

Theme: If we are to remain steadfast in the fight against sin and remain free from the influence of false teaching, we must hold faith (revealed in the gospel of grace in Jesus our Lord) and a good conscience (directed by the Word of God and the Spirit) more tightly than anything of this world. Failure to do so can have disastrous consequences in this life and in the life to come.

Background and Introduction: Larry in the boxing ring? Not a pretty sight.

Paul is concerned that Timothy is prepared as a soldier of Christ in the battle for the truth. Frankly, it is a concern that I have for the church, and this church today.

I. Called To Battle

NOTE: Paul's language is militaristic (of the soldier and battle)

1st - fight well, a soldier called to arms

2nd - Make sure you know what you are fighting for

A. Timothy's fight

1. Preserving the truth

a. Taking on the false teachers (1:3)

b. Obscuring or altering the Gospel

c. Taking the fight to the "enemy"

- Timothy was to be on the "offensive" (Polemicist)

2. As one equipped

a. Uniquely equipped! (4:12)

b. Prepared for this fight (no matter how long it lasts!)

B. Our fight (1 Peter 3:15)

1. Defending the faith (Apologist)

- Sharing what we know and believe – and why

2. Equipped for the task

- Given the truth (2 John 1:2; John 14:6)

- Given the Word (James 1:18)

- Given the protection and provision we need (Ephesians 6)

3. Our enemies?

a. Sometimes they are inside the church

b. Those "outside" the church

c. Loving our enemies

II. The Battle Ground

A. A firm faith

1. Expressing the faith

2. Knowing His Word

- He has given us the word of truth

- How well do you know it?

B. A good conscience

1. The call to a clear conscience

- For ourselves (1:5; 1:19; 3:9)

- Watching out for others (1 Corinthians 8; Romans 14:23)

2. His personal striving for a good conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Corinthians 4:4; Romans 9:1; 2 Timothy 1:3)

3. The relationship between knowledge and conscience

a. Sound doctrine is necessary for a good conscience.

- b. Good conscience is key to maintaining sound doctrine.
 - Ignore the conscience – and sound teaching soon fails
- c. Legalism vs. submission
 - NOTE: A clear warning: Martin Luther – "...to go against conscience is neither right nor safe."

III. Count the Cost

- A. No casual combatants (Luke 14:31; Luke 9:62)
- B. Serious casualties are possible
 - 1. Hymenaeus and Alexander
 - They ignored the conscience
 - They ruined their faith
 - They undermined the faith (2 Timothy 2:17, 18)
 - 2. Handed over to Satan
 - To bring them to repentance
- C. The spoils of victory
 - A promise of grace – mercy – peace
 - A share in Christ and his kingdom (Revelation 2:26; Hebrews 3:14)
 - Life now and in the world to come (1 Timothy 4:8)