
Introduction

Good Morning Sierra Vista Community Church.

I'm looking forward to today's sermon.

I had a hard time with this sermon. Paul packs so much into just a few words that it is easy to get caught up in the minutia and dealing with each word and phrase and miss the point Paul is trying to make.

I did that and came up with a study on the passage that was fun for me to create, but had no point, no central and important message that you could use to make a change in your walk with Jesus.

Frankly, I prayed for help and asked for help. I was stuck. Evan gave me some great ideas and then our new Pastor, Pastor Brian, gave me some more.

I went back and I found what Paul was trying to say, and when I get done here this morning, I hope you will know what it was and be able to apply it in your life.

Today's sermon is on 1 Timothy 1:12-20

This section of scripture talks about Paul and his previous life as Saul. But that's not what is important.

While Paul is introducing himself, he gives glory and honor to Christ, and recognizes that he was appointed to be in Christ's service!

1 Timothy 1:12: *I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,*

In his service!

How many of you were ever in the service? I think you will be able to buy into this today.

I was an army brat, and grew up around the Army. My dad was a LTC so I thought that made me somebody special. When I was caught stealing, the police were quick to remind me that I was not my father.

I had an uncle, Cecil Octavious Carlile, Cecil O to his friends. And how he got into the service is a great story . . .

Cecil was a rotten little kid. Really. He was in constant trouble at school and with the police. The local justice of the peace was especially hard on Cecil, especially after seeing him 4 or 5 different times in court! Cecil thought he would get the judge back. Well, he and some buddies went out one night and were shooting rabbits. They got a large number, enough to spread all over the gas station that the judge owned. Well, Cecil was caught and the judge gave him a choice. Time in jail or join the Army.

Fortunately, Cecil chose the army. Being constantly challenged physically and mentally is just what Cecil needed, and he excelled.

As an enlisted man, he was soldier of the month for the entire Army. He went to officer candidate school and went on to be a pilot in Vietnam. His plane is, or at least was on display at the entrance of the Fort Rucker Alabama at the US Army flight center.

He was a consummate soldier. Loved the training and being a Colonel gave him the chance to lead others and train others.

He served something over 20 years and retired. He went to a civilian job, never flew again.
Folks, Paul was called to be in God's service. But, there was no retirement date set.

Opening

Let me take a moment to introduce you to the players in this story.

Paul and Timothy. Mentor and student, working together with a common goal.

Who is Paul

Paul wasn't awarded a rank that the rest of the service members could see and relate to. He didn't have automatic respect that he would have had if he was called Colonel Tarsus.

He had to give his bonafides, his Resume' so to speak. He does that here is:

1 Timothy 1:12-20: *¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. ^[a] Amen.*

Paul declared his sins and the fact that he was forgiven. Why in the world would God choose him to carry his word, and he wrote more books in the Bible than anyone else?

1 Timothy 1:15-16: *"¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life."*

Jesus came to save sinners.

Have you ever been to a testimony service where people tried to out sin each other?

I have been to testimony services, where the goal seems to show that you were worse than everyone else, as Paul seems to be doing here.

One person says: "I gotta tell you how bad I was, but God forgave me."

Another stands and answers: "Now brother, that's a good story, but I was much worse than you. Why I did X Y and Z"

That is not the point though. The point is that Jesus came to same sinners.

The best testimony I ever heard was from one of those testimony services. Everyone was confessing to past sins, and one old man didn't speak. People started goading him into speaking his testimony, calling on him

over and over, while he steadfastly refused. Finally, he got up and gave what I consider the greatest testimony ever. He said: "I was saved when I was 8. I have served God faithfully now for 75 years." And he sat down. Wow, to have always lived under God's grace. If that was true, then he lived an exemplary life and was truly blessed by God.

What Paul did not say, is that he had the training under the eminent Rabbi Gamaliel that let him preach in any Synagogue but what he did say was even when he recognizes that no one did more to hurt the early church than he did.

God chose Paul to be an example. If God can show mercy on a murdering blasphemer, persecutor and insolent opponent of Christianity then he can certainly show mercy on each of us and save us too! (AMEN)

Who is Timothy

Timothy is introduced in Acts 16:1-3

Acts 16:1-3: ¹ Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. ² He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. ³ Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

That's not a casual conversion. For a grown man to be circumcised is a commitment!

(Pause for reaction)

For some reason Paul was convinced to circumcise Timothy. Timothy had to have been convinced that this was the right thing to do, as he trained to work with Paul among all nations.

Timothy is mentioned as a companion to Paul in 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon. He served as companion, fellow evangelist, and as a pastor in Ephesus.

Paul says Timothy had a "genuine faith," the same as that which lived in his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:1-5). Eunice and Lois prepared Timothy's heart to accept Christ by teaching Timothy the Old Testament Scriptures and preparing him "from infancy" to recognize the Messiah when He appeared (2 Timothy 3:15). When Paul came preaching Christ, all three accepted his teaching and committed their lives to the Savior.

We, too, must prepare our children to be ready when Christ moves in their hearts. They must know how to recognize that pull on their spirits as coming from the Savior, and the only way to do that is to follow the example of Eunice and Lois and teach our children the Word of God.

The elders laid hands and prophesied about Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:14.

1 Timothy 4:14: *Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.*

I could not find anything further on what the prophesy was, but it had to do with the gifts that Timothy had been given. Having the council of elders pray for you would have probably been a recognition that Timothy was called to ministry.

Here, in Paul's first letter to Timothy, he gave him instructions and advice for leading the church. In the second letter Paul exhorted Timothy not to let others look down upon him due to his youth, but to set an example for other believers

2 Timothy 4:12: *Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.*

So how old would Timothy have been? Some say as young as 14, others put him closer to 20. We have no way of knowing. It was important to me when I was in High School to think that Timothy was my age. It gave me a boldness to witness, and knowledge that if I carefully studied and taught the scriptures that God would use me. It encouraged me to become the man I am today.

Paul told Timothy to be devoted to reading Scripture, exhorting, and teaching, and to not neglect the gift that he had been given. Paul also counseled Timothy to keep a close watch on himself. These instructions remain pertinent to believers today. These apply as much to us today as they did to Timothy 2000 years ago.

What did Paul say to Timothy?

1 Timothy 1:18-19a: *"¹⁸ This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ holding faith and a good conscience."*

Timothy is commissioned, like a soldier, to wage the good warfare.

Being a soldier of Christ involves a commitment to spiritual warfare and living out Christian values. This metaphor emphasizes the active role believers play in their faith journey.

Don't make a mistake here. Timothy was fighting a spiritual war then and we are fighting a spiritual war now.

Key Aspects of Being a Soldier of Christ

- **Spiritual Warfare:** Engaging in a battle against spiritual enemies such as sin, temptation, and evil forces. This requires awareness and readiness to confront these challenges.
- **Endurance:** Soldiers are called to endure hardships and remain steadfast in their faith, even in difficult times. This includes sharing in suffering and supporting fellow believers.
- **Focus on God's Mission:** A soldier of Christ prioritizes God's mission over worldly distractions. This means dedicating oneself to serving God and others, embodying virtues like love, courage, and self-control.
- **Do not listen to or participate in propaganda from the enemy,** which includes anything evil, as seen in social media or on television and accepted by our culture. Many perversions have gained momentum as normal things in our life. Things like materialism, exaggerated egos, sex, pornography, recognition that any religion could be right. Folks, there is only one way to heaven, and you are either on that road, marching to the beat of God, or you are somewhere else.

I heard a story I want to share with you.

A man was coming out of church one day, and the pastor was standing at the door, as he always was, to shake hands with the worshippers. As he shook the man's hand, he pulled him aside and said, "You really need to join the army of the Lord."

The man replied, "I'm already in the army of the Lord, Pastor."

So the Pastor enquired, "Then why do I only see you at Christmas and at Easter?"

The man whispered back, "I'm in the secret service."

(leave time – pause here)

Christians are in a spiritual warfare. The devil, the world, and the flesh are real enemies. These spiritual enemies are out to destroy the testimony and effectiveness of the believer. The enemy will seek to take you out or make you a prisoner of war. Thus, we are called upon to be good soldiers for the war.

How can we be good soldiers of Jesus Christ? What does it take for us to be soldiers who are victorious in the spiritual conflict?

First, We Must Be Dedicated

We are called to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We are enlisted as His soldiers. We are dedicated to His cause. The flag we wave is the flag of Heaven. Those around us should have no questions about our loyalty as His soldiers.

Second, We Must Be Durable

Paul told Timothy to endure hardness. Enduring hardness means we should not allow ourselves to become easily discouraged. It means we are prepared for conflict at all times of the day: in the wee hours of the morning or late in the night. It means we should not back down from the threats of the enemy. It means we will not allow the casualties around us to make us quit. A good soldier does not think about quitting!

Third, We Must Be Deliberate

Paul said, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life." A good soldier is not distracted by all the things going on in this life. His focus is to represent the Lord Jesus well in the conflict and to make sure He wins. Distractions could result in being hit by a fiery dart of the wicked one. Distractions could make us the target of a spiritual assassin. Distractions could cause us to turn our backs and become vulnerable to satanic attacks.

Fourth, We Must Be Delightful

Our number one priority as soldiers is to please the Lord! God is most pleased with us when we follow our orders, we are diligent at our post, we are vigilant as watchmen, we are loyal to our cause, we fight to win, and we are steadfast at all times.

Being a good soldier requires effort. We must realize that we are not called to be part time soldiers.

If we are going to fight a battle in the spiritual war that is raging around us, what do we need to do?

Ephesians 6:12 (English Standard Version - ESV): *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

Let us go onward and forward for the cause of Christ! Lift His royal banner and do not let it suffer loss. Let it be known we are in the Lord's army, and as His soldiers we are earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Living as a Soldier of Christ

Being a soldier of Christ is not just about belief; it involves action. This includes:

- **Training:** Engaging in prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with other believers to strengthen faith.
- **Support:** Working alongside fellow Christians to encourage and uplift one another in their spiritual battles.
- **Mission:** Actively participating in spreading the message of Christ and serving those in need.

This is what Paul is telling to Timothy when he says to be ready to wage warfare! Being a soldier of Christ means living a life of faith that is active, resilient, and dedicated to God's purpose.

To finish this passage, let's look at 1 Timothy 1:19b-20

Paul speaks against Hymenaeus and Alexander, who rejected Christ's teaching, and have made a shipwreck of the faith.

Timothy 1:19b to 20: ^{19b} *By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith,* ²⁰ *among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

Who were Hymenaeus and Alexander.

Hymenaeus and Alexander were teachers or pastors who were leading people away from sound doctrine, and were working against Paul. We aren't sure what they did that got them crossways with Paul, but Paul is using church discipline here to separate themselves from these people who were actively hurting the church.

Hymenaeus and Alexander were doing something that was leading the believers astray, and as such were to be in effect, ex-communicated.

Do not Blaspheme (insult God)

Do you know what it means to Blaspheme? I looked it up, and it was an interesting study.

To blaspheme is to speak with contempt about God or to be defiantly irreverent. Blasphemy is verbal or written reproach of God's name, character, work, or attributes.

Blasphemy, by definition, is both deliberate and direct. Even so, we should be careful to reflect God's holiness and never misrepresent the glory, authority, and character of God.

(From Got Questions)

Blasphemy was a serious crime in the law God gave to Moses. The Israelites were to worship and obey God. In Leviticus 24:10–16, a man blasphemed the name of God. To the Hebrews, a name wasn't just a convenient label. It was a symbolic representation of a person's character. The man in Leviticus who blasphemed God's name was stoned to death.

Followers of God are also responsible to make sure their behavior doesn't incite others to blaspheme God. In Romans 2:17-24, Paul scolds those who claim to be saved through the law and yet still live in sin. Using Isaiah 52:5, Paul tells them, "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (verse 24). Teaching false doctrine and leading God's people astray is also a form of blasphemy.

Jesus spoke against those who witnessed his miracles and said they were demonic. Mark 3:22-30 talks about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Their portrayal of the holy as demonic was a deliberate, insulting rejection of God and was unforgivable.

Fortunately, Jesus forgives even the sin of blasphemy. Paul was a blasphemer (1 Timothy 1:13) and tried to make others blaspheme (Acts 26:11). Jesus' own brothers thought He was insane (Mark 3:21). All repented, and all were forgiven.

Conclusion

Some have given up on their faith, and have not accepted knowledge of right and wrong

Not only have some given up, but many try to fight for both sides. They try to live in sin while fighting the Christian fight part time.

There is a comedian named Mike Goodwin who tells the story of calling a church member. I'll tell the story as if it happened to me.

Recently I had occasion to call on a church member, who I didn't realize was a Part Time Christian. Apparently, when I called it was her day off.

(holding phone) ring ring,

(she answers) Who the blank is this, and how did you get this blankety blank phone number.

(I speak) Hello sister, this is Jim from the church.

(she answers) Well praise the Lord, how are you Brother Jim?

Folks, there are no part time Christians. There is no Reserves. Believe me when I tell you, you are on the firing line, front row, in the trenches, and we need to be aware that the enemy comes to "seek, kill and destroy!"

This is a true statement: Satan does not need us to trust him or worship him. All he needs to do is to get us to not worship God in every aspect of our life. Pornography, sex, the pursuit of personal advancement or gain at the expense of others and without consideration for God's will. Satan want us to value our own desires, reputation, or success above the glorification of God. The Bible cautions that such ambition often leads to discord, jealousy, and ungodly practices.

When you became a Christian, you were overwhelmed with a desire to serve and share the gospel. Now, do even your closest friends know you are a Christian? Do your kids and grandkids know? Seriously, when is the last time you discussed the Savior with them? When was the last time you helped someone outside your immediate circle of family and friends? When was the last time you studied, not just read, but studied the Bible?

What is our mission?

We need to live humbly before God, knowing that only because of Jesus' death on that cross do we have eternity with God promised to us. When Christ works in you, honor God with your testimony.

We need to fight the fight. Satan is going to do everything he can to cause us to turn to sin instead of to God. Don't give up! Remember what I said earlier: "Satan does not need you to worship him, he just wants you to not worship God!"

We need to love one another with all that encompasses.

We need to let the Holy Spirit guide us in all things.

Jesus came to earth because He loved us.

We watched a video the other day where a family came home from Easter service and a neighbor spoke to them asking where they'd been. They explained that they went to church and a little bit about the Lord. The neighbor then asked if they didn't think he would want that same information.

If you put on a uniform of a military corps, everyone would immediately recognize you for what your are.

Well, we don't have uniforms. How can people recognize you as a believer. Are you living a different life? Do you talk about Jesus? Or do you look just like everyone else and never tell them about Jesus.

We need to introduce people to Christ. They don't know what they don't know. If we don't tell people about Jesus who will. There are over 140,000 people in the Las Cruces Area. It's not like you don't have a huge mission field in front of you. Start with who is most important to you. Is it your family, friends, acquaintances, strangers, the homeless and hopeless?

Didn't someone introduce you?

I got a call from a high school classmate a few years ago now. Rita told me that she looked down on me and ridiculed me in High School because I was always talking about Jesus, carrying my Bible and guitar and hanging out with other Christians. It didn't hit her for years what she had done and what she missed. She became a Christian years later, dedicating herself to serving in God's army! She just wanted me to know.

I want you to do two things this week.

- 1) Think about the person or people that brought you to Christ. What would you like to say to them?
- 2) Pray about where your commission is. How are you serving in His army?

Let's Pray