



FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

BIG IDEA: God has called us to be guardians of the gospel.

DATE: Wednesday, October 1 and Sunday, October 5, 2025

SCRIPTURE: 1 Timothy 1:12-30

OPENING QUESTION

What are some causes in your life that are important to you? (perhaps foster care, domestic violence, the environment, politics, animal abuse, etc.) *Why are those causes important to you?*

As Christians we are all called to the same cause - to guard the message of the Gospel. No matter what may change in the culture around us, we have been entrusted with safeguarding this timeless truth and pass it on.

SETTING THE STAGE

Paul sets the tone of his letter by referring to Timothy as his “true son in the faith” (1:2), and like a concerned father, he wants to make sure Timothy is fully equipped to handle the situation. False teachers had infiltrated the church in Ephesus. Among other things, these teachers were urging the believers to place themselves under Jewish law. Paul reminds Timothy that the power of the law pales in comparison to the power of the gospel of Christ. He urges Timothy to stay strong and to remember that he is not alone in the fight.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1 Timothy 1:12-20 (NLT)

¹² I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him, ¹³ even though I used to blaspheme the name of Christ. In my insolence, I persecuted his people. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief. ¹⁴ Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was! He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them all. ¹⁶ But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life. ¹⁷ All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen.

¹⁸ Timothy, my son, here are my instructions for you, based on the prophetic words spoken about you earlier. May they help you fight well in the Lord’s battles. ¹⁹ Cling to your faith in

Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked. ²⁰ Hymenaeus and Alexander are two examples. I threw them out and handed them over to Satan so they might learn not to blaspheme God.

DISCUSSION

GLORY TO GOD FOR HIS GRACE

READ: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Paul reminds Timothy of his own life and how God has used him in spite of his past. How does Paul say that his life before finding Christ differs from his life at the time when he wrote this letter? How did the change make him uniquely qualified to talk about God's abundant grace to others? (see verses 12-15)

Paul had been a former persecutor of the church and considered himself a "chief" among sinners. What did Jesus demonstrate in extending mercy to Paul? (see verses 15-16)

Why is a personal testimony such a rich and powerful tool for communicating the truths of the gospel?

SHARE: Did you know everyone who has a testimony of believing in Jesus can share their story in 2-3 minutes?

WRITE: On your white board write the following into 3 columns:

My Life Before Christ

How I Met Jesus

My Life with Christ

Have them think about what their life was like before inviting Jesus into their life as Savior and Lord. Were they full of anger or felt a lack of purpose? Maybe they were young and grew up in a Christian home – they can share about that in this column. Then have them think about how they met Jesus. Did someone share the gospel with them? Who? At what age? Briefly describe that moment of surrender. Then they write a few things about what their life is like now. Perhaps they will say my life hasn't been easy, but I have a peace that does not make sense, and my life has been given a new purpose. I feel contentment and joy and have found a new family of friends at my church who encourages me.

IDEA: Prepare your testimony and share it as an example. Encourage them to write out their testimony this week and be ready to share it as the Holy Spirit leads. And let them know if they do not yet have a testimony you would love to talk with them more.

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

READ: 1 Timothy 1:18-20

Paul concludes this section with a brief prayer (or doxology), in which he praises the unmatched character of God. Why do you think Paul includes this prayer after reflecting on his own life? What is his personal charge to Timothy?

Paul names two false teachers (Hymenaeus and Alexander) and states they have been “delivered to Satan,” which likely refers to their removal from the church. What had these men rejected? What did Paul want these men to learn? (see verses 19-20)

RESPONSE

Circle up into smaller groups and answer these application questions together:

- What difference does it make in *your* life to know that Jesus extended mercy to Paul, the “chief” among sinners? Is there anything in your life you feel is too big of a sin for Jesus to forgive? How can we extend that mercy to ourselves and others?
- Who are some individuals you have mentored and encouraged in the faith? How did you do it? How have they helped *you*?
- What does it mean to “fight the good fight” when it comes to your faith in Christ? How can you “cling to your faith” and “keep your conscience clear” as verse 19 instructs?
- Because God has called us to act as guardians of the gospel, what can we do to live out that responsibility?

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COMMENTARY

Timothy was one of the few people who remained faithful to Paul after his imprisonment. Following Paul’s release from prison in Rome (which occurred sometime after the events depicted in Acts), Timothy again travelled with Paul to Ephesus. Paul continued on into Macedonia, but he left Timothy behind in Ephesus to serve as a pastor to the growing congregation that was in need of spiritual leadership.

At some point in Paul’s journey, he pauses to write a personal letter to Timothy to encourage him in his new role and make sure he is ready for the task. As we find in this opening section, he begins by reminding Timothy of his responsibilities – first, as a discernor of, and protector against, false teachings; and second, as a fighter for God-honoring causes. Paul’s advice resonates with anyone who has ever stepped into a position of leadership and authority: remember your calling, cling to your faith, and fight the good fight for Christ.

VERSES 12-14

Paul reflected on the difference the gospel made in his life, being reminded of his own sin and God’s grace. Having instructed Timothy to stand firmly against false teachers, Paul quickly acknowledged his personal need of God’s grace. God’s merciful acts caused Paul to *thank Christ Jesus our Lord*.

Paul was not bragging on his abilities or his good works as reasons for Christ’s appointing him to the ministry. He acknowledged God’s gracious purpose in calling him into this ministry of the gospel. Even when he linked his commission to the fact God considered him *trustworthy*, it was all because of God’s *grace*. Paul’s statement in verse 12 must be read along with the rest of the sentence in verses 13 and 14.

God’s grace is not merely sufficient; it continually increases more abundantly.

Paul was completely aware of his past sin. He had been a *blasphemer*, speaking against Jesus. He also was a *persecutor*, actively oppressing people who followed Jesus. In spite of Paul's past character and behavior, he *was shown mercy* from God.

When Paul contemplated God's mercy toward him, he was overwhelmed by the way His grace was *poured out*. God's grace is not merely sufficient; it continually increases more abundantly. Paul was overwhelmed that even as sin increased, God's grace abounded even more. (See Rom. 5:20.)

VERSES 15-17

The saying to which Paul referred may have been a faith declaration common to the church of his era. In any case it certainly referenced Jesus' declaration that He came to save the lost (Luke 5:32). Such a statement was *trustworthy*. Timothy and the church at Ephesus could place complete faith in Jesus' redemptive purpose. This proclamation *deserves full acceptance*. The message of God's grace in Christ should be embraced completely and without reservation.

Paul confessed he was *the worst* of sinners. His previous listing of grievous sinners (vv. 9-10) was not an arrogant accusation but a humble admission of his awareness that he was their chief.

Paul's self-awareness of being the *worst* of sinners magnified God's mercy. If Christ could demonstrate His extraordinary patience toward someone like Paul, He could extend grace to anyone. Paul saw his salvation as an *example* so others might *believe* in Christ and receive *eternal life*. God's grace abounds to all people who place their faith in Jesus.

Paul concluded this section with a benedictory salute to God who had extended such undeserved grace. Exalting the characteristics of the Lord, Paul glorified Him as *the King*. He is the *eternal* King, existing in time past and in time to come. He is the *immortal* King, living forever. He is the *invisible* King, observable not by human senses but revealed through His Son. He is the *only God*, unlike and unaccompanied by any other. He is the King who deserves *honor and glory forever and ever*. To which we can shout with Paul, *Amen*.

Believers are an exhibit of God's grace and mercy for all to see.

Like Paul, believers are an exhibit of God's grace and mercy for all to see. We cannot look down on other people if their sins are somehow "worse" than ours. We cannot see ourselves as deserving of God's salvation. We can only confess our sinful unworthiness and receive God's grace by faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. As we do so, we join Paul in praising Him for His mercy and grace.

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