

Winning The Spiritual Battle (Part 4) **1 Timothy 1:15-20**

Introduction:

1. Many preachers today make a living off of telling people what they **want** to hear. They tell people that it is God's will that they be prosperous, healthy, wealthy, and basically have a problem-free life.
2. This sounds very appealing, and people are drawn to this type of teaching. The problem with it is very simple. It is not scripturally accurate! It is false doctrine. It also gives people false hopes, and when problems **do** come (and they will), it devastates them.
3. Here is the reality: the Christian life is likened to a battle, not a Bahamas cruise. Here in our text, Paul reinforces this truth to young Timothy. 1:18
4. There are twelve "charges" in this book, and this is one of them. A "charge" is a mandate or a command. Notice that Paul charges Timothy to war a good warfare. It sounds to me like Timothy is in a battle. It reminds me of an old gospel song.
5. The Christian life is not a summer vacation. It is a battle. A war. cf. 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3-4
6. So many believers fail to recognize this truth for this dispensation. They read verses that deal with Israel's kingdom on earth and come away with the "God wants to bless me" mentality.
 - Our blessings today are spiritual blessing in heavenly places. Life on earth is called "*the sufferings of this present time.*" We are guaranteed suffering, persecution, and affliction while on this sin-cursed earth.
 - Satan is called "*the prince of this world,*" and we are on his turf right now. We are living in the middle of his evil world system.
7. If believers fail to understand this, when the afflictions and heartaches of life come, they are unprepared to handle them. Believers then question God, they question the Bible, and they question the preacher who preached the health and wealth message. They become deflated and discouraged – casualties of war.
8. The word "*warfare*" comes from a Greek word from which we get our English word "strategy." We are soldiers for Christ, and we have an adversary – Satan (Ephesians 6:10-11). Therefore, we had better have an effective strategy.
9. Every believer must war a good warfare. How can we do this? The apostle Paul lays out a strategy for us.

First, we must exercise complete allegiance to our Leader. vs. 17-18

Second, we must obey instructions from our Commander. vs. 15

Third, we must follow the correct pattern. vs. 16

1. Last week, we learned that Jesus saved Saul of Tarsus (Paul) and set him forth as a **pattern** for other believers in this age of grace. What does the word "pattern" actually mean?

- Webster's – "a form or model proposed for imitation"
 - Strong's – "a sketch for imitation"
2. This is such an important issue, because in each dispensation God provides a chief spokesman who provides a pattern of divine expectation for others.
 - Noah – during the time when there was no written Word of God
 - Abraham – God's promises concerning a nation, a land, and a kingdom
 - Moses – It was through this man God gave to Israel His law, including the Ten Commandments.
 - John the Baptist – a pattern to Israel as he announced the soon arrival of the Messiah
 - Jesus and the Twelve – a pattern to apostate Israel of the need to repent and turn to Christ, their long-awaited Messiah
 3. Of course, Israel and the world rejected Christ. They did not receive Him as the Messiah. They rejected the King. No King, no kingdom!
 4. This rejected King ascended to heaven. It was prophesied that wrath would be sent from heaven's throne to this Christ-rejecting world. Instead, Christ made an unprophesied appearance in Acts 9. He saved the blasphemous, Christ-rejecting Saul of Tarsus.
 5. This is one of the most significant events in your Bible. In verse 16, notice the words, "...*in me first.*" The word "chief" in verse 15 also means, "foremost" (in time, place, order, or importance). It is also translated "*beginning.*"
 6. Clearly, something started with Paul that would be a pattern for others to look at during this time of grace. What was it?
 - Paul was Saul of Tarsus. He was a man full of rage and fury against believers in Christ. He held the garments of those who stoned Stephen. He persecuted believers unto death, and put them in prison. Acts 22:4
 - Paul was the chief rebel of Israel's rebellion, "*breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*" (Acts 9:1). Paul was a great candidate to be Antichrist.
 - Then suddenly, the resurrected Savior appears to Paul from heaven and speaks to him, not in wrath, but with grace! He saves Saul of Tarsus in sheer grace, and makes it clear that He has a special work for him to do. Acts 26:16-18
 - Paul was chosen to receive a series of special revelations from Christ.
 - Paul was chosen to hold the office of Gentile apostleship.
 - Paul was chosen to be the one to whom Christ would reveal the mystery of the body of Christ and dispensation of grace.
 - Paul was chosen to be the one to whom God would reveal the intimate details of the cross and the gospel of grace.
 - Paul was chosen to write more books of God's Word than all of the twelve combined.
 - Was it because he **deserved** these privileges? Absolutely not! It was sheer grace, and Paul knew it. Paul said, "*By the grace of God I am what I am.*" Paul didn't hold the office of Gentile apostleship because he earned it or deserved it. It was nothing but the grace of God.

7. What a picture and pattern Paul is for believers today. My friend, God's grace should never cease to amaze you.
 - Are you saved? It's God's grace. Do you have a Christian family? It is God's grace. Are you in a Bible-believing church? It is God's grace. Are you serving the Lord? It is God's grace. Do you hold some position in the church? It is God's grace.
8. Everything we are and everything we have is a gift of God's marvelous grace. There is absolutely no room for boasting. Paul knew it, and we should know it.
 - When we are prone to complain about how tough the Christian life is, or how hard we have it, or when we criticize other people for their apparent short-comings, there is a problem. Do you know what the problem is? We no longer stand amazed at God's grace in our lives.
 - When we decide to quit serving the Lord, or quit giving to the Lord, or quit growing in our relationship with Him... when we get cold, and indifferent, and complacent, the problem is that we have lost sight of God's incredible and matchless grace.
9. What should God's grace motivate us to do? Paul said, "*I labored more abundantly than they all.*" Why is this? I think Paul continued to stand amazed at God's grace, and it motivated Him greatly.
 - The grace of God should be what fuels your Christian life - not guilt, not fear, not a desire for acclaim or recognition.
 - I should **want** to serve the Lord, give to the Lord, read His Word, grow in my relationship with Him, witness to others, etc. Why? The abundant riches of His grace motivates me.

In Conclusion:

1. Our Commander in chief has given each of us, as soldiers, a pattern to follow. This is why Paul could say things like, "*Be ye followers (imitators) of me.*"
2. Paul is our pattern in salvation – saved by sheer grace.
3. Paul is also our pattern in service. The grace of God fueled him to serve Christ.
4. Paul is our pattern in faithfulness. He said at the end of his life, "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*" God's grace sustained him throughout his entire life until the very end.
5. As a soldier, following the correct pattern is crucial. Do you want the right results? You have to follow the right pattern. "*Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*" **Philippians 4:9**