

“FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT”

I Timothy 1:18-20

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INTRODUCTION

But there are some doctrinal deviations that go beyond the realm of tolerance for the believing church. When significant aberrations take place from the Apostolic deposit of truth found in Holy Scripture as given by the Holy Spirit, the believer is not to be tolerant—**he must fight for the truth and oppose wrong teaching, even when done by those who profess to be fellow believers.**

Now, it is not always easy to know when we can agree to disagree over errors that are really minor, and when we must refuse to budge and must take a stand. I submit to you that the Holy Spirit who gave us His Word will enlighten us and show us the way if we willingly and prayerfully submit to His guidance through the Scriptures.

Yes, we must be patient, we must be kind, and we must be tolerant toward others—but never at the expense of TRUTH!

If we err, we must not err on the side of exposing the Truth to abuse; God will help us to see if we have gone too far if we have tender hearts toward Him and faithfully search the Scriptures—as Bereans!

IT IS NEVER LOVING TO TOLERATE ERROR. WE MUST FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT—WITH ALL OUR MIGHT!

- I. THE COMMAND TO DEFEND TRUTH AND TO EXPOSE ERROR (18) [Review vv. 3-11]
 - A. Authoritative Command
 - B. Sacred trust—a banking figure; something very valuable and important that must be carefully guarded
 - C. Filial bond—“Timothy my son”
 - 1) Paul his spiritual “father”;
 - 2) Timothy younger and must respect Paul’s experience and authority.
 - 3) Timothy has a “filial spirit” of loving cooperation

DO we have such an attitude of respect toward our “spiritual fathers” who have passed on to us our doctrinal heritage? We must take our responsibility seriously!
 - D. Divine call—prophecies made concerning Timothy
 1. Timothy was “pointed out” to Paul by divine selection and the work of NT prophets.
 2. Timothy was “ordained” and gifted for the work given to him.
 3. Today God still calls and the churches ordain those gifted by God to faithfully serve Him.
 - His servants must faithfully carry out the divine appointment.
 - His people must reverently submit to genuine divinely appointed leaders.
 - E. Spiritual Warfare: see **II Cor. 10:3-6; I Tim. 6:12**; II Tim. 2:3-4; 4:7; **Eph. 6:10-18**
Present tense verb—“be fighting the good fight.”
Paul does not refer to a single battle, but to “a military campaign waged over a lengthy period of time.” We are involved in “not a sprint but a marathon,” “not an afternoon’s sailing but a voyage.”
- II. THE MANNER OF DEFENDING TRUTH AND EXPOSING ERROR (19)
See I Thes. 5:8—Breastplate of faith and love, and helmet of salvation; **Eph. 6:13-16.**
 - A. Faith—trust in God, and belief in His revealed Word. [doctrinal clarity]
 - B. Good conscience—clean from sin; accurately condemning wrong and promoting right.

Note the proper emphasis on belief and sound doctrine and practice of godliness. **Sound doctrine and good morals are closely connected in Scripture!**

- Poor doctrine leads to bad morals.
- Bad morals lead to poor doctrines.

III. THE DANGER OF FORSAKING SOUND TEACHING (19b-20)

A. Spurning a “good conscience” [*very strong word*=“*push aside, repudiate*”]

You can justify anything you wish if only you ignore your **biblically informed** conscience.

B. Suffering shipwreck—in regard to **their faith** or **the faith**: maybe both ideas are to be seen here!

We cannot assume here the loss of the salvation of these men.

C. Satanic delusion and Strong Discipline (20)

1. Delivered over to Satan

- The author of **lies** and **false doctrine**.
- Given over to his damaging treatment like Job in 2:6.
- Involves excommunication from the body of believers as in I Cor. 5:5.
- Likely also involves some physical suffering as in I Cor. 11:30; cf. Ananias and Sapphira
- The realm outside the Church is in Satan’s domain; see I Jn. 5:19.

2. Strong discipline—“disciplined like a child”

- Involves training, disciplinary treatment, even corporal punishment when needed.
- The purpose is remedial—restorative; not permanent exclusion!

D. The Savior is “blasphemed” by false teaching—irreverent and disrespectful speech

IV. THE NECESSITY OF NAMING NAMES AND MOVEMENTS AT TIMES

A. Hymenaeus—cf. II Tim. 2:17

B. Alexander

- It is unlikely that he is to be identified with the Alexander of Acts 19:33—a Jew who was trying to defend his people against the position of Paul during the riot at Ephesus; if he had become a Christian since that time, he could be the same man.
- He could be the same as “Alexander the coppersmith” of whom Paul stated in II Tim. 4:14 “he did me much harm.” But, we cannot be sure.

We are told that we must not name names—that to do so is uncharitable.

- Moreover, people need to be warned so as not to fall under the influence of those teaching or doing wrong.
- This is one of the distinctions between fundamentalism and New Evangelicalism—we are willing to take a firm stand against error and even to name names when necessary.

CONCLUSION

For far too long mainstream evangelicalism has been willing to tolerate diverse and divisive doctrinal deviations within the body of believers. The end result is that today we have **rampant doctrinal confusion in our churches, colleges, and seminaries**. Doctrines no longer taken for granted in many circles are:

- The complete inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture—even in historical and scientific matters.
- The literalness of hell.
- The limitation of salvation to those who have trusted Christ.
- That Creation was by a direct act of God in 6 literal days. That Adam and Eve were literal persons.
- That the flood was worldwide and destroyed the entire earth.

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