

# Guard the Gospel Treasure

2 Timothy 1:13-18

*Our church is always only one generation from losing the gospel. To keep it, pastor and people must be vigilant to preserve biblical truth.*

LTS: Heb. 3:1-19

Many generations ago there was a beautiful garden. In it, God created a man and his wife and gave them his sufficient word. He told them how to live in that place in a manner that would bless them beyond their wildest holy imaginations. But the tempter came to them and questioned God's word, doubted God's word, and finally denounced God's word in an effort to separate the original man and woman from their God. To mankind's everlasting harm, the serpent succeeded. In tricking them to give away the treasure of God's word.

Fast forward about 1400 years and we read the story of how Israel had drifted so far away from God that when young King Josiah was set on the throne in Jerusalem there was NOT even a single copy of the Scriptures known to exist in the world. Then one day (2 Kings 22) one of the priests discovered a copy of God's word while cleaning a storeroom in the temple. When king Josiah read the book of God, he tore his clothes in grief, shame, and fear because he realized that God's people were suffering under God's judgment because they had long since discarded the treasure of God's word.

Fast forward again to Europe's Medieval history. This is that period of Western Civilization known as the Dark Ages. And why was it called the Dark Ages? Because the light of the gospel had gone out. When Christianity went from being a target of persecution to the official state religion, it didn't take long for the glory of God's word to be replaced with the so-called "wisdom" of power-hungry men. When Martin Luther inadvertently launched the great Reformation in 1517, he did so by restoring the word of God to its rightful and necessary place. The result was the absolute transformation of the western world.

Fast forward again to our day and we see that the winds and waves of a godless culture have continued to hammer the church with philosophies, and religious contrivances, and every lofty thing that it can raise up against the knowledge of God. And many times, these demonic forces have actually won the day. If you doubt that consider this,

- Yale university was founded to train men for ministry. Where is their devotion to God's word today?

- Harvard University was founded to train young men to be pastors. Where is their devotion to God's word today?
- Princeton University once had a president by the name of Jonathan Edwards. But where is it's love of God's word today?
- When George Whitefield turned over the leadership of the Methodist movement to John Wesley, it was (for the most part) a movement based on the Pauline and reformation doctrines of grace. But where is the Methodist church's devotion to God's word today?
- Today in America, a number of Christian Colleges are capitulating to the pressures of a godless society. And piece by piece, coin by coin they are surrounding the treasures of Scripture.
- My friends, it is NO hyperbole in our day to suggest that every bible-believing, Christ-loving, Gospel-motivated church in North America is always only one generation away from losing the treasure of God's word

If you have managed to keep up with what the most recent surveys reveal about what professing Christians in America believe, you know that there is a real and present danger. And that danger is not that the church might cease to be relevant to the world. Rather, the danger is that we will lose the gospel completely. And once the gospel is gone, the rest of God's word will go with it.

One author, after examining some of the recent religious surveys in the United States concluded that that if the data collected is an accurate representation of what self-professed Christians believe, the church is in serious danger. Because, what most people believe (according to the latest data) is not Christianity at all. It may more accurately be labeled Moralistic, Therapeutic Deism. The fundamental tenants of such a religious ideology go something like this:

1. A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does NOT need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to [heaven](#) when they die.

My friends, that may be what a majority of professing Christians believe today but listen to me very carefully: That is not biblical Christianity. The doctrinal propositions I just named reveal that such people have already given away the treasure of God's word.

Paul and Timothy lived in a day much like ours, where the winds and waves of

public opinion and phony religiosity was tricking people into giving away the treasure of God's word. Most importantly, they were distancing themselves from the true Gospel.

When the pressure of persecution was applied, they were ashamed to be associated with a crucified messiah. They were ashamed to call themselves a follower of a teacher who had been publicly condemned by both Jews and Romans. They were mortified that someone would discover that their hope for eternal life was in a man who said He was the promised Christ but whose life ended with shame, reproach, and a borrowed tomb.

Such men and women proved to be ashamed of the Gospel, ashamed of Christ, and ashamed of his apostle, Paul – who, like his Master before him, found himself chained and imprisoned while awaiting the sentences of death.

With all of this as introduction, let's take a moment to read the text for this morning.

Read 2 Tim. 1:13-18

There are clearly two parts to this text this morning. From the pen of imprisoned Apostle Paul, they exhort us to...

I. Guard the Truth Courageously (13-14)

II. Choose your Friendships Wisely (15-18)

## **I. Guard the Truth Courageously: (13-14)**

1. Paul's message to Timothy in this first chapter of his final letter is a call to courage in a world that is increasingly hostile to the gospel. And it is a call to loyalty both to Christ and to Paul. That's why he says (v. 8), "Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner." Why was he saying that? Well, because Paul knew that Timothy struggled sometimes with having courage sufficient to the need of the moment.

2. When we come to verse 13, then, we need to remind ourselves that Paul knows his time has come. His ministry as an apostle is just about over. And because of that he is concerned that Timothy will carry on the work after he is gone. He wants to remind timothy that the most important duty he has is to be a faithful ministry of the word and

to teach God's people to hold fast to the gospel at all costs.

3. So, Paul say (13) "Follow the pattern of sound words."

A. The New American Standard says, Retain the standard of sound words." The Greek term here is actually the verb "to have."

B. This is a common word that's used in different forms almost 800 times in the N.T. In this case, however, it is a present, active, imperative. That means, it's a command that requires continuous action. A literal translation would be "I command you to have and keep on having the pattern of sound words," The problem is, that's not how we talk in modern English.

C. The translators, therefore, are put in the position of needing to find a verb that will communicate the Paul's meaning, hence, "Retain," or "Follow." It might also be translated "Hold on and keep holding on," "posses and keep on possessing."

4. Timothy had been taught the Scriptures from his earliest years on the knee of his grandmother Lois and his mother, Eunice. Furthermore, he also attended the "St. Paul School of Theology." Not that he had actually gone to school, but rather that he spent years traveling with and learning from Paul. The apostle has been more than a little instrumental in forming Timothy's understanding of God's word, and particularly, that Gospel.

5. So Paul is telling Timothy, Retain and keep on retaining; Possess and keep on possessing the precious Christ-revealing, life-imparting treasures of God's word.

6. And notice how Paul says it: "Follow/Retain the pattern of sound words. The word "Pattern" means "sketch, or outline." Even in ancient times an artist, before he painted something on a jar or wall, he would first outline or sketch out the basic shapes and locations of all the key elements of the painting. The idea here is that Timothy should NOT think that it is up to him to figure out what needs to be taught to the churches. Paul had already sketched it out for him. In fact, if I might press the analogy a little further, Paul had already done much of the painting himself. But he wasn't going to be able to finish. He was leaving it to Timothy to pick up where he left off in terms of communicating the rich truths of divine revelation and especially the gospel.

7. And notice the definite article here. Paul does not speak of "a pattern," but THE pattern. It is not up to the preacher or Bible teacher to come up with clever and novel ideas. We don't have the freedom to bind people's consciences with the ideas of men.

A. The preacher's mandate is NOT to preach psychology.

B. He is not called to proclaim a clever philosophy

C. He is not called to offer pointers on life-hacking and self-help.

D. He's called to preach Christ crucified, risen, and coming again!

- E. He's called to command everyone to repent of their sins and transfer their loyalty from self to God.
- F. He's called to invite men, women, boys and girls into life – eternal life found in Jesus Christ alone.
- G. Not only that, but he is called to preach the whole counsel of God relative to everything pertaining to life and godliness found in the treasure of God's word.

8. Now let's make another observation. Paul is telling Timothy to possess and keep on possessing... what? Paul says, keep possessing the pattern of... "sound words." What does he mean by sound words? Well, since it's always best to let Scripture interpret Scripture, turn back one page and look at 1 Tim. 6:3. Here Paul, in his FIRST letter to Timothy, says:

Teach and urge these things. If anyone teaches a  
different *doctrine* and does not agree with  
the *sound words* of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the teaching that accords with godliness,  
He is puffed up...

9. Well, that's helpful, isn't it? Turns out, this isn't the first time Paul has exhorted Timothy about these things. So, what are the sound words Timothy is supposed to teach? They are the doctrines or teachings or truths that we have received from the Lord Jesus Christ. The truths Paul, specifically, has received from Christ, and John received from Christ and Peter received from Christ.

10. Paul touches on this again in 2 Tim 4:2 when he summarizes all of it in the command, "Preach the Word." NOT a word you think the Lord has directly given to you, but the word of God found in holy Scripture.

- A. To the church in Galatia Paul wrote, "For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. <sup>12</sup> For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.
- B. Turn back with me to 1 Cor. 15:1-10
- C. Beloved, what Paul calls "sound words," (healthy words, true words) did not originate in his sophisticated, highly educated mind. No, he received it from Christ

Himself.

11. These doctrines – this Gospel - is the “pattern of sound words” Paul had sketched for Timothy. And how did Paul deliver these words, these doctrines? He did it (13b) in faith and love.

A. In faith: Paul taught and preached what he sincerely believed. 2 Cor. 4:13 Paul writes, “Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak.”

- 1) Paul was no Jonah. He didn't speak merely because he was under compulsion from God under threat of being swallowed by a whale.
- 2) No, to Paul it was his great delight to proclaim the Gospel of Christ – even in the face of danger? Why? Because he truly believed it.
- 3) He taught it in Faith.

B. In love: Paul wasn't an angry preacher. He didn't hate unbelievers. He had compassion toward them. He loved them.

- 1) And isn't this how we should proclaim the gospel? First, we believe with all our hearts as it applies to our own souls. We exercise the very faith to which we call others.
- 2) Then, we proclaim it with bold love for the lost. We don't treat unbelievers like the enemy - no matter their political affiliation, their lifestyle, their religion, or gender preference. Rather, we minister the “sound words” of the gospel to them in personal faith, and genuine love.
- 3) No matter who we may speak to, we always strive to speak the truth in love. And these are the faith and love that are ours because we are “in Christ.”
- 4) And by the way, this isn't relevant ONLY to our ministry of the gospel. It is relevant to teaching and preaching all the doctrines (all the “sound words”) of Scripture. We don't soft-peddle sound doctrine under the guise of love. We don't capitulate the hard saying of Jesus or the difficult teachings of the apostles in the name of grace.
- 5) Even when it comes to the precious doctrines of election and calling, we strive to be unyielding but always loving. That's why on our website we describe Calvary Bible Church as “Lovingly Reformed.”

12. Now notice verse 14. (Read 14)

13. Paul continues in the same vein. First, he commands Timothy to possess, and keep

on possessing the pattern of sound words. Now he says, “Guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”

- A. To “guard” means “to protect by taking careful measures. To guard from corruption or destruction.”
- B. This is every pastor’s job and it is every believer’s responsibility. We guard the truth. We defend the truth. We stand upon the truth. We show deference when it comes to our personal desires and inclinations, but we are unyielding with the truth.
- C. And our ultimate model of this, of course, is the Lord Jesus Himself who on the one hand was willing to lay his life down for sinners and on the other hand never compromised on the truth.

14. So, by the power of the H.S. who indwells us, we are assigned the duty of guarding the truth. And notice the term Paul gives the truth here. He calls it the “Good Deposit.” The NASB calls it “the treasure” which has been entrusted to you.

15. This is completely relevant for our generation. In our time the evangelical church has all but completely thrown “sound doctrine” overboard. Why? Because that’s not what the majority of church-goers want. They want positive thinking. They want to know how to be rescued from toxic relationships. They want someone to tell them that they have potential. But listen, every Christian’s job is to Guard the Truth. Every Church’s job is to Guard the truth. Every Pastor’s job is to Guard the truth.

16. Apart from “Sound words,” apart from the “treasure of God’s word” we don’t have a church. All we have is a crowd. And there is a big difference.

16. The “sound words” of God are the crown jewels of the church. Apart from Christ Himself there is nothing we love more. In fact, apart from the “sound words of Scripture” we know nothing about Christ!

17. So how do we guard the treasure? We read the word, sing the word, study the word, pray the word, Preach the word, rest in the word, obey the word, meditate on the word and we talk to people about the word. Where there is agreement, we rejoice. Where there is error, we correct with gentleness and peace.

18. And as you share the treasure of the gospel with others you will discover that some will love you for it and others will take offence.

- A. You’ll make your co-workers uncomfortable
- B. Your relatives will call you a fanatic.
- C. You may lose friendships and miss out on invitations to social gatherings, NOT because you are legalistic, combative, or arrogant (NEVER BE THAT!). But because your faith in Christ and love for people compels you to tell the truth.

19. As you live for the truth you will find that your friendships will begin to fall into two groups: those who cling to the truth and govern their lives by it and those who compromise and defect from the truth.

20. And that brings us to the second (and final) point. The first was, Guard the Truth Courageously. And now...

## **II. Choose your Friendships Wisely (15-18)**

Read 15-18

1. Apparently, when Paul was called to stand trial, those who should have been by his side abandoned him. I suspect they were fearful of being implicated in his so-called crimes against the state. This man who had led so many to Christ as he ministered from Ephesus; this beloved apostle to whom many, no doubt, feigned allegiance to. When the pressure was on, when persecution struck, they ran – just as the disciples all abandoned Jesus at his arrest.

2. Two of those men had their names recorded in the permanent record of Scripture. Their names are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

3. The only thing we know about these men is their defection from Paul when he needed them. How would you like to have that etched into your tombstone? If God revealed to you that he was going to name you in Holy Scripture using only 75 characters, what would you hope he would say?

4. Well, I would hope it would be more than 75 characters, and I would hope that he would say something like what he recorded of the next man in this text, Onesiphorus.

5. The main point here is that he was not ashamed of Paul's chains. He didn't make excuses for avoiding Paul because it was embarrassing to be seen with a criminal. Rather, when he went to Rome (perhaps on business) he determined to do whatever it would take to find him... and he did.

6. Here was a faithful servant. Here was a loyal friend. And the message to Timothy is, you should be like Onesiphorus, not like the other guys. I know that's what Paul was thinking because back in v. 8 he said, "Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or me his prisoner"

7. He's saying, this is how its done, Timothy. Follow the example of Onesiphorus. I need you. I long to see you. Please don't let me down.

8. For us the message is, Don't be ashamed of the Gospel, and don't capitulate on sound doctrine. Christians love sound doctrine. We love the truth.

A. The truth is what brings us to Christ



- B. The truth enables us to commune with God
  - C. The truth reveals the Father's will for us.
  - D. The truth fills us with wisdom for life.
  - E. The truth reveals mysteries that God unveils only to his people.
  - F. The truth makes us wiser than our enemies.
  - G. The truth teaches us how to love.
  - H. The truth reveals how two sinners can stay happily married for a lifetime.
  - I. The truth instructs us on raising children, managing money, responding to evil, and 10,000 other things.
  - J. No wonder Paul calls it the treasure.
9. The sad reality is,
- A. Adam and Eve failed to guard the treasure of God's word.
  - B. Israel failed to guard the treasure of God's word.
  - C. Christians in Medieval times didn't guard the treasure.
  - D. The mainline denominations failed to guard the treasure.
  - E. And the sad reality is, that many American churches and homes who claim to be Christian are NOT guarding the treasure of God/s word. This is a dangerous things.
  - F. (The Church of Canada - female pastor who has declared that she is an atheist).
10. O my friend, do you have a Bible? Do you read it? Do you study it? Do you feel that it is life and breath and wisdom for living? Does it drive you into communion with Christ, repentance from sin, and love for people? Is it your treasure?
11. May God give us the grace and power by His Spirit to Retain the pattern of Sound words and guard the treasure) the good deposit) until he come and finds us faithful.