

**DON'T SHIPWRECK YOUR FAITH!
1 TIMOTHY 1:18-20**

Introduction

On April 10, 1912 the ship we know as Titanic left her berth at the harbor in Southampton, England on her maiden voyage. The ocean liner was 882 feet and it was boasted that not even God could sink her! She left port with 2,228 souls on board.

Four days into the voyage, on April 14, 1912, the captain received severe ice warnings for the area where the Titanic was sailing which he and his crew ignored as the Titanic maintained her course for New York harbor.

We know that the Titanic struck an iceberg on the starboard side of her bow just before midnight and began to take on water. Within a time period of about three hours, the Titanic and 1,523 of her passengers were at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. Only 705 people of the original 2,228 on the ship survived!

This shipwreck was an avoidable tragedy had all the proper steps been taken by the captain and crew! But, since those steps were not taken, a very tragic loss of ship, of life and of property took place!

That's just one of many famous shipwrecks that we could talk about this morning. Personally, I remember one in my hometown when I was 16! *The African Neptune* hit the Sidney Lanier Bridge in Brunswick, Georgia, back on November 7, 1972 around 9:50 p.m. and collapsed a portion of the bridge plunging cars into the Brunswick River! Ten people were killed and ten more were wounded! Brunswick made the national news!

I remember it mostly because I had gone across that bridge not more than a half-hour earlier—I could have been collateral damage from that shipwreck!

The cause of the crash was a misstep in the execution of a command! As the ship approached the bridge, the pilot ordered the helmsman to put the rudder left 20 degrees. The helmsman repeated the order correctly when he received it, but executed the order incorrectly by putting the rudder 20 degrees right instead of left.

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Those are just two of many, many tragedies involving shipwrecks, but did you know that **not all shipwrecks happen at sea?** Our text speaks of a different kind of shipwreck—a "**spiritual shipwreck**"—i.e. **The shipwreck of one's faith!**

In fact, it even records the names of two men in the early church that had experienced such a **shipwreck** in their lives—Hymenaeus and Alexander.

Most of us in this room may never be involved in a shipwreck at sea. However, **the possibility exists that we might suffer a shipwreck in our spiritual life.** In some ways, **a spiritual shipwreck can be far more devastating than a shipwreck on the high seas! That's because "spiritual shipwreck" involves eternal matters and matters of the soul and spirit!**

Now the **picture** that the Apostle Paul uses here of a **shipwreck** is something that he knew about personally! According to *2 Corinthians 11:25*, Paul **suffered a shipwreck on three separate occasions!** One of those occasions we are given more details of in *Acts 27!* But, like most shipwrecks, that one was avoidable! Had those in charge just listened to the Apostle Paul, that one would not have taken place!

So the picture that Paul gives here is something he was acquainted with! Let's look at the subject this morning of "*Don't Shipwreck Your Faith!*"

I. WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL SHIPWRECK? (Vs. 19-20)

Paul called out two men here who had **shipwrecked their faith!** We don't know much about these men, but we do know that they became a problem for Paul and for the Churches affected by them.

This is revealed in 2 Timothy, where it is said that **Hymenaeus had "erred" concerning the truth, (2 Timothy 2:17-18);** and Paul says that **Alexander did him "much evil" personally! (2 Timothy 4:14)**

Most of us here today know a someone or more than one someone who once walked with the LORD but have now made shipwreck of their faith! They no longer walk with the LORD!

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It happens! Even sometimes among those in high places of Spiritual leadership! I've seen it personally more times than I care to count!

Spiritual shipwrecks can, unfortunately, be found all around! They are getting easier to find the closer we get to the LORD coming!

But one thing that I want you to realize this morning is that **spiritual shipwrecks don't just happen to others, they can happen to any one of us!** Paul charged Timothy here to hold to his faith and not be like these others who didn't and shipwrecked their spiritual lives!

No one in this room is immune from the possibility of **getting off of God's course for our life and shipwrecking our life and our faith!**
1 Corinthians 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

II. WHY ARE THERE SPIRITUAL SHIPWRECKS?

Why do they happen? What kinds of things can cause ships to wreck?

A. Not Using A Navigational Map And Compass!

I don't know how they do it now, but pilots at one time would use a compass and the pattern of the stars to determine where the ship was in relation to the rest of the world!

The pilot would consult a map to determine his latitude and longitude so he could steer clear of the danger around him!

Some folks have quit consulting their Map (Bible) and Spiritual Compass (Holy Spirit) in this dark world! And the result is that they're headed for a shipwreck!

B. Not Having A Pilot That Knows The Ship And The Sea!

Jesus knows what is best for your ship...your life!

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Because if you know Him, HIS LIFE IS YOUR LIFE!
(Col 3:4)

Listen, Jesus knows the SHIP and Jesus knows the SEA!
The sea of this life is going to present some storms from time to time that only Jesus knows how to steer you through them!

Unfortunately some have kicked Jesus aside and taken over the helm themselves! They don't have a clue about their ship and they don't have a clue about how to get it through a storm!

Some get caught up in a storm and they don't know what to do and they want to abandon ship! *"I'm not doing this anymore!"*

C. Look At These Two Men Who Suffered Shipwreck! (Vs 19)

Paul tells us that the reason these two men suffered shipwreck was because they **"put away"** the faith. This phrase literally means **"to thrust or push away"**. It refers to **"an intentional turning from truth to error!"** That my friend is very serious business!

In the case of Hymenaeus it would appear that **he rejected the true teaching of the faith and embraced false doctrine.** For Alexander, it seems that **he developed a mean spirit and began to work against the things of the Lord. But both of these guys wound up where they were because they pushed away truth and consequently embraced error!**

This same process takes place within people in the local Church! For whatever reason, some people who belong to a local assembly and who once professed Christ as their Savior have had something that **caused them to push away from the Church and the truth! When that happens they begin to embrace error and they shipwreck their faith!**

That move from truth to error is **not** normally made in an instant!

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Normally one does not wake up one morning and say, *"I think I'll throw away my testimony and influence today. I think I'll just get out of the will of God."*

No, it is far more subtle than that:

I've seen folks begin to fall away when they **got their eyes off of the sinless Savior and on to someone else** that they feel has let them down, especially if it is a Pastor or some other Church leader or leaders! Or maybe it was the Church itself!

I've seen others fall away when they **don't deal with sin in their lives**—i.e. they allow sin to go unchallenged and unconfessed in their lives!

I've seen others, even men of God, fall away when they **begin to rationalize their sinfulness and backslidden condition!**

Some people fall away because they've allowed something to affect their basic faithfulness! (Church attendance, Bible study, praying, tithing!) If that happens, you're a candidate! Some folks lives are adrift! A ship that is adrift is in danger!

By the way, backsliding usually begins very subtly—a drift! The movement away from God is a little at a time, but before long, the backslider is far, far away from the One Who redeemed their soul!

Ill. It is like putting a frog in a pot of cool water and placing it on the stove and slowly turning the heat up! Because he is cold blooded, the frog is oblivious to the temperature changes in the water, until it is too late and he is boiled to death!

Some this morning have drifted so far from the LORD that maybe they don't even remember how they got to where they are! But they're far, far away from where they started in Christ! **Look closely at your life today and assess if you've drifted and where that drift in your life has taken you!**

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III. WHAT IS A...WHY ARE THERE...SPIRITUAL SHIPWRECKS? WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF SPIRITUAL SHIPWRECKS?

A. What Happens When A Ship Wrecks? (Vs 20)

1. There Is Always A Loss Of Some Kind!

- a. To The Ship!
- b. To People! (Sometimes people you love!)
- c. To Property!

Some of the loss may be recoverable! Some may not be!

2. For these two men, they were *"delivered to Satan"*.

This was the most extreme punishment available for Church people who went away from the Lord. It's called Church discipline!

But sometimes all the LORD does is let sin take its natural course in the life of those who stray!

Proverbs 11:6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.

B. We All Need To Understand The Effect Of Our Sin!

1. Our Sins Have Consequences And We Always Reap What We Sow!

Galatians 6:7-8 7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

2. When A Believer Allows His Or Her Life To Become Shipwrecked By Sin, There Are Terrible Consequences To Pay For That!

1. Chastisement is assured! (Hebrews 12:6-12)
2. Death is even a possibility! (1 John 5:16)
3. Besides that, the loss of one's testimony, one's influence and one's usefulness is a tragedy beyond description!

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1 Corinthians 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

4. When we shipwreck, it can negatively affect our relationships with others!

Remember: We can choose to sin, but we cannot choose the consequences!

C. Three Truths About Sin:

1. **Sin Will Take You Where You Don't Want To Go!**
2. **Sin Will Keep You Longer Than You Want To Stay!**
3. **Sin Will Cost You More Than You Want To Pay!**

IV. IS THERE ANY REMEDY FOR SPIRITUAL SHIPWRECKS?

(Vs. 18-19a)

Paul lays out a five step remedy that will help one either avoid a spiritual shipwreck or recover from one if it has already taken place!

A. **The Remedy Lies In Following! (Vs. 18)**

Paul tells Timothy that he is giving him a "**charge**". That is a military word and it refers to **a superior issuing commands to a subordinate.**

In other words, Paul is telling Timothy that he has the responsibility to **obey** his words! He has **a duty to listen to and carry out the orders** of the Apostle!

The same is true for the believer today! The first step in walking with God as we should lies in our willingness to obey His revealed will as it is written in the Word of God!

We have a mandate to obey the Word! (James 1:22-25)
Our obedience proves that we love the Lord! (John 14:15; 21)
Our obedience proves that we are saved by the grace of God!
(1 John 2:3-5)

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Where is your life in relationship to God's Word?

The Remedy Lies In Following!

B. **The Remedy Lies In Fulfilling!**

Paul reminds Timothy of the "*prophecies*" that had been issued concerning his life. Prophecies, no doubt, of his gifts, strengths and fitness for the ministry. He was to flesh out those prophecies through his life and ministry for the glory of God!

Note: We have been the object of divine prophecies as well. We have been told that we are "*more than conquerors*", (Romans 8:37)

We have been told that we can constantly walk in victory through the Lord Jesus Christ! (1 Corinthians 15:57)
We have been told that out our faith in the Lord is our key to overcoming everything in this life! (1 John 5:4)

Just as this charge was "*committed*" to Timothy, we have a charge committed to us!

We have a duty to God, the church, our fellow man and ourselves! We need to live up to our potential in Jesus Christ! Let's face it, many believers in this day and time are falling far short of their God-given potential! Are you living up to your fullest potential for the LORD?

C. **The Remedy Lies In Fighting!**

"War a good warfare!"

We have not been enlisted in the Lord's army to "play army" on the playground. **The Christian life is a battleground!** From the moment one comes to faith in Jesus, he or she is **in the midst of a spiritual conflict.**

Our enemies of **the world, the flesh and the devil** are all working to shipwreck us on the jagged rocks of sin!

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Thankfully it is a battle that we can win, if we appropriate the spiritual resources provided for us by our Heavenly Father!
2 Corinthians 10:3-5 3 *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

D. The Remedy Lies In Our Faith!

"Holding faith" This word means *"to lay hold of a thing, to own or possess for oneself"*.

Abandoning one's faith is the wrong move to make!
When you abandon your faith—SHIPWRECK is imminent!

E. The Remedy Lies In Faithfulness!

Not only was Timothy to *hold to faith*, but he was to **hold to a "good conscience"**.

We all know that when we go against our conscience, we experience feelings of guilt, shame, remorse, fear, doubt and insecurity.

The conscience is given to us so that when we know what is right and what is wrong, it insists that we do the right and avoid the wrong. But it is the Word of God that teaches us what is right and what is wrong. A conscience that is set by God's Word and guided by God's Holy Spirit is a *"good conscience!"*

In other words, a *"good conscience"* is a synonym for an obedient heart which wants to do what God says is right.

Whenever God speaks, and we know what he is telling us to do, regardless of what our flesh or our feelings say, we are to obey Him! That is the way to maintain a *"good conscience."*

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A good conscience works with faith, that which lays hold of the resources of God in dependence on Him. So a **good conscience** is the discipline of the mind and the will that says, *"I will follow my Lord and do what he says to do."*

Conclusion

Simply put, it is dangerous to operate our lives apart from the leadership of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit! It is a recipe for disaster—for SPIRITUAL SHIPWRECK!

What will be said about your life? Will you be able to say what Paul said in *2 Timothy 4:7*, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"*

Or will your life be one of the many who veer off course, **guided by self-will and feelings** only to be wrecked upon the jagged reefs and rocks of sin?

Listen to one last thing—Regardless of what storms may come your way, you can safely navigate the seas of life with the LORD at the helm! Is He there?

First of all He needs to be in your ship...in your life! Are you saved?

Second, He needs to be in control of your ship! Don't dare take the helm of your own life! It won't turn out well!