

# 1 Timothy

## I. Introduction

A. **1 Timothy 1:17-20** . . . Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. [18] This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, [19] keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. [20] Among these are Hymenaeus (*high meh NEE uhs*) and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

### B. Pray

## II. Proclaiming the greatness of God for His mercy; keeping faith and a good conscience so as not to suffer spiritual shipwreck.

A. [17] Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

1. Paul preceded this statement about the uniqueness of God, the greatness of God, and the worth of God with an acknowledgment of the greatness of his own sinfulness and unworthiness to receive any measure of mercy and grace from God. And so to get the most out of these descriptions of God, let us consider them from an awareness of our own sinfulness and unworthiness.

### 2. Now to the King eternal

a. A uniqueness of God is that He is eternal in both directions. He has no beginning and no end. He is not only the King of the ages who will reign forever, He has reigned forever.

b. To give you a sense of what forever means, **Psalm 10:16** says “The LORD is King forever and ever; nations have perished from His land.” Consider the life-span of a nation like China – yet God was King before it existed and will still be King when it ends.

### 3. Now to the King immortal

a. As our immortal King, He is indestructible, incorruptible, and imperishable. God cannot die or become non-existent. Here again, God is unique, for no other King possess immortality.

b. Paul affirms this in **1 Timothy 6:15b-16**, “He...is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, [16] who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light,

whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

4. **Now to the King invisible**

- a. Our King cannot be seen by human eyes or any device humans can devise.
- b. In the introduction to his gospel, John writes, “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God (*Jesus*) who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained [God] (*given us a visual of what God is like*)” (**John 1:18**).
- c. Paul affirms that Jesus gave us a visual understanding of what God is like when he said “[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (**Colossians 1:15**). So though no one can see God, we can see what God is like in Jesus.
- d. There is however, another side to this. When Moses asked to see God’s glory, God agreed to show Moses His glory, but said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!” (**Exodus 33:20**) I take this to mean that seeing God with human eyes would be so overwhelming to our human mind and body that we would die from the experience.

5. **Now to the King who is the only God**

- a. There are many so-called gods that people look to or pray to or depend on or serve in some way. But there is only one God – or as Jesus said in **John 17:3b**, He is “**the only true God.**”
- b. In other words, we have no other “god” options, because there is no other God than Yahweh.

6. **be honor and glory forever and ever**

- a. Those who recognize that God is worthy of honor do so because they see that His character, thoughts, words, deeds, and ways of dealing with humanity are of such an unequalled quality as to deserve the highest forms of reverence, awe, deference, and worship.
- b. Those who give God glory and want Him to be glorified by others do so because they see that His words, deeds, use of power, and His judgements are worthy of praise, honor, and admiration.

7. How do you see God? I am not asking how you speak or sing about God when you are exalting Him or praising Him. I am asking how you see God – in the good times and the bad, when healthy and when sick, when free of pain or when suffering, when happy or when broken hearted. How do you see God? Do you see Him as worthy of being honored and glorified in any and every situation?

- B. [18] This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance (*in agreement*) with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight . . .
1. Though it is not perfectly clear, it is probable that the command Paul is referring to is found in **vs 3-5**, where Paul reminds Timothy of the two more prominent reasons they left him in Ephesus.
    - a. **First**, to silence those who were teaching strange doctrines, spreading myths as if they were scripture truths, and using genealogies to determine one's standing with God and in the church.
    - b. **Second**, to ensure that the goal of the church's teaching is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.
  2. That Paul entrusted this work to Timothy demonstrates Paul's confidence that Timothy was worthy of such trust.
    - a. We see the extent of Paul's trust in Timothy when he explained to the church in Philippi that he hoped to send Timothy to them because he had no one else of kindred spirit who would genuinely be concerned for their spiritual well-being (**Philippians 2:20**).
    - b. And here in **vs 18**, Paul affirms that his trust in Timothy is supported by what was prophesied about him when the church elders prayed over him and laid their hands on him before placing him into ministry.
    - c. Are you a trustworthy servant of Jesus Christ? Am I a trustworthy servant? Can God, or the leadership of the church, or your fellow believers depend on you? Can you depend on me? These are questions worth considering, for as the next part of this verse says, we are in a war – fighting for the honor of God, the purity of the message, the edification of one another, and the spiritual health of the church.
  3. After confirming his trust in Timothy to carry out his commands in **vs 3-5**, Paul reminds Timothy to use the gifts and abilities given to him by God – through the pre-ministry prophecies – to fight the good fight.
    - a. The **first** thing to notice about the phrase, “fight **the** good fight,” is the use of the word “the.” It is, fight **THE** good fight, not fight **A** good fight. This indicates that the fight is actually an ongoing war, not a single or momentary battle.
    - b. The **second** thing to notice is that the war is not just any war, it is the good war. People, including Christians, can fight over

many things – some of them are important issues, but many of them are frivolous, temporary, or unworthy of fighting over.



- c. The fight within the church that is worthy, important, vital, and therefore **good** is the fight for the spiritual health of the church, which includes fighting for the honor of God, the purity and practical application of the message, the unity of the Body, loving one another, continued growth toward spiritual maturity, and becoming Christ-like – individually and corporately.
4. What do you think is worth fighting over?
  - a. Sadly, many Christians are quick to fight over issues that threaten their sense of security and well-being, their position or importance in the church or home, their ability to control, their desire for respect, and their freedom to be self-ruled.
  - b. Yet when it comes to fighting the good fight for the spiritual health and well-being of the church, many Christians are slow to start and quick to quit.
  - c. In other words, when the issue threatens them and their sense of need or control, they fight. But when the issue threatens the truth of God's word, the integrity of the message, the spiritual quality of the leadership, the genuineness of worship, or the spiritual health of the church in general, they are not so interested in getting involved.
5. Before leaving **vs 18**, I want to point out that Paul's exhortation to fight the good fight is an exhortation to protect and defend what ought to be. In other words, it is not for taking what God has not

given. Rather, it is for ensuring that what God has given continues to be what God intended it to be.

- C. When it comes to fighting the good fight – or any fight for that matter, it is important that we remain true to God, His word, and the ways of godliness. Therefore, Paul begins **vs 19** by saying, “keeping faith and a good conscience.”
1. In other words, keep a firm grip on your faith and on a good conscience as you fight the good fight.
    - a. To keep a firm grip on faith means keeping a firm grip on your trust in God to equip you, empower you, sustain you, and bring good out of the individual battles and the war. And to trust in this way means using only godly ways and means when fighting.
    - b. To keep a firm grip on a good conscience means refusing to compromise what you know is right and good – so that you do not go against what a good conscience would approve or do what a good conscience would condemn.
  2. Possibly we can sum this up this way: when fighting the good fight (*or when fighting any fight*), do not compromise your faith or your conscience, that is, do not stray from the truth of God’s word, do not abandon love, compassion, and mercy, and never – regardless of how bad things look – resort to ungodly ways or use ungodly means to win a battle or protect yourself in battle.
    - a. Without question, fighting according to these rules and conditions requires a trust in God like David’s trust in God when he fought Goliath.
    - b. Therefore, to remain godly when fighting the good fight you must trust that the all-powerful, all-wise, always present, and always victorious God is backing you up so that there is no reason for you to resort to any ungodly ways or means in battle.
- D. In the second half of **vs 19**, Paul makes it clear that keeping a firm grip on faith and a good conscience when fighting the good fight is vital because “some have rejected [complete trust in God and the importance of a good conscience] and [as a result have] suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith (*Christianity or Christian life*).”
1. The reality is, war has a powerful effect on those doing the fighting – even if it is a good war. And those powerful effects can change us for the better or the worse. However, the effects of war on fighters most often changes them for the worse.

2. Therefore, if we are not vigilant and careful about keeping a firm grip on our faith and on our good conscience, then what we see and experience on the battlefield will likely lead to some measure of distrust of God and a compromised conscience.
  3. Once we have allowed distrust of God to enter in and have compromised our good conscience, we open ourselves up to using all sorts of ungodly ways and means in an effort to win battle after battle in order to win the war.
  4. Are you aware of how easily, and even quickly, fighting with those around you – even when it is for a good cause – can change your demeanor, thinking, attitudes, words, and actions from what is godly to what is unloving, unkind, mean spirited, and therefore ungodly?
    - a. Don't ever think that you can come out of battle as godly as you went in without intentionally keeping a firm grip on your faith and good conscience.
    - b. Doing battle has the profound ability to change us – and unless we are intentionally clinging to God and His ways while fighting, it will change us for the worse, or as Paul says, it will shipwreck us in regard to our faith.
- E. Finally, Paul provides two examples of Christians who suffered shipwreck by fighting for something in the wrong way. [20] Among these are Hymenaeus (*high meh NEE uhs*) and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.
1. We can reasonably conclude from the context that Hymenaeus and Alexander were fighting for the acceptance of their strange doctrines, the acceptance of myths as Biblical truths, and the use of genealogies to determine one's standing in the church and with God.
  2. If this is correct, then we can conclude they were fighting a wrong fight in ungodly ways.
    - a. The proof they were fighting the wrong fight comes from vs 3-5.
    - b. The proof they were fighting in ungodly ways is seen in Paul's confirmation that their way of fighting demonstrated distrust of God and the compromising of their conscience.
  3. As to their blaspheme, we can only guess that Paul is referring to their misrepresentations of God's character, ways, and word that would lead other Christians to think and speak of God as if He is imperfect, or as if He has some measure of evil in Him, or as if He is not fully trustworthy – or in other words, as if there is something

- in God or something God does or doesn't do that can be used as a reason to think less of Him.
4. And finally, handing Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan probably means removing them from church life so as to end their influence within the church – which would also end the church's efforts to correct them. Therefore, they would be left to their self-destructive ways, which in time would cause them to experience the destructive effects of their foolish ways, and hopefully cause them to see that the devil's only goal is to bring them with him into hell.

### III. Conclusion

- A. Never underestimate the importance of your view of God. How you see God powerfully influences how you see yourself in relation to God, how you relate to God, the degree to which you trust God, and the degree to which you live in accordance to God's will and word.
- B. Never underestimate the power of fighting with others to change you. Therefore, I urge you to intentionally cling to God and His ways while fighting so that the fighting does not change you for the worse, because if it does, it will lead to your being shipwrecked in regard to your faith.
- C. And finally, when fighting the good fight (*or when fighting any fight*), do not compromise your faith or your conscience, that is, do not stray from the truth of God's word, do not abandon love, compassion, and mercy, and never – regardless of how bad things look – resort to ungodly ways or use ungodly means to win a battle or protect yourself in battle.