



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Timothy 1:12-2

“Two Wonders”

1 Timothy

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for your goodness in your grace. We're reminded of that in our text this evening and we look to you to give us a good understanding of it and appreciation of what we have in Jesus Christ, how it is that we came to be in him, and to enjoy all that we have. We have more than we can comprehend. And what we have is that the earnest, just a down payment of what is to come. Father, you have blessed us so abundantly. You have given us new life. You have given us the Holy Spirit, who is the seal on our heart, who protects us, who guides us, who empowers us who gives to us the life and the mind of Jesus Christ. You have given us gifts to use within the church and in your service. You've blessed us abundantly and addition to that you've given us held in itself and the world to come for all eternity.

So we thank you father for all that we have in your son, new life, forgiveness, adoption. Blessings beyond our comprehension, Father. Help us to get a sense of the grace that you've poured out upon your people from our text this evening. From Paul's experience, from what he recounts as he encourages Timothy to do his work and may we be encouraged from the life of Paul to do the work you given to each of us. May we redeem the time. May we be earnest and diligent and the service that we are performed. Bless us to that end tonight. May we worship you this evening as we study together and then may we continue that effectively before the throne of grace as we pray for those who are in need; so prepare our hearts for that. Sanctify us through our time of study now. We pray for the young people as they meet that you'd bless them also in their time of study and their fellowship together. We pray all these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] Our text evening is 1 Timothy 1:12-20. Paul writes, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who have strengthened me because he considered me faithful, putting me into service/Even though I was formally a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor/, yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief/And the grace of our Lord was more than abundant with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus/It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners among who am I and for most of all/Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost Jesus Christ might demonstrate his perfect patients as an example for those who would believe in him for eternal life/And out of the King eternal, immortal, invisible, and the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen/This command I entrust to you Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you that by then you’d fight the good fight/Keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith/Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme”

One of the hymns we sing Sunday morning, Sunday evening is, “Beneath the cross of Jesus”, with this stanza, “And from my spit and heart with tears to wonders I confess. The wonders of his glorious love and my own worthlessness.” When Paul contemplated the cross of Christ those same to wonders filled his mind. His unworthiness and Christ’s love. And he proclaimed both and together they motivated his life. The New Testament scholar, FF Bruce, called Paul “The preacher of free grace.” It could be said of all the apostles. And I think all the profits as well that they proclaimed grace. But the subject is especially prominent with Paul, perhaps because it was especially evident in his life. It’s often that way, with men who have lived a life of sin and have been saved from that snatched his brands from the fire.

John Newton lived to be an old man - I think he was 82 when he died -and for the end of his life he said to his friend, “My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things. I am a great sinner and crisis a great Savior.” Well, Paul’s testimony was the same as that and we’ll see that here in 1 Timothy chapter 1. He preaches grace and as always, he doesn’t describe it as given in drops, but in a flood. He speaks of abundant grace. Grace saves sinners and it transforms lives; that’s the subject of the last half of 1 Timothy 1:12-20. Timothy has been given a charge by Paul. He was to silence false teachers in the church at Ephesus and he was to correct the strange doctrines that they had introduced. That was his

duty. It was a challenging charge. It would be hard to do for anyone, I think. I assume these men had entrenched themselves somewhat in that church. They had a following. And whenever someone of that kind has to be extracted, has to be dealt with it's going to be difficult. So it would be difficult for anyone but I think particularly for one like Timothy, who seems to have been timid by nature.

But the grace of God was more than sufficient to enable him to do all that he had been called to do. God never gives us duties that are beyond our abilities because he supplies us with the abilities and he supplies those abilities with the power and grace to do them. If he calls us to do something we can be assured he's going to be faithful to enable us to carry out the charge that's been given. That is the encouragement that Paul gets to Timothy from his own personal experience. I think it's the implication of much of what he says to Timothy when he reviews his own spiritual experience, his conversion and what God has done in his life in verses 12 to 17. Seems to be a digression from what Paul has already stated in the first half of the first chapter. But it's not that it all. It is necessary to Paul's purpose.

In verse 18 he tells Timothy to “fight the good fight.” But before that, he reminds Timothy of what God had done for him, for Paul personally. How he had saved him and how he had made him an apostle. He describes God's great grace and changing a sinner into a saint and making a persecutor of Christ into a lover of Christ. That takes amazing power to do such a transformation in one and the same thing can certainly take place for Timothy and the work that he's about to do. And what is at least implied in Paul's biographical sketch that he gives us here is the inability of the law to do the very things that Paul describes as having taken place in his own life. Now that's the issue that Timothy was facing. That was the issue that Timothy was charged with correcting; false teaching about the law.

Paul in the first part of chapter 1, explained the right use of the law and explained it's not for righteous people it's for the unrighteous and it's been given to convict people of their sin to show them that they are sinners and that they need a Savior. Paul was a Pharisee, when he was converted. Paul was a man of the law and he knew the law well. Talks about that another portions of the New Testament in the book of Galatians, and the book of Philippians. You could say he was a perfect according to law, at least in his eyes. He was a man who kept the law. But the reality is the law didn't change them. The law

didn't bring about the great changes that he speaks of in this chapter. The law showed him though, that he was in need of change. It showed him that he was the foremost sinners.

So Paul doesn't really digressed from his purpose in these verses. His conversion and life illustrate the purpose of the law and encourage Timothy in his own duties by giving an example of what the power of God can do in an individual. But what seems to have prompted this biographical portion of the chapter is Paul's mention of the gospel. In verse 11, he spoke of the glorious gospel with which he had been entrusted. And that occasioned a response from Paul so often that happens in his writings. He is explaining something wonderful and it moves into breakout into a word of Thanksgiving or a doxology and we have both in this text. He expresses his great gratitude for that blessing of being entrusted with the gospel. Verse 12, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who had strengthened me because he considered me faithful, putting me into service."

The words used there or the participle strengthened and appointed like the verb considered are in the era's tense or the past tense. So what Paul seems to be referring to here is his conversion on the Damascus Road when he met Christ, and he was changed. He was made a new creature. He was given a great ministry, a great task called to be an apostle. So he seems to be referring here to his conversion. In spite of all the mischief that he had cause in the church as a persecutor. "Christ" - he said - "judged him faithful and appointed him to service and put him in ministry." He does that for every believer.

When you were called to faith - I assume everyone here has been brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ - when you were brought to him, when you were saved, when you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ at that moment you were equipped for service. The Holy Spirit would've came a seal on your heart and you were given a spiritual gift. You were given at least a gift, one or more, to be used in Christ's service. Now there are all kinds of gifts. We can look at Romans, chapter 12, and first Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4 and you see the gifts that are listed there, many, many gifts. Some of the nature of teaching or evangelism, others in in terms of faith and helps and service. But everyone has a gift. Everyone has a service to perform in the body of Christ and in the world as we represent Jesus Christ; we've all been equipped to do that. So all kinds of gifts and all kinds of opportunities for us not only to minister to one another, but to serve the Almighty God, what a privilege that is.

When you think about it, we who are as nothing go back to Isaiah chapter 40, and you see how God looks on the world what it is compared to him, and all of its greatness, all

of its **pomp**; it's like dust on a scale. It doesn't even move the scale. It has no weight, no glory at all. And yet out of that he chose a multitude equip them to serve him, who doesn't need any servants at all. That is a great privilege, and unimaginable privilege and Paul counted it to be that. After all he had done, he says, “Christ considered me faithful.” Now that doesn't mean that Christ saw some potential in the apostle Paul when he was Saul of Tarsus that look down on the earth, and he saw this man who was full of zeal and evidently had a brilliant mind, who had surpassed all of his contemporaries, persecuting the church. He said, “Now there's someone I can use. I'll just turn him around because he's faithful. He is faithful to what he knows. He's faithful to what he's doing.” They didn't see that in Paul. They didn't see him. Paul's abilities that made him a good candidate to be an apostle, and therefore appointed him to be one. What he's saw was nothing in Paul, but he saw in Paul what his grace could produce, make him a grateful servant.

There's nothing in Paul that called forth God's grace and that's clear from verse 13, where Paul recounts his former life, which is what makes Paul's conversion and is calling for an amazing. “Formally” - he said – “I was a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly.” Paul's career as a Pharisee and a persecutor of the church as the grand inquisitor of the Sanhedrin is recounted by Luke and by Paul himself in the book of acts and in the book of Galatians. “He persecuted the church beyond measure and try to destroy it.” he said. He imprisoned and beat and killed Christians. Acts 26:11, “And as I punish them often, in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme. And being furiously enraged at them I kept pursuing them, even to foreign cities.”

And that is where grace found him. In the midst of his furious persecution of the church and of the name of Jesus Christ on his way to Damascus to carry all of that out Christ appeared to him and he called them to himself. There's anything mitigating about the circumstances of the terrible persecution that Paul brought on the church. It was that he did in ignorance, he said. “I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly.” In the Old Testament there is a distinction between sins, those that are done through ignorance and those that are done presumptuously. Sinning presumptuously or sinning with a high hand. You read about this distinction in Numbers 15:27-31, “And for those sins which were done presumptuously there was no atonement.” There was a sacrifice for those sins.

Paul didn't sin in that way, which is different from many of his contemporaries in Judea and Jerusalem, and that region where our Lord ministered and Galilee of many of the priests and the Pharisees and the Jews. They sinned against the clear light that they were given. They sinned against their better convictions. They saw miracles, they heard teaching, they witnessed the fulfillment of prophecy and the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. They saw prophecies out of Isaiah transpire through him, and he heard one teach as no one has ever taught before. They saw miracles causing the lame to walk and raising the dead, and yet they did not believe, they rejected him.

John 12:37, “Though he had performed so many signs before them yet they were not believing in him.” Paul had not sinned in that way. He had not sinned against his convictions and against the Holy Spirit in a willful act against his better knowledge. He thought he was serving God. He thought he was doing a service for him. Defending the faith and persecuting the church. In Acts 3:17, Peter in his address to the people in Jerusalem speaks along those lines he says “Now, brethren, I know you acted in ignorance.” And then he goes on to say, “Therefore repent.”

You've acted in ignorance. You have not willfully rejected the truth in the sense that some have. You have not sinned against the Holy Spirit, repent while there's time. Reflects our Lord's statement from the cross in Luke 23:34, “Forgive them father, for they know not what they are doing.” Now, having said that it doesn't weaken the sense of grace at all and it certainly doesn't make grace conditional, as though Paul had earned something. And because he did what he did in ignorance God was somewhat in his debt, not at all. Paul makes that plain in verse 14, “And the grace of our Lord was more than abundant with this faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.”

Grace of God was more than abundant that could be translated as it has, by some, super abounded. The ideas that it overflow its usual measure. A great amount of grace was given to him. He was flooded with grace. And the effect was to change Paul. Grace brought with it faith and love which are characterized as being in Christ. Both are gifts of God. Both are produced by him. Paul didn't have any of that in it. So all the product of grace. Grace we can understand as the root. Faith and love as the fruit. The product of what God does. It's not anything in Paul, this wasn't his work. This was God's work completely, solely, sovereignly. It's the only way to

explain the change in Paul. From being a persecutor to an apostle. From one who hated the name of Christ, to one who cherish that name. What a magnificent scene that is of Paul on his way, breathing threats against the church on his way to Damascus when Christ in the midst of that, in the midst of his hatred for the name of Christ cuts him down and makes him a new preacher. There was nothing that Paul could say, lended himself to the grace of God. It was all completely a work of God’s grace.

But where grace is active, where grace is at work, where grace is present, there will be faith and love. We cannot be in Christ, without having faith and love. They characterize Jesus Christ and they come forth from him. They are the evidence of the change life and the work of grace within that life. And what’s true of Paul is true of all who have been saved. Verse 15, “It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners among whom I am for most of all.” This is the first of five faithful sayings that are found in the Pastoral Epistles. The others are found in 2 Timothy 3:1 and chapter 4, verse 9 and in 2 Timothy 2:11 and Titus 3:8.

This faithful saying is about salvation. It states the essence of the gospel. It stresses God’s grace and salvation. Christ came to save sinners. He came to save those in rebellion, just like Paul going contrary to the will of God, the nature of God. He came to save the rebellious and the undeserving. And that being the fact that he came to save sinners. Obviously then it was God who took the initiative in doing it. Didn’t come because we invited him, because we called for him; we were not doing that. He came to save the unworthy, he took the initiative. This is what Jesus said to Zacchaeus in Luke 19:10, “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Lost were not seeking him. He came to seek them, and not just to seek them to save them. That is the grace of God. That’s the nature of the grace of God. It is so great that it actually saves.

Christ didn’t come to help people save themselves. He didn’t come to be an example of salvation, of how one can live in order to obtain God’s approval, God’s saving work. He didn’t come to be an example of what God thinks of sin, and that if we’ll just simply believe that counts for righteousness. He didn’t come to make men savable, so that they could then believe. Everybody’s on a different plane. A plane where there’s now ability in and of ourselves to do that, that’s not the case, that’s not

what happened at all. What we read throughout the Bible is he came to save and he saved at the cross, he accomplish the work of salvation. Came to save sinners, and he did it.

And his grace is so great that it can reach down and save the worst of sinners, that's what Paul said that he was. He was the foremost or the chief of sinners. Now that isn't some morbid statement of self-abasement or statement of false humility, not at all. It's the kind of statement that a person makes, a kind of personal assessment that one has when he or she understands sin and grace. Kind of statement that a man like John Newton makes towards the end of his life as he sees it all more and more clearly. Doesn't remember a lot but he does remember I'm a great sinner and Christ is a great savior and that's what produces a statement like this that Paul made.

Paul attempted to destroy the church in its infancy. That was a terrible sin. That was a grievous sin. Try to destroy the work of God. Try to destroy the work of salvation. You try to snuff it out. So grave was that that he calls himself the foremost of sinners, the chief of sinners. Either in reality, or in at least certainly in his own mind that's what Paul is saying this is not a boast, or this is not a statement of false humility. This is not a grandiose type of statement, this is the truth, I am the chief of sinners. I'm the very worst. Well, as I say, knowledge of sin and of grace gives one an understanding of the greatness of sin. Paul had that and he gives attention to that here in order to give us a sense of the depth of sin in order to illuminate or to highlight the greatness of God's grace. He was a great sinner. “The greatest,” he says, but Christ saved him. Save the greatest of sinners. Who can't he save if he can save the greatest of sinners?

As Paul states in verse 16, “His salvation was for a purpose an instructive purpose to show forth God's perfect patient as an example for those who would believe in him for eternal life.” God's patience is his long-suffering, and holding back his wrath. Holding back what deserves to be poured out upon a simple grace. The holding it back in patients, he did that for Paul as an example, or as a model for others. In fact that word example can mean sketch and so it's been translated sometimes with that idea or commentators have translated it in that way with the idea of his conversion being a rough sketch or illustration of how God deals in grace with sinners. Want to see how that happens? Look at Paul, look at his life. God was patient with him as he stormed through the near East snuffing out churches and

Christians. He’s long-suffering. He’s patient with our sin, giving men and women the opportunity to look to him and to believe in him. And when he brings them to faith in Christ, they are given eternal life, just as Paul was. That incredible blessing in light of what we were.

Paul’s conversion is proof that as great as a person sin may be God’s grace is greater. And no one need feel that he or she is without hope. No one need feel that they are too sinful to be saved. That God can’t find him because he or she is too lost. He saved the chief of sinners, so who can’t he save? If a person is not saved it is not because of a failure on God’s part, he proved that on the apostle Paul. Well, that was God’s immediate or approximate purpose in Paul’s salvation to be a model, to be an example of how he says people. The greatness of his salvation, what he can do, what he does do.

In verse 17, Paul states God’s ultimate purpose, which is God’s glorification and so he now comes to his doxology. He’s giving thanks and how he gives praise, verse 17“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, the honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” We are all creatures of time and we’re all made of dust, but God is King eternal, or King of the ages. He is unaffected by time. The rules time he rules and governs all of history. It all unfold every age, every century. Every year, every month, week, minute, second, all of it unfolds according to his will and his direction, and his purpose. There’s a purpose to history, things aren’t just randomly occurring. Certainly seem random to us but they’re not. God is in complete control of all of that and that should’ve been a great encouragement to Timothy.

Paul is praising God because he’s just amazed at the grace of God, but the implications that for Timothy should’ve been very apparent to him. God’s in control of every moment of his life. He had a difficult task ahead of him, he had to deal with some difficult characters in the church. Would not be easy, particularly for someone like Timothy he was a timid young man. But nothing happened than any of the moments of Timothy’s life that isn’t under the complete control of the God he serves. He is the king of the ages. He’s the one who rules over time. It proceeds from him, from his thought. It is a result of divine Fiat, he wills it into being. So what does Timothy have to fear? He serves that God.

And because he rules time he's unaffected by time he's also immortal or he's incorruptible. His word to be translated in both ways, but he cannot perish. He cannot be diminished in any way by anything. Time or the forces of the universe, they don't affect him. He never changes. He is as William Hendrickson wrote in his commentary, “The inexhaustible reservoir of strength ever knew for his people.” He cites as a reference to that Isaiah 40, the passage that Doctor Hanna preached on a few weeks ago. Let me just read it, it's a great text and I assure if it didn't come to Timothy's mind it's certainly would've been a good one for him to think about. Timothy was a relatively young man, certainly in comparison to the apostle Paul and in Isaiah 40:29-31, if you read that great text. “He gives strength to the weary and to him who lacks might. He increases power, though youths grow weary and tired. And vigorous young men stumble badly yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired. They will walk and not become weary.”

I think that for Timothy, the implication of this doxology; it's part of it. This is the God's going to supply you Timothy with all that you need to carry out this hard task that you've been given, but one that you must do Timothy. The church needs this ministry. And so he praises the God who is immortal, incorruptible, and who is invisible. It's not like the things that men worship. Men have worshiped idols in the past. Today, they don't worship idols they worship their Mercedes. They worship their house, or they worship their career or they worship something of that nature things that are tangible. The things that they've got to take care of things that they've got to polish. Things that rust and grow old and fall apart. God's not like that. He's invisible. We can't polish him. We can't touch him. He's invisible. We can't even comprehend it, we can't study him. We can't figure him out. He's beyond us.

Later Paul will say in chapter 6, in verse 16 that “He is the one who dwells in unapproachable light through no man has seen or can see.” Can't see him. Paul can comprehend him. He's beyond us, and so he simply concludes by saying the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. But with that Paul now turns his attention to Timothy and he resumes his exultation that he began in verse three. He describes Timothy's task in military terms. It's hard so the military metaphors are appropriate. But first he encourages him with a reminder of the signs that have been given to Timothy when he was a young man. The signs that pointed to his calling.

Verse 18, “This command I interest you Timothy my son in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you that by then you fight the good fight.” Timothy’s duty was urgent. Paul had given him a command he was like a soldier under orders, which indicated that the need to be faithful was pressing. This is like a great confrontation, a great conflict, a great battle, a fight and so attention, faithfulness are pressing matters. It’s very urgent. But there were reasons to be brave and reasons for Timothy to be confident because of supernatural signs that had accompanied his ministry when he was younger. Prophets had declared his fitness for the ministry. We don’t know when that occurred. It may have occurred when hands were laid on Timothy, probably when he was sent out with Paul and Silas on the second missionary journey that may be what Paul is referring to in chapter 4 in verse 14. He says, “Do not dig let the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on use through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbyter.”

Maybe occurred when Timothy was being sent out. Or maybe it was during a meeting of the church just before that or sometime before that. Maybe it was during Paul’s first missionary journey there when Timothy seems to have become a Christian, believed and then converted, which led to his being sent out with Paul because they’re the church meeting profits declared his qualifications and Paul realized this is one that God has set apart. That’s what happened to Paul and Barnabas you remember when they went on their first missionary journey.

It’s recorded in Acts 13:1-3, there were prophets and teachers were told and the church at Antioch. It was a church that was filled with gifted men a very large church a very active church and they had prophets and teachers there a number of gifted men, and they were using their gifts in the church service, and while they were ministering they were told the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work of ministry to which I have called them.” Evidently that happened through some profits they were preaching. I would assume it was like a Sunday evening meeting and various men were ministering and a profit stood up and made a declaration such as that. Perhaps another profit made the same declaration and the Holy Spirit said through these men to set these two men apart, so they did. They laid hands on them and they sent them out on their missionary journey.

Something like that happened with Timothy when he was younger. Now he had been given a direct indication from the Lord that he was adequately equipped for

service. To serve him in the way that he would serve him. Now we don't have profits in the church today to do that. We don't have apostles also to appoint officers in the church. We don't have that; things have changed. But to go back and look at Acts chapter 13, while the profits, I assume, were the ones that made the statements that they were verbalized through the prophets what Luke writes, is that the Holy Spirit spoke. He spoke through profits that he can speak for others today. He speaks to our hearts and audibly, but really, according to the Scripture, and he makes his well-known in that way.

It's in line with what the word of God says, but we have the same kind of situation where God through the spirit of God makes his well-known to us and the direction and conviction that he gives in leading us into service along with the confirmation given through others to affirm or confirm the Lord's leading does much the same today as was done for Timothy when he had those prophetic utterances given to him. So Paul reminds Timothy of the supernatural tokens of God's favor that confirmed his calling into service. The command and the task that Timothy was given will be very hard that they are in accordance, Paul is saying with the prophecy that had been uttered. They are consistent with those prophecies.

And so Paul tells them to fight the good fight. Yes, it's hard. It's difficult, but you've been called to this. God's appointed you to this. This is your service. He prophesied that you were fit for it and able to do it so fight the good fight. That's what Timothy was in. That's what you and I are in. A fight. We're in the battle and that is a way of saying it's not an easy circumstance set that we are in this world. It's not easy, but we are all equipped for it. Every one of us as Christians are equipped to do the work that God has given us in this world. We are in a battle and the first means of fighting it is faith.

In verse 19 Paul advises Timothy to keep it. Keeping faith and a good conscience. Faith here is the act of believing, of trusting in the promises of God; that is how we fight the good fight. We do it by trusting the Lord, by believing everything that he's told us, by trusting in the promises that he's given and doing it, following through, being obedient to what he has told us to do. The word faith at the end of the verse is a reference to the truth. It's a reference to the body of Christian doctrine. It is literally the faith. Which certain one, he said, had rejected. Rejected these doctrines. They rejected this truth. Paul often makes use of military metaphors. His principal

passage on spiritual conflict is spiritual warfare that's found in Ephesians 6:10-20. He describes the war as invisible. It is against the spiritual forces of wickedness. And there he lists the weapons that we have, the armor that we have. The helmet, the breastplate, the sword, all that we are equipped with.

Here he only mentions faith. But faith as trusting and faith as truth. We need to know the truth, and we need to trust and it. We need to act upon it. That is the way that we wage war against error, and we face it everywhere at all times, constantly. The church will always be in that battle, until Christ returns and so we must know the truth to fight error and to protect ourselves from that error and not be taken in by it. Well those who don't. Those who reject the truth, who depart from it, shipwreck their lives. Paul says, by rejecting God's word they reject, as it were, the rudder of the ship or by rejecting God's word they throw away their spiritual or your moral compass, they have no direction and they are shipwrecked very shortly, very soon after. Their lives are destroyed.

And so to effectively contend for the faith we must be good soldiers and good sailors. We must be able to fight and to navigate. We need to know the word of God, and we need to obey the word of God. We need to use it. Use it properly. Well, in verse 20 Paul identifies those who were probably the ringleaders of this group that was teaching the law falsely. They are Hymenaeus and Alexander. And Paul writes that he had handed them over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme. This was an act of discipline on his part.

We find the same expression in 1 Corinthians 5:5, where a man was engaged in immorality and the church of Corinth and the church had done nothing about him. Church leaders didn't take any action, didn't discipline him. And so Paul took the action and he writes that he delivered such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Satan has some authority over bodies in the lives of men. He has the authority to destroy physically and we see that in the book of Job, for example. He does that only within the will of God, and in doing what he does he only carries out God's will. But Paul delivered that man in Corinth over to Satan for the destruction of his body. And when people are put under church discipline that can happen. That can be the result. What normally takes place, or the way church discipline is to take place is they are excluded from the Lord's Table from taking the Lord's Supper.

In order to bring them under the conviction of their sin and the Holy Spirit works upon them. But if that does not lead to repentance then physical harm can come and people die, and the New Testament has examples of that. Corinth is another example, chapter 11 of that book and verse 30, he speaks of those who sleep those who are sick and those who sleep among them because they been abusing the Lord's Supper. This can happen, but the reason is not to destroy people. It is to restore them is to bring them back into fellowship. It is to produce repentance. But church discipline is another weapon that is given for the purity of the gospel, for defending the faith and it must be used if the church is to be kept pure. If it's to be kept clean of moral corruption and also from spiritual error, from false teaching. If we don't do that if we don't contend for the faith through the word of God and through the use of church discipline, then error will creep in error will take root and it will take over a local church and destroy it.

So we need to be active in fighting the good fight and what should make us active in doing that is an understanding of the grace of God that should motivate us, as it did Paul. He pursued his calling. He exercised his gifts diligently. He redeemed the time. He extended his energy and his life in the service of Christ, not because the law told him to do that or he had some weight like that hanging over him, but he did so out of complete gratitude for the grace of God and the sense of the two wonders. Of his sin, and Christ's love for him. May God give us an appreciation for the cross and our own unworthiness. May he give us an appreciation of our sin and his grace and may that be a source of motivation for us in his service, and may we serve him faithfully and well. Contend for the faith. Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we do thank you for your goodness in your grace and come to this text where Timothy has been given a charge, a responsibility, a duty that was a difficult one. And we had our duties as well, we have responsibilities in a Christian life. Give us a desire to do that. May we not do that because their duty, but because we understand what we have from you. It is a privilege to have your responsibilities laid upon us. May we appreciate what you've done for us, that we might do those in a way that pleases you, and be very effective in them. Bless this church, keep it free from error. Give us the love for your truth, for the faith and may we honor you and all that we do. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.