn to people, possessions and personal acclaim.

What you know and believe about God is everything, because what you know and believe will determine how you live. Doctrine determines conduct. Right doctrine makes it possible to "fight the good fight." Kent Hughes in *PTW 1 Timothy Commentary*, p. 52

1. When believers, even leaders, stray and are unrepentant, the process eventually leads to what we call church discipline. We seek to rescue.

2. To hand over to Satan is meant to be redemptive (fellowship is withdrawn). We probably don't know Alexander but Hymenaeus (see 2 Tim 2:17) taught the resurrection already happened.

- They blaspheme in that they speak falsehoods about God.
- 3. Sin only has a few colors. It isn't complicated. False doctrine will lead to sinful behavior and we aim to rescue folks who are sinking (though often they will resist rescue).
- C. Thus we find ourselves in a fight and we wage the good warfare for the glory of God.

### **Close**

- A. In order to wage the good warfare there are a few necessities.
  - 1. We need to have commitment to King Jesus. I have decided to follow Him. The going can get really rough. Our eyes are fixed on Jesus and we respond as Christ would respond.
  - 2. We need grace because grace is strength. God gives grace to the humble.
  - 3. We need perseverance because the fight is not always easy or short. So we persevere in our pursuit of godliness and love. Sound doctrine lights the path.
- B. Battles will come because enemies persist. I pray God finds Living Hope Church faithful as we wage the good warfare.

### **Pray**

#### **Discussion Questions:**

Where are you waging the good warfare in your life?

How do you seek to maintain a good conscience?

If your life would be come a shipwreck how might that happen?

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