

9/10/23 - 1 Tim. 1:18-20 - "An Autopsy of Enduring Faith"

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[0 : 00] Today we'll be reading 1 Timothy 1, 18 through 20. The word of the Lord.

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, among them who are Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme. Amen. This is God's word.

It is good. This letter began with Paul urging Timothy to oppose false doctrines. If you can remember the first sermon in this series from verse 1 to 11, and then he digressed into, we'll call it an inspired rabbit trail, as Paul got into his own personal praise to God for his own salvation, put himself on the chopping block to make known the gospel in comparison to the issues that he was trying to silence.

And so Paul later now, today, returns to the matter at hand, heresy in the church. And so Paul returns to Timothy with the charge to oppose false teachers and Timothy's responsibility to not only silence them, but to drive them out, so that sound doctrine would be established.

[1 : 44] What Timothy is experiencing here, church, is the experience of every Christian that sets their sail upon the Christian life.

And it's rough waters often at times. It reminds me of the image of the day that I decided that it was a good idea to take my oldest son, Micah, on his first fishing charter on Lake Erie.

And it was going pretty well at the beginning. We were having a lot... Did you say amen, son? He's here to testify against me if I don't tell the story.

And so we started out good. The drawbridge, you know, we'd be waiting for the drawbridge to go up as we're getting out of the canal and then out to the harbor.

And everything was great. And it wasn't until we got past the canal, got past the harbor, and it was pretty vast for Lake Erie.

[2 : 58] And it was a little choppy. Didn't realize that my son had motion sickness until that day. And really didn't realize it until the cold front decided to shift all of a sudden.

And these dark clouds started rolling in. And here we are walleye fishing. And we're experiencing these swells that are like six to ten feet.

And we're just out there fishing. And poor Micah couldn't stand that anymore. But Timothy's experience is the call of every Christian to set our sails on those waters.

That experience at Lake Erie is the exact picture of what the Christian life is setting sail upon. Unfortunately, the church, Christian church at least, seems to have latched upon this peaceful and restful lifestyle.

And forgetting the variables that constitute and define peace and rest. In other words, Christianity has sort of become all about smooth sailing.

[4 : 14] Right? And this, as you can imagine, is a distortion of reality and not in line with biblical Christianity. Because peace and rest have a certain objective truth that constitute peace and constitutes rest.

And it's not in anything regarding our circumstance. You see? You see, truth is established and exposed by way of waves and warfare.

And that's what we're seeing in the passage today. Truth is established, it's exposed by our dedication to these waves and warfare.

The Christian sets upon their vessel, upon these tumultuous waves of the Christian life to reach this eternal rest and peace of which we're working towards, which is what some refer to as heaven. We're on this trip. But far too often we lose sight of that distance and we think that it's here and now, right now, in our lives of eternal peace and rest.

[5 : 21] And we neglect to realize and engage in the warfare that we're actually in. So either way for us, we're going to reinforce the call today to be good sailors and good soldiers.

Specifically, what that looks like and how to do that well. And so in our series today, this message is called An Autopsy of Enduring Faith.

And we're going to look upon two autopsies as our two sections today. And I'd like to pray before we dive in.

So will you please join me in prayer? Father, thank you for your word. Help me to be clear today. Help us to be attentive. Soften our hearts so that your word may be planted deep within our lives and in our convictions to hold fast to what is true and reject that which is false.

[6 : 22] Help us, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Get that out of the way. So the first autopsy that we see today is a closer look at steadfast faith.

In verse 18, Paul continues to Timothy, 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.

Let's pause there. There's something that develops in this passage that is unique because we have to realize that Timothy never signed up for this job in Ephesus.

Paul commissioned him in this passage by apostolic authority. But Timothy, there is an autonomy here between God's will, between the two.

He was charged by Paul, commissioned by Paul, but he was called by God. So you have apostolic authority and divine authority, and that divine authority being seen through prophecies previously made.

[7 : 47] There's more on this in chapter 4 and a couple more sections in the second letter to Timothy about this calling and commissioning period and those prophecies that were made. But what I want you to understand is subtly here we have to realize that God recruited Timothy for service.

He called him. And what Timothy experienced is the experience of placing our faith in Jesus Christ. He literally set sail upon choppy waters and the choppy sea.

But we see here, we discover that the vessel that he sails upon is unique. The vessel that he's sailing upon is in one sense God's calling and also God's commissioning.

He's on the boat of God's calling and commission. It's not of himself, you see? And the calling of every Christian is prophetic.

It is prophetically called throughout and woven throughout the pages of Scripture on the basis of faith. But God equips the church to fulfill this calling in our lives during our charter at sea.

[9 : 00] We have responsibility here. And the problem we see that we face out at sea is that we have the responsibility of doing this good or bad according to our calling and commissioning.

Do you see that? It's our responsibility to do this well or poor. Not only does God recruit, but God gives us orders so that we are united in obedience to Him, to His will.

He gives us orders. I know, I lost a couple people here because who wants to follow orders? This is the land of the free. You ain't gonna tell me what to do.

And, you know, our society frowns upon being told to do anything and we understand that, but being Christians, we're set apart from the world. We know just as a military charge and a military order is meant not to make your life miserable, it's meant to guide soldiers, it's meant to protect soldiers, it's meant to direct and orders are good and God gave us orders to help our responsibility to do this well.

Well, what's the order in this passage? What's the order to Timothy? Paul says to fight the good fight in the NASB or, as your translation as we read today, wage the good warfare.

[10 : 38] How do you do that? He follows along. Keep faith and keep a good conscience. Hold faith and hold a good conscience.

That seems pretty easy, doesn't it? And that's all that there is to it. a two-step plan to being faithful to God.

It's like keeping the faith brings about and reinforces what we believe. To hold a faith is to hold of what we know is true.

Holding a good conscience, though, is something that reinforces how we behave. One is head, one is hands, all according to what God does within your hearts.

The whole person of a Christian is engaged in this commission and calling on that vessel. The charge is so simple.

[11 : 38] Keep the faith, hold the faith, and hold a good conscience. This holding is also used in a couple instances in Scripture where it talks about holding a baby, like holding pregnancy, keeping a pregnancy, holding an illness, or holding a friendship or a relationship.

This hold is used in all sorts of different expressions. But do you understand what I'm trying to say? Be pregnant in the faith. Be contaminated in faith.

Be friends with faith. Hold the faith and a good conscience. Christians. What faith did Paul have in mind here?

The faith that believes in yourself? Declare that you are because God is? No. The faith that Paul refers to here are essentials to what it means to be a Christian.

The triune working of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The full humanity and deity of Jesus Christ. The sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

[12 : 54] Death upon the cross. The necessity of atonement. Justification by grace through faith. These are essentials to what makes a Christian a Christian.

Hold the faith. And you see it's interesting because the intrinsic nature of holding a good conscience will rise and fall upon the measure of how robustly we are holding the faith.

Upon these two, holding the faith in a good conscience will dictate everything a Christian believes and behaves. You see, the Christian life is built upon the unchanging nature of God's will, what has been done in your hearts.

He calls and commissions Christians to fight this fight. But we have a problem.

If we are to take our eyes off of that calling and commission and look around at the ships and the vessels that surround us of Christians out on the choppy waters, we see not all boats are holding well.

[14 : 06] some boats as we saw in Lake Erie with my son, some boats are headed back to shore, back to the harbor where it was a little bit calmer, a little bit easier.

Some just sank all together and are floating out there crying for help. We see that this was the problem in this Ephesian church.

Paul said earlier in chapter 1, verse 5, the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Certain persons by swerving from these have wandered away from that. This is the very problem in this Ephesian church. church. This happens with everyone around.

In fact, their grip seems to slip and they grab a hold of ideas that seem to enhance their faith rather than holding the faith. They're on a mission to enhance their faith, make it a little bit more robust in their minds and adding their ideas or maybe even redefining faith altogether.

[15 : 26] They justify their lives by their own standards to make their conscience a little bit clearer so when they lay down at night, they feel that they're not in disobedience with God's Word.

This loosing of faith and conscience is considerably dangerous to all Christians of all time. But how much more severe when shepherds, pastors, elders, bishops of God's people fall into this very snare?

And for that, Paul reveals the consequences of those who wander from God's order for Christians and especially leaders. And we have to make an autopsy and a closer look at shipwreck faith.

He says, he continues here, by rejecting this, some, some have made shipwreck of their faith, faith, among whom Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, that they may not learn to blaspheme.

Paul clarifies some certain persons that he vaguely referred to earlier in the Ephesian church. And actually, his second letter, 2 Timothy, will go into more depth, and Paul mentions more specifics later on, that Hymenaeus, actually, he was upsetting the faith of some in the second letter to Timothy, and Alexander seems to be just ruthlessly, maliciously attacking Paul and the gospel in the second letter.

[17 : 07] But for these men, they have shipwrecked the faith. Yeah, they may have taken the altar call, they may have taken steps towards baptism, they may have joined membership in a church, served in children's ministry even.

Only the real Christians serve in children's ministry. I'm just kidding. But they did it all, right? Well, what does that say about the perseverance of Christians?

Can we indeed lose our salvation? Well, absolutely not. Because as we dig into the original language, we see something that Paul was making clear here. They did not shipwreck their faith that the ESV translates this in.

And it's, the reason it's translated that way is because of consistency in translations. But what the Greek actually says is they shipwrecked the faith. Their faith was simply not a part of them. It was detached. They shipwrecked the faith before they could even adopt it into their lives. You see, the lifestyle of these men rejected apostolic authority, which revealed they were never saved to begin with, regardless of the altar call, regardless of church membership, regardless of baptism, regardless of serving in children's ministry.

[18 : 42] ministry. They just simply were not saved to begin with. In other words, to reject apostolic authority is like setting the sail upon the choppy sea and using a boulder as your ship.

God has neither called you nor commissioned you. You're doing it in your own power. And Paul was out of options for these men because they were truly leading people astray.

And the only thing that he could do was remove them from the domain of the church that is built upon sound doctrine, to remove them from the domain of the church, which is the domain of light, into the domain of Satan.

In other words, these guys were set out into the world because they were never a part of the church in their sin. This is an act of tough love to those in unrepentant sin.

And this is where the church of whom they were separated from pleads with them for repentance. They don't just get together at Bob Evans and say, how's life going?

[19 : 48] Oh, that's great. What's the Lord doing in your life? No. It's saying, Hymenaeus, you've got to come back to the faith. This is the gospel. You're in error.

Every communication from that point forward to anyone outside of the church, removed from the church, is to call for their repentance. This is the nature of church discipline at the most severe level.

And most churches don't do it because most churches are more concerned about numbers and the seats that are filled in the church service and the numbers and the baptisms and all these things. It's vanity in the church.

This is the nature of church discipline at the most severe level. Why does that matter? Well, sometimes I think you don't realize the advantages of being on board a ship until you experience being thrown off of it.

It's like the saying that you don't know what you have until it's gone. And the church gathering is a place where assurance is built.

[20 : 57] When we gather on Sunday morning, we're assured in our salvation. When we observe baptisms, we're assured of salvation. When we take the ordinances of the Lord's Supper, we're assured in salvation.

When we look around, it's we're reminded of the faith that God has given to us and how He saved us. There's so much assurance in this body.

There's so much encouragement of stirring one another up outside in the domain of the world with apart from the church, apart from a community that you're really, truly, deeply plugged in with.

It's choppy. It's choppy. Removal is done out of love. And for that, there is hope for false teachers all around, even in our day today, that they can be saved from their shipwreck.

But it will take a fresh start. It will take a new foundation for them to sail upon. Paul put himself on the chopping block, and he is a living testimony, now dead, living at this time, a testimony of God saving him from his shipwreck.

[22 : 09] And if there's hope for Paul, there's hope for all. And so for us today, especially church leaders, we have to recognize the importance of fighting this good fight and how God intends for us to do it, how to be good sailors and good soldiers.

And I found it really helpful during the week of reflection to focus on the contrasting nature of his writing because that's to say that if we are to fight the good fight, then this affirms that we're not

supposed to fight the bad fights, the corrupt faith and conscience.

This good fight has been through Scripture all the way back to the Exodus. Moses confronted the golden calf. I know, conflict.

He confronted the golden calf in Exodus 32. Joshua confronted his own people of serving other gods and to turn to the living God in Joshua 24.

Elijah confronted, guess how many, 450 prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18. Ezekiel had visions to confront those false visions, those witchcraft almost, and divinations in Ezekiel 13.

[23 : 33] Fast forward to the New Testament. Jesus Christ confronted false pharisaical theology all throughout the Gospels. And every single epistle of the New Testament is confronting false teachers.

sinners. And then Jude says he's charging the church to contend for the faith in Jude 3. When did we think that this fight ended?

The good fight continues through church history. The church of one body and one Lord as Ephesians 4, 1-6 says. They've experienced all these fights throughout history from the Council of Nicaea.

And I'm not going to bore you for a minute, but this is important because they defended the Trinity, the doctrine of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working in salvation as the Council of Nicaea, 325.

The sovereignty of God's grace against Pelagius in the Council of Ephesus, 431. The deity of Christ in the Council of Ephesus in Chalcedon in 451.

[24 : 44] Even leading to the Great Schism as a result of power, politics, and control, all papal issues that were distorting and minimizing the apostolic faith-based way of salvation of works, 1054.

Leading to the Middle Ages where there was a false defense of the way of salvation to the Protestant Reformation that's similar to the Great Schism. and we could go on and on and on with all of these fights for the faith.

Amen. Have we forgotten the words of our Lord Jesus Christ? Many call it the high priestly prayer, but I believe it was words of warfare.

He says, Holy Father, in John 17, keep them in your name. which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

Keep them, he says, from the evil one. Sanctify them in the truth. What dictates truth? He says it.

[25 : 54] Your word is truth. Truth. As we survey God's word and church history, we discover that anyone who believes that doctrinal unity can be achieved without a struggle and without a fight is completely ignorant of what it is to fight the good fight.

the Holy Spirit has reformed the church and yes, it was messy. There was break after break after break. Or maybe was it pruning after pruning after pruning.

Jesus Christ had to be defended, Scripture had to be defended, faith had to be defended, grace had to be defended, all for what? All so the glory of God may shine vibrantly in the world according to truth and if according to truth, His word.

Fight the good fight. This call and commission is for every single Christian who has a tendency of reclusing from any conflict, from any confrontation and to leave the calm harbor as a good soldier and to lean into the fight concerning the essentials of the faith and being a good soldier.

Far too often, though, we seem more concerned with these bad fights that are less essential to the faith that just make us look like a bunch of dummies. We don't know what we believe.

[27 : 36] We don't know how unity is achieved. We've surely were sanctifying in ourselves by our little bickers and arguments of non-essentials than we are of the truth as Jesus Christ said. And we're bickering over nothing.

Not you, but just Christianity in large. You guys are really faithful and it's a blessing to pastor you as a church. But far too often, we're concerned about picking bad fights that are less essential.

We pick the wrong fights. We have to have wisdom and self-control to ask ourselves, is salvation at stake in this fight?

And tragically, you can look over church history, even recent church history, and you just see God's sheep battered, bruised, bloodied over the paint that they painted the sanctuary in.

The colors of the carpet. Forgotten birthdays. You'll notice we put our birthdays in the newsletter now.

[28 : 40] Or sanctification at its finest. If you look around, you see this friendly fire among the Christian community.

We know if a fight is essential because we have to realize that is this fight going to matter a year from now? We should also be warned when our fights are sort of perversely bringing us enjoyment. Some people are quarrelsome. Some people just like to pick a fight and bully and hit people over the head with the Bible. We shouldn't be waging war perversely like that, but lovingly. And we should aim never to justify ourselves. You see, the good fight is a fight for sound theology central to the Christian doctrine. It was once said, in essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity. Well, it may be true that no one admires confrontation.

[29 : 54] I don't think anybody of us really like to get into a contentious discussion with anybody, but I don't believe for a second that God admires a church unwilling to leave the harbor.

Please realize the call and commission we have individually and corporately to join this effort, even with Timothy long ago. And what I want us to see is there's four imperative fights for us today. And the first, I believe, is biblical inerrancy is a fight that we have to fight today. There's probably more, but four. I'm just going to highlight four. We don't have a lot of time. I believe biblical inerrancy is a fight we need to fight today because we should feel severely unqualified to be able to redefine what God's Word says and how to live the Christian life and how to be saved.

The Bible is the Word of God in written form. It's the way it is. We have to deal with it. Our fight today is salvation through Jesus Christ alone.

[31 : 08] Why? There's Christian schools where even a number of students have no idea about the exclusivity of Jesus Christ being the way of salvation.

This is a fight even in Christian circles. Jesus is the only way of salvation. The third fight is the fight of justification by grace through faith.

Why? Because the Bible teaches that sinners are declared righteous in the sight of God solely on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Not our righteousness.

And we're imputed faith. faith according to the Bible. Our faith today is the evidence of saving faith. How? By good works.

Right? Why? Our conduct will either clarify the gospel or distort it. It'll reinforce it or it's going to say well I don't think Christianity is all cracked up to be what it's going to be.

[32 : 16] The church is called to obey Jesus Christ's commands. Not to change his commands. On these four quick things church we unite and apart from this we divide.

Why? Because the enemies of God will not run away and remove themselves. Timothy was called to drive them out. Wolves have to be driven out of the sheepfold and so too it is for us today.

We have to drive that out. I'm going to invite the worship team to join us back on stage and we'll get ready for our continued worship and I'm going to call it extended reflection on the sermon.

But I want you to think about this for a moment because if you feel like you may not be necessarily shipwrecked, you may be convicted that you haven't left the harbor or that you really haven't been latching on to what the calling commission truly is all about in your life.

You've kind of been doing it your own way and you might feel like you might be a shipwrecked Christian. You're out there floating in the water just gasping for air calling out for help.

[33 : 37] Well there is great assurance for us who fear the potential of shipwreck or believe and they believe that they actually are shipwrecked. It's an assurance that the disciples experience as their faith was tested.

What they discovered on board with Jesus is that shipwreck was not possible as long as Jesus was in the boat. Though the winds blew, though the seas rage, they held on to faith to the one who commands the winds and the waves to be still and know that He is God.

Amen. Have faith, do not fear, He will hold you fast.