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The Call to Courageous Ministry! Fight the Good Fight.

1 Timothy 1:18-19, *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,*

Introduction: Ministry is not a Career! It is a Campaign!!

The Apostle Paul does not describe Christian ministry with the vocabulary of business management, personal development, or community services.

He uses the vocabulary of the battlefield.

In **V18-19,** three military terms appear:

- **Charge** (parangelia, a military order),
- **Wage warfare** (strateuomai, to campaign), and
- **Warfare** (strateia, a military campaign).

The entire passage breathes with the urgency of wartime, the weight of high command, and the gravity of a mission that will have eternal consequences.

This is not hyperbole. The battle Timothy was engaged in the battle for the truth of the Gospel in the church at Ephesus was more consequential than any military campaign in the Roman Empire.

- Military campaigns determined the political boundaries of nations.
- The battle for the Gospel determines the eternal destiny of souls.

Paul wants Timothy to feel the weight of what he has been called to do.

But the language of warfare is also language of empowerment.

Soldiers are trained, equipped, commissioned, and backed by the full resources of their commanding authority.

Paul is not merely warning Timothy of the difficulty of ministry, but he is equipping him for it.

The charge carries authority.
The prophecies confirm the calling.
The weapons are specified.
The campaign, though difficult, is not hopeless.

The victory, though not yet complete, is assured.

I. The Charge Committed. *Paratithemi*

A. The Language of Sacred Trust

The word committed in Greek ***Paratithemi*** means to deposit for safekeeping, to entrust to a trusted guardian.

It is the same word used in **Luke 23:46**, *Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.*

Here Jesus commits His spirit to the Father.

It is also used in **2 Timothy 2:2**, *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

For the transfer of apostolic teaching to faithful men.

It is the language of legal trust, of an estate entrusted to a responsible steward.

Paul is not merely giving Timothy advice or sharing his personal convictions. He is making a formal transfer of apostolic responsibility.

The charge that was entrusted to Paul by the risen Christ is being deposited with Timothy for the next generation.

This is a deliberate, solemn act of succession. And the word committed emphasises that the deposit is not Timothy's to alter, improve, or supplement.

He is a steward, not an owner.

This concept of the sacred deposit runs throughout the Pastoral Epistles.

1 Timothy 6:20, *O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—*

2 Timothy 1:14, *That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.*

2 Timothy 2:2, *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

The language of deposit, guarding, and transmission is the language of the most precious inheritance in the world: ***the apostolic Gospel.***

B. Son Timothy! The Relational Context.

Paul does not begin this charge with an institutional formula or a theological declaration.

He begins with a name and a relationship: **son Timothy**. The charge is not merely professional; **it is personal**.

It is the transfer of a father's lifework to a son who has shared it, who has seen it lived, who has been formed by the same Gospel it proclaims.

This relational context is not sentimental but essential.

The ministry that Timothy is being charged to continue is not a job description but a life.

The apostolic deposit includes not merely the doctrinal content of the Gospel but the character, the suffering, the prayer, the love, and the courage that Paul has embodied.

Timothy cannot simply inherit the theology without the life from which it grew.

This is a model for every generation of ministry succession.

The pastor who trains his successor through proximity, shared experience, and honest relationship is doing far more than transferring a set of skills.

He is passing on a way of being in the world before God, a pattern of ministry integrity that can only be caught by observation and cannot be downloaded from a curriculum.

II. The Confirmation of Calling.

A. What were the Prophecies?

According to the Prophecies.

Paul refers to prophecies previously made concerning Timothy.

These are almost certainly connected to the event described in **1 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.*

When Timothy was formally commissioned for ministry, the elders of the church (perhaps under prophetic prompting) declared what they discerned to be the gifts, the calling, and the purpose of God for this young man's ministry.

In the New Testament context, this prophetic commissioning was not a guarantee of easy success or immunity from suffering. It was a divine confirmation of calling and a statement of divine purpose.

Acts 13:2-3, *As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then, having*

fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

- The commission came from God.
- The confirmation came from the community.

B. By them you may wage the good warfare

Paul gives Timothy a strategic instruction.

Use the prophecies as weapons in the warfare. By them, he says, you may wage the good warfare.

The prophecies were not merely historical records, but they were active instruments for maintaining confidence and courage in the heat of battle.

When Timothy was facing fierce opposition, when the false teachers were gaining ground, when his own inadequacy felt overwhelming, he was to return to the prophetic confirmations of his calling.

This principle is not unique to Timothy.

Throughout the Bible, God gives His servants specific promises and confirmations that are designed to sustain them through hardship.

God told Joshua.

Joshua 1:9, *Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*

God told Jeremiah at his calling.

Jeremiah 1:8, *Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you," says the Lord.*

God told Paul in Corinth during a particularly difficult period.

Acts 18:9-10, *Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; 10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."*

The promises and confirmations God gives to His servants are not decorative, but they are functional.

They are the courage reserves that the servant draws on when circumstances argue for retreat.

Timothy was to take the prophecies over his life and use them as a sword in the battle, not merely as a comfort in the quiet moments.

C. The Role of the Church in Confirming Calling.

The reference to prophecies also highlights the communal dimension of ministry calling.

Timothy's calling was not simply a private experience, but it was publicly declared and formally confirmed by the eldership.

This corporate confirmation is an essential safeguard against the kind of unaccountable self-appointment that leads to the abuse of spiritual authority.

The New Testament pattern is consistent.

- Calling is initiated by God,
- Tested by life,
- Confirmed by the community, and
- Ratified by the church through the laying on of hands.

Acts 6 shows this with the appointment of the first deacons.

Acts 13 shows it with the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas.

1 Timothy 3 and **Titus 1** show it in the qualifications for elders and deacons that must be publicly evaluated before appointment.

This pattern protects both the individual and the congregation.

- The individual is protected from the self-deception that can afflict even genuinely gifted people.
- The congregation is protected from the ambitions of those who have gifts but lack the character and community accountability that genuine ministry requires.

III. The Nature of the Battle.

A. The Military Metaphor in Paul's Letters

Wage the Good Warfare

Paul uses military language extensively in his letters.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4, *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,*

Ephesians 6:10-18. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Ephesians 6:12-13, *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. 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."*

Philippians 2:25, *Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;*

Philemon 1:2, *to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:*

The military metaphor is not incidental.

Paul uses it because he understands that the Christian life and the ministry of the Gospel are conducted in the context of active spiritual opposition.

The resistance to the Gospel is not merely human resistance but it is the opposition of spiritual powers and principalities (Ephesians 6:12) that have been set against the advance of the kingdom of God since the beginning.

This warfare perspective is not paranoid but realistic.

Jesus himself said.

Luke 12:51, *Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.*

2 Timothy 3:12, *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

The Christian who experiences no spiritual opposition should wonder whether they are actually advancing the Gospel at all.

Soldiers in camp behind the lines are never under fire but soldiers at the front always are.

B. What Makes It Good?

The Good Warfare

Paul does not just say warfare, but he says the good warfare. This qualifier is significant.

The warfare is good not because it is pleasant or comfortable it is neither. It is good because its cause is just, its weapons are divinely given, its commanding officer is the risen Lord Jesus Christ, and its outcome has been secured by the resurrection.

The difficulty of the battle does not alter the goodness of the cause.

The Reformers spoke of the ***causa Dei***, the cause of God.

To fight for the purity of the Gospel, to resist false teaching, to maintain the integrity of Christian ministry these are the causes of God.

They are worth the sacrifice they require because they have eternal significance.

Every soldier who has ever given his life for a worthy cause has said, in effect that this cause is worth more than my comfort, my ease, or even my life.

That is precisely what Paul is saying to Timothy that this cause is worth everything.

C. The Enemy and the Theatre of War

The warfare Timothy is engaged in has multiple fronts.

The most immediate front is the false teachers within the church. But behind them stands the spiritual opposition to the Gospel that Paul identifies in Ephesians 6:12 as principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The false teachers are not merely making intellectual errors, but they are instruments of the enemy's strategy to distort the Gospel and damage the church.

This does not mean the false teachers were consciously in league with Satan. It means that when people depart from the truth of the Gospel, they move toward the father of lies regardless of their intentions.

Jesus said to the Pharisees who rejected him: You are of your father the devil (**John 8:44**).

This is strong language, but it reflects the spiritual reality.

There are only two kingdoms, and teaching that undermines the Gospel of Christ, however sincerely it is offered, serves the purposes of the one who has been opposing that Gospel since the Garden.

IV. The Two Weapons: Faith and a Good Conscience.

A. Faith: The Foundation of the Soldier.

Paul specifies two weapons with which Timothy is to wage the good warfare:

a) Faith
b) Good conscience.

These are not offensive weapons in the military sense.

They are the foundational character qualities that make all other ministry possible.

Faith (pistis) here means the settled, personal trust in God and in the truth of the Gospel that gives the minister their authority, their motivation, and their perseverance.

1 Timothy 6:12, *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.*

The fight is, at its core, a fight of faith!

The fight to maintain trust in God when circumstances argue against it, to maintain confidence in the Gospel when culture dismisses it, to maintain hope in the victory of Christ when the opposition seems overwhelming.

Hebrews 11, the great faith chapter, is a catalogue of people who waged the good warfare of faith.

Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, the prophets. They each maintained faith under conditions that made faith costly.

1 Timothy 1:18, *Timothy my son, I give you the following charge. And may I say, before I give it to you, that it is in full accord with those prophecies made at your ordination which sent you out to battle for the right armed only with your faith and a clear conscience. (**Philipps**)*

B. A Good Conscience: The Soldier's Integrity.

The second weapon is a good conscience.

The internal moral clarity that comes from living in alignment with what one knows to be right.

Paul returns to this theme from **V 5,** where he identified a good conscience as one of the three roots from which genuine

love grows. Here it appears again as one of the two essential weapons for spiritual warfare.

The connection between faith and conscience is not accidental.

Faith without moral integrity becomes presumption: a person who claims to trust God while consistently violating their conscience is not trusting God. They are using the language of faith as cover for moral cowardice.

Conscience without faith becomes a crushing burden: the person who is aware of their moral failures but does not rest in the grace of Christ will be paralysed by guilt.

Together, **faith and a good conscience produce the character of the faithful minister**:

- Deeply aware of their own sinfulness and failure (conscience),
- Deeply secure in the grace of God and the finished work of Christ (faith).

This is the person who can wage the good warfare: not because they are impressive or invulnerable, but because they are honest about themselves and trusting in God.

C. The Armour of God.

Ephesians 6:13-18 provides the extended commentary on these two weapons.

The full armour of God includes:

- **The belt of truth** (corresponding to good conscience — integrity),
- **The breastplate of righteousness** (faith's application to the heart),
- **The gospel shoes** (faith expressed in the readiness to share the Gospel),
- **The shield of faith** (corresponding to the faith Paul names here),
- **The helmet of salvation** (the cognitive dimension of trust in God's saving purpose), and
- **The sword of the Spirit**, which is the Word of God.

Belt of truth: Just as a soldier's belt gathers and secures his clothing for battle, truth holds everything else in place. The Christian soldier who is not anchored in truth who is uncertain about the Gospel, vague about his doctrine, inconsistent in his integrity is a soldier whose armour will not stay on.

Truth is not merely a weapon, but it is the structural foundation that makes the other pieces functional.

Breastplate of righteousness: Righteousness here includes both the imputed righteousness of justification and the practical righteousness of holy living. A soldier without a breastplate exposes his vital organs to fatal attack.

A Christian whose life is morally compromised, whose conduct does not match his confession is spiritually vulnerable to the accusations of the enemy and the doubts they generate.

Gospel shoes: The readiness of the Gospel of peace. A soldier who cannot move quickly is easily outflanked. The Christian who is not ready at all times to share the Gospel, who is uncomfortable with the message, who does not know it well enough to explain it clearly, is a soldier who cannot advance. Gospel readiness is the mobility of the Christian soldier.

Shield of faith: Above all, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. The Roman legionary's shield was large enough to crouch behind for total protection.

Faith in God's promises is the shield that deflects the enemy's most effective weapon: doubt.

Every flaming dart every whisper of God doesn't love you, you are not forgiven, your calling is not real is extinguished by the shield of faith.

Helmet of salvation: The helmet protects the head. The seat of thinking, reasoning, and planning. The assurance of salvation guards the believer's mind against the most devastating attack.

The suggestion that he is not truly saved, that his sin has disqualified him, that God has given up on him. The helmet of salvation is the settled confidence in the completed work of Christ.

Sword of the Spirit: The only offensive weapon in the list. The sword is the Word of God not a general religious feeling, but the specific, precise, two-edged sword (**Hebrews 4:12**) of Scripture, which the soldier wields.

The same way Jesus wielded it against Satan in the wilderness: it is written, it is written, **it is written** (**Matthew 4:4-10**).

The weapons are entirely supernatural.

Not human cleverness, not institutional power, not social influence, not charismatic personality.

The soldier of Christ fights with truth, righteousness, Gospel readiness, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer.

These weapons are, as Paul says in **2 Corinthians 10:4**, mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.

They are sufficient for every challenge Timothy faced and every challenge the church will ever face.

V. The Theology of Calling in the Pastoral Epistles.

A. What the Pastoral Epistles teach about Ministry Calling?

The Pastoral Epistles contain the most complete theology of ministry calling in the New Testament.

They address **calling, gifting, character qualifications, commissioning, and the ongoing maintenance of ministry integrity.**

Together, **1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus** form a comprehensive manual for faithful leadership that the church has returned to in every generation of reformation and renewal.

1 Timothy 3:1-7: The qualifications for an overseer. The list is almost entirely character-based:

- Above reproach,
- Faithful to his wife,
- Temperate,
- Self-controlled,
- Respectable,
- Hospitable,
- Able to teach,
- Not given to drunkenness,
- Not violent but gentle,
- Not quarrelsome,
- Not a lover of money.

The ministry of the Gospel is entrusted to people of character because the Gospel is the most important message in the world and its messengers must embody its transforming power.

2 Timothy 1:6-7, *Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

The gift of ministry must be actively maintained and exercised. It can be neglected (**1 Timothy 4:14**). It must be stirred up, fanned into flame, kept burning through disciplined exercise.

2 Timothy 2:1-7: You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Paul uses three images:

The soldier (who endures hardship and does not entangle himself in civilian affairs),
The athlete (who competes according to the rules), and
The farmer (who works hard before he shares in the crops).

Each image emphasises a different dimension of faithful ministry: single-mindedness, integrity, and diligence.

Titus 1:5-9: The qualifications for elders:

Blameless,

- Faithful to his wife,
- With believing children,
- Hospitable,
- Not self-willed,
- Not quick-tempered,
- Not given to wine,
- Not violent,
- Not greedy,

but a lover of goodness, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught.

Character precedes competency.

Who the minister is matters more than what the minister can do.

VI. The Prophetic Tradition and Ministry Confirmation.

A. Old Testament Background

The practice of prophetic confirmation of calling has deep roots in the Old Testament.

Moses was called at the burning bush with a divine theophany (**Exodus 3**),

Aaron was confirmed as high priest by the budding of his rod (**Numbers 17**),

Samuel received his prophetic calling through a direct divine word (**1 Samuel 3**), and

The prophets were repeatedly commissioned with visions and divine speeches that authorised their message.

The prophetic tradition in the New Testament does not replace Scripture or add to the apostolic deposit. But it does play a confirming and directing role in the life of the community.

Acts 11:28 records **Agabus** prophesying a famine.

Acts 21:10-11, records him prophesying Paul's imprisonment.

These prophecies were not new revelations of doctrine, but they were specific divine guidance for specific situations.

The prophecies over Timothy (**1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14**) were of this same character. Specific confirmation of his particular calling and gifts.

B. The Function of Prophecy in Ministry Confirmation.

The prophecies Paul refers to serve a specific pastoral function they were to be used as tools for courage in the heat of spiritual battle. By them you may wage the good warfare.

The memory of prophetic confirmation is not a substitute for faith, but it is a fuel for faith.

When Timothy was facing the fierce opposition of the Ephesian false teachers, he was to recall the prophetic words spoken over him at his commissioning and allow them to renew his confidence in the divine calling on his life.

This is not superstition or mysticism. It is the application of a basic principle of biblical faith.

God gives specific promises and confirmations for specific needs.

The psalmist recalled God's faithfulness in past deliverances as a ground for trusting Him in present crises.

Psalm 77:11-12, *I will remember the works of the Lord; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.* **12** *I will also meditate on all Your work, And talk of Your deeds.*

Paul recalled his Damascus Road experience as the anchor of his apostolic confidence when that confidence was challenged.

Timothy was to recall his prophetic commissioning when his ministry confidence wavered.

VII. The Single-Mindedness of the Gospel Soldier.

A. No One Engaged in Warfare Entangles Himself.

2 Timothy 2:4 provides the negative definition of the good soldier.

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

The military illustration is precise. A soldier on campaign cannot simultaneously run a business, maintain a farm, and fight a war. The demands of warfare require total concentration of resources and attention.

The positive equivalent is Paul's statement in **Philippians 3:13-14**, *Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

Paul's single-mindedness — **this one thing** — is the characteristic of the soldier fully committed to the campaign.

He does not regret the sacrifices it requires but he regards them as the normal cost of the cause.

The entanglements Paul warns against are not necessarily sinful activities. They are neutral activities that can crowd out the primary calling.

The pastor who becomes more consumed with church administration than prayer and Scripture study has entangled himself.

The believer who allows career advancement to consistently displace Gospel witness has entangled himself.

Single-mindedness is not the absence of normal human life but it is the ordering of all of life around the supreme priority of pleasing the one who enlisted us.

B. Please Him who enlisted.

The goal of the soldier is not glory, not recognition, not even success as the world defines it.

The goal is to please him who enlisted him.

For Timothy, the one who enlisted him was the risen Christ, acting through the apostolic commission of Paul and the prophetic confirmation of the Ephesian elders.

His criterion for success was not numerical church growth or popular acclaim but the approval of the one who had called him.

Paul expresses this for himself in **2 Corinthians 5:9**, *we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.*

1 Corinthians 4:3-4, *But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.*

The freedom that comes from being accountable primarily to God rather than to human opinion is the freedom that makes courageous ministry possible.

When the approval of the one who enlisted is what matters, the disapproval of those who oppose the Gospel loses its paralyzing power.

Conclusion

*In **1960**, a young **Dutch Reformed pastor named Andrew van der Bijl** known to the world as **Brother Andrew** was preparing to make his third clandestine trip behind the **Iron Curtain to deliver Bibles** to persecuted Christians. Each trip had been more dangerous than the last.*

Soviet border guards** were becoming increasingly suspicious of Western visitors. **Two of his colleagues had been arrested.

The night before his departure, Andrew sat in his small apartment in Holland and read ***from 1 Timothy****. When he reached* ***verse 18 wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience*** *he wrote in his journal:*

I have been reading this verse for twenty minutes and I cannot move past it. ***I have been given a charge. I have been given prophecies****. The missionary organisation that sent me out, the elders who prayed over me, the whispers of the Spirit in the years of preparation — all of it points to this:* ***I have been commissioned for this campaign. I must go.***

He crossed the border the ***next morning with five hundred Bibles hidden in his car****. As he reached the checkpoint, he prayed what became known as the* ***Brother Andrew prayer****:* ***Lord, You made blind eyes see. Now please make seeing eyes blind****.*

The guards, who routinely dismantled cars looking for contraband, waved him through without searching his vehicle. ***He delivered the Bibles. He returned safely****. He repeated this pattern* ***hundreds of times over the next decades.***

When asked how he found the courage to make these trips year after year, Brother Andrew answered: ***I found the courage in the charge. Not in my own bravery, which is minimal. Not in my assessment of the risks, which was always sobering. But in the conviction that I had been charged with this campaign by a commanding officer whose orders take precedence over the***

regulations of every border guard and every secret police force in the world. The charge came from above. And that charge, held in faith and a clear conscience, was my armour.

Today, ***Open Doors, the organisation Andrew founded****, operates in* ***over sixty countries****, serving more than* ***two hundred and thirty-five million persecuted Christians worldwide****.*

It all began with ***one man, a charge, faith, and a good conscience.***

This is what the good warfare looks like when it is waged by someone who has received the charge and refused to lay it down.

APPLICATION FOR DAILY LIFE

1. **Write down the specific ways God has confirmed your calling in Christ**. These may be prophecies, scriptures, the counsel of trusted believers, circumstances, or inner conviction. Collect them and use them as your courage reserve this week.
2. **Read Ephesians 6:10-18** and identify which piece of the armour of God is most neglected in your daily spiritual life. Make a specific plan to address that gap this week.
3. The good warfare requires single-mindedness. What civilian entanglement (**2 Timothy 2:4**) is currently dividing your attention from the primary calling God

has given you? **Take one step toward disentangling from it.**

4. Faith and a good conscience are the two weapons Paul names. Do a conscience audit this week: **is there anything that is troubling your conscience that you have not yet addressed?** Address it through confession, restitution, or changed behaviour.
5. Pray specifically for a believer who is currently waging a particularly difficult battle for the Gospel, whether in ministry, in the workplace, in the family, or in a persecuted context. **Ask God to give them faith and a good conscience.**
6. Study the three images in **2 Timothy 2:3-6: soldier, athlete, farmer.**

   Which image resonates most with the particular challenges you face in your Christian life and service? Journal what it means for you to embody that image this week.
7. The charge was committed to Timothy through personal relationship.

   Who is the Paul in your life, and who is the Timothy?

   Are you both receiving from and investing in the chain of faithful transmission that will carry the Gospel to the next generation?