

How To Prevent Spiritual Shipwreck **1 Timothy 1:19-20**

Introduction:

1. Paul likened the Christian life to army combat in verse 18. He told young Timothy to war a good warfare. The last few weeks we answered the question, “How can we win the spiritual battle that we are in here on earth?”
2. But Paul changed the analogy from army to navy. Paul did not want Timothy to end up spiritually shipwrecked (vs. 19). This word “*shipwreck*” is so descriptive, and carries the idea of being stranded.
 - Webster’s says that this word “*shipwreck*” symbolically carries the idea of loss and failure. I believe this is the idea Paul is conveying here in our text.
3. Paul even mentions two men by name that had experienced spiritual shipwreck. They had experienced what Paul stated in verse 6. They had swerved off course and ended up shipwrecked.
4. This can happen to anybody in his or her Christian life. It is so easy to get caught up in the wrong things and get off track. When we take our eyes off of Jesus Christ and the truth of His Word, we can end up in so much trouble, stranded and shipwrecked spiritually.
5. We can find ourselves in total bondage to Satan, living in a way and saying things that are blasphemous (evil; not in accordance with truth).
6. How do you prevent this from happening in your life?

First, by holding firmly to your faith

1. Paul tells Timothy to war a good warfare (vs. 18) and then immediately after this says, “*Holding faith...*”
2. I think so many times we misunderstand what biblical faith is. Faith is not wishful thinking. It is not the power of positive thinking. It is not a magical genie bottle.
3. Faith is exercising a complete, unwavering confidence in God and in God’s Word.
4. Hebrews 11:6 makes it clear how essential this issue of faith is. You cannot please God without it. You cannot pray without it. Did you notice how faith and prayer go hand in hand?
 - If I believe that God is God, and if I have the utmost confidence that God will honor His Word, then I naturally will seek Him daily.
5. Satan desires to undermine our faith.
 - Satan wants to deceive believers into doubting God’s character, doubting God’s Word, doubting God’s goodness, etc.
6. Your faith should be growing each and every day. 1 Thessalonians 3:10; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:3
7. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Romans 10:17
8. How can we have faith in God if we do not know what God has said? This is why Satan does not want your nose in this Book! He wants to keep you away from it

so that you will possess a weak, unstable faith, and ultimately end up spiritually shipwrecked.

Second, by keeping a good conscience

1. People do not end up spiritually shipwrecked suddenly. It is a gradual drifting off course whereby a person's faith begins to wane and his conscience becomes defiled, so that it no longer registers as it once did.
2. Conscience is that within us which enables us to distinguish between right and wrong. Romans 2:15
 - Conscience is what separates man from animals. Mankind has a conscience that tells him that things are good or evil, right or wrong, moral or immoral.
3. But conscience **must** be instructed. The apostle Paul was living in good conscience when persecuting believers before his salvation. He thought it was an evil religious system, and therefore persecution was the right thing to do. His conscience had not been properly instructed.
4. How do we instruct our conscience? Through God's Word!
5. Do you see how these first two points go together? God's Word is what grows our faith (confidence) in God, which, in turn, instructs our conscience and keeps it pure. 1:5
6. When truth is ignored or rejected it results in a weakened faith, which can result in a seared conscience (1 Timothy 4:1-2). Like flesh which has been seared with a hot iron, it no longer responds, and conscience can no longer be depended upon.
7. When this happens there is no limit to how far a person can plunge into wickedness. The word "*shipwreck*" aptly describes the person whose conscience has been defiled and seared. Titus 1:15-16

Third, by rightly dividing God's Word

1. Paul names two men that had become spiritually shipwrecked (vs. 20). Things had gotten so bad that Paul was forced to exercise some sort of apostolic discipline. These men had received some sort of formal apostolic reproof and excommunication.
2. Why did Paul do this? He did it for the men's good ("*...that they may learn not to blaspheme*"). He also did it for the good of the church. If cancer is not addressed, it spreads. Paul did not want these men's false doctrine spreading.
3. Their false teaching revolved around the issue of the resurrection of the saints. They were teaching it had already happened. 2 Timothy 2:15, 17-18
4. Please note, it was not that they were denying the resurrection of the saints. They were not denying a belief in Christ or the Bible. They were simply failing to rightly divide God's Word, and they were misplacing the resurrection, saying it was past.
5. This would mean that we were in the tribulation, or the kingdom. This, of course, would undermine all of Paul's teachings to the church. They were teaching that

we are no longer in the time of grace, and their wrong division of the resurrection would then lead to a host of other false teachings.

6. What is the point? We must ingest God's Word if our faith is to grow and if our conscience is to be instructed and pure, but we must follow God's prescribed method of how to study the Bible – rightly dividing the Word of truth.
7. If not, we can end up getting sucked into false doctrine and end up spiritually shipwrecked.

In Conclusion:

1. These men in our text were not good soldiers. They had gone AWOL. They were traitors. They were defectors. They had gotten caught up in a web of false doctrine and had become spiritual shipwrecks.
2. God desires faithfulness from His children. So many times people will get on fire for God, but then they quit or get off track. A few years later they are back, but then fizzle out again quickly.
3. When we stand before the Lord one day, the dominant issue will be one of faithfulness. Let's not become spiritual shipwrecks. Let's hold to our faith, keep a good conscience, and rightly divide God's Word.