

Good Soldier or Bad Sailor?

1 Timothy 1:18-20

CCF 12.28.25

Intro

It has been my privilege to visit Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. multiple times...

And on each of those visits our school group has watched the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and then made our way to a grave that looks like so many of the others...

- But this particular gravestone is next to a *special flagstone walkway* that was installed to accommodate the large number of visitors who wish to pay their respects to this individual soldier...

The man who is buried there was a ***good soldier*** from Texas named Audie Murphy...

- Audie Murphy served in WWII and first saw combat in North Africa, Sicily and Italy in 1943 and 1944...

Throughout these campaigns, Murphy proved himself to be a proficient marksman and a highly skilled soldier...

- After the invasion of Rome, Murphy received his first medal for gallantry — but it was in France that Audie Murphy would have his *greatest test* and his *legacy-defining moment*...

On Jan. 26, 1945, near the village of Holtzwihr in eastern France, Lt. Murphy's forward positions came under fierce attack by the Germans...

- Against the onslaught of **six Panzer tanks** and **250 infantrymen**, Murphy ordered his men to fall back to better their defenses...

Alone, he mounted an abandoned, burning, tank destroyer and, with a single machine gun, contested the enemy's advance.

- Wounded in the leg during the heavy fire, Murphy remained there for nearly an hour, repelling the attack of German soldiers on three sides and single-handedly killing **50** of the enemy combatants...

His courageous performance stalled the German advance and allowed him to lead his men in the counterattack which ultimately drove the enemy from Holtzwihr...

- For his outstanding display of bravery, Murphy was awarded the *Congressional Medal of Honor*, the nation's highest award for gallantry in action...

By the war's end, Murphy had become *the nation's most-decorated soldier*, earning an unparalleled *28 medals*, including three from France and one from Belgium.

- Murphy had been wounded *three times* during the war, yet, in May 1945, when victory was declared in Europe, *he had still not reached his 21st birthday*...

Without a doubt, First Lt. Audie Murphy was a **good soldier**...

With this **good soldier** in mind, I would now like to draw your attention to some **bad sailors**...

- The **bad sailors** I am referring to are those who were in positions of leadership aboard *the most famous shipwreck of all time* — **the Titanic**...

Among the mistakes made by these **bad sailors** were the following 3 fatal errors...

Error #1 — For reasons that are still unclear, the Captain of the Titanic, E.J. Smith, commanded that the ship be run at full speed through the iceberg-infested waters of the North Atlantic...

Error #2 — Less than an hour before the Titanic hit the iceberg that would sink it, another nearby ship, the Californian, radioed to say it had been stopped by dense field ice. But as the warning didn't begin with the prefix "MSG" (Master's Service Gram), which would have required the captain to directly acknowledge receiving the message, the Titanic's radio operator Jack Phillips considered the other ship's warning non-urgent, and didn't pass it along...

Error #3 — The lookouts aboard the Titanic had no binoculars. Second officer David Blair, who held the key to the Titanic's store of binoculars in his pocket, was transferred off the ship before it left for its maiden voyage from Southampton, and forgot to hand over the key to the officer who replaced

him. At a later inquiry into the sinking, a lookout on the Titanic said binoculars might have helped them spot and dodge the iceberg in time.

These three tragic errors committed by ***bad sailors*** contributed to the loss of over 1500 lives as the Titanic slipped into the cold depths of the Atlantic Ocean on April 15, 1912...

- Now, as we think about the differences between ***the valor of Audie Murphy*** and ***the negligence of those in leadership aboard the Titanic***, it is abundantly clear which example we should emulate...

It is always better to be a good soldier than it is to be a bad sailor...

And this is just what we will see as we study 1 Timothy 1:18-20 this morning...

In this passage, we will see that Timothy has a choice to make...

Will he respond to *Paul's exhortation* and be a ***good soldier*** or will he follow the *poor examples* of the ***bad sailors***, Hymenaeus and Alexander...

And like Timothy, we have the same choice to make...

We find ourselves in an ***in-between time*** — Christmas is over and New Year's is not quite here — and this is a fine time to evaluate how we are doing at this stage of our life...

- From what I understand, many of us (if not all of us) are going through difficult seasons...

Challenges abound — unfavorable circumstances surround us and the way forward is unclear...

*Maybe you can relate to the opening lines of Dante's **Inferno**...*

***Midway in our life's journey,
I went astray from the straight road
and woke to find myself alone in a dark wood.
How shall I say what wood that was!
I never saw so drear, so rank, so arduous a wilderness!
Its very memory gives a shape to fear.***

We find ourselves in this frightening place — and a choice must be made...

Will we, like bad sailors, recklessly sail away, refusing the warning signs and inevitably shipwreck our faith?...

Or will we choose to stand and fight like good soldiers — knowing that this is what the Lord has called us to?...

So, with this as our introduction, would you please follow along as I read the 3 verses that we will be studying this morning...

1 Timothy 1:18-20 (NKJV)

18 This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,

19 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,

20 of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Let's move into our first section...

1) Good Soldier (vs 18-19a)

Now, as we move into vs 18, Paul, like a good commanding officer — gives direct orders to his subordinate, Timothy...

18 This charge I commit to you, son Timothy,

charge — *instruction, command; this word is strictly used of commands received from a superior and transmitted to others...*

In other words, Paul received this **charge** from High Command — from Heaven — and he is passing it on to Timothy...

APPLICATION QUESTION — Do we receive the charges that we read in the Word of God as direct commands from Heaven?...

Do we conduct ourselves as good soldiers who are **ready** and **willing** to carry out those commands without **hesitation**?...

The Lord Jesus challenges us on this point in...

Luke 6:46 (NKJV)

“...why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?”

*Now, the **charge** that Paul is speaking of in 1 Timothy 1:18 most likely refers back to...*

1 Timothy 1:3-4 (NKJV) [let's look there...]

3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

This **charge** from the Apostle Paul was a command for Timothy to stay in Ephesus in order stem the tide of false doctrine and to correct those who were in error...

- And if we take some time to think about the difficulty of this **charge** that Timothy received from the Apostle Paul, ***we too will be exhorted to remain faithful in difficult circumstances...***

You see, as a ***good soldier*** Timothy was to remain at his post — he was not to leave the field because the battle was heating up — Timothy was to stay and fight...

*And what was true for Timothy is true for us — we are not to abandon the conflict because just because it is challenging — as **good soldiers** of Jesus Christ we are to stand and fight...*

*We see that the Apostle Paul wonderfully exemplified the attitude of a **good soldier** as we turn to...*

Acts 20:22-24 (NKJV)

22 “And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

Turning back to 1 Timothy 1:18 we read...

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy,

The expression **son** that we find here is a term of endearment...

Interestingly, the Greek word translated **son** can also be translated **child**...

Now, this intimate expression of endearment reminds us of the following three facts:

1) Paul was Timothy’s spiritual father...

2) Paul was likely 20 or more years older than Timothy...

3) Timothy was a dependable son in the faith who became Paul's most trusted co-worker...

So, as we consider the relationship of Paul and Timothy we should ask ourselves — *do we have any sons or daughters in the faith?...*

Do we have any that we would consider our children in Christ?...

Like Paul, are we willing to mentor those who are younger in the faith, seeking to help them to grow into maturity in Christ?...

- Now, if you consider yourself too young to be a Paul then I would simply ask you — *are you a Timothy?...*

Are you someone's *son* or *daughter* in the faith?...

- Like Timothy, are you allowing yourself to be mentored by someone who can help you grow in the faith?...

Continuing on in vs 18 we read...

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you,

With these words Paul reminds Timothy that God had spoken to Timothy through others — Timothy knew that he was called to this ministry...

And this assurance of a ***specific divine calling*** was designed to strengthen Timothy for the work that God had called him to...

Paul writes something similar as we turn to...

1 Timothy 4:12-15 (NKJV)

12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

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.

15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

As a ***good soldier***, Timothy was to remember that he had been appointed to his position by the Lord Himself...

- [expand on the importance of positions in ministry being ***divine commissions*** as opposed to ***self-promotions***...]

*It is only as we recognize that it was the Lord who called us to be ***good soldiers*** that we can rest in the promise of...*

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV)

...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

[expand on the importance of looking back to when God first called you — encouragement that others have given related to your calling — (Ray Solis' words of encouragement)...]

Please turn back to 1 Timothy 1 as we move on in vs 18...

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,

As we put the pieces together we see that Paul views Timothy as a high-ranking officer, who has received his orders, and who is to **wage the good warfare** against false doctrine...

- This subject reminds us of what A.W. Tozer said of the Christian life — *that it is not a **playground** — it is a **battleground**...*

Paul will address this theme once again in...

1 Timothy 6:12 (NKJV)

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Then near the end of his life Paul reflected on his own years as a good soldier in...

2 Timothy 4:7 (NKJV)

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

This verse is a vital reminder that ***the battle will not last forever...***

- When we come to the end of our lives we will lay down our arms...

But until then we are to remain in the fight...

For more on this subject of spiritual warfare, would you please turn to...

Ephesians 6:10-18 (NKJV)

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

If we are to **wage the good warfare** as **good soldiers** then we must fight in the power that God provides — we must be clothed in the armor of God...

- And as we **fight the good fight of faith** we must remember that we are only being asked to follow the example of our Savior...

When we find ourselves shying away from the spiritual battle that we have been called to fight we would do well to heed the exhortation of...

Hebrews 12:3-4 (NKJV)

3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

With this in mind, please turn back to 1 Timothy 1 as we move into vs...

19 having faith and a good conscience

Here Paul highlights two vital components of a **good soldier** — **faith and a good conscience**...

Faith is likely a reference to *the Christian faith* — to trust in the entirety of the Word of God...

- Timothy was to keep the faith — he was to hold fast to the spiritual truth that had been revealed to him — he was not to depart from the commands of the One who had enlisted him...

As a *good soldier* for Christ, Timothy's responsibility was to remain loyal to the Scriptures...

We see that the Apostle Paul made this clear as we turn to...

2 Timothy 3:13 - 4:5 (NKJV)

13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,

15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

So, in dealing with false teachers, Timothy must hold on to the Word of God and not be pulled into error...

- Likewise, if we are to be **good soldiers** we must always remember that Satan deals in deception, but the truth of the Word of God is able to defeat his lies...

For more on this subject, please turn to...

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 (NKJV)

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

- [expand on faith in the Word of God being absolutely foundational to our success as **good soldiers** — without the **sword of the Word of God** we are weaponless...]

Back now to 1 Timothy 1:19...

having faith and a good conscience,

The **conscience** is that inward judge that bears witness of our actions — when we live in obedience to the Word of God then we will have a **good conscience** as ***good soldiers***...

- The **good conscience** — one that obeys the commands of the Word of God as applied by the Holy Spirit — enables the ***good soldier*** of Christ to ***fight during the day*** and ***rest peacefully at night***...
- [expand — we must train our conscience to be good by the consistent study of the Word of God...]

*With that said, let's move now from **Good Soldier** to our second section...*

2) Bad Sailors (vs 19b-20)

To pick up the flow of thought, let's go back to the start of vs 19 where we read...

having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected,

Tragically, instead of being ***good soldiers*** some had rejected the **faith** and a **good conscience**...

Tragically, when a person rejects the **faith** — *when they depart from the Word of God* — they also lose their **good conscience**...

- Instead of submitting to the leadership of the Lord they leave His army and go out sailing on the sea of their own ideas and desires...

These bad sailors no longer fellowship with **good soldiers** because they no longer want to take orders from their Heavenly Commander...

- They will not listen to biblical exhortation because it wounds their damaged conscience and their foolish pride...

They have become **bad sailors** who will not submit to the will of God — they simply want to go their own way...

*The attitude of a **bad sailor** is perfectly summed up by William Ernest Henley's atheistic poem, **Invictus**...*

***Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.***

***In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.***

***Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.***

***It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.***

- [expand on the boastful and false words — William Ernest Henley was undoubtedly a ***bad sailor...***]

This subject reminds me of a famous quote that was reportedly uttered by an employee of the White Star Line at the launch of the Titanic on May 31, 1911...

“Not even God could sink this ship.”

Now, there is no way of knowing whether or not that quote is *fact* or *fiction* — but we do know that this *idea* is in the heart of ***every bad sailor...***

- You see, when a person rejects **faith and a good conscience** they are sailing out on dangerous waters — trusting that they know best and that God no longer has a claim on their lives...

They believe that *not even God could sink the ship of their lives* — they believe they are free to venture out into the great beyond with their heart as their guide...

But that voyage is destined for failure — we see this clearly as we move into the last part of vs 19...

which some having rejected concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,

As we think about this verse in context, Timothy would have been very familiar with the imagery of a shipwreck...

- Shipwreck was a well-known metaphor in the ancient world and by using this imagery Paul was signifying the catastrophic scale of damage caused by ***bad sailors***' rejection of faith and a good conscience...

[ex. we use the phrases “train wreck” or “dumpster fire” in similar ways...]

The point that cannot be missed is that the ***choice*** to be a ***bad sailor*** — instead of a ***good soldier*** — *will inevitably result in tragedy* — the ***bad sailor*** will suffer **shipwreck**...

- If the ***bad sailor*** refuses to return to shore and take up arms as a ***good soldier*** then **shipwreck** is the *only possible result*...

As we move into vs 20 Paul calls out two specific bad sailors...

20 of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander,

Though we cannot be absolutely sure, it seems most likely that these two were leaders in the Ephesian church and that they were spreading false doctrine...

For more on Hymenaeus, please turn to...

2 Timothy 2:15-18 (NKJV)

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

16 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.

17 And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort,

18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

*Now, as we turn back to 1 Timothy 1:20 we must admit that we don't exactly know who this Alexander was — but we do know what Paul **did** to these two **bad sailors**...*

Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan

This frightening imagery is the final step in church discipline...

The phrase **delivered to Satan** highlights the **importance** and **protection** of fellowship in the local church, since being put out of the church leaves a person more exposed to Satan...

- This **delivering to Satan** is to be used when an unrepentant sinner is removed from the church and treated as an unbeliever...

Please turn to Matthew 18 to see what the Lord Jesus had to say on this subject...

Matthew 18:15-17 (NKJV)

15 “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’

17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”

Now please turn to...

1 Corinthians 5:1-5 (NKJV) [give context]

1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife!

2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.

4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Taking into account both 1 Corinthians 5 and 1 Timothy 1, the Holman New Testament Commentary shares the following...

“In both instances, the sinning person was dismissed from the church. He was taken out of the protective community of the church and Christ's kingdom and handed over to the kingdom of this world, ruled by Satan. Alone in Satan's domain, the disciplined person would realize his errors, recognize the truth and goodness of God's kingdom, and choose to repent and return to God and the church in faith.”

With that said, it is obvious that not every **bad sailor** will repent as a result of church discipline...

- But we have no control over that — we are not responsible for producing **outcomes** — we are only responsible for being **obedient...**

As **good soldiers** we are to exercise church discipline on **bad sailors** in the hope that they would come to their senses and return to shore...

Back now to 1 Timothy 1 as we move into the last part of vs 20 where Paul writes...

whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

learn — means "to learn by discipline," suggesting that Satan would deal with them through adverse circumstances...

As far as the word **blaspheme** is concerned, there is no explicit indication that the false teachers directly uttered evil statements about God...

- However, to misrepresent God's truth is to speak ill of Him and that is a form of blasphemy...

Now, as we consider church discipline exercised on bad sailors we must remember that the goal of such discipline is **restoration**...

I love the way Paul put it in...

Galatians 6:1 (NKJV)

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Paul also wrote these words in...

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 (NKJV)

14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

With these verses in mind we realize that delivering a **bad sailor** to Satan is the final step in church discipline — and it is a painful step — but it had been known to produce good results...

To prove my point, please turn to...

2 Corinthians 2:5-8 (NKJV) [man from 1 Cor. 5...]

5 But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe.

6 This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man,

7 so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.

8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.

We will stop here for today...

Conclusion

And as we close I want to leave you with two final thoughts regarding good soldiers...

The first thought comes from...

2 Timothy 2:4 (NKJV)

No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

Thought #1 — If we are to continue fighting as good soldiers, we must desire to please God — He must be the reason we keep fighting — we must long to hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful soldier”...

Thought #2 — No soldier understands the significance of his or her role while in the war — it is only after the war is over that the soldier can see what part he or she played...

And this is how it is with us as good soldiers of Christ — we have no real idea of what part we are playing in God's ultimate battle plan — so don't even try to figure it out...

- ***Simply keep fighting the good fight of faith until the Lord Himself carries you from the field...***

Let's pray...