

Fight the Good Fight

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[0:00] We're working our way through this epistle of Paul to his son in the faith, Timothy. 1 Timothy 1, and we'll begin reading at verse 12 and read to the end of the chapter.

I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display the whole of his patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Now to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

[1:24] Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them, you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience.

Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

Amen. Please turn again with me or keep your Bibles open there to 1st Timothy chapter 1. We'll be looking at verses 18 to 20 tonight, the very end of the first chapter, as Paul continues his exhortation, his encouragement to Timothy.

He talks about fighting in these verses. And war is something that we hear about often in these days. There's war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

And every day, terrorists are waging war against all who do not agree with their ideology. And though it has great cost, war is messy.

[2:39] It's painful. It requires sacrifice. The cost of not winning a war is far greater than the cost of fighting the war. Imagine if we had lost the war of independence, for example, the American Revolution.

Where would we be today? Not a sovereign, free nation enjoying the things that we do enjoy today. The cost was high. Many early Americans lost their lives.

Parents watched their children die. But had we not fought that war, we would not be what we are today. War is painful. It is agonizing. It is sacrificing work.

And as one who has not ever been to war, I can't begin to understand it. For me to say those things may ring empty and hollow to someone who has been in war.

But often the alternative of not fighting is far worse. And so it is with spiritual warfare. We know that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil and the heavenly realms.

[3:48] You see, every day Satan is waging war against the church, its ministers, its members seeking to destroy her. And if the church does not fight, the consequences will be devastating.

And so we must fight. And that's what Paul encourages Timothy to do here. Fight. Fight the good fight. Timothy's in a fight. He's facing opposition at Ephesus. There's false teachers.

People teaching things that are contrary to the truth. The very gospel is at stake. And so Paul's just taking time to remind Timothy of who he is. Remember, I was a sinner too, Paul.

And if God can save me and use me, and he explains the glorious gospel as he talks about that, then he can take you, Timothy, and he can use you.

And so don't grow weary in this fight. Don't grow tired of doing what I've commanded you to do. Stay at Ephesus and teach the truth. Don't get tired of that, Timothy. Yes, it's hard work. [4:47] But yes, and yes, there are obstacles. And yes, there may be discouragements. But don't stop. God, your spiritual well-being, the spiritual well-being of the church is at stake. And as it was for Timothy in Ephesians, so it is for us.

So I want us to be encouraged tonight to fight the good fight and to be warned of the danger of not fighting. There's a battle to be fought, and we must fight it.

And if we don't, there will be severe consequences that we see right here in these verses. And so may God enable us to endure a hardship like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

Notice again those final verses with me. Verses 18 through 20. Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction. This command, really. And it goes all the way back to the command that he gave back at the beginning of the chapter.

Stay there in Ephesus, so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines.

Timothy, my son, I give you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience.

[5:52] Some have rejected these, and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught, not to blaspheme.

The first thing we want to see as we look at these verses tonight is, one, you have enemies. You have enemies. That may seem obvious. It may seem basic. But it's something that we need to make clear.

Here, for Timothy, it's false teaching and teachers. Stay there, Timothy, and deal with these enemies that you have. And what a battle for this young man, this young Timothy, to take on.

Here are older men in the church. Men who have been around longer than Timothy has. Likely men who are respected in the church. And young Timothy has to come in and tell them that what they're teaching is false.

It's wrong. No, it's a tall order. But if left unchecked, their teaching is going to destroy the church by misusing the law and undermining the glorious gospel.

[6:48] The gospel that teaches us that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The truth is at stake because these false teachers were enemies of the truth. Here's Timothy's number one enemy.

At least the most obvious one is these people that are teaching false doctrine. And do you know that that's an enemy for us too? You know, we've got our doctrine down here. We've got our confession of faith. And we're good to go.

We don't need to worry about false doctrine. Oh, yes, we do. We don't need to worry about it, but we need to be aware of it. And we need to be aware that it's an enemy that would seek to destroy our church. Especially ministers like Timothy.

False teaching is popping up all over the place. And it often looks good. And it sounds good. And it's appealing to different people for different reasons. But anything that doesn't match up with the Scriptures must be rejected.

It must be fought against. And so we make it our aim to be aware of what popular ideas are current and how dangerous they are. And you too be vigilant. As you listen to teaching over the radio or on the TV.

[7:52] Some of those television evangelists, they're pretty dynamic. They're pretty engaging. It's almost like watching a train wreck. Sometimes you have to stop and watch them for a moment to see what they're saying.

Don't get sucked in if they're not teaching the truth. Listen. Filter everything you hear on sermons on the internet. CDs. The things you read. Filter it through God's Word. Just because something sounds good doesn't mean that it is good.

And by guarding ourselves at that point, maybe we can avoid getting to the point where Ephesus did. Not where these things were coming in from outside the church. There weren't people outside the church attacking it with false teaching. It was men right in the church.

False teaching being propagated by members of the church at Ephesus. And so we must be ready for such an enemy. Guarding ourselves now. And avoiding ever getting to that point.

But there was another enemy there. And it was the enemy of sin. Wicked living. It seems that there was something underlying the problem of the false teachers and their poor doctrine.

[8:53] And it was sin. And sin is a great enemy. We saw that it pays the wage of death. It's a fearsome enemy. We say, where is that in the text? How do you know that he was dealing with the enemy of sin?

Well, Paul talks about people who have rejected a good conscience. Timothy is to be holding on to the faith and a good conscience. Verse 19. But some have rejected these. Pointedly, some have rejected this.

This good conscience. In Scripture, a good conscience is possessed by those who live according to God's law. And hold to his truth.

By those whose consciences aren't condemning them because they're living contrary to what God has revealed. And those with whom Timothy was dealing had rejected a good conscience.

They were no longer concerned with obedience to God's law and his truth. Later, Paul will say of them that such teachings come through hypocritical liars whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

[9:53] These people had rejected a holy life, it seems. Their consciences no longer operating as they should. And having rejected holy living, sound doctrine didn't take long to follow.

And I want to take a moment to make an observation here. And that is often that what precedes deviation from the truth, the thing that comes before a doctrinal shift, is often a fall into sin.

People get caught up in some sin. They get tempted and they fall into sin. And then they begin to adjust their doctrine accordingly. To either justify their sin or to lessen the severity of it.

Or to change their view of God as a God of justice who punishes sin. Or to change their view of the law of God. To question the justice of God. To question the lawgiver himself.

To question the need for holiness in the life of the Christian. To become a carnal Christian. People will sin. And then to make their sin acceptable. They'll tweak their doctrine.

[10:56] They'll adjust it. So that it won't trouble them any longer. I remember a pastor friend of mine telling me about his son. And his son had grown up in the church.

And he had joined the church. And his son later came to him questioning some of the doctrines in the church. Dad, I don't see why we believe this. And I don't know why we believe this. And he was going to leave the church.

And his dad began to reason with him. And he said, from the scriptures, explaining what he had explained his whole life about these doctrines. And why they were true. And then he stopped. And he said, son. Have you been sleeping with the girl that you've been seeing?

It clicked all of a sudden. And the son said, yeah, dad, I have. He had fallen into sin. And then he had begun to adjust his doctrine accordingly.

To ease his conscience. And that's a sad, sad thing. Right here, Hymenaeus. Among them, those who have rejected a good conscience. And shipwrecked their faith.

[11:57] Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander. Hymenaeus, he's rejected a good conscience. And later we read about him in 2 Timothy. That he's wandered from the truth. He's teaching that the resurrection has already taken place.

He's spouting heresy. Rejected the good conscience. And then we find out that he has abandoned the truth. We have a subtle enemy at work. We must be prepared to fight against him.

He will tip away at our defenses against sin. Slowly eroding our good conscience. And then he'll begin to attack the truth we hold dear. That's the attack he took here in Ephesus. And he still uses that same approach.

And so our enemies are false teaching. Our enemies are sin. But also those who have fallen or are falling away into those sins. People like Hymenaeus and Alexander will be our enemies.

Now we long to see them restored. And we will. They will be our enemies though. These might be ones that we've long thought to be brothers and sisters in Christ.

[13:00] We might be tempted to go along with them in their sin and error. Because we like them as people. You know what? This is the person I've respected for so long. And he's the one teaching these things. And so if he's saying it, it must be right.

And that person can become our enemy by leading us astray. Instead, they must be warned. They must be told to repent of their sin. They must be told to stop teaching and believing lies.

And if they don't respond, they must be handed over to Satan, Paul says. Which I believe is a reference text communication. Putting them out of the church. We'll talk more about that in a moment. But this is going to require strength and resolve on our part.

We face a powerful enemy. These people will try to take us with them into sin and error. We have to be ready to resist. Here are these enemies. False teachings, sin. Those who are falling into sin. And ultimately, of course, it's Satan. Who is our enemy? We're fighting a spiritual battle. And as he attacked Adam and Eve at the very beginning, so he will come after you with his full arsenal, seeking to devour you.

[14:01] And sometimes, dear people, sometimes he succeeds. Hymenaeus and Alexander. Prime examples of those who succumb to the attacks of Satan.

And so we have enemies. Now, they may look different to different people. They may come in different forms. The temptation to sin will come from all quarters, all sorts of places, from peers, pressuring us to follow them, from friends who chuckle at our strict moral standards and ask what harm a few indiscretions will cause.

Temptations to violate our conscience will come from the sinful desires remaining in our own heart that are fed and fanned into flames by the culture around us, relentlessly attacking us.

Everybody gives in and indulges their lust occasionally. No big deal. So we slowly but surely are tempted to abandon our good conscience until one day you wake up and find that that conscience isn't operating anymore.

It's been seared. No longer troubles you. Oh, then you're well on your way to a tragic end. And so we say with Paul in Acts 24, I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

[15:13] The temptation to false doctrine might come differently. It might be blatant attacks on what we believe. Just people out and out saying, you're an idiot for believing in the sovereignty of God. There's no way God knows the future.

If He does, then He's a cruel, He's a vicious, He's not the kind of God that you want to serve. It may be blatant and upfront like that. It may be much more subtle. It may come doubts in our own mind. When we face tragedy, death, natural disaster, and we begin to question, how could God do something like that? How could He allow something like that to happen? And doubts may creep in that way.

We might begin to wonder about our total deprivation. Maybe I really am a good person. Look at all the good that all of these bad people in the world do. Maybe I'm not that bad after all. Maybe I can contribute to my justification.

All sorts of ways. The health and wealth gospel may get a hold of you. Oh, just have faith and you'll prosper. You'll have all the material benefit you need. That's appealing to a lot of people.

[16:14] There's that cultural influence still. The ones that said you need to have more money, more things. And you get sucked into that. You begin to think, I do need to have more money. I do need more things. And then along comes a preacher.

Somebody talking from the Scriptures and they say, if you want more money and you want more stuff, then you just need more faith. And you need to give to my ministry. And when you plant that seed in my ministry, then it's going to grow and multiply in your life.

And health and wealth. And all of a sudden it's snuck in the back door because already you've been tempted to sin, to covet, to hastily gain wealth, which Proverbs says makes itself wings and flies away.

It might come in that way. All sorts of ways false teaching will infiltrate the church. It's a subtle enemy we face. But the point is that we have enemies. And so the second thing that we see is that we must fight.

You have enemies, first of all. Secondly, you must fight. And it's a good fight. There are fights worth fighting, good ones, and there are bad fights worth not fighting. When I think of bad fights that aren't worth fighting, I think of my boys.

[17:19] And the fight over a toy. And how insignificant it is. And how pointless it is. And how foolish it is. And how if they would just take turns, then they could both play with the toy.

It's so simple to us adults. And then we find that we have our petty arguments too. But the arguments, they'll argue over the words in a silly song.

Oh, this is the word. No, it is this. And he's very adamant about it. That's not a fight worth fighting. There's no point to it. It's not a good fight. But there are good fights.

There are fights that are worth fighting. There are hills where we must plant our flag and take our stand and say, here I stand, I can do no other. Rest assured that the fight to maintain the faith and a good conscience is a good fight and one to which you must give yourself with every ounce of

energy and strength.

We have enemies. And such enemies require that we go to war. Paul will repeat it. It's so important. He repeats it for Timothy in the same letter. 1 Timothy 6. But you, man of God, flee from all of this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

[18:31] Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you were made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. And he'll say it again in 2 Timothy, encouraging him to endure hardship like a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

It's a good fight. You must fight it. And a fight like that will require sacrifice. Just like a war requires sacrifice. We're going to have to cut off right hands and pluck out right eyes.

Giving up things that are dear to us. Friendships may have to be sacrificed. Timid people like Timothy may have to confront strong-willed leaders. Something that's very uncomfortable for somebody like Timothy that was not a strong personality.

Ministers will have to call on people living in their sin to repent. Risk not enjoying the favor of men. Not an easy thing to do. That requires fight.

When you see preachers telling people only what their itching ears want to hear, only talking about God's love and His wonderful help and blessing in their lives, but never confronting them with the hard reality of temptation and their sin, you can be confident that there's not any warfare going on there.

[19:43] There's no fight going on there. There's no sacrifice being made which is exactly the way people want it. People don't like sacrifice. They don't like to have to think about fighting.

And so if a preacher says, well, I just don't believe I'm called to preach about sin. I've heard him say that. With my own ears. Great big church. Somebody asked him, why don't you talk about those negative things?

He said, well, I don't feel like I'm called to preach about those things. Well, then you're not called to preach. Because God says it's a battle. And you're going to have to call your people to battle. Church like that doesn't need a letter like the one to Timothy. There's no Timothy there to fight the good fight. No parishioners willing to stand up and take the battle standard. They don't want to fight. They need a letter like the one to the church in Sardis that says, a church that's given up on the fight, I know your deeds.

You have a reputation of being alive. But you are dead. Wake up. Strengthen what remains and is about to die. For I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.

[20:48] How many churches have a reputation for being alive? But are actually dead. They're full of people that don't know what sacrifice is. That don't know what spiritual warfare is.

That don't know what sin is. That don't know what temptation is. And don't know what it is to battle those things. They'd rather give in to it. And not have to think about it. And not have to deal with it. And just be told that everything is okay.

That makes people feel good. But it's not what God's Word says. God's Word tells us that we're in a battle. A fight. That we must fight.

And what we see here is that there are terrible consequences for not fighting. We may think that war is ugly. And it is. When we noted earlier, what would have happened if the Americans had not sacrificed?

Early Americans and not sacrificed for the American Revolution. What if today we were to give up on the war on terror? Bring all our troops home. What might that do? Well, less troops would die.

[21:45] All of the bad headlines would go away about death and suffering. And there would be no sacrifice. And everybody would be happy. For a while. But then the consequences in the long run of terror reigning even here at home are, I believe, far worse.

With the potential for Americans dying again by the thousands like they did on 9-11. And there are consequences to not fighting, to not being willing to make the sacrifice. But our soft society doesn't like sacrifice.

It does like immediate gratification. It likes ease and pleasantness. And so we don't like war, whether it's the war on terror or the war on sin. What's true in society is now being reflected in the church.

We don't like the hard work we have to put in. We'd rather have it easy here and now. But to take this approach in our war against sin and Satan is even greater a tactical mistake than not fighting a war against terrorists.

That's why itching ear preachers are so dangerous. They're leading a generation of churchgoers to their doom. By not telling them the truth of God's Word.

[22 : 55] By letting them go easily on their way, happily. Never pricking their conscience. Never pressing them on matters of life and godliness and faith.

And so what happens when you give up the fight? What happens when you reject a good conscience? When you say, I want it easy. I don't want to have to deal with sin. I'm just going to live in it and it's going to be okay. Because everything's okay. Because I'm happy.

Because God is all good and all love. What happens when you reject the good conscience? When you give up the fight? Well, what happened to Hymenaeus and Alexander?

When you make shipwreck of your faith. Some have given in to temptation. Allowed sin to take over their lives.

They've abandoned the truth. The faith once for all delivered to the saints. And so they've abandoned their trust, their faith in Jesus. The one who came into the world to save sinners. You see where this path leads.

[23 : 51] It starts with just a bit of innocent temptation to a little sin. And it grows bigger and bigger. And so what happens? You've shipwrecked your faith. Shipwreck's not a pretty sight.

It is a vivid illustration though. A ship once strong. Floating above the water. Carrying its cargo and passengers. Coast to coast. Back and forth across the ocean.

Strikes a reef. Or an iceberg. And begins to take on water. Water begins to pour into the ship's hold. And eventually the ship sinks. And it goes down to the bottom of the ocean to be left there.

Not to be brought up again. I've seen a shipwreck before. I've been able to snorkel over a shipwreck. And dive down into it. And there's a sense of finality to it.

That ship wasn't ever coming back up from the bottom of where I saw it in the Caribbean. There's things growing all over. It's been there for years. It's not a pretty sight. It's a frightening sight. Even more frightening to think about that's what could happen to your faith.

[24 : 56] Faith. Frightening to think of my faith sunk down to the bottom of the sea like a shipwreck. And that thought ought to awaken you to the potential for this within your own heart.

A shipwreck of faith. Which leads to death. Maybe this catches you at just the right time. You've begun to indulge in a little bit of sin. You don't see the harm in it.

Look and see where it could lead. Look where it led these two men. Fight against that sin. Cut it off. Maybe you're farther beyond that. You're already indulging some gross sin.

Your conscience is already hardened to it. You've started to adjust your theology around it. Not to justify the sin so much you know it's wrong. But to lessen the severity of it in your mind. You can even begin to twist justification by faith alone.

Say, I can't do anything to contribute to my salvation. So I'm just going to live any way I want.

Because my works aren't going to save me anyway. And to begin to think a holy life isn't important. Necessary.

[25 : 52] Maybe you're indulged in sin as pride. You're proud of how well you keep God's law. And you begin to think, well, it's not all God. It's God and me. Stop.

Do you see where you're going? Shipwreck is coming. And what follows shipwreck? Hand such a one over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. Again, I believe it's a reference to excommunication.

And I want to be careful here. We don't believe that you can lose your salvation. And so I don't want anyone here who has no reason to question their assurance of salvation to do that. But the scriptures do teach us that some who give every appearance of having believed in the Savior will prove to be false professors.

They will shipwreck their faith. And so when we come to such a text, we need to take a look at ourselves and make sure we're not a false professor to make sure our faith is genuine and not subject to shipwreck.

But when we do find such a one in our midst who's made shipwreck of their faith, who persists in their sin, their rebellion, their blasphemy, who remains unrepentant despite the efforts of the church to bring them back and restore them, we must, as Paul says, hand them over to Satan.

[27 : 06] And when you look at the parallel in 1 Corinthians 5, it seems clear that this is a reference to putting them out of the church. Excommunication. Excommunication. Putting them out of the realm where Christ is head into the realm of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now

at work and those who are disobedient.

Ephesians 2.2. Satan, though his power is limited, still does have power in this world. And to hand someone over to him is to put them out of the church into the world.

But you notice the purpose isn't for their destruction. It's for their good. Here that they might be taught not to blaspheme them. In 1 Corinthians 5, it's so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and a spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

It's redemptive. The aim of church discipline is to correct the problem, to restore the one in sin, to bring them back, to bring them to repentance. Apparently, some shipwrecks can be salvaged.

Praise the Lord. Dredged up from the bottom of the sea, repaired and made seaworthy again.

Sadly, that's not always what happens, but it is the goal. That's what's coming if you turn away from a good conscience.

[28:13] Shipwreck. Being put out of the church. That's what's coming if you're not willing to fight the good fight of faith. Pressing on towards the goal. Dealing with your sin. Sacrificing.

Doing the hard work. But if I were to leave you there, it would be to leave you unequipped. Not ready to fight the battle. And so you have enemies and you must fight, but thirdly and in the last place, God has provided all that you need for the fight.

You're not left to fight the battle alone. And so don't be discouraged tonight. We don't have to worry or fear. All we need for the fight has been supplied for us. If you want to know more about the armor that God gives us, go back and read again Ephesians 6.

Here we're just going to touch on some of the things mentioned in this passage. And the first is strength. We go back up to verse 12 for that. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength. Then Paul talks about how he's been put into service.

Difficult service. It's been a fight for him. But the strength comes from the Lord. Ephesians 6.10

Finally be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. If you should go and try to fight this battle, this war against sin and temptation and false teaching and Satan, and you say, I'm going to do it in my own strength because I'm strong enough.

[29:27] One of those independent types. Then you're going to fail. You go into battle depending upon the Lord and on His strength. And His strength alone.

No temptation. Here's the kind of strength God can give you. No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

That's the sort of strength God provides. So when the temptation comes, you rely on Him. Not your own strength. But something else Paul reminds Timothy of is prophecy.

On this verse 18 again. Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them, so that by them, by these prophecies, you may fight the good fight.

Well, what does that mean? How does prophecy help you fight a fight? Well, it seems that God had especially revealed to Paul and other elders that Timothy was to be set aside for the ministry.

[30:30] We'll read later in chapter 4 and verse 14. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. There have been prophecies made about Timothy that he was going to be a faithful minister of the gospel.

And so he was ordained and put into gospel ministry. And Paul says, Timothy, I know that you're discouraged. I know that you're facing these attacks in Ephesus.

And it makes you want to quit. It makes you want to throw in the towel. I've been there, Paul can say. But he says, don't forget that what you are doing is God's will. This was prophesied about you. It is for you, Timothy, to be teaching these men, to be correcting them, to be training them for godliness. It is for you to stand up to them. This is what God called you to do. Don't quit.

Don't quit. It's God's calling on your life. And so you take that prophecy. You take that promise of God and you take it to battle. Don't quit. Remember that this is what God has for you.

[31:27] And surely that was a great blessing and a battle like the one Timothy was facing. A reminder that this is God's will for him. Take that into battle. Now, we don't have prophecies like that specifically with our names that have been made concerning us.

But ministers, for example, today do have the confirmation of the church that they've been called to the ministry to do that work. And so we must not grow weary in seeking to protect the flock from attack, correcting those who go astray, keeping others from going astray, guarding our own hearts.

We must fight the good fight. It's our calling. And Christians, all of us may not be called to public ministry, but you are called to follow Christ until he takes you home.

You are called to fight the battle. And you take that to heart next time you think you're too worried to pick up the sword of the spirit, the word of God. You call it to mind that it is for you to fight this fight, that this is your calling.

Next time Satan comes with his attack and you think, I don't have the strength to lift my shield of faith. You remember that that is what God has called you to. It was God's will that Paul served or that Timothy served him in Ephesus.

[32 : 36] And for you, what is God's will for you? What what prophecy, what promise can you take into battle? First Thessalonians four verse three. It is God's will. OK, you want to know what God's will for your life is?

A lot of people want to know what God's will for their life is. Here it is. It is God's will that you should be sanctified, that you should avoid sexual immorality, that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen who do not know God.

OK, next time you're tempted, tempted to ignore your conscience, ringing all the bells, it's wrong, it's wrong, Aaron, don't do it. You're tempted to ignore. You remember, you know what?

It is God's will that I be sanctified and lay aside this wickedness and reject that temptation and no longer live like the world. God, give me strength. That's your will for me. I'm in the right fight.

This is the right battle. I'm where I'm supposed to be. Don't begin to think for a second. You know what? This Christian life is not all it's cracked up to be. There's too much fight. There's too much temptation.

[33 : 41] I can't do it. No, you can do it. God has called you to do it. And the one who has called you is faithful and he will strengthen you for the task. And so you take that promise. You you come up with another promise.

When you feel all alone, God will never leave me or forsake me. That's his will. He's not going to leave me. And so I believe that I'm going to take that promise. I'm going to go. And when you get tired of facing the sinful world, you take a hold of the promise that says Jesus is coming again one day.

Say, I don't believe it. It doesn't look like he's coming in the world. It's going to pot and and it's a mess. And there's no sign that Jesus is coming back. No, God's word tells us he is coming back.

So you take that and you say it is God's will for me to be in this world until I die or until Jesus comes again living for him. Oh, you take the prophecies, Timothy.

You take the promises that were made to you, dear people of God, so that by following them, by holding on to those promises, you may fight the good fight. You take those things into battle with you and they will be your encouragement, your strength.

[34 : 46] John Calvin says, what is there that either ought to give or can give us greater cheerfulness than to know that God has appointed us to do what we're doing? He says it should make us happy, knowing that God has appointed us to do the very thing we're doing.

We're walking this Christian life and it's hard and it's difficult. We begin to get discouraged and think maybe I've gone down the wrong path. No, God has set you on this path and now let's bring joy to your heart and encouragement in the battle strength to lift that shield of faith.

One more time, pick up the sword of the spirit. One more time and go back to his word. You take those promises into battle. God has given you, he's equipped you with strength, he's equipped you with his promises.

And then there's the weapon of a good conscience, holding on to faith in a good conscience.

Timothy, don't let go of these things. The battle must be won here. A good conscience is an excellent weapon in the war against sin.

Temptation comes and your conscience says, no, you cannot do this great evil thing before God and men. What a blessed thing our conscience is. Sometimes we don't think so because it troubles us, it torments us, it causes us to stay awake at night with guilt over sin unrepentant of.

[35 : 57] But how many times has your conscience stopped you in your trek towards sin? How many times has it restrained your evil desire or kept you awake at night? That's God's blessing to you, that good conscience.

Don't ever let it become dulled and certainly don't ever let it become seared to where it doesn't function at all. If you feel that coming, it's no longer doing its work. Open your eyes. See what sin has gotten a hold of you so that you no longer see its sinfulness. Pray that your conscience might not be dulled and seared so that you don't lose this powerful ally in the war against sin.

You're going to fight a good fight. You're going to need a good conscience. Don't reject it. Hold on to it. And faith. Hold on, Timothy. Holding on to faith and a good conscience.

And faith. Here's our hope and trust. Our complete and utter reliance upon the Savior who came to save the likes of us. And what a blessed thing this is.

[36:54] Again, we don't rest in our own strength. We trust someone else. We trust our Jesus. The one who's already dealt the death blow to our greatest enemy, Satan. He did it at the cross.

And he is going to come again. And he's going to finish that. That defeat that was begun at the cross. He's going to utterly destroy Satan once and for all. That's who our hope and our faith, our trust is in.

The Prince of Peace is our ally. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, our defender. The King is our protector. And our trust is in Him. And so don't let go of your faith. There's a strong weapon in the battle against sin and Satan.

Shield of faith. And this great Jesus who has fought the fight for us and walks through us in the battle every step of the way. Never let go of your faith.

Guard your heart, your mind, your conscience. And so make no shipwreck of your faith. And God help us then to fight the good fight. May He make us good soldiers. With Christ Jesus.

[37:57] May He strengthen us. We have enemies. And so we must fight. There's severe consequences for not fighting. But praise God that He's equipped us for the fight. He's given us everything that we need.

But some here don't even care about the fight. Utterly unequipped for the battle. And so you're losing it. Satan has you in his grasp. You're actually fighting for the wrong side.

You couldn't resist Satan if you wanted to. And so it's hopeless for you. You're the kind of person that's beyond the reach of the Savior. I hope that didn't sound right.

Because it's not. You're exactly the kind of person Jesus came to save. He came to free people from bondage to sin and Satan. He came to set men free.

He came to defeat Satan. And to deliver. And to save those who are lost. He came to save people like you. You come running to Christ tonight. And He will save you.

[38:59] And then He'll go with you every step of the way. Into battle. Yes, it's a battle. I won't sugar coat it for you tonight. It's a war. But it's a blessed thing. Knowing that you're on the right side of the battle.

Knowing that you're headed for glory. Knowing that victory in Christ is guaranteed. Knowing that He will win. Death and defeat are guaranteed for those who reject Christ.

Victory guaranteed for those who are in Christ. Which will it be for you? You come and trust in this Christ tonight. You put your faith in Him. And you too can have a good conscience. The conscience that has bothered you so much up until now.

That you try to bury. But even in those moments. It bubbles back to the surface. It makes you feel guilty. You can lay that all to rest. By coming to Christ tonight. Come and join our happy band.

We're marching to Emmanuel's land. It's a fight. A battle. But it's a joyous one. Because on the other side is glory. There's a heaven to be gained. A hell to be shunned.

[39:58] So come and join us in the fight. Let's pray together. Our Father we pray that you would give us grace. To put on the full armor of God. So that when the day of evil comes.

We may be able to stand our ground. And after having stood to stand. We pray that you would arm us for the fight. That you would make us strong for the battle. We pray that we might fight.

If not in our own strength. In our own wisdom. But that we might cast ourselves upon the Savior.

Upon Christ. May we go to war with faith. Faith and a good conscience as our weapons.

We thank you that you've given us the truth of your word. The promises of your word. May we take these with us. And we thank you that we go in your strength. And so we pray that as we go. Even this week into the world.

That you would guard us from sin and temptation. That you would prepare us to fight against them. To beat them back. To resist them. To not give in to false teaching. That we might not succumb to

the snares of the devil.

[40:53] Arm us and strengthen us. That we might bring glory to your name. And the way that we fight this good fight. That you have set before us. Give us hearts that are willing to sacrifice. Hearts that are willing to do the hard right.

To forsake the easy wrong. Give us grace to walk in the way that you've marked out before us. And give grace to some here tonight. To come and trust in the Savior. That they might find you their hope.

Their trust. And their salvation. May they come and find forgiveness of their sins. And then a willingness to walk this road with us. Fighting the fight. So that you might be honored and praised. We ask it in Jesus' name. And for his glory. Amen.