

**1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1: 18-20; “Keeping the Charge”, Sermon # 11 in the series – “To Honor God in the Church”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014, In the Afternoon Worship Service.**

Paul has now finished giving his own testimony and has spoken praise to God for the glorious attributes of God who had had such mercy on him, a sinner. But now he returns to his original train of thought, his charge or command to Timothy, not to permit errors of doctrine to come into the church, but to preserve pure and intact the gospel and all the truths related to Christ and salvation. The purpose for which men are raised up to the Christian ministry is no different today than it was in Timothy’s day. Men in the ministry are entrusted with the invaluable truth of salvation in Christ and how people may come to know God. And they are entrusted with teaching the sound doctrine found in all parts of the Word of God, and flowing from that, how people should worship and serve God acceptably. The faithful minister must wage a good warfare, to guard and promote God’s truth in the church and in this fallen world of sin. In doing so he will encounter persons who will pervert the gospel or water it down, or try to replace it with something else. But there are 3 things which Paul wants Timothy to remember that will enable Timothy to keep the charge and honor God. He will keep the charge by remembering the importance of some things good and bad.

**1<sup>st</sup> – He will keep the charge by remembering the words of good men.**

Paul calls Timothy his “son” or “child” once again here as he did in verse 2. Clement, one of the early Church fathers once said, ‘We call them fathers that instruct and catechize us.’ Perhaps Clement was the man mentioned in Philippians in Chapter 4, verse 4 by Paul who was, “a fellow worker” laboring with him in the gospel. Turn over with me to Philippians 2: 19-22. Here Paul explains himself well when he says, “But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.” “For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.” “For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.” “But you know his proven character that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.” Paul, when instructed Timothy in the doctrinal truth related to the defense and propagation of the gospel, was also looking to see if he was “like-minded” with him, as an Apostle who was trying to promote everything true and good. Not every Christian was like this. Many people (He calls them “all” here), sought their own things and not the things of Christ. Timothy was not like this. Both Paul and Timothy knew that there was more to being a Christian than mere assent to the truth. Paul and Timothy were like-minded in that they had a sincere love for the brethren to see them growing and prospering in their faith, finding out whether or not Christ was dwelling richly in their hearts; finding out whether their faith was steadfast, finding out whether they had moved away from the hope of the gospel because of the persuasive words of some deceiver.

“Like father, like son,” so we say. But Timothy would keep the charge because he had imbibed Paul’s spirit as well as his words. Paul would have Timothy remember also the prophecies of a number of godly men who over time, by the inspiration of God given to them, knew that God would use Timothy mightily for Christ’s kingdom and for His glory. Perhaps these prophetic utterances were spoken at Timothy’s ordination as it says in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4: 14. “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things, give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.” The lesson that we all can learn from this is this – There are expectations which God has for us and which other godly men have concerning us which are our charge. If we have believed in Christ, it is of great consequence whether we are faithful to rise to usefulness to Christ and to His Church. It does seem that the Apostle felt a keen disappointment

in regard to the fact that there were not many who sincerely cared for the state of the churches, the spiritual welfare of all the saints. The question is, will you study by God's grace, to keep the charge committed to you; to live up to all that God has given to you in gifts, graces, and truth so that together we may wage a good spiritual warfare?

**2ndly – Paul charged Timothy that he should keep the charge by remembering to have faith and a good conscience in spiritual battle.**

Verse 19 says that Paul wanted Timothy to “have faith and a good conscience, which some had rejected”. Concerning the faith they had suffered shipwreck. The importance of this statement is very great. In waging warfare for the truth of the gospel and the salvation of sinners, Timothy must have faith. This means, of course, that he would hold fast all the truth essential to a right understanding of the gospel. He must rightly understand the person of Christ; born of a virgin, two natures, one personality, fully God and fully man. He must address the sinfulness of man; his depravity and inability. He must proclaim the righteousness of Christ; His obedience, humility, and sufferings on the cross. He must often refer to His resurrection and ascension; that He is and will be triumphant in His cause. But it means even more than this. He must remember to have faith in the power of the gospel and the providence of God. It is God Himself who will make a way for Christ's gospel to have good success through our own endeavors. It means that the minister and all the congregation must have the faith to pray that the Word of God would prevail over all the errors and hearts of the people whom we come into contact with. This, we must believe, as well as Timothy. We must have faith in the Word of God that as we share it, that God Himself will make it effective to destroy the heresies and errors of false doctrine. We must have faith in the gospel that it is the power of God unto salvation. We must be expectant that God will bless and honor it to the salvation of souls. We must have faith that that the Lord will strengthen our faith to do what is right and to stand for what is right. We must see that keeping a good conscience before God as regards our heart and our walk and our witness will help us when the spiritual battle rages. 1<sup>st</sup> John 3: 21 says: “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.” “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

I would like you to look at some other verses with me. Turn with me over to Acts 24: 10-16. Paul has been arrested in the temple for having caused the Jews there consternation by his supposedly having brought Trophimus the Ephesian into the temple. They were seeking to kill him but he was rescued by the commander and the soldiers; and finally they stopped beating Paul. (Acts 21: 32) This led to his being able to publicly defend himself by his preaching. But his defense did not free him and so he was brought eventually before the council, and after that, before the governor Felix. Here is where we take up our reading. “Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: ‘Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.’ “And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city.” “Nor can they prove the things of which now accuse me.” “But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.” “I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.” “This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.”

You can see here what brought Paul a clear conscience in the face of all these charges that were being brought against him. It was that he believed all things which were written in the Law and in the Prophets, and he ordered his own life and conduct to be faithful to preach the gospel in light of the coming Judgment Day; and to be without offense toward God and men; even in

this present life he strove to do this. This too, is what you and I ought to strive for. Knowing that no one can be saved without the gospel being preached to them; knowing that right is right and wrong is wrong, we can confidently go into the spiritual battles, even as Paul did. Paul was a good sailor as well as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Paul's conscience is like a rudder steering him in the right direction. And we will be led well in spiritual battle and in propagating the truth before others when we keep our conscience clear or void of offense; which is to be blameless.

John Trapp takes the metaphor a bit farther. He says – “We must all look to our standing, and get our hearts ballasted with grace. As the bee, when she is to fly against the wind, ballasted her body with some little stone carried betwixt her feet, that we be not swirled about with every word of doctrine.” “A man is to expect if he live out his days, to be urged to the breach of every branch of the Decalogue, and to be put to it in respect of every article of the creed.” “Provide for a storm: Shipmen in a calm, or at a haven, look to their tacklings: see the ship be well ballasted, victualed, and watered.” (End of quote) You see, my beloved brethren, unbelieving people and sometimes even compromised believing people, are going to try to get each one of us who believes, to compromise the precepts and principles and doctrines of the faith. Having faith and a good conscience will be the right ballast and rudder. Those who do not want to repent of their sins will try to do anything they can to avoid the implications of Biblical truth. You and I must be exactly the opposite in our attitude. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3: 15 and 16 has the answer for us: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.”

**3<sup>rd</sup> – Let us keep the charge of maintaining Biblical truth and practice, by remembering the awful example of men who have suffered shipwreck.**

Verse 19 says that “some having rejected faith and a good conscience concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom Paul delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” Hymenaeus and Alexander were men who did not hold fast their confession of Christ or keep a good conscience. They did not have their spiritual ships ballasted and they did not use the rudder to steer them rightly. And so they ran upon the rocks of the Lord's judgments. Paul would deliver them by his Apostolic power, to Satan so that they would be taught not to blaspheme. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2 we see some of their sinful errors. They didn't handle the word rightly. They were profane babblers. They were sensual and they were contentious for their own false interpretations of the Scripture. They were saying that the resurrection was already past and thus they overthrew the faith of some. They were proud and argumentative and unrepentant. Their message would spread like a cancer. Let us remember this bad example and steer away from it.

Let us understand that it is very important to your being an orthodox Christian that you do not believe that the resurrection has already taken place. When this falsehood is taught it does violence to the glory of Christ's glorious Second Coming. Christ's Second Coming and our resurrection from the dead are integrally linked together in Apostolic teaching. What! Is Christ not coming at all? Are we not instructed in the Word of God to be always looking for His glorious appearing? Are we not told to be always watchful, always prayerful as to His coming for us, both in terms of our death, and in terms of His Second Coming? Truly we are told these things. And when we do not believe in a future resurrection it is as much as saying that the promise of Christ is not true; that God's word is not true. These men were saying that everything in the physical realm of existence continues on, world without end; that the resurrection is not something that we will see with our physical eyes and that somehow Christ will not come back in this way to raise the dead, judge the world, and transform the bodies of His saints in glorification. This indeed is blasphemy; to rework in your own mind the purposes of God which He has plainly stated in His word. Is your earthly feeble reasoning stronger than

God's precious promise and purposes. I think not! For when we die, the next event which our body will experience will be the resurrection from the dead. And on that glorious Day every eye will see Him, not just some eyes. How were these men blaspheming Christ? They were blaspheming by attempting to say that the resurrection which God has promised to be future, physical, and publicly glorious had already taken place. It was to be on-going, hidden from men's eyes, and not collective, but individual. Is a man's reasoning to contradict the purposes of God and His revelation of what He promises to do for His Church? It dishonors God to say so, and therefore it is blasphemy. It takes what God has said will be, and says that it cannot be, in the way that He has said and promised.

Let us never allow ourselves to fall into this very earthly unbelieving form of thinking, as though God cannot at any moment intervene in human history and bring this world to an end as we know it. Some day He certainly will send Christ back to bring it all to a climax and to a wonderful end for all those who are looking for His appearing. Remember – You have set sail on the good ship grace, and you have to have her ballasted with faith. You have to steer a straight course if you would reach heaven and if you would honor God and wage a good warfare. See to it that you keep this charge. Remember the words of good men and fulfill all their godly expectations of you. But remember even more that the eye of God is upon you and the expectations of Christ that you will look to Him for faith and a good conscience are always there. Look to Him for the grace that you will need to finish well. “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”