

## THE SHIPWRECK OF FAITH

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**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 1: 19

Good morning, Church. The last word that we received from Matthew 7:21-23, where I had spoken about 'almost saved' not being an option. We had talked about how being a few degrees off, how we could be possibly saying the right things, possibly doing the right things, appearing externally spiritual, and possibly also looking like being close to God, but still be dangerously misaligned.

We also saw that while a few degrees off course may not seem very serious in the beginning, eventually direction determines destination, and we could land ourselves someplace where we should not be. Perhaps some of us would have left asking: How does this happen? How do people drift? How can we be spiritually off course? Last time, we heard of the danger of being off course. Today we are going to see how being off course or adrift becomes a disaster.

When I shared the example of that vessel that had gone slightly off course and ended up outside the channel, I did not complete it. Many came up to me afterwards and asked whether it was one of my ships. And it was not. By God's grace, I was centered on the channel.

This story actually goes back to 1989, and the story continues to the conclusion today. It's the story of Exxon Valdez. It's one of the most devastating maritime disasters in history that took place in Alaska. In fact, when I look back today, I would consider it one of the most disastrous maritime disasters in all the world.

The oil tanker Exxon Valdez had departed from Valdez carrying millions of gallons of crude oil, and she was on her route outbound from Valdez, which is in Alaska. The vessel belonged to Exxon. Everything appeared routine. The vessel was smoothly underway. Everything was functioning like I had mentioned last time, and the crew were experienced because they had done this route many times before.

No one that night believed that they were heading towards disaster. But a few hours later, the vessel had struck the Bligh Reef, which tore open the hull completely, and she released more than 10 million gallons of crude oil. For us to understand, 10 million gallons is approximately 41,000 cubic meters. Each cubic meter is about 1,000 liters. So, she spilled 41 million liters. This went into the waters of Alaska, completely devastating seabirds, fish, otters, seals. The entire ecosystem was affected. Fishing communities which depended on these waters, businesses that thrived because of fishing – everything was affected. Collapsed livelihoods!

The consequences of that night are felt even today. That was the disaster. During the investigation, things that captured the investigators' attention was that the disaster was not caused by any one dramatic mistake, or any catastrophic decision.

It was a chain of reactions which had built up to this point. Some of the factors that they had looked at was fatigue, workload, inadequate supervision, navigation failures, delayed decisions, and finally, safeguards which had broken down. and one of the most painful observations that came out during that investigation was that it was rumored that the master who was responsible for the safe navigation of that vessel was possibly intoxicated in his cabin. This could not be proven, but it was kind of alleged.

But the bottom line was leadership decisions that should have been crucial that night failed. Things developed to that point.

And one of the most painful outcomes of that investigation was that the disaster did not begin at the Bligh Reef. It had started long before. The reason why I bring this up and why I had brought up this story last time, and why I am completing it this time around is that disasters usually become visible only at impact. Failures often begin much earlier. That's the key point.

And likewise, spiritually, we may think that faith failures or faith shipwrecks happen suddenly. But on the contrary, it doesn't. It's not that somebody wakes up in the morning and says: Well, today I'm going to follow God. It doesn't happen that way. There are usually things that lead up to this point. Some of those are neglected prayers, ignored convictions, compromises that are hidden, obedience that is delayed, and eventually, spiritual fatigue. And what drift starts, shipwreck finishes.

And that's the title of the message for today: The Shipwreck of Faith. And it is centered on the key words from 1 Timothy 1:19.

#### 1 Timothy 1:19

*"Having faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected, and so have suffered shipwreck concerning the faith."*

You heard that right. The Bible is talking about a shipwreck. This is quite interesting because the word shipwreck is considered the end of it. It's basically that nothing moves forward. And when it says shipwreck concerning the faith, because faith can be neglected, faith can drift, and faith can suffer damage. We all kind of live in this misnomer that once saved, everything is good. But that is not the case. We are fighting a battle, and that battle is where faith can get affected.

Paul in writing to Timothy in this verse. He is a young pastor. Paul is aware about what's happening there in the church. So he says, "Hold on to your faith and good conscience because some of those in that church have rejected and suffered shipwreck."

That brings me to four points from this message, and then there will be one more point which I'll wrap up with.

### **1. SHIPWRECK BEGINS LONG BEFORE IMPACT.**

It's obvious that no one is going out looking to have shipwrecks. Everyone who's sailing the seas, the intent is to reach from point A to point B safely. So, no ship or vessel suddenly appears on the rocks. It's planned that everything should go well. But when it does happen, something always precedes that instance. It's small errors, small drift, small neglect. I had explained this in my previous message.

Spiritual collapse, likewise, also begins when nobody notices it. These are, like I mentioned, neglected prayer, loss of hunger for God, compromises being tolerated, and convictions being ignored.

No one actually plans to collapse spiritually, but it happens gradually.

Hebrews 2:1 "We must pay the most careful attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift away."

The Bible does not say fall away, or run away, or instantly abandon. But it uses the word drift because drift has a very potentially serious meaning. It is something that happens gradually. It happens slowly. It happens invisibly. But rest assured, it's happening.

The Bible is full of such examples all through the Old Testament and New Testament. We'll look at some of these to see the consequences that can result from such a drift.

Judges 16 talks about Samson didn't lose his strength overnight. It didn't happen suddenly. Long before his eyes were taken, Samson was involved in boundaries that were slowly moving, compromises that he slowly increased, desires that he slowly allowed to overrule his conviction. The haircut that we so often read about was not the beginning. It was simply the visible impact. It was what was seen.

That's the thing with drift. It begins in such a manner that it seems harmless, but that's where the potential of its danger lies. You rarely realize that it's drifting until you realize that you're somewhere you should not be.

So, when we look at this shipwreck which begins long before impact, there are three pertinent points that we need to apply:

- Where have we slowly started drifting,
- What convictions have we possibly started ignoring,
- What was it that once bothered us and now no longer bothers us.

It begins quietly, and if you're not able to address these three points, we can find ourselves shipwrecked.

## **2. IGNORING CONVICTIONS HARDENS THE HEART.**

Going back to the same verse in 1 Timothy 1:19, Paul says, 'holding onto a faith and good conscience.'

Why does he use the word conscience? Conscience is something that God built into each one of us. It's like an alarm. It warns, it signals, and it alerts. But an alarm is only good as long as it is listened to. If you don't pay heed to the alarm, then it's just noise.

In my career, I often go on inspections and one of the most common observations that I make on the bridge is that some of the safety alarms are muted. Ships today are designed with a plethora of alarms which would go off at the slightest of misalignments with the normal design that is supposed to happen. These alarms can kind of become kind of noisy over time, but they're there for a reason. But what happens is these alarms go off so often that the duty officer then tends to mute it. The alarm is not switched off. It's visible on the screen, but it's not making a sound. So, what happens is that what once created urgency in response now creates no response. Caution suddenly becomes normal and as a result, danger slowly starts creeping up. But it steadily does creep up.

Spiritually, we can end up similarly. We can start ignoring the convictions. And here's the thing. When we start ignoring convictions, it starts becoming easier. If you can recall the very first time, you probably did something which was not supposed to be done. I'm sure each one of us would have felt a little pinch in our heart, a little thorn pricking where it should not be, a little discomfort depending on how big the issue is. It could have probably led even to sleepless nights. But it's just a matter of time before that becomes normal. If you do not respond to that conviction and set things right, the second time, it gets easier.

Exodus ch. 7 to ch. 14, we look at Pharaoh. Pharaoh did not become hardened in a single day. There was warning after warning, plague after plague, one instance after another. Initially, we see a kind of response which is in obedience. But then, sooner or later, he probably realizes that it's easier to keep going back and forth, keep dilly-dallying with these phenomena. The Bible repeatedly says, Pharaoh

hardened his heart. danger was not in the first warning. The danger was ignoring warning after warning because every ignored conviction makes the next one easier to ignore.

This is something that we need to understand. I'm sure each of you would be putting up quotes around the house. This is something which probably can stand out. **Every ignored conviction makes the next one easier to ignore.**

Think about 1 Samuel 15. What happened to Saul? He did not lose his kingdom in one go. It began with selective obedience. God said, "do this". He tweaked the instruction a little bit and did it partially. He adjusted his obedience slightly, and he then excused it. he justified it. And when Saul was confronted, he defended it without repenting.

What started as a compromise slowly began to harden his heart. Why did that happen? Because convictions, when ignored, very often result in self-justification.

Genesis 13, we look at Lot. Lot did not land up in Sodom suddenly. The Bible says he first looked towards Sodom. Then he moved near Sodom and then he lived there. then he pitched his tent at the gate of Sodom. Step by step, little by little, what looked dangerous suddenly started to feel absolutely normal. And this is what hardening does. It starts making danger feel familiar. It's like the new normal.

Acts 24, se look at Paul. When he preached, Felix responded by being afraid. The alarm worked. It had sounded in his heart. conviction was working. But what did Felix do? he replied, "Go away for now. When I find it convenient, I will call for you." He very easily delayed his response, and as a result, his conviction was delayed. There is no mention in the Bible of him having responded later. Delayed obedience often becomes permanent resistance. When we choose to ignore the conviction and respond to it in a manner of delaying it, it very likely will become a resistance that is permanent.

Hebrews 3:13, "But exhort one another daily while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." The Bible does not say that while you still have time, so it soon, within this week. It says while it is still called today. That is now! You need to exhort one another, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

That's the thing about sin. It's going to be deceptive. It's going to come in different manners. It's going to come in ways that we don't understand. And drift is one of that. Drift causes you not to see where you're going, but it is taking us away. And sin gradually hardens and it doesn't happen instantly. As I mentioned, the first warning ignored is dangerous. The tenth ignored warning is just normal. That's something we need to be very careful about.

### **3. HIDDEN COMPROMISE CREATES DANGEROUS DRIFT.**

What are these hidden compromises? Each one of us, not one sitting in this congregation can say that they have not at any point of time been subjected to any of these. And some of these are pride, secret habits, secret sins, resentment, unforgiveness and compromise. Each one of us has been there. It's what we did when we were convicted about that.

Galatians 6:7 says, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever man sows, that will he also reap."

I mentioned earlier that for quite some time; I thought this was a concept around what we talk about doing good and receiving good. If you do bad, something bad is going to happen. What goes around,

comes around. Something that we are very familiar with. But here's the thing. Seed become harvests. They have the potential of becoming larger things. When a man sows a seed which is small, it has the potential of becoming something big that we will harvest. What you harvest depends on what you sow.

Joshua 7 – Israel had just experienced victory after victory. The world was seeing it. everything seemed strong. But hidden beneath it was the fact that there was and Achan who secretly did what God had forbidden him to do. he was not to take any plunder. He was not supposed to take any spoils of the war. But he did that. there was no public scandal; there was no visible warning. There was no crisis. But he still did something in private. And eventually, one man's private sin resulted in a nation's downfall. It was a public defeat that Israel suffered.

Here's the thing with hidden things. They never stay hidden. Hidden things have this knack of finding their way out and coming out in the open. Eventually, Israel suffered a humiliating defeat. And Achan and his entire family were executed.

Song of Solomon 27 says, "Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards." The Bible is not talking about bears and lions and large animals, something huge that would come and destroy. It's talking about the small things – little foxes. It's not a massive event which eventually destroys the vineyard. It's always small things like locusts. And here it talks about little foxes. Basically, small things that go left unchecked.

We all usually end up praying for the big things. We talk about the visible big sins that we have and we lay it before God. Lord, help me to get over this sin or this habit. We're always putting forward the big things. But it's not so much the big ones. Much of the time, it's the small compromises which quietly destroy us. that's what we need to pay caution to. That's why the Word says, "Whatever man sows, so he shall reap"

1 Kings 11 – Solomon did not wake up one morning and suddenly abandoned God. Like I mentioned, it's not that we get up in the morning and say that today I'm not going to follow God. It slowly builds up to that point. Scripture here talks about Solomon saying that he turned his heart. he allowed his heart to be turned by his wives. These were the foreign women that he was forbidden to marry. But he did that. That was his first compromise. Over time, the Bible says, as Solomon grew old. This means that gradually, it didn't happen overnight. It took time. It was a process that he, slowly and over time, drifted, and the wisest man moved away from God.

And that's what private compromises can do. they eventually become a public decline. And as a result, God had decreed that his kingdom will also be torn away.

Then in Genesis, we see the story of Cain. We all focus on how Cain committed the murder. But what happened before? What was the warning before? God had already warned him well beforehand. God said, "Sin is crouching at your door." The warning had come long before Cain's failure. The warning had sounded long before what was visible. But what did Cain do? He ignored it. He did not respond to it. And as a result, his unchecked anger turned into action. His private resentment became public destruction.

I'd given an example of how, during my sailing days, I would get a call from the engine room, and they'd tell me that we have sprung a leak in one of the pipelines or one of the valves, and we are slowly leaking in water. And it's fine; it's only a trickle, a drip. Every four hours when the water level changes, the duty engineer will empty the bucket, and we'll be fine and can deal with it later on. But this is what I have to tell you. The ship was not designed to have water in the inside. The water is

always supposed to be outside. So if something is causing that water to trickle inside, then it holds the extreme potential of rupturing, and resulting in the foundering of that vessel. It cannot be ignored. There must be an action.

Likewise, in spiritual life, if we spring a leak anywhere, the longer we ignore it, it has every potential to shipwreck us. So what do we look at as an application? What are those leaks that we are excusing? What are we still tolerating because the consequence is not visible? When we don't see the consequences, we don't see the repercussions, and we tolerate what is happening.

#### **4. GOD ALWAYS WARNS BEFORE COLLAPSE.**

We are mistaken by always understanding warning as a punishment. We always consider warning as a negative thing. That's probably because of how we've been brought up. There's a warning which has a repercussion and so we always deal with it as being something which is not good. It's negative.

But scripture repeatedly shows warnings as mercy, as grace before judgment. Why? Because our God is one who loves. He's not there to destroy us. He's not there to end it all. He's there to restore. We look at scripture again.

Genesis 6. Before the judgment, what did God do? He sent Noah the word to build an ark and give the message to people. For many years, Noah kept talking about what was coming through. Hammer after hammer, and eventually the ark itself was a message on its own. People saw this huge boat sitting there in the middle of nowhere. There's this guy who's shouting out that the floods are coming. Repent while there is still time. didn't happen. God did not send His judgment before sending His warning. Warning here was meant to be mercy.

Jonah. Nineveh was headed for destruction. God could have judged immediately. It could have been done and dusted with. But He sent Jonah. We all know the story from Sunday school, about how Jonah went his own way, about the fish. But yet, God used him and he was sent with the required warning to be sent out. And he shouted it out. Repent. What was the reason behind it? Because God desired repentance more than destruction. Warning was meant to be grace.

Luke 22. Jesus looked at Peter and said, "Simon, Simon. Satan has asked to sift you." Jesus had warned Peter well before Peter had failed. Jesus did not say: Simon, I knew you were going to do this. I had heard that Satan was looking out for you." No! He didn't do that! He warned him before. It was a clear cutthroat warning to Peter to pay heed to what's coming, but Peter still stumbled.

But here's the thing. When that warning came, it was very clear that that failure that Peter was going to go through was not going to become final. The warning here was preparation for something better. And we look at that later.

2 Samuel 12. After David had sinned, God sent Nathan. God could have very well done what He needed to do. It could have been out in the open. But it didn't. God had Nathan confront David, and David immediately responded. David's healing began the moment he realized, and he repented for what he had done. Here correction was grace, the warning was grace, and the conviction was grace. God wanted to restore David back to who he was.

Psalms 139:23-24. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."

Somehow, we believe that the day we became born again, and the day we accepted Christ, we don't have any such instances in our life.

During the first service, we sang a song... "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love." That's in our life. It's going to happen. We need to submit before God and ask Him to show us where it's happening, when it's happening, and how it's happening. Because you believe it's not happening, we are only fooling ourselves. It is happening. It's just that we need to make sure that we can be vulnerable before God and allow Him to show us and lead us in the way everlasting. That's how a healthy believer's life is. It's by examination. It's by asking God to show us.

Dangerous ones are those who want to avoid it. That's the dangerous part. So, what is the application for us? When God corrects us, convicts us – do we respond? Do we resist? Do we excuse or we ignore? We need to be very clear about that, because here's the thing. God wants us because He loves us. It's easy for Him to have the same floods come again and destroy creation and start the reset counter like one of the games that we play – lives lost, you have three lives. It's very easy for that to happen. But that's not the purpose God wants restoration because He loves us people who survive spiritually. Those who are spiritually strong are not those who have lived a perfect spiritual life. They are not the ones who did it right all through. They are usually the ones who responded to the correction, and that made them stronger.

I mentioned that we would have four plus one points. We've seen the four points where potentially we can get hardened, where we can ignore convictions and we can end up losing track. That brings me to the fifth point.

## **5. SHIPWRECKS ARE NOT THE END OF THE STORY.**

After hearing all I've said before, many of us would think that's it's too late. I've done too much damage; there's no turning back. I will not be able to go back to where God intended.

Let's go back to Luke 22:31-32. I said that we could complete this part later.

Jesus says, "Simon, Simon, indeed Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail. And when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren."

The amazing part is Jesus knew very well that this was the same one who was going to deny Him when Jesus was going to the cross. And He says, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you."

During this time, Jesus does not say, "Peter, you will never fail." He says, "I have prayed for you that when you have failed, you will come back stronger. That is God's preparation towards what was happening. It was not 'if', it was 'when' restoration was possible. Peter stumbled, but Jesus did not disregard him, did not reject him. His failure was a chapter, not an ending.

What happens later, in John 21? The same man who denied Jesus three times now stands before Him. And this time, Jesus only asks, "Do you love me?" Three times Peter denied Jesus, and three times Jesus restored him. The place of failure became his place of healing.

That's important for us. Our failures do not determine where we end up. It's God's love that will take us through where He intends us to go. That's the beauty of our God. He's always after that one because it's not us holding on to His hand; it's Him holding on to our hand. Think about it as a father and son. The son can't hold on the father, but the father holds onto the son's hand when he's crossing the road. That's Him. That's His love that He wants to always ensure that we are restored and we are always with Him.

Jonah – we saw his story. Jonah resisted. He disobeyed. God said, “Go this way,” he went that way. We know the storm. We know the fish. God did not abandon Jonah. The storm became mercy for Jonah. The fish became mercy. And his discipline became rescue. God was disciplining him.

Luke 15, we see about the son who drifted, who left home, who left compromised, who was wasted, who was completely collapsed. But when he returned home, there was no condemnation. The father runs towards him even when he is still far from home. There was no condemnation, there was no rejection. It was just simple restoration. The son came back believing that he would no longer have the same heirship. But the father got him to sit down where he was before.

Here’s the thing: our God is not only the one who warns, but He also restores, even when we fail.

So in conclusion, shipwrecks rarely begin where they end. that’s only the visible impact. Likewise, spiritual collapse rarely begins publicly. It happens privately. The tragedy of a shipwreck is that people only realize it at impact. That’s where situations go off.

So, the question is never: ‘Have I crashed?’ The question is: ‘Am I drifting towards a shipwrecked faith.’ There is always a final call before there is none. While we keep saying that God’s not going to let go, there is a time for that as well. There is a call before impact. There is a call before collapse. There is a call before drifting, during drifting, even before one is shipwrecked.

So, the pertinent question that we need to be asking ourselves is: What warnings have we ignored? What compromises have we normalized? What convictions have we silenced? Am I headed towards a shipwrecked faith? Because it’s never too late until it actually is.

Let’s pray.

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