

**From Love to War:**  
*Deep Convictions of an Entrusted Gospel*  
 1 Timothy 1:18-20

**Introduction:** *“The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn’t exist.”* This quote or ones in kind have floated around for centuries, started possibly by the French literary figure Charles Baudelaire in the Paris newspaper “Le Figaro” in 1864. It is a profound statement that understands the true nature of our enemy: he exists to lie and deceive since that is his nature and greatest weapon. But the greatest of enemies will convince their foe that they are not *really* an enemy, not dangerous at all, or perhaps are a figment of our imagination. He’d love to convince us that he is not active, should not be feared and simply exists in the caricatures of red horns and hooves.

The reality is much different and much more dangerous. We have an adversary that is compared to a prowling lion who seeks to devour (1 Pet. 5:8), who blinds eyes (2 Cor. 4:4) and who seeks to captivate the minds and hearts of humanity (Col. 2:8). He would love to see marriages break up through infidelity (1 Cor. 7:5) or unresolved anger (Eph. 4:26). He would love nothing more than to see a discouraged, tempted, distracted, busy, stretched thin church who are engaged in anything and everything *except* the mission to which God has called us. That is why we must realize that we are engaged in an active and real war that is raging all around whether we think it is or not.

In the story of the *Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn was trying to convince Theodin, king of Rohan, to engage in the coming battle that was raging all around. The king, desiring to save his people from death and pain, stated *“I know it is what you want of me. But I will not bring further death to my people. I will not risk open war.”* To which Aragorn replied, *“Open war is upon you, whether you would risk it or not.”*

We looked a few weeks ago at the charge given by Paul to Timothy. It was a charge to confront those in the church who were teaching a different or false doctrine, most likely coming from elders/pastors of the church. But it was also a charge of **love**, the desire to see those teaching this to have their hearts changed, their consciences renewed, and their faith becoming sincere. Love was to be shown in the truth, to God and to others. But after reflecting on the Law and gospel and how his own testimony was shaped by the grace and mercy of Jesus, Paul now returns to his **charge**, a military grade command to Timothy. Now, he was not talking about love as much as a **manifestation of love**, which would produce a recognition of **the battle that was truly going on**. This battle was not just against flesh and blood (or just about people), but against cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12). It was a war that Timothy had to gear up for, engage in, and fight. It is the **SAME WAR** we face today. My concern for us is the fact that some, if not most of us, struggle to realize that this war exists, or that we are on the front lines, or that it is raging all around us. *Open war is upon us, whether we would risk it or not.*

### **An Entrusted Gospel is Convinced Life is War (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**,

### **Resources Given to Wage War**

#### **Gifts by the laying on of hands**

Far from thinking this was an easy task, Paul speaks to Timothy with terms of endearment and affection (my child). In both recorded letters to Timothy, Paul would **remind** him of what he had been given at

the beginning of his ministry, namely “the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of hands” (2 Tim. 1:6), and the prophecy that came when the council of elders laid their hands on him (1 Tim. 4:14). What was this laying on of hands? It must have been similar to the sending of Paul and Barnabas from the church of Antioch in Acts 13:1-3, where the Holy Spirit set them apart for missionary work. What was the gift Timothy received? Most likely it was the gift included evangelism, preaching, teaching, and leadership (4:6, 11, 13, 16; 6:2) that he would use in his work with Paul being sent out from Lystra on the Second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-3).

### Gifts by the indwelling of the Spirit

Why would Paul have to remind Timothy of these things? He had to be reassured that he was adequate for the task because God made him adequate, and did not leave him alone nor did he leave him without resources. This is what we need to remember today. Not only have we been made adequate in the gospel of the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:5-6), but we also have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Rom. 8:9), and are given gifts at salvation (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). In other words, we have been given all the resources we need in Christ, His Spirit, His gifting, and His Word to wage warfare properly and fully.

**NOTE:** Look back at the word "CHARGE". Timothy needed to be reminded that he had all the resources he needed, but he also had to be reminded that *because* he was called, had hands laid on him, had prophecies given about him, and gifted, he had a **duty** to perform. In the word picture, he was a soldier that was equipped and trained and now he had to **fulfill his assignment**. This is so important in our day and age. We are called to freedom since Christ has set us free (Gal. 5:1), which means we go out of our way to make sure we do NOT legislate morality, don't specify how often you should commit to worship together, how much you should give, how much you should serve, or how much you should share your faith. But the downside of freedom (if that is the right way to frame it), is that we can easily **abuse or take advantage of our freedom instead of seeing ourselves as slaves to Christ**. We are servants who only do what we ought to do (Luke 17:10). To put it another way, we are **free to serve Christ out of a duty of delight in obedience to Him**. Timothy's assignment was not easy, he did not feel like it, and he could have found a million other things to do. We have the freedom to do a million different things, but we are also called to specific commitments to fulfill. We are called to worship together regularly, to serve, love, and encourage one another regularly, to prioritize these things over other 'good' things, **not because we have nothing better to do, but because there is nothing better to do**. When our mindset is ONLY about pressing our freedoms without understanding God's commands and commitments to fulfill, our freedoms become selfish, self-serving, and distracting.

### Engaging in the Right War is Imperative

Now, Paul moves to remind Timothy that he was to enter into a battle, wage warfare. This is a favorite metaphor or picture of ministry for Paul, and anyone who has been active in ministry can understand why. He reminded Timothy in his second letter to suffer as a **good soldier of Christ Jesus**, aiming to please the one who enlisted him and to stay away from civilian entanglements (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

### Understand who the enemy IS NOT

But notice that Paul said Timothy was to wage the good, or commendable, or beautiful warfare. This means there was the wrong kind of battle to fight. Remember, we battle against satanic forces over flesh and blood, but the problem is that we ONLY GET TO SEE FLESH AND BLOOD, so we often think that *they* are the enemy, rather than the **deceived**. We must remember that though we "*destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ*" (2 Cor. 10:5) we do NOT wage war against people! We are called to love. We are NOT called to

judge those outside the church (1 Cor. 5:12 - "for what have I to do with judging outsiders"). Timothy needed to silence these teachers and even discipline them, but they were still not the enemies (though they could have been enemies of the cross - Phil. 3:18)

Our culture is quickly shifting. That was vividly seen this week as a liberal voice in Hollywood had the nerve to sit next to a conservative former POTUS at a football game this week. Ellen DeGeneres took heat from her 'friends' for conversing, laughing with, and enjoying the presence of George Bush. Even in her deceived state, she explained that even though she disagrees politically with someone she can still express kindness to them. This is something we as followers of Christ need to remember. As California becomes more liberal, more overtly sinful with less shame, we must remember we are called to break through strongholds of the mind and heart rather than shunning and waging war on those we are called to love, show kindness, and hospitality to.

### Understand the nature of the war we are in

But, again there *IS* a war raging around us (and even in us). That is why we must adopt in our thinking a **Wartime Mentality**. We must realize that we are in the thick of a cosmic conflict right now with an enemy who does not fight fair, knows our weaknesses, the Bible better than we do, and seeks to devour. I first heard of this type of mentality from **John Piper** in his writings in *Desiring God* and *Don't Waste Your Life*, which are highly recommended. Here is a condensed version of that type of thinking:

1. **This world was created to be subdued, and everything created by God is good and can be enjoyed** (1 Tim. 4:4-5)<sup>1</sup>

This is the reason we can enjoy sports, sunsets, art, drama, a great book, laughter, waves on the ocean, biking down hills, floral arrangements, poetry, great food and wine, or a ride at an amusement park (which are all things we can do here in SoCal). We enjoy them because all of these were created by God as an outflow of glory so that mankind would see them, experience them, and in so doing, reflect back the glory of God in worship. The gifts could be enjoyed in light of the Gift Giver. That's why Paul said they should be received with **thanksgiving**.

2. **Since the Fall of Mankind into sin, there has been a cosmic WAR raging between God and Satan** (Eph. 6:11-13)

Out of pride and desire to put himself in the place of God (Isa. 14:12-14), Satan led a rebellion against God that led to a third of the angels being swept out of heaven (Rev. 12:3-4). This led to Satan deceiving Adam and Eve and waging war against God's people Israel and targeting Christ and His redemptive work. Satan hates God and all associated with Him. He sets out in a relentless pursuit to blind the eyes of unbelievers, to attack marriages, and to tempt believers to fall. He is the Prince of the power of the air and has delegated control over the course of this world (Eph. 2:1-3). In the church at Ephesus, much like today, he attacked through church leaders and teaching. In 1 Tim. 3:7, it's why Paul reminds the church they needed qualified leaders so they don't "*fall into reproach and the snare of the devil*". False teaching sets out to capture the minds and hearts of our children, trying to steer them away from the truth to believe the deceptive captivity in their mind and heart.

That is why what must be recaptured by the church is a sense of **urgency**. Now this is NOT **fearful overreaction**, but rather a recognition of the war raging around us. Satan would love to lull us into a sense of security and "okay-ness" so that we no longer pursue God, His Word, and holiness. We fail to realize that Satan would love nothing less than capturing our kids hearts to pursue ANYTHING other

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from John Piper's writings on "Wartime Living" and podcast "Is Wartime Living the same as minimalism?"

than God, His church, and believe that life was all about them. Satan would love nothing less than have individuals and families becoming **nominal members of churches**, where we do not view all of our life with Christ as vital to our soul, but simply another marginal activity. The church needs to be woken up from a peacetime mentality with no sense of urgency to a wartime mentality that is not caught up with the trivial.

3. **Because the world is fallen and broken, full of sin, the ordinary pleasures of life are NOT simply good, but are a danger to be guarded against** (Luke 8:14)

A wartime mentality understands that though all things are made for our good, the good pleasures of life can easily become **replacements for God in worship and pursuit of pleasure as an end in itself can replace our clear mission: to love God with all our heart and make disciples of all nations.** We are masters at making good things into ultimate things, taking gifts and elevating them above the gift giver. *Have we evaluated our life and not only turned from overt sins, but also the idolatrous pursuits that take us away from God and our mission?*

4. **Following Jesus, then, demands that we implement self-denial (Matt. 16:24) since we are citizens of heaven** (Phil. 3:20) **and are strangers and aliens in this world** (Eph. 2:19)

A soldier has to make choices. They cannot operate like everyone else in the civilian world since he had to stay sharp, being ready to take up arms at a moments notice. There is a certain **vigilance** with soldiers, and they are forced to say "no" to good things to be able to be ready for the most valuable things. *What have you denied yourself in your pursuit of Christ, even good things that would distract you?* Lives and families that follow Christ **should** look different than neighbors and friends who do not at the level of **priorities and values**, and that is expressed in how we spend our time, money, and decisions we make with our family. This is NOT anti-gospel, since we show our unbelieving friends the worth of God in Christ when we are ABLE but UNWILLING to participate in the same things, NOT because we cannot, but we pursue something that is more valuable.

5. **However, we are not called to just "go without". We instead seek to glorify God by investing our resources for the good of other people and our joy.**

Here is where a *wartime mentality* bleeds over to a *wartime lifestyle*. Just like a mobilized America during the Second World War, where rubber drives were carried out by a civilian population and luxury ocean liners like the Queen Mary were transformed in to troop transports, the whole country felt the pull to invest themselves in a war that affected all of us. National security was at stake, so everyone was on board with the fight, whether they were on the front lines or not.

"Ralph Winter stressed that God's people, in a prosperous land like America, simply cannot live as though there were not thousands of unreached people groups who are under control of the enemy. We have from our commander in chief a commission to go. We have the most powerful, liberating bomb in the world called the gospel. Therefore, to just carry on our lives in this country as though it were peacetime shows how out of touch we are with biblical reality."

*John Piper*

6. **We recognize the satanic reality of the danger of riches (1 Tim. 6:10), finding it more blessed to give than receive (Acts 20:35), and finding our greatest joy NOT in gaining more in this life but living in the reality of the next.**

This is truly the challenge for all of us, since we are all lulled into a false sense of peace in this time and place we find ourselves living. This does not mean we should react in guilt, shame, or fear. But we should absolutely evaluate our lives in light of the glory of God, the gospel call of Jesus Christ, and the mission we've all received.

For Timothy, his wartime mentality would mean fulfilling his duty in the church at Ephesus, willingly correcting strong voices in the church. This was not going to be done out of **fear, but out of power and love and self-control** (2 Tim. 1:7). It was out of the joy that comes through the gospel that Timothy could suffer for the sake of Christ, forsaking the comforts that others would have enjoyed, since Christ was the most valuable and joyful person in his life.

*Is that how we approach life? What is the duty and commission we've been called to in our stretch of wartime? What would adopting a wartime mentality look like for us in terms of lifestyle? What would change? What would stay the same?*

### **An Entrusted Gospel is Committed to Truth & Purity (19a)**

holding faith and a good conscience

#### **Commitment to Truth must be Held**

Part of fulfilling his duty meant that Timothy was to hold onto faith, not just *his faith*, but the whole of faith, the gospel, the Word of God. Once faith is vacated, once truth is compromised, once the gospel is minimized the enemy can get a foothold. Holding to the faith is more than simply the intake of Biblical truth and information, but it IS NOT LESS THAN THIS. Timothy had to regularly exercise his gifting by teaching, evangelism, and leading to make sure that he was not caught unprepared. He had a vivid example in the church where two leaders in particular made a shipwreck of their faith by following after false realities and contrary truths. This is why we will always uphold the truth, preaching, and teaching of God's Word here, since the day we stop is the day we start the clock of our march toward irrelevance and death.

#### **Commitment to a Good Conscience must be Active**

Paul again links faith and conscience like he did in the opening of his letter. Our conscience is linked with our minds and thinking, so our faith and conscience are inseparable. The conscience must be active and exercised or it can become seared (1 Tim. 4:2) and defiled (Titus 1:15). When we actively respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, our consciences get reshaped, quick to respond and trust to His leading in unfamiliar situations. Marriages typically fall apart after a million, small compromising decisions, and that is exactly how we fall into dire sins. We simply slowly but progressively stop pursuing God, stop striving to live a holy life, and make seemingly innocuous and harmless decisions that lead us down a path of major compromise.

### **An Entrusted Gospel is Compelled to Confront (19b-20)**

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.

#### **Confronting Error maintains purity in the church**

Apparently Paul had already stepped in before this letter. Hymenaeus was teaching that the resurrection had already happened (2 Tim. 2:17-18), which not only was spreading like gangrene through the church but also was upsetting the faith of some. Sin spreads like leaven in bread, where it begins to affect, sometimes silently, throughout the whole. Our sin is never dichotomized but will

always bleed over into relationships. What was at stake was the purity, health, and effectiveness of the church. These were spiritual predators that had to be silenced.

### **Confronting Error manifests love to the deceived**

Now no one likes to confront sin, and they really should not. Paul's actions here seem harsh to us, as these two men were **handed over to Satan**. That seems vindictive, but love is truly behind this. In 1 Cor. 5 we read of another situation where someone in the church was sent out, excommunicated from fellowship, not to be vindictive, but to be restorative (1 Cor. 5:5). This would ensure purity in the church (5:6) and the right kind of judgment IN THE CHURCH (5:11-13). By putting people OUT of the church into the sphere of Satan, it gives an opportunity for **repentance, learning, and restoration**. In fact, it can be argued that the person put out in 1 Cor. 5 was the same who came back to the church in 2 Cor. 2, **forgiven, comforted, and reaffirmed in love** (2 Cor. 2:7-8). This process is ONLY going to happen if we are compelled to confront as a means of protective and corrective love for God's people.

This all sets the stage for what the church was to DO, how they were to live and play OUT the truth. That is what we will begin to look at next week. For now, we'll remind ourselves that *open war is upon us, whether we would risk, recognize, or acknowledge it or not*. **Have you embraced a wartime mentality that has led to a wartime lifestyle?**