* **Apostles’ Creed**
* **Intro New Cov’t Members**
* **Series Slide**
* In the ancient tale of Greek Mythology, Homer’s *Odyssey*- Odysseus is on a journey home from war. But even though the Trojan war is over, Odysseus’ fight is not.
* He faced dangerous creatures and opposition from Greek gods, all trying to keep him from home.
* One of the most enduring and insidious of these creatures was the Siren. The Sirens were a group of 2 or 3 seductive women/bird/fish combinations who lived on a rocky island and sang a beautiful and tempting song. As sailors passed by, they would hear the song, and turn their ships toward it…only to shipwreck on the rocks and die.
* To avoid this grisly death, Odysseus has a plan. He has all his crew put beeswax in their ears. But, he wants to hear the Siren’s song. So, he instructs his crew to tie him to the mast of the ship, and under no circumstances…no matter what he does or says, should they untie him until they are well past the island of the Sirens.
* The plan works. When Odysseus hears the Sirens, he is overcome with temptation, he begs the sailors to free him. But they just tighten his ropes and sail on to safety.
* Eventually, Odysseus makes it home and is reunited with his love…Penelope.
* That’s one way of handling the Sirens.
* But there’s another approach- brought to us by Jason and the Argonauts in in another ancient Greek Myth.
* Jason was on a quest to retrieve the Golden Fleece. And to get there he and his men had to sail past the Sirens. But they had a secret weapon. His name was Orpheus. Orpheus was a musician that had a few songs of his own. SO when the Siren’s started singing their tempting but deadly song… Orpheus took out his lyre and played a more beautiful and intoxicating song.
* Two heroes. Two quests. One result.
* They finished their quests…and made it safely home.
* Though their end point was the same, their strategies for the Sirens differed.
* Odysseus tied himself to the mast.
* Jason turned up the music in the boat.
* Today, I’m going to give you a plan to hold on to your soul that employs both strategies.
* Tying to the mast…and turning up the music.
* **Title Slide- “Rope, Beeswax, and a Lyre: Why We Need Grace-Fueled Habits to Get Everyone Home” – 1-2 Timothy**
* For the last few weeks we’ve talked about what the soul is…about how important it is to pay attention to how you keep your soul. And we’ve landed on this idea that we are largely shaped by our habits. The unintentional rhythms that we unconsciously go back to day after day. This is what either nourishes or poisons our souls.

So that means, that our aim at the end of this series is to get rid of some old soul-poisoning habits…and put on some new soul nourishing habits…and that is hard work.

Especially in a world filled with a tempting Siren call…that even though we KNOW following it leads to Shipwreck…we still fall for it every time.

SO, we need some ropes…and some shipmates with beeswax in their ears to tie us to the mast…and we also need a song…and an Orpheus… who will play the song when the Siren song gets loud.

* So far in this series, we’ve done a lot of theory, but today, I’m going to show you the ropes and the songs. …and look to the left and the right of you…cuz you’re looking at your shipmates.
* To do this, I want to read some large chunks of the Apostle Paul’s letters to his apprentice Timothy, who was a young guy trying to lead this hot and fresh movement of the church in Ephesus. And in Ephesus there was all kinds of trouble. All kinds of obstacles. In fact, Paul’s letters to Timothy are not unlike a letter that Odysseus might have written to Jason. “Here’s how to accomplish your mission. And not lose yourself to the Sirens. Here’s how to make it home safe.”
* “Tie yourself to the mast. Make sure you have beeswax. Oh…and if you can …find Orpheus…and tell him to bring his lyre.”
* **1 Tim 1:18-19**
* **18 Timothy, my son, I am giving you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies previously made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the good fight, 19 having faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and have shipwrecked their faith.**
* **1 Timothy 6:11-12**
* **11 But you, man of God, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called and about which you have made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**
* **2 Timothy 1:8-18**
* **8 So don’t be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. 9 He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. 10 This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11 For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher, 12 and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day.**
* **13 Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us. 15 You know that all those in the province of Asia have deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. 16 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. 17 On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he diligently searched for me and found me. 18 May the Lord grant that he obtain mercy from him on that day. You know very well how much he ministered at Ephesus.**
* **2 Timothy 2:1-10**
* **You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.**
* **2 What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**
* **3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the commanding officer. 5 Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 6 The hardworking farmer ought to be the first to get a share of the crops. 7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.**
* **8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer to the point of being bound like a criminal. But the word of God is not bound. 10 This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory**
* **2 Timothy 2:15-22**
* **Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth. 16 Avoid irreverent and empty speech, since those who engage in it will produce even more godlessness, 17 and their teaching will spread like gangrene. Hymenaeus and Philetus are among them. 18 They have departed from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and are ruining the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, bearing this inscription: The Lord knows those who are his, and let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness.**
* **20 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also those of wood and clay; some for honorable use and some for dishonorable. 21 So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument, set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.**
* **22 Flee from youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.**
* **2 Timothy 4:1-8**
* **I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of his appearing and his kingdom:**
* **2 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching. 3 For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. 4 They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**
* **6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved his appearing**.
* Here is an overarching summary of all this from Peter.
* **1 Peter 2:11-12**
* **11 Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul**. 12 **Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles,** **so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.**
* **Transition:** Let me be really clear about where I’m going today. I’m inviting you to practice a very specific set of spiritual habits together- habits that we are calling “Soul Handles”.
* The point is this. If Odysseus just KNOWS about the Sirens, if Odysseus makes plans to avoid the Sirens, if Odysseus learns all about the dangers of the Sirens, but he doesn’t ever ACTUALLY have his men tie him up and put Beeswax in their ears…he’s dead in the water.
* If Orpheus doesn’t pick up his lyre and ACTUALLY start playing a competing tune…then Jason and the Argonauts are shipwrecked. They don’t get the Golden Fleece. And they never make it home.
* Likewise, if we don’t take up ACTUAL SPIRITUAL PRACTICES….Soul Handles that resist temptation and embrace God…then we make a shipwreck of our faith….and we lose the war for our souls.
* So, let me start by countering a common mis-conception…
* **1) Soul Handles aren’t self-improvement. They’re weapons in the fight to get everybody home.**
  + When Odysseus had his men tie him to the mast…when Jason had Orpheus play the lyre… in one small, myopic sense, YES, they did that so that the Sirens didn’t kill them.
  + But that doesn’t really see the big picture.
  + The big picture is that Odysseus and Jason were trying to get home. They had been on a mission. At war. In search of the Golden Fleece.
  + The point of the rope and the beeswax and the song wasn't merely to get past sirens….they had to get past the sirens to get home safely.
  + I think this is one way habits, or Spiritual disciplines get a bad rep. Often times, people just think they are self-improvement projects, kind of like a fad diet. Just something you do to make yourself better.
  + But there is a much bigger picture at play here. Let me show you from what Peter says and from the way Paul coaches Timothy.
  + **1 Peter 2:11-12**
  + Peter says that the church is a group of strangers and exiles.
  + In other words, we aren’t home in the world.
  + We are pilgrims. Making our way home.
  + Also, we’re on a mission.
  + The goal of the church, as Strangers and Exiles in a foreign land is NOT to “get home at all costs”…no, we are to live our lives in a certain kind of way that even those who may be against us…would turn out to glorify God…so they, too will understand themselves as Strangers and Exiles and make their way home with us.
* **Back to 1)**
  + We aren’t just trying to become better, more moral people….We aren’t practicing self-discipline so people say nice things about us at our funerals…we’re fighting to make everyone’s funeral a homecoming.
  + Listen, your walk with God matters to your neighbor. Your walk with God matters to this City.
  + Now, let me talk about why this is a fight.
  + A couple of weeks ago we looked at this strange saying of Jesus.
  + **Luke 9:23-25**
  + Jesus says, “If you want to follow me, you’ve got to die. If you want to save your life, you’ve got to lose it.”
  + And remember what we said about the Soul. A Soul that is connected to God and others is integrating. Its becoming whole.
  + And we live in a world that IS NOT connecting itself to God and others. We live in a highly individualistic world where everyone is isolating themselves looking to themselves for meaning.
  + So, if you happen to be integrating while all around you is DISINTEGRATION…its gonna feel counter-intuitive to do these habits. Its gonna seem like you’re dying…when you’re really coming to life.
  + Its gonna feel like you are going backwards, when you are actually headed home.
* **Back to 1)**
  + Let me give you a couple of modern examples.
  + I’ve got one son (I won’t name him), that thinks my rules for his phone are “dumb”.
  + Like its in the kitchen at 8 pm. Shut down for the night.
  + Like, you don’t get an internet browser on your phone or you can’t have games on your phone. Or no social media accounts.
  + And to him…it seems like teenage death. Because he can text with friends after 8. Or play the games everyone else is playing. Or post on Instagram or Snapchat.
  + But actually, if you look at the statistical and psychological analysis of 13-18 year olds…its clear disintegration…our teens are filled with anxiety, depression, and suicide rates through the roof.
  + SO, the very habits that are actually training him for INTEGRATION and a WHOLE LIFE…compared with the DISINTEGRATION AROUND HIM…they feel to him like death. But they are life.
  + …and Odysseus SCREAMED for those sailors to untie him when he heard the Siren’s song.
  + It's a fight. Give you another example.
  + Some of you in here are attracted to the same sex. You’re gay.
  + And you’ve studied the Scripture. You understand human sexuality in the context of God’s big picture. And you are committed to living a life of holiness, following Christ, denying yourself and taking up your cross…
  + And there are days, when you feel like you are disintegrating…and the world around you is integrating. The world around you is sexually arriving…coming together while you are dying. Every movie and TV show you watch promises how happy you’ll be if you just let your inner self be your guide to sexuality.
  + TO resist that, some days, feels like disintegration. But its not. It ts just that all the disintegration around you makes your integration feel like death.

* + Head up. You’re my hero. You’re fighting to get home. You’ve got your eyes on the Golden Fleece. Don’t quit.
  + And, those choices…are not just about your self improvement. They are about leading others to glorify God and not shipwreck on the rocks.
  + Look at what Paul tells Timothy.
  + **1 Tim 1:18-19**
  + He says, I need you to REMEMBER THE BIG PICTURE. Or you’ll quit fighting. That this is not about your personal morality. In fact, Paul wasn’t writing the letter to TIMOTHY FOR TIMOTHY…he was writing it FOR TIMOTHY to accomplish his mission of leading the church and getting these folks from Ephesus to know and walk with God.
  + Then he says that those who forget the big picture…the homecoming…the mission…they end up shipwrecked. They end up listening to the Sirens.
  + **1 Timothy 6:12**
  + He tells Timothy to Fight the good fight by putting on handles to take hold of the ETERNAL LIFE…or the INTEGRATED SOUL CONNECTED TO GOD.
  + He is telling him that to keep the big picture in mind…us- together with God in the end… its going to take intentional in the moment Soul Handles.
  + And Paul knows that this feels sometimes like death.
  + He mentioned over and over people who had deserted him. Given up. Let him down. In fact, in 2 Timothy he’s writing from a prison cell at the end of his life.
  + **2 Tim 4:6-8**
  + He says, “I’ve finished the race. I have kept the faith. I’ve fought the fight…and now I’m dying. But don’t let this prison cell fool you. I won. I’ve resisted the Siren and it looks like I’m disintegrating…but I’m not. I’m headed home. And my prayer is that in my finishing the race…that I helped others make it home too.
  + That’s why I love what he says to Timothy about a soldier, athlete, and farmer.
  + **2 Tim 2:3-6**
  + He compares following Jesus to being a soldier.
  + Acknowledging the reality of the fight. Its suffering in the battlefield of life. Its hard to follow Jesus.
  + And then he says, “Soldiers are disciplined. They have to have their minds trained on a mission. On the big picture. Or else they give up. A soldier can’t merely evaluate what he does in any given moment on what he feels. He has to ask what bigger mission is he serving. He doesn’t have his mind on civilian affairs…but is executing the orders of the commanding officer.
  + Then, he compares following Jesus to being an athlete. Another very disciplined vocation. An athlete has to know the bigger picture…the rules. I can’t just play football anyway I want to play it. I have to understand what the game is… and play according to that end with those goals in mind. Or if I’m a runner, I can’t just run as fast as I can in any direction, I have to identify and know my lane and where the finish line is. I have to see the bigger picture.
  + Finally, he compares following Jesus to being a hardworking farmer. And he says, the farmer gets the first share of the crops. In other words, if the farmer doesn’t keep his eyes on the end, he’ll give up during the hot sweaty work he’s doing and say, “THIS IS DOING ANYTHING.” He’s got to picture those crops coming up and producing corn, and tomatoes, and watermelon…and remember that all the tilling and planting is going to payoff- not today, but in the future.
  + If the soldier, or the athlete, or the farmer is distracted from the big picture doing the hard disciplined work required in each of those professions…then all they will quit and chase after the Sirens that promise pleasure and pay off in the moment. They’ll lose the war, be disqualified from the race, and never see any crops come up.
  + Paul’s letter to Timothy gives actual names of people who gave up.
  + **Phygelus and Hermogenes, Hymenaeus and Philetus**
  + The habits and disciplines that we are going to take up are not merely about making you a better person.
  + If that’s all they are to you, you’ll give up.
  + **2 Tim 2:21**
  + Paul told Timothy, that God is making himself known through vessels that are set apart for his service.
  + So when you read your Bible, when you pray, when you fast, when you Sabbath, when you turn off your phone, when you have intentional gospel conversations with a friend…you aren’t just making yourself better…you are being used as a vessel for God to bring people home.
* **Back to 1)**
  + About 3 years ago we said the mission of this church is to Multiply Gospel Change. For Broken People. On Purpose.
  + About 2 years ago, we began praying for a Spirit-Filled Revival in our church that would move out into our City.
  + These Soul Handles that I’m introducing today are the ON PURPOSE way that we become the vessels for a revival. That we discipline ourselves to follow Jesus by tying ourselves to the mast and playing beautiful music…in order to get the people of Murfreesboro HOME.
  + This is NOT a self improvement project. This is ON PURPOSE mission.
* **Transition:** Now, lets move on to the Soul Handles themselves. Let me show you how these work.
* **2) Soul Handles are grace-fueled habits that embrace God’s story & and resist evil’s story.**
  + All through Paul’s letters to Timothy, he talked about 2 sets of actions.
  + He would say things like “Flee evil…or RESIST temptation”
  + But he would also use more positive verbs. “Take up. Practice these things. Hold onto to these truths”
  + So on one hand, Paul was encouraging Timothy and the Ephesian church to RESIST EVIL.
  + ON the other hand, he was telling them to ACTIVELY EMBRACE GOD.
  + I’m introducing 8 habits today, that for the next several weeks we’ll talk about the practice and importance of each one.
  + And these habits fall into 2 categories.
  + Embracing God’s Story, and Resisting the Evil Story.
  + Habits that embrace God are ones that actively engage him.
  + Habits that resist evil are things we do to break us out of the default mind…the sort of mindless go through the motions, I’m the king of the grocery store line type of thinking.
  + Soul Handles that embrace God are like Orpheus playing his lyre. They help play louder music than the Sirens that would shipwreck our faith.
  + Soul Handles that resist evil are like beeswax and rope. They keep us from being distracted and tempted by muting the Sirens.
  + And of course, we do this all with the power that God gives us.
  + That’s why I say these habits are grace-filled. We are not doing them with our own strength. But in a response to what God has done for us in Christ…and with the strength he gives us by his Holy Spirit.
  + Take a look at some of the stuff Paul told Timothy.
  + **2 Tim 1:12 & 14**
  + On one hand, he tells Timothy “I know that I’m not going shipwreck my faith, because God is able to guard what he’s entrusted to me”
  + On the other hand, he tells Timothy 2 verses later- “YOU GUARD the good deposit of what God has done in you…with the help of the Holy Spirit in you.”
  + So, who’s job is it to guard the gospel in us. God’s or ours?
  + The answer is YES.
  + Remember, the integrated soul is deeply connected to God. So as we practice habits…on one hand we are giving effort, on the other hand its God working THROUGH us to hold onto our faith in him.
  + That’s why Paul tells Timothy over and over things like “Be diligent. Pay attention. HOLD ON.” Because he knows there is effort to put in.
  + At the same time he is constantly reminding Timothy of the gospel…which is that Timothy didn’t save himself from sin. God did that in Jesus Christ.
* **Back to 2)**
  + Listen, Spiritual Disciplines have to be fueled by grace. Knowing that God has already done the work to save you…and you can’t earn love or favor with him.
  + The System of Habits we’re going to use as soul handles is called the Common Rule…this is the way Justin Early, who created the Common Rule put it.
  + **Rules before Love equals Legalism.**
  + **Love before Rules equals Gospel Formation.**
  + In other words, if you forget the gospel, if you forget the undeserved grace of God to save you from your sin and make you into an integrated soul…if you forget that before you could love God…he loved you first…if you forget the sufferings of CHRIST and then try to suffer FOR CHRIST…
  + …you’ll quit. You’ll become a prideful legalist or a depressed legalist.
  + BUT, if love and grace FUELS habit…you will be formed by the gospel story of Jesus in your place…getting you home.
  + And honestly, that's what these habits help you focus on. The gospel story. The grace of God. Grace fuels these habits…and these habits throw gasoline on gospel fire by resisting the evil story around you…and embracing Gods story.
  + In fact, let me just show you.
* **COMMON RULE ON SCREEN**
  + 4 Weekly Habits
  + 4 Daily Habits
  + 4 habits are embrace of God’s story
  + 4 habits are resisting the world’s story
  + 4 habits are toward loving God
  + 4 habits are toward loving others
  + **Kneeling prayer-** frames your day in God’s story…3 times it weaves prayer into your day.
  + **Scripture before phone**- if the first thing you do is pick up your phone and scroll news or social media…you are letting the sirens get to your heart before you get tied to the mast. You are being shaped by the wrong story.
  + **24 hr Sabbath.** You are spending one day a week embracing the fact that God is God and you are not. That you don’t live to work…but you live to worship.
  + **Fasting for 24 hours once a week**. You are learning to resist temptation by saying no to something. You are engaging intentionally in suffering from lack…to hear from God.
  + **One meal a day with others**- You are engaging God by loving your neighbor. Creating moments to llsten to others… and be with others created in God’s image…instead of eating every meal in front of the TV or in the car in a hurried way that says, “The most important thing is that we get stuff done..instead of people being important”
  + **Daily hour with phone off.**
  + You are resisting the urge to ignore the people around you by peering into a fantasy world inside your phone.
  + **One hour of uninterrupted conversation with a friend once a week.**
  + You are intentionally investing in another person, playing a gospel tune to them on your lyre. Instead of looking up from our busy lives and realizing that we haven’t had a meaningful conversation about God and life in months.
  + **Curate weekly screen entertainment to 4 hours**
  + Movies, TV, Youtube, Social Media….they all tell us stories. About what matters, what the Good Life is. And most of what you see is a Siren song. It sounds beautiful…but it will eventually have you shipwrecked. We need to be aware of the stories that shape us. Curating screen entertainment to 4 hours a week helps us to not be shaped by those stories, but to decide to let the stories in that point us to beauty and justice.
* **EXPLAIN HOW PEOPLE CAN GET THEIR HANDS ON THIS.** 
  + There is also a book I highly recommend.
  + On website under resources.
  + But…we aren’t doing this alone. We have shipmates.
  + **1 Tim 1:18 & 6:12**
  + Paul points out 2 ways that other people would help Timothy fight the good fight of faith.
  + Timothy had people that knew him, that pointed out God’s work in him…that’s what these prophecies are about.
  + Also, Timothy made the good confession in front of witnesses…he fights WITH ACCOUNTABILITY- have you been baptized? Have you joined the church? Are you in community…and living honestly…talking to people in your community group…not just sitting trying to answer questions…but sharing your life and saying “What do you think? How do you see God at work in me? What do I need to resist and embrace?”
  + **2 Tim 1:16-18**
  + Paul talks about one of these guys that helped him- Onesiphorus.
  + When everyone else was deserting Paul, because Paul was dangerous. If you got caught talking with Paul…you could end up in Prison. SO while everyone else was running away from Paul. Onesiphorus was diligently searching for Paul. And it deeply affected him.
  + Onesiphorous was Orpheus. Simply by sacrificing his own safety and comfort to be present with Paul and visit him in Prison…Its like he grabbed a lyre and started playing a gospel song. That was louder than the Sirens song for Paul to give up.
* **Back to 2)**
  + Paul tells timothy to Preach the Gospel no matter what.
  + He tells Timothy that there will be all these other competing myths and stories…and that people will be tempted, with itching ears…to have you sing the Siren’s song.
  + They will want you to change the gospel message.
  + Because it FEELS better in the moment to say, “Just do what feels right to you” than it does to say, “TAKE UP YOUR CROSS…those who lose their lives will save it!”
  + But Paul tells Timothy…DON’T GIVE INTO THAT. Preach the gospel. Lay down your life for the people of Ephesus. Pass this gospel truth on to faithful people who will pass it on to more faithful people. Resist Evil. Embrace God. Keep the Ultimate finish line in mind.
  + We’re getting people home…we’re not just becoming better people.
  + Shape them with the gospel.
  + **2 Tim 2:8-10**
  + **8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer to the point of being bound like a criminal. But the word of God is not bound. 10 This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory**
  + That’s what these Soul handles are about- Reminding ourselves and others about the Gospel. Enduring all things for the homecoming of others. So when I’m not watching as much TV, or when my stomach is growling from a fast, or when that hour long conversation with a friend interrupts my busy important schedule…
  + …I can know…this isn’t for me…this is for the KINGDOM of God. This is my neighbor. This is for eternal glory. This is for the GOD who LOVED ME FIRST.
  + I love the way Paul ends his letter to Timothy.
  + **2 Timothy 4:16-18**
  + **At my first defense, no one stood by me, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that I might fully preach the word and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever! Amen**.
  + See, even though everyone deserted him. He’s not bitter. In fact, he forgives them and asks Timothy to not hold it against them.
  + Because he is so drenched in the presence of God…that he can keep preaching the gospel so that more people will hear it.
  + And he is confident…because of God’s presence and because he is so immersed in the God’s story…that he will make it safely home.
  + **2 Tim 4:22**
  + …and the last written words we have from Paul before he dies…deserted in a Roman prison…are words of love and hope for his shipmates.
  + Exactly what we need as we persevere in these disciplines and hold onto these Soul Handles-
  + **“The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all.**”
* **Lords Supper- a reminder of the gospel story. A handle of RESISTANCE- there is death…and EMBRACE…I’ll drink this cup again with you.**