

# Shipwreck in the Fog of War

*The Spiritual Battle of Christ's Church*

**1Tim 1:18** 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**,  
<sup>19</sup> **holding faith** and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made **shipwreck of their faith**,  
<sup>20</sup> among whom are **Hymenaeus** and **Alexander**, whom I have **handed over to Satan** that they may learn not to blaspheme.  
(1 Timothy 1:18-20)

## Shipwreck

The **most famous shipwrecks in history** surely must include:

- **The Titanic**, which on its maiden voyage hit an iceberg in the dead calm of night, leading to the rapid sinking of the “unsinkable” modern floating version of the Tower of Babel, which myth records everyone from the captain to the architect defiantly stated, “**Not even God himself could sink this ship.**”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There are so many interesting things related to the sinking of this ship. These include the deaths of three of the most powerful and wealthy bankers and industrialists who opposed the creation of the Federal Reserve Bank (John Jacob Astor IV, Benjamin Guggenheim, and Isidor Straus), which without their opposition just so happened to be created a year after the disaster. And, many clues that have led some to conclude that it was actually the sister ship the RMS Olympic that was deliberately sunk in the name of the Titanic. For a documentary on the latter *Titanic The Shocking Truth* (2012). At any rate, this is certainly the most famous shipwreck in history.

- **The Edmund Fitzgerald**, preserved for us in lyric form by Gordon Lightfoot,

*The legend lives on from the Chippewa on down,  
Of the big lake they called Gitche Gumee  
The lake, it is said, never gives up her dead  
When the skies of November turn gloomy  
With a load of iron ore twenty-six thousand tons more  
Than the Edmund Fitzgerald weighed empty  
That good ship and true was a bone to be chewed  
When the gales of November came early*

- **The Eduard Bohlen**, a German cargo ship that ran aground on the Skeleton Coast of German Southwest Africa in the pre-days of WWI. Apparently, thick fog off the coast of what the Bushmen call, “**The Land God Made in Anger**” and Portuguese sailors referred to as “**The Gates of Hell**,” was responsible for the wreck that now sits an incredible 1,300 ft from the Atlantic, encased by the sands of the Namibian desert.

Weather was responsible for most of these wrecks, but the fog stands out to me for the inability of the captain to see beyond his bow or port or starboard or stern to make an educated decision on where he is and, more importantly, where he does not want to be.

Fog plays an important role in another, sometimes overlapping, topic—*war*. The Prussian military analyst **Carl**

von Clausewitz said in his book *On War* (1832), “War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty. A sensitive and discriminating judgment is called for; a skilled intelligence to scent out the truth.” The phrase, “fog of war” seems to have first appeared in 1896 in the book *The Fog of War* by Sir Lonsdale Augustus Hale where he described “the state of ignorance in which commanders frequently find themselves as regards the real strength and position, not only of their foes, but also of their friends.”<sup>2</sup> This whole idea goes back at least to Sun Tzu in his 2,500 year old *Art of War* in which he states, “All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when we are able to attack, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near.”

How are shipwrecks and the fog of war overlapping? War entices the greedy. The example, the famous **Spanish Armada**, a fleet of 130 ships on a mission to invade England

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<sup>2</sup> This is from the *wiki* on “Fog of War.” A search on Google Books going back to 1500 yields two hits prior to this. In the poem “Bunker Kill Battle,” M’Donald Clarke writes, “Will they dare a third attack? Is a question seen in every eye; Old Put across the Nick, and back, Rides slowly, their vengeance to defy—Wildly, in that deadly hour, The Ramparts shove their bolted shower, While, mid the waving for of war, Thunders the Yankee’s loud hurrah.” M’Donald Clarke, *The Poems of M’Donald Clarke* (New York: J. W. Bell, 1836), 187-88). Earlier, in 1817, we can see a snippet view from *United States Congressional serial set – Volume 11047*, “The clean scent of pine and of clover, Drive away the shrouding fog of war And reveal the Flag of Freedom Waving resplendent in the dawn!” (p. 138).

in 1588, was decimated by storms and most of the ships wrecked on the rocky coasts of Scotland and Ireland, killing around 5000 soldiers. This occurred because Philip II appointed an aristocrat without naval experience as commander of the fleet. 300 years earlier, and in some parts of the world even more famously, the largest naval invasion in history was the **Fleet of Kublai Khan**. Mongol, Chinese, and Korean soldiers, marines, and sailors set sail in over 4,400 ships towards Japan. Numbering more than 140,000, the invasion of 1281 AD saw the coining of a new military term “**kamikaze**” as a two-day typhoon known by that word (meaning “**divine wind**”) hit the fleet, destroying approximately 80%. Most of the soldiers were either drown or killed on the beaches by samurai.<sup>3</sup> They should not have been sailing in typhoon season.

Perhaps my new favorite is the wreck of the **Whydah Gally**. The Whydah was a fully rigged gally built originally as a cargo, passenger, and slave ship. On her maiden voyage, she was captured by the pirate Captain **Samuel “Black Sam” Bellamy**. Now captain of the Whydah, Bellamy famously

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<sup>3</sup> For more see **James P. Delgado**, “Khubilai Khan Fleet,” *Archaeology* (n.d.), <https://www.archaeology.org/exclusives/articles/645-khubilai-khan-fleet-mongol-empire-japan>; **Mark Staniforth**, “The Original Kamikaze: Kulbai Khan’s Invasion Shipwreck Found?” *The Conversation* (Nov 3, 2011), <https://theconversation.com/the-original-kamikaze-kublai-khans-invasion-shipwreck-found-4132>.

captured ship after ship as he went up the coast. But the captain got too greedy and on April 26, 1717, he was caught in a violent storm and she wrecked on the rocks off Cape Cod. Only two of his crew and seven others from captured sloops survived. Six were hanged upon washing up on shore, while the remaining 142 men of the Whydah drown, including her pirate captain. Rediscovered in 1984, it remains the only fully authenticated Golden Age pirate shipwreck ever discovered.<sup>4</sup>

**War, fog, and shipwrecks.** This basically summarizes the remaining three verses of 1 Timothy 1. Today we will look at them, considering how this important directive from an Apostle of Jesus Christ to his favored son in the faith Timothy relates to the church, her shepherds, and her people in our day.

## 1 Timothy 1:18-20 ~ Context and Structure

These three verses are the last in the first chapter. As such, they are also the last of the chiasm that makes up the first chapter.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Isis Davis-Marks, “Six Skeletons Found in Wreck of 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Pirate Ship Sunk Off Cape Cod,” *Smithsonian Magazine* (Feb 12, 2021), <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/scholars-discover-six-skeletons-whydah-pirate-ship-180977011/>.

<sup>5</sup> A Reformed scholar I have not run into in Timothy yet has a commentary set on 1, 2 Timothy (his dissertation was on Titus), which includes chiastic outlines for all of the books. See Paul S. Jeon, *1 Timothy: A Charge to God’s Missional Household* vol. 1 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017) and

- A) 1 Tim 1:2-3, To **Timothy**, a **true son** in the faith: **charge** some that they teach no other doctrine;
- B) 1 Tim 1:4, **Fables** + endless genealogies, **which cause disputes** rather than godly edification;
- C) 1 Tim 1:5-6, Purpose of Law: pure love + **good conscience** + sincere **faith**, **some** having **strayed**;
- D) 1 Tim 1:7-9, The **excellence** of the **Law toward the unrepentant**;
- E) 1 Tim 1:9-10, Meant for the **lawless, unrighteous**, those things **contrary** to sound doctrine;
- F) 1 Tim 1:11, According to the glorious **gospel** of the blessed God which was **committed to my trust**;
- central axis) 1 Tim 1:12, I thank Christ Jesus;
- F') 1 Tim 1:12, He **enabled** me, **counted** me faithful, **put me into the ministry**;
- E') 1 Tim 1:13, Although formerly a **blasphemer**, a **persecutor**, and an **insolent** man;
- D') 1 Tim 1:13-17, The **excellence** of the King and His **mercy toward the repentant**;
- C') 1 Tim 1:18, This **charge** I commit to you, **my son Timothy**;
- B') 1 Tim 1:18, **Prophecies** concerning you, **which cause** you to wage the **good warfare**;
- A') 1 Tim 1:19-20, Having **faith** + **good conscience**, which **some** rejected + **shipwrecked their faith**.<sup>6</sup>

That these three verses match up with 2-7 is noticed indirectly by Ryken who says, “**The letter could flow smoothly from verse 7 to verse 18 with little interruption in thought.**”<sup>7</sup> That’s a sure sign of a structure. Looking more

subsequent volumes. **Paul S. Jeon**, “To Exhort and Reprove: Audience Response to the Chiasmic Structures of Paul’s Letter to Titus,” Dissertation to the Catholic University of America, 2011, <https://cuislandora.wrlc.org/islandora/object/etd%3A96/datastream/PDF/view>.

<sup>6</sup> **Christine Smith**, “1 Timothy 1,” *A Little Perspective* (Sept 23, 2016), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/1-timothy-1-2016/>. I have relabeled her lettering because it is difficult to decipher, as she has sub-units in this particular look at the chiasm. Thus, note that center, F’, and E’ are all single verses, while D’ is a unit. She has a simpler chiasm here. **Christine Smith**, “Book of 1 Timothy Chiasmic Structure,” *A Little Perspective* (Nov 4, 2013), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/book-of-1-timothy-chiasmic-structure/>. See also **DPR**, “1 Timothy 1:1-20,” *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* (Jan 16, 2015), <https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/2015/01/16/1timothy-1/>. This person sees virtually the same outline.

<sup>7</sup> **Philip Graham Ryken**, *1 Timothy*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Daniel M. Doriani, and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 48.

closely at these ABC, C'B'A' pairs proves very informative. Vv. 2-3 match vs. 18a. Notice the repetition of “Timothy” and “charge” (v. *paraggello*, n. *paraggelia*) as well as “son” (*teknon*). Vv. 5-6 parallel vv. 19-20. Notice the repetition of “faith” and “good conscience.” The middle also repeats, but through a theme rather than explicit words. In both instances, *one thing leads to another*. In the former, devoting themselves to myths and endless genealogies leads to speculations rather than stewardship. In the latter, prophecies lead to waging the good warfare. We might depict the relationships like this:

- A) 1:2-3, To Timothy, a true son in the faith: charge some that they teach no other doctrine;
- B) 1:4, Fables + endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification;
- C) 1:5-6, Purpose of Law: pure love + good conscience + sincere faith, some having strayed;
- A') 1:18, This charge I commit to you, my son Timothy;
- B') 1:18, Prophecies concerning you, which cause you to wage the good warfare;
- C') 1:19-20, Having faith + good conscience, which some rejected + shipwrecked their faith.

All this means that to properly interpret our verses, we must read them in context with the earlier ones. By further comparing the former with the latter verses, we can see sharp contrasts and clearer instructions which will help us think about the relevance for today. Before that, notice how our passage seems to have its own tiny structure.

- A. Timothy [Paul], prophecy (with tongue) (18a)
- B. You may wage the good warfare (18b)
- C. Holding the faith (19a)
- C'. And a good conscience (19b)
- B'. Some have made shipwreck of their faith (19c)
- A. Hymenaeus and Alexander (Satan), blaspheme (with tongue) (20)

At the beginning we have a name. At the end, we have two names. After the first name, Timothy, we have the implied relationship to Paul. After the other two names, Hymanaesus and Alexander, we have the implied relationship to Satan. Reading both together, we might imply that as Paul is the spiritual father of Timothy, Satan is the spiritual father of these other two men (e.g. John 8:44; 1Jn 3:12). The end of the A/A' pair sees a contrast between prophecy, a spoken word from God vs. blasphemy, a spoken word against God. The B/B' pair sees first, Timothy doing something, namely waging the good warfare. And right before the other two names, we have them doing something, namely shipwrecking their faith. Thus, we have a middle (C/C'), a very important middle. Paul commands Timothy to hold the faith and a good conscience. This is the center of our message. Why do you suppose that might be?



# The War

## *The Charge*

We begin to uncover the answer at the beginning of **vs. 18**. Paul “charges” Timothy with something. The ESV’s “charge” is fine, so long as you have the right idea of that word in mind. If you think **merely of the imposing of a task** (something like a boss charging the employee to mop the floor), this is not enough. “Charge” as in to rush against or attack (he charged him with a sword) at least has the military connotation. But words “**command**” (NAS) or “**order**” (**Acts 16:24**) best fit the context. Notice how Paul unusually opens this letter by saying that he is an Apostle “**by the command**” of God and Christ (**1Tim 1:1**). And given that he will later in this verse talk about **waging the good warfare**, it is easy to see a kind of military hierarchy going on here.

It is as if God is the **Fleet Admiral**, Paul is the **Captain**, and Timothy is the **coxswain** (helmsman). Like a captain giving orders to the helmsman, Paul gives Timothy a command, “**Here is where you need to steer to stay on course. You are the one steering this thing, so I’m entrusting**

you to heed my command. Carry out these orders.” With such a chain of command, the obvious **implication** of this is exactly as the child’s song teaches us, “**I may never march in the infantry, ride in the cavalry, shoot the artillery; I may never fly over the enemy, but I’m in the Lord’s army, yes, sir,**” except, I’m going to change it to the **navy** for today. Christians are in God’s military. You must realize that the command given to Timothy carries down to today and it is not an option. All Christians must obey this command, because we have been enlisted. God is giving you a direct order through his word. It is his charge to all his people. He isn’t asking; he is telling.

### *The Relationship*

And yet, though this is the context, Paul reminds Timothy of their own **personal relationship**. Without this, the command will go unheeded. Paul is not merely Timothy’s commanding officer, but his **spiritual father**. “**Timothy, my child.**” We should remember that **Timothy is young**. We saw in a previous sermon that he is perhaps between mid-20s to mid-30s. But he doesn’t call Timothy “**a child,**” but rather “**my child.**” Paul is his **spiritual father**.

Sometime in the early church, perhaps with the advent of the term Pope (from the old English *papa* and Greek *papas*) and then with the calling of priests “father,” the church began referring to some of its leaders with this familial language. That idea comes from places like this.

However, the only ones who use the language this way in the Scripture are those who were **directly over a congregation or individual** and were instruments God used through the gospel **to save them**. Paul, it clearly seems, was instrumental in Timothy coming to faith in Christ. Therefore, there is a *spiritual* father/son relationship that simply isn't true of a Pope to all of the Roman Catholic people or of some guy walking in from off the street and giving his confession to the local “father.” That is an abuse of the language (let alone other things).

Further, and this is relevant to something that occurs much later in the letter, it seems to me that this language of “child” is the **NT's equivalent of the OT “children” of Israel**. They are parallel, but not identical. In the OT, all of those born from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were “children.” In the OT, all the eight-day old males received the sign of this birth—**circumcision**. I believe much of the church has made a mistake in assigning baptism to infants, because

among other reasons, I believe they confuse the OT with the New at this point. The NT children are not (*necessarily*) our biological babies (God can save them, but clearly does not save all), but rather those who come to faith in Christ. This is precisely what Paul says here. Therefore, **baptism** is applied to *these* children. They are the children of the covenant.

The implication is that the command will only be heeded if you are **a true Christian**. Unbelievers will have their own things to worry about, but God is not commanding them here. Professing Christians who are not actually saved are commanded, but they won't heed. He is commanding Christians and they must listen.

### *The Prophecy*

Paul next reminds Timothy that this command comes from **something that had happened earlier in his life**. “...in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you.” What **prophecies**? Some think this refers to Timothy's **conversion (6:12)**. But this seems more specific. Others think this may refer to **reports about Timothy when he was much younger** that led to Paul wanting him to join his

missionary team ([Acts 16:1-3](#)). Some think this has something to do with a gift given by prophecy when the council of elders [laid their hands on him](#) ([4:14](#)). In that case, it would have something to do with his becoming a pastor at Ephesus. This seems to me to fit the context best, but it isn't necessary to know exactly what it was in order to see why it is brought up here.

Because Timothy is a pastor, this especially [pertains to pastors](#) of churches. Timothy is not merely called to be saved. He has been called to lead a church. And therefore, pastors including myself and your elders, are under this command in a way that, as James says of teachers, makes them [doubly accountable](#). Sadly, we live in an era what pastors take this no more seriously than the rest of the church does, and that isn't a whole lot. And as we will see, this leads shipwrecking the church.

## *The Good Warfare*

These prophecies lead directly to Timothy now having to “[wage the good warfare](#).” It says, “the [good](#) warfare,” and not simply “warfare.” As Ryken notices, this implies that [not all warfare is good](#). I'll say more about that in a moment.

First, what is this warfare? This is perhaps the most important question we can ask today. While we can go to other passages for confirmation, we can compare this with the parallel parts of our passage and come to a definitive conclusion.

The most obvious way of doing this is to look specifically at the Timothy-Paul, Hymenaeus/Alexander-Satan parallel. Paul is to Timothy as Satan is to those two men. Paul and Satan are parallel in that both are **fathers**. Fathers of what? **Souls**. Souls are **spiritual** things, and this is how we usually think of Satan. He is a spiritual entity and therefore the warfare here is spiritual in nature. Without this parallel, this would be harder to discover from our passage.

Yet, we can easily go to **other places**, especially in **Ephesians**, which is relevant, since in a way this letter is also written to the Ephesians (**1Tim 1:3; 6:21** and the plural “you,” that is the church). “**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**” (**Eph 6:12**). This is a direct parallel to a war in which **Satan** is involved in our passage. That this “wrestling” is a war is clear in the next verse. “**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” (Eph 6:13). Because this is basically the same thing, broadly speaking, that Timothy is called to, though he is a pastor, this is written to the entire church, and therefore I see this warfare Timothy is commanded to wage as applying not just to pastors, **but to the church.**

These three verses are **supernaturally supercharged**, from needing **spiritual salvation** to having **prophecies** of the future be made, to **fighting a war** in the supernatural realm with **Satan**. Christians must relearn to think of the battle that they are commanded to prepare for as a **supernatural battle**. We are not fighting flesh and blood. We are fighting against ancient, intelligent powers that have held sway over men for thousands of years. This darkness has manifested itself in so many horrific ways in this world, and the only way to win is by being in the Lord’s Navy. You must be on the side of the Captain of the Hosts of heaven. He alone has the power, has won the victory, and gives weapons of defense and offense by which this foe’s power may be vanquished. This is why it is necessary to be a Christian. Turn to Christ, because you cannot stand against this enemy on your own.

But, returning to Ryken's point, this means that **not every battle is a good battle**. Throughout and the next letter, Timothy is told to stay away from **needless controversies** (myth, genealogies; **1:4**). He is not to be **quarrelsome** (**3:3**). He is not to **quarrel over words** (**6:4**). Notice the **tongue** again! Such things occur in the church, and they are the equivalent of **friendly fire**.

A fight over a doctrine not essential to the Christian faith is usually a bad fight. Every biblical truth needs to be taught, discussed, believed, and practiced. But not every biblical truth needs to be argued for in every situation, and no biblical truth should ever be defended with a contentious spirit. Church traditions often make for bad fights, too, as do practical matters (such as the color of the church carpet or the furniture that should go into a nursery) with little spiritual consequence.<sup>8</sup>

It's not that you can't have opinions on such things. It's that you must not **fight** over them. You must not **attack** one another. You must not **divide** or **leave** a church over them. People get ridiculously angry because their idea of what color a wall should be painted was not heeded. Christians

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<sup>8</sup> Ryken, 46.



turn on one another because they disagree on theological matters of indifference. Every single church seems to have their fair share of this kind of shrapnel hitting the sailors, all because **our own cannons** are turned inward on each other. Do you not think that old pirate Satan who comes to steal and to destroy loves anything more than watching us defeat ourselves?

### *The Necessary War: Blasphemy*

What are the issues in mind **in our passage**? They are **much more serious**. That's why they are to be fought over. They are questions of **blasphemy** and **faith with a good conscience** (i.e. morality—the Ten Commandments). These are the things to fight over. Each of them is, at its core, supernatural in nature.

**Blasphemy** is the last of them, and I bring it up first because it seems parallel to prophecy. Both are things that come directly **from the tongue**. James says, “**If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless**” (**James 1:26**). This is precisely what those kinds of fights over non-essential matters makes your religion.

This week on Facebook, someone posed asked a great question. “When Scripture commands, ‘let your words be seasoned with salt,’ why do so many Christians take this to mean, ‘let your words be seasoned with cayenne pepper and ghost peppers?’” The answers that came back were fascinating. One seemed to justify exactly what the questioner thought was bad. “Reality is like this. Speak with a sharp two-edged sword and seasoned with salt. You know what happens with salt in a wound.” In other words, it is the person who has the salt in the wound who is the problem, not the one with the sword. Another cleverly avoided the question by saying, “Because sometimes conversations require some extra spice.” Why can’t we just listen to the point instead of try to figure out how to justify it away?

James again says (and rather appropriately for our context!), “Look at the ships ... though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every

kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so” (Jas 3:4-10). Did Paul have this very passage from James in mind when he brought up the shipwreck?

What is blasphemy? Blasphemy is bringing harm (war) with the tongue. Specifically, it is verbal attack on God. Synonyms are reviling, denigrating, disrespecting, defaming, and slandering. Idolatry is blasphemy, because it attacks God’s nature, making him in our image. Attacking God’s attributes, like his power, his goodness, his holiness, this is blasphemy, because it attacks the essence of God (2Kg 19:4; Dan 3:29[96] LXX). Going after God’s people is blasphemy, because God is in mystical union with is people through the Spirit (in the OT era see Isa 52:5; cf. 2Macc 8:4; 9:28; 10:4). Attacking Christ is directly blasphemous because he is the image of God. Curiously, this is precisely what Saul was doing, and he mentions it in 1Tim 1:13. In other words, this is the very same sin that he

himself was committing! This will have important implications for how we interpret the handing over to Satan.

The **blasphemy of the Holy Spirit** is the ultimate blasphemy, because it is a direct attack on the Father, the Son, and the one they sent, the Third Person. In the context of this sin, it is **a verbal, spoken attribution of the works of God in Christ to the devil.** “**You are doing this because you are in league with Beelzebub!**” It is a verbal attack on Christ, but one that they know is not true because **the Spirit was bearing witness in their own hearts** that it was not true. Putting that into a modern context, it is hearing the gospel and the call of the gospel in your own inner man and then coming away saying that this is of Satan. It is attributing the works of God in Christ to the Devil. It is knowingly and brazenly blaspheming God’s Son with the Holy Ghost right there like the breath between the words. It is *not done out of ignorance*, as Paul had said was true of him. All that said and it is pretty easy to see that this is a spiritual, supernatural sin that one commits which has ramifications not in this world, per se, but in the world to come.

## *The Necessary War: Faith and a Good Conscience*

The second necessary thing to fight for in the passage is **faith** (1Tim 1:19). Unlike **vs. 2** which was “**the faith**,” that is **the faith once-for-all entrusted to the saints** (Jude 3), this time he is talking about **Timothy’s personal faith in Christ**, which was already hinted at earlier when he called Timothy his son (in the faith). I wish I didn’t have to say it, but in today’s era of **atheist, wiccan, Buddhist, and homosexual clergy**, it must be said. Pastors must believe in Jesus Christ. Just what does it say about how far the visible church has fallen that this even needs to be said?

My faith, you believe the Good News about Jesus and trust in him to deliver you from all evil, including the world, the flesh (ourselves), and the devil. That Gospel is hidden in the term **blasphemy**, because as I argued previously, the heretics in Ephesus were manipulating the genealogies of the OT to somehow blaspheme Christ. I believe **this is confirmed now** when it says Timothy was to hand Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. What other Person of the Trinity could you manipulate a genealogy or “myth” from the OT and still be said to blaspheme God? Perhaps they were doing what the

Rabbis were doing by teaching that Christ was nothing more than an ordinary man from the genealogy of Shem?

Who are Hymenaeus and Alexander? We cannot be sure. **Hymenaeus** (meaning Nuptial; belonging to marriage. From Hymen, the god of marriage<sup>9</sup>) seems to have been **the first full-Preterist** as we learn from 2 Timothy that he and another man named Philetus, “**swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some**” (2Tim 2:18). As happens today when people teach that every single event in the Bible has been fulfilled, imagine being told in your sinful flesh that your resurrected body is here now, and that you no longer sin, or something like that. This is a spiritualization of a physical future reality, and it seems to me to play into proto-Gnostic impulses that perhaps deny that Christ came in the flesh.

**Alexander** (Meaning **Defending men; man defender; defender; helper of men; one who turns away evil**<sup>10</sup>) could be the **coppersmith** that did Paul great harm (2Ti 4:14-15), who in turn may or may not be the **Alexander the Jew** (which is interesting considering the whole genealogy controversy and the fact that Demetrius a silversmith

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<sup>9</sup> Stelman Smith and Judson Cornwall, in *The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos, 1998), 108.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 12.

instigated the riot in Ephesus), who tried to speak up at the Ephesus riot (**Acts 19:33**), as Bruce says, “to make it plain to the crowd that they had nothing to do with the present trouble—that they were as much opposed to Paul ... as the demonstrators were.”<sup>11</sup>

As opposed to these two men, Paul says that Timothy is to hold fast to his faith *and a good conscience*. It is incredibly important to hear what he is saying. John Trapp comments, “A good conscience ... is as it were a chest in which the doctrine of faith is to be kept safe. That doctrine of faith will quickly be lost if this chest is broken. For God will give over to errors and heresies those who cast away conscience of walking after God’s word” (**John Trapp**, *Commentary upon All the Epistles*). Calvin says,

They who do not serve God with a sincere and a perfect heart, but give a loose rein to wicked dispositions, even though at first they had a sound understanding, come to lose it altogether ... We know that the treasure of sound doctrine is invaluable, and therefore there is nothing that we ought to dread more than to have it taken from us. But Paul here informs us that there is only one way of keeping

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<sup>11</sup> **F. F. Bruce**, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 377.

it safe; and that is to secure it by the locks and bars of a good conscience ... All the errors that have existed in the Christian church from the beginning proceeded from this source: that in some persons ambition, and in others covetousness, extinguished the true fear of God. A bad conscience is, therefore, the mother of all heresies.

(Calvin, *Commentary on 1 Timothy*)<sup>12</sup>

Do you understand? Especially for pastors, but also for all Christians, to live a life contradictory to the law is to go against conscience. That's why Paul brought the Ten Commandments up earlier. To go against conscience can sooner or later destroy one's faith in the Gospel itself, because that person does not want to humble themselves and repent. I am convinced that theological controversies that even many purport to be over "essentials" often have at their root a violation of conscience and gross sin at the root. We've seen in from Rome to Reformed Baptist circles.

Ryken mentions a fascinating book called *The Intellectuals* (by British historian Paul Johnson) in which he bring out in the lives of many modern intellectuals such as Rousseau, Marx, Tolstoy, Hemingway, Sartre, Bertrand Russel, and

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<sup>12</sup> Both cited in Lee Gatiss, Bradley G. Green, and Timothy George, eds., *1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: New Testament*, vol. XII, Reformation Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 131.



others, their anger, violence, cowardice, cruelty, deceitfulness, dishonesty, egotism, self-publicity, hypocrisy, ingratitude, rudeness, intolerance, love of power, manipulativeness, exploitativeness, quarrelsomeness, self-deception, gullibility, selfishness, ruthlessness, self-pit, self-righteousness, snobbery, and vanity.<sup>13</sup> In a word, many of our academy, our most prized ivory-tower elites are complete and total jerks. Their consciences are severed, and their ideas are a fruit not merely of their minds, but of their *immorality*. Paul is saying that this must not be the way of it for a Christian, much less a pastor like Timothy. This is the heart of our passage, and as such it is the vital point.

Therefore I must ask you, **are you are Christian?** Is God your spiritual father? Have you come to the Lord through the command of Christ, heeded his call, repented of your sins, and trusted in his sacrifice to cover you? Further, **is your conscience clear?** That is, are you living an outward life of duplicity that anyone around you could see, but you do not want to recognize in yourself? This is not a word to the one already broken by their own sin, but rather to the proud and arrogant at heart who think they have none.

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<sup>13</sup> I found this list in a review of the book. “A Review of ‘Intellectuals,’ by **Paul Johnson**,” *Christian Conservative Perspective* (n.d.), <https://blogs.cornell.edu/ccperspective/home/review-of-intellectuals-by-paul-johnson/>. In Ryken, see p. 52.

# The Shipwreck

What does all this lead to? By “this,” I mean the **refusal to take seriously faith in Christ and your conscience**. I mean the **refusal to fight the good warfare**, and instead to engage wantingly in those kinds of controversies that do nothing but harm the faith of others, especially through the use of your tongue (or your keyboard). It leads to **the shipwrecking of the faith** (**1Tim 1:19**).

Notice that Paul contrasts Timothy whom he tells to wage the good warfare and hold faith and a good conscience with the two heretics who have “**rejected this**” and then immediately “**made shipwreck of their faith.**” Paul **understood shipwrecks**. He was in at least three (**2Co 11:25**)! In the one recorded in Acts, Luke tells us that the harbor in a place called “**Fair Havens**” (near the city of Lasea), was dangerous that time of year. Paul protested about going out, but was overruled by a *centurion* (that is, a man of war!). Nearly as soon as the 276 persons had set sail, a tempestuous northeaster struck, and their ship was driven along for fourteen days, finally striking a reef. **Shipwrecked** (see Acts 27). This is precisely what happens when you fail to look after your faith and conscience. Your bad conscience and

lack of faith create a perfect fog in your head. It is a fog that will not allow you to think clearly, to make proper decisions, to see spiritual direction. And, you eventually run aground on some uncharted desert isle, far from the church, far from God, far from eternal hope.

The only solution is to **turn to Christ** who like the warmth of the sun dispels the cloudy fog and sets your eyes firmly in the heavenlies, so that you can see where you are and where you must navigate. But if you will not, notice what the command is for the pastor to do. He is, like Paul himself, to **hand these people over to Satan**. This is the difficult doctrine of church discipline and with it we shall end.

Church discipline was called the **third mark of the church** by the Reformers, behind only the right preaching of the Word and the right administration of the sacraments. The church that does not discipline those who have gone astray on central, necessary doctrine is not a church. This is because it allows heresies and immorality to run amuck in God's temple, profaning it and removing its candlestick from the heavenly temple.

But notice what its purpose is. Many think it is **simply punitive**. It is that, but not in the way that a verdict of guilty

and a punishment of life in prison or death is in the secular counterpart. Rather, the hope is that the one being disciplined will “learn” not to do these sins (1Tim 1:20). Clearly, even these two characters have not committed the blasphemy *of the Holy Spirit*. The hope is that they might be restored. But restored to what?

Casting someone out of the congregation is handing them over to Satan. What this refers to is a casting them back into the world which is Satan domain. Jesus said, he is the prince of this world (John 14:28; 16:11). What someone with eyes to see understands here is that the world has no lasting eternal hope. It has no special revelation, no Gospel, no sacraments, no fellowship, no prayer, no means of grace, no way to be saved or sanctified by the only living God. It is the realm of darkness.

The casting of a person back into the world, under the authority of the principality of the air and darkness, to be his slave, away from the means of grace, away from the NT temple of God, is done in hopes that they might remember and that God might use what they have heard already to bring them to their senses. When that happens, the church is to return them to fellowship rather than forever shun them as brothers.

These are serious issues facing us here. A spiritual chain of command. Spiritual orders. A spiritual war. A spiritual fog. A spiritual shipwreck worse than any physical shipwreck to ever happen, because its consequences last for eternity. A spiritual disciplining. A hope for spiritual recovery. That is the charge Paul gives to Timothy. Pastors, elders, and churches must heed this message. In cases of discipline, it is the entire congregation that casts out. No one is off the hook. And the same goes for restoration.

Every Christian must hear and heed this command of our great God. This is the clear directive of where we are to steer. There is no fogginess in these words. The consequences could not be higher, because the war we are fighting could not be more important. This is especially true in days when so much of the professing church seems to no longer even be aware of what is being ordered by the Living God to his military personnel. But that is also nothing new. Listen to these amazing words of St. Basil the Great some 16,00 years ago.

What storm at sea was ever so fierce and wild as this tempest within the churches? In it every landmark of the Fathers has been moved. Every foundation, every bulwark

of opinion has been shaken. Everything buoyed up on the unsound is dashed about and shaken down. We attack one another. We are overthrown by one another. If our enemy is not the first to strike us, we are wounded by the comrade at our side. If an enemy soldier is stricken and falls, his fellow soldier tramples him down. There is at least this bond of union between us that we hate our common foes, but no sooner has the enemy gone by than we find enemies in one another. And who could make a complete list of all the wrecks? Some have gone to the bottom on the attack of the enemy, some through the unsuspected treachery of their allies, some from the blundering of their own officers. We see, as it were, whole churches, crews and all, dashed and shattered upon the sunken reefs of deceitful teaching, while others of the enemies of the Spirit of salvation have seized the helm and made shipwreck of the faith.

(Basil, *On the Spirit* 30.77)<sup>14</sup>

Let us not shipwreck his church or our faith, but let us spur one another on to love and good works through the power and fellowship of the Holy Spirit by God's grace.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Peter Gorday, *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 9. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 149.

<sup>15</sup> In researching the fog of war, I came across an interesting little blog article on the subject from a Christian who has many of the same ideas and Scriptures, and gives some very practical

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