

Message Series: Famous Shipwrecks

Today's Message: "The Danger of Making Shipwreck of Our Faith"



A SouthPointe Message

Further Study

While most of us are very familiar with what "natural shipwrecks" are all about, very few of us have actually ever experienced a shipwreck. Most of the information we have about shipwrecks has been obtained from reading something about them or by what we have seen on television. The Apostle Paul's story is somewhat different from ours. He suffered shipwreck at least three times during his life according to 2 Corinthians 11:25 and he lived to tell the story. One of his shipwreck experiences is outlined in vivid detail in Acts 27 and 28. So, what was Paul's intention in mentioning these shipwrecks? What was he attempting to teach us from these experiences?

To fully answer that question, we need to read the books of 1 and 2 Timothy very closely. These two books happen to be my two favorite books in the entire Bible. When Paul wrote his letters to young Timothy, he made some startling statements to Timothy at the very beginning of his writing. I say these are startling statements because Timothy was not an "on the fringe" kind of Christian. He evidently was strong in his faith and very mature for his age. In 1 Timothy 1:18-20, Paul reminds Timothy that the Christian life is much like a warfare that must be fought on a daily basis. Paul quite often used military language throughout his writings when speaking about the Christian life. But here in 1 Timothy 1:19, Paul includes a new term not found anywhere else in Scripture. He uses a naval term rather than an army term. He reminds Timothy that there is a greater danger in life than suffering a "natural shipwreck". The greater danger is for a person to stray off course from the truth of the gospel and make a shipwreck of your life and of your faith. That is the real danger! It is no accident that this emphasis comes at the very beginning of the book to Timothy.

To impress the point to young Timothy even further, Paul uses two examples of individuals who made a shipwreck of their faith. Their names are mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20. Their names are Hymenaeus and Alexander. Paul warned Timothy not to follow their example. After such a solemn warning, I believe that Timothy must have read the remaining part of the book slowly and intently.

PAUL TOLD TIMOTHY THREE THINGS IN THE TEXT:

1. "War a good warfare": Paul must have emphasized this because Timothy may have been young, soft, and timid because of his age.
2. "Hold onto faith": Paul said that faith is a weapon that must be used in our daily warfare.
3. "Hold onto a good conscience": Someone said that the conscience is the still small voice inside you that makes you feel even smaller.

We will discuss the conscience later in our study.

THE USE OF MILITARY TERMS IN PAUL'S WRITINGS:

In verses 18-20, Paul uses two different military words to describe the Christian life. He uses an army term (war a good warfare) and he also uses a navy term (shipwreck).

I believe he did that to emphasize the fact that the everyday Christian life is not a bed of roses. It is in fact a war that must be fought each and every day. Jude 3 says that this war is a daily battle for THE FAITH: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

1 Timothy 1:19; 4:1 - Some shall depart from the faith.
2 Timothy 2:18 - Satan will attempt to overthrow your faith.
Mark 4:40 - A lack of Godly faith will make you say and do crazy things.
See also Luke 22:31-32; Luke 18:7, 8; Deuteronomy 32:19-20.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH - WHAT IS FAITH?

1. Defined: The persuasion that something is true. The idea of trust (Hebrews 11:1)
2. Developed: Faith comes from the Word of God (Romans 10:17; John 20:30, 31). Faith is strengthened through fellowship (Hebrews 3:12-14; 10:24, 25). Faith is confirmed in obedience (John 7:17).
3. Destroyed: Faith can be destroyed by neglecting God's Word in our lives (Hosea 4:6). Faith is dead without works (James 2:20-23, 26).

Christians, who have unshakable faith, are the number one enemy of Satan and the forces of evil. On the other hand, a Christian without faith becomes weak and they turn to other gods. Like a ship, our faith is designed to sail on the sea of life and withstand the storms it encounters without floundering upon the rocks.

TWO EXAMPLES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

While we do not know much about the two examples used by Paul of individuals who made shipwreck of faith, Timothy must have known who they were.

- Hymenaeus: (See also 2 Timothy 2:17)
- Alexander (See also 2 Timothy 4:14) Also known as the coppersmith.

Paul simply warned Timothy that these two men were guilty of teaching false doctrine and causing much injury to Paul himself and the church as a whole. According to Paul, these two men make shipwreck of their faith.

"Shipwreck" - Means "to put away the faith; to thrust or to push away. It refers to an intentional putting away of truth from one's life". We must also remember that this "putting away" never happens overnight.

WHAT CAUSES SHIPWRECKS? (NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL)

1. Improper Navigation and Steering: No compass to guide. The Word of God must be our compass to guide us through all of life.
2. Unexpected Storms: Storms are things that are out of our control. When we are in the midst of a storm, we must trust His providence and His sovereignty.
3. Sailing Through Unknown Waters:
4. Lack of Visibility:
5. Getting off Course; Equipment failure; Drifting:
6. Carelessness and Indifference; Sabotage:
7. Lack of Supply: No food, water, medicine, life vests etc.

RESULTS OF A SHIPWRECK (NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL)

1. You may drown: Even if you do not drown, you may never reach your destination. Your progress may fail, you may never finish.
2. You may lose everything you have in life:
3. You may suffer serious injury that will affect you the rest of your life.
4. You may even lose your testimony (This was Paul's greatest fear- See 1 Cor. 9:27).

CONCLUSION/APPLICATION - FIVE STEPS IN VERSES 18-19)

1. Follow - This is a military word; "a charge to keep". We are to listen and carry out the orders of our commander and chief Jesus Christ.
2. Fulfilling - Even though Paul had heard reports of his tremendous potential, he still warned Timothy of the possibility of making shipwreck of his faith (See also Romans 8:31; 1 Corinthians 15:5).
3. Fighting - The Christian life is a battlefield, a war zone (See Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5).
4. Faith - Timothy is told to "hold the faith" - "possess it, lay hold upon it, hold tightly".
5. Faithfulness - The value of a good conscience is not to help a person determine right from wrong. Its design is to help a person to resist turning from the truth. Your conscience will insist that you do right at all times.