

Guard The Gospel

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, for a short while this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, 2 Timothy chapter 1.
- 2 Timothy chapter 1. And we're looking at verses 12 down to the end of chapter 1. But if we just read again in verse 12.
- 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 12. But Paul says there, But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.
- I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.
- You know, as we study 2 Timothy, we always have to keep in mind three things. Who, where, and why this letter was written.
- [1 : 1 2] The who is very straightforward. It was the Apostle Paul, who was, as we know, he was Timothy's tradesman. He was the one who wrote this letter. And Paul, as you know, he was once a persecutor of the church, a passionate persecutor of the church of Jesus Christ.
- And now he's a passionate preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. So who, Paul, where? He's in prison. Paul is in prison awaiting his execution.
- He's been sent to prison. He's been sentenced to death for promoting and proclaiming this glorious gospel message. And he's not in a nice prison, as we probably have nowadays, with TVs and all these things.
- No, Paul is in a damp, dark, dismal dungeon. He's on death row. He's weeks away from death. He might even have been executed by the time this letter reached Timothy.
- We don't know. But what we do know is that, as Paul confesses at the end of his letter, he has fought a good fight. He has finished the course. He has kept the faith.
- [2 : 1 6] And there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness in glory. So who is Paul? Where he's in prison? Why is he there? Why did Paul write this letter?
- Paul wrote the letter because his concern was not about himself. That's what you see throughout the whole letter. He's not selfish. His concern is not for himself, but for the gospel.
- His concern is for the gospel and for the generations to come. Paul's concern was for our children and our children's children. That, as the psalmist says, that generations yet unborn will praise and magnify the Lord.
- And that's why we see in this section, this closing section of chapter 1, we see Paul exhorting and encouraging Timothy to ensure that this gospel baton is passed on to the next generation.
- And Paul says two things to Timothy in this closing section. He says, guard the gospel and glory in the gospel. Guard the gospel and glory in the gospel.

[3 : 24] There are two headings this evening. So guard the gospel and glory in the gospel. So first of all, he says, guard the gospel. Guard the gospel. Look again at verse 12. Paul says, but I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed.

And I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. So as we come to the closing section of this chapter, we've seen that Paul's final farewell letter to Timothy.

It's a personal and pastoral and also in many ways a precious letter. Because in it, as we've seen, Paul assures Timothy that he's remembering him in prayer.

He's remembering Timothy's ministry in Ephesus. And he's remembering all the tears and all the trials that Timothy is facing. And as he says in the opening verses, he says, I thank God whom I serve as I remember you in my prayers night and day.

[4 : 35] But as we've seen, Paul was not only remembering Timothy. He was also wanting to remind Timothy of that good and godly grounding he had from his mother and his grandmother.

That even in his family home, he had this firm foundation of the gospel. And for this reason, says Paul, he says, For this reason, fan into flame your God-given gift as a pastor and preacher of the gospel.

Because we have not been given a spirit of fear. We have been given a spirit of faithfulness. We've been given a spirit of power and passion and perseverance.

Therefore, says Paul, do not be ashamed. Do not be ashamed of the gospel. Don't be ashamed of the ministry of the gospel or the message of the gospel.

Because the gospel, this glorious message, the gospel is the good news. It's the power of God unto salvation to those who believe. And as Paul explained, and as we read earlier on, Paul explained that the gospel, it's a great and glorious proclamation.

[5 : 44] Why? Because it changes hearts and lives. It's a proclamation which rescued us from sin. It's a proclamation which redeemed us from slavery.

It's a proclamation which called us to a holy calling, where we are saved, sanctified, and set apart. But none of it, says Paul, and this is the emphasis, none of it is because of our works of righteousness.

No, it's all according to his purpose and grace. And this proclamation of the gospel, it has been made known to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

This same Jesus who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. And you know what Paul is actually saying to Timothy, he's saying to him, remember that the gospel is not just a proclamation.

You're not just preaching a message. You're preaching a person. The gospel is not just a proclamation. The gospel is a person. We invite people to come to the person of Jesus because the gospel is all about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 55] That's what makes the gospel good news. That's why it's a great and glorious gospel. Therefore, Timothy says, do not be ashamed of this gospel.

No, guard the gospel. Guard the gospel. And you know, I love this word that Paul uses here. He uses it twice in verses 12 and 14.

He uses this word guard. Guard the gospel. He says in verse 12, I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

And then he exhorts Timothy in verse 14, by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. If you're reading from the authorized version, you'll see that the word is keep.

And that's because this word that Paul uses here, it has a threefold meaning. To keep, guard, and watch. Keep, guard, and watch.

[8 : 04] And interestingly, it's the same word that the psalmist used in Psalm 121. The psalm we were singing earlier. The well-known keeper's psalm, where we sang, Thy foot he'll not let slide nor will.

He slumber that thee keeps, guards, or watches. Behold he that keeps, guards, or watches Israel. He slumbers not nor sleeps.

The Lord thee keeps, the Lord thy shade. On thy right hand doth stay. The moon by night thee shall not smite. Nor yet the sun by day. The Lord shall keep thy soul.

He'll keep, guard, and watch it. He shall preserve, or keep, thee from all ill. Henceforth thy going out and in. God keep forever will.

It's the keeper's psalm. And it's the keeper's psalm because in it we're reminded and reassured that the Lord is our keeper. He promises to keep us and to guard us and to watch over us.

[9 : 06] As Kenny Mitchell, he's not here this evening, but as Kenny Mitchell would often say, the first step after being saved is being kept. The first step after being saved is being kept.

And the Bible assures us we are being kept. We're being guarded. We're being watched. Kept by the power of God, the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

And we are being kept because we cannot keep ourselves. My friend, the Lord is our keeper. And the affirmation and the assurance of Psalm 121 is that he will keep us.

He will guard us. He will watch over us in all our going out and in all our coming in from this time forth and even forevermore. The Lord is our keeper.

He keeps us. He guards us. He watches us. But you know, what Paul highlights here is that the Lord not only keeps guards and watches his people, he also keeps guards and watches his proclamation.

[10 : 08] The Lord preserves the proclamation of the gospel. And as we said, the proclamation of the gospel is the proclamation of a person.

The person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It's the proclamation of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And that proclamation, as we've said time and time again, that proclamation of the gospel, it is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe.

That's why Paul is saying in verse 12 here, he is saying, I am not ashamed of the gospel. For I know whom I have believed in the gospel. I have believed in the person of Jesus Christ.

And I am convinced, he says, I am confident that he is able to keep and he's able to guard and watch over the proclamation of the gospel.

He is able to preserve and protect the proclamation of the gospel. This same Jesus is able to build and bolster his church through the proclamation of the gospel so that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

[11 : 22] I am convinced, he says, that he is able to keep guard and watch over the proclamation of the gospel until that day. Until the day that Jesus comes again.

And you know, Paul is saying to Timothy, he says, Timothy, this is the gospel that was entrusted to me. And now, Timothy, as I pass this gospel baton on to you, it is being entrusted to you as well.

Yes, the Lord will keep and guard and watch over the proclamation of the gospel. But he has entrusted the gospel to men. That through the foolishness of preaching and proclaiming the gospel, sinners will be saved.

Therefore, Timothy, by the encouragement and the enabling of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you, you also, you also, you also, you also keep guard and watch over the gospel.

Keep, guard and watch over the gospel. Now, as we said, this word, keep or guard, it has a threefold meaning.

[12 : 41] Keep, guard and watch. But the word not only has a threefold meaning, it also has a threefold message. That's why I love Psalm 121. A threefold meaning and a threefold message.

This word gives to us the image and the illustration of a shepherd, a soldier and a sailor. Keep, guard, watch, shepherd, soldier, sailor.

Because a shepherd keeps his flock safe. A soldier guards his territory. And a sailor watches for rocks.

A shepherd keeps his flock safe. A soldier guards his territory. And a sailor watches for rocks. A shepherd, a soldier, a sailor. And Timothy, he's saying the gospel of Jesus Christ is that it has been entrusted to you.

It was entrusted to me. I'm passing it on to you. You are being entrusted with the gospel. Therefore, be a shepherd. Be a shepherd, Timothy. A shepherd who keeps his flock safe.

[13 : 45] Jesus, as you know, he's the good shepherd. He laid down his life for the sheep. But as a minister of the gospel, you are his under-shepherd, Timothy. So keep the flock safe. Feed the flock.

Nourish and nurture the flock of God with good and godly teaching from God's Word. Be a shepherd, Timothy. Keep the flock safe. But more than that, be a soldier.

Guard your territory. Defend against heresy. And denounce any false doctrine. Always be on your guard, Timothy. Guard the gospel.

Don't conform. Don't concede. Don't compromise to the truth of God's Word. No, don't compromise one inch. You guard the gospel. Be a soldier.

Guard your territory. So, Timothy, be a shepherd. Keep the flock safe. Be a soldier. Guard your territory. And be a sailor. Watch out for rocks. Watch out for rocks.

[14 : 44] Timothy, you are anchored on that solid rock. There's no disputing it. But as you make your way through the ocean of life, you have to watch out for all these rocks. You have to stay awake.

You have to stay alert as you navigate all the dangers that you'll face in your ministry. You have to keep watch in order to prevent others from making shipwreck of their faith.

And as you know, Paul mentioned that in his first letter. He said to Timothy in my first letter, Hymenaeus and Alexander, they made shipwreck of their faith.

But Timothy, be a sailor. Watch out for the rocks. Watch out for the rocks. So, Timothy, be a shepherd. Keep the flock safe. Be a soldier.

Guard your territory. Be a sailor. Watch out for the rocks. Because the proclamation of the gospel, it has been entrusted to you. It's in your hands now. I'm passing the baton on to you.

[15 : 43] So, keep guard and watch over this gospel. Guard the gospel, he says. And glory in the gospel. Guard the gospel.

And secondly, glory in the gospel. Glory in the gospel. Now, look at verse 15. Paul says, You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. But when he arrived in Rome, he searched for me earnestly and found me.

May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day. And you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus. So, having exhorted and encouraged Timothy not to be ashamed of the gospel, Paul now gives two examples of how some people responded to that gospel.

Because he describes those who deserted the gospel. And he also describes someone who remained devoted to the gospel. And you know, this is why we have to remember that Paul is in prison.

[17 : 01] Paul, as we said, he's been persecuted and punished for preaching the gospel. He's weeks or even days away from death. And yet, you look at verse 15 and you think, well, how painful it must have been for Paul to write these words and remind Timothy that there are some who have deserted the gospel completely.

He says, You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. Now, the church in Asia, it was a large region where Paul had spent time preaching and proclaiming the gospel.

Paul had invested a lot of energy and a lot of effort in the church in Asia. And we're familiar with the churches in Asia because many of them are mentioned in the book of Revelation.

We're told about the seven churches in Asia. We're told about Ephesus. That's where Timothy was. We're also told about Smyrna. And Pergamum and Thyatira and Sardis and Philadelphia and Laodicea.

And Paul says, There are some in these churches who have not only deserted the gospel. They've distanced themselves from me.

[18 : 20] And they've also disassociated themselves from the church. In fact, the word Paul uses when he says that there are those in the church in Asia who have turned away.

That's what he says in verse 15. He says that they've turned away. The word that he uses is apostasy. He uses the word apostasy. Paul says they've apostatized.

They've apostatized. They've disowned the church. They've denounced their faith. They've completely deserted the gospel. They're no longer with us. And with that, Paul names and shames these two men.

Because they were obviously leaders in the church. But their leadership was lacking. And you know, you look at it and you think, well, how sad. How sad to get your name into the Bible.

But for all the wrong reasons. You're mentioned in Holy Scripture for all the wrong reasons. We saw that on Sunday evening with King Ahab. His name was written and remembered in Scripture as the most evil king in Israel's history.

[19 : 25] And here in 2 Timothy chapter 1, the names of Phygelus and Hermogenes, they are written and remembered as deserters and defectors of the gospel.

In fact, Paul names and shames Phygelus and Hermogenes because they had a hollow heart.

You know, Jesus described these two men. He described Phygelus and Hermogenes very accurately in the parable of the sower. I love the parable of the sower.

It's my favorite parable. And it's in the parable of the sower, you remember, that Jesus is asking us the question, how's your heart? And he's asking us, is it a hardened heart?

Is it a hollow heart? Is it a hungry heart? Or is it a healthy heart? How's your heart? And Jesus explains, he explains that a hollow heart is like the scattered and sown seed that fell upon dry, rocky ground.

[20 : 38] But on the surface, Jesus says, on the surface it didn't look like rocky ground because there were signs of life and growth. It looked so promising if you were to see it on the surface, but underneath.

Underneath there were problems. Because underneath there's no depth. There's no root. There's no earth. And according to the parable of the sower, it's clear that Phygelus and Hermogenes, they were the type of people who joyfully responded and received the gospel.

And at the beginning there was for them excitement and enthusiasm and enjoyment of the gospel, so much so that they were made leaders in the church. But a hollow heart, says Jesus, will follow only for a while.

Because when they encounter and experience trials and tribulation, when they come across temptation and testing, they fall away.

And when they fall away, all that grew upwards wither. Because it didn't grow downwards first. They have a hollow heart.

[21 : 46] Timothy, you are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. And you know what's more is that the hollow hearts of these two men, they were known.

They were known throughout the church. It was public knowledge. Everybody had heard about Phygelus and Hermogenes. You know, he says. You're aware.

It was public knowledge that they had deserted the gospel. And we know that from our own experience, don't we? That a hollow heart, it's not a good witness for the gospel.

Because someone who disowns the church and denounces their faith and deserts the gospel, it always dents and it always damages the cause of Christ in a community.

That's why we always need to be encouraging people to put down good, strong roots. That's why discipleship is so important. That's why fellowship is so important.

[22 : 47] Where we need to nurture and nourish one another with God's word. But you know, Paul is saying to Timothy, he's saying to him, remember these two men. Remember Phygelus and Hermogenes.

And don't be like them. Don't desert the gospel. Be devoted to the gospel. Guard the gospel. Glory in the gospel. Glory in this great gospel message.

You know, is that not what Paul said to the Corinthians? He said, let the one who glories, glory in the Lord. Let the one who boasts, boast in the gospel.

Let him glory in the gospel. Don't desert the gospel. Be devoted to the gospel. Guard the gospel, Timothy, and glory in the gospel.

Like this man, Onesiphorus. Because Onesiphorus, he didn't have a hollow heart. No, he had a very healthy heart. Onesiphorus was someone who was faithful and fruitful.

[23 : 47] Onesiphorus was devoted to the ministry and devoted to the message of the gospel. In fact, Paul says the thing about Onesiphorus is that he didn't just show up once at my prison door and say something nice and then clear off home.

No, Onesiphorus was so devoted to the gospel that he was determined to find me when I was in Rome. He searched for me and sought me out. And even when he found me, he refreshed me and he revived me.

He supported me and strengthened me. He encouraged me. He even emboldened me. He prayed for me and he prayed with me. And Paul says about him, he says, May the Lord bless the household of Onesiphorus.

May the Lord bless and keep his family because of his devotion to the gospel. May the Lord bless the household of Onesiphorus. And you know, we might wonder why Paul highlights the household of Onesiphorus when he says, May the Lord bless the household of Onesiphorus.

But you know, Paul knew the impact and the influence that devotion to the gospel can have on a home and a family.

[25 : 05] Paul knew that in order to be a passionate pastor or an effective elder or a devoted deacon, Paul knew that that takes up time. It takes time.

It involves and includes giving up personal and private time. In order to be devoted to the gospel, it takes up time to attend church services and attend kirk sessions and be at deacon's courts and attend presbytery meetings.

It involves sacrificing your time with family and sometimes even your friends. And you know, Paul was aware of how much Onesiphorus was devoted to the gospel, which is why he says, May the Lord bless the household of Onesiphorus for his faithfulness and his fruitfulness.

And as you know, well, most of us, we aren't called to be a Paul or a Timothy. But we can all be an Onesiphorus. We can all be an Onesiphorus.

We can all be devoted to the gospel. Yes, it will take up our time. But we can all revive and refresh one another. We can all support and strengthen one another.

[26 : 18] We can all be like Onesiphorus who encouraged and emboldened Paul. We can all pray for one another and pray with one another. We can all be an Onesiphorus.

Therefore, says Paul, may the Lord bless the household of Onesiphorus for his faithfulness and his fruitfulness. And you know, my friend, may the Lord bless you.

May the Lord bless your household for your faithfulness and your fruitfulness. And you might say, well, Mordor, I don't do anything. But the Lord sees it.

May the Lord bless your household for your faithfulness and your fruitfulness. And so as we come to the close of this opening chapter in 2 Timothy, we're looking at a pastoral and personal and precious letter.

But Paul is exhorting and encouraging Timothy to ensure that this gospel baton is passed on to the next generation. And he says, Timothy, Timothy, guard the gospel.

[27 : 24] Guard it with your life. Guard the gospel and glory in the gospel. Because this gospel, it's the power of God unto salvation to those who believe.

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray together. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for that glorious gospel message.

That the baton was passed on to Timothy and to the generations following him. And that we are those who are the beneficiaries of others passing it on to us.

And help us, we pray, as we go on in this wilderness journey, to always remember that we must pass it on to. That we are not to hold on to it and keep it to ourselves.

But that we are to tell it to that generation following. That this God is our God. And that he will be our guide. Even unto death. Lord, give to us a boldness.

[28 : 28] A boldness in our faith. Help us, Lord, to guard the gospel. And to glory in this gospel. A gospel that has changed us. And that is able to change anyone.

O Lord, we give thanks to thee for its powerful message. And we pray that those who are in the hearing of it. Even in here, week by week. Or watching online.

O Lord, we pray. And we plead with thee. That that seed would not fall by the wayside. Or among the thorns are unto the rocky ground. But that it might fall into the good soil.

Which thou art preparing. Lord, we pray that thou wouldest hear us. And answer us in accordance with thy will. That thou wouldest have all the glory. And Christ would have the preeminence.

And that we would know blessing. Go before us, we ask. For we ask it in Jesus' name. And for his sake. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing again.

[29 : 28] This time in Psalm 119. Psalm 119. Again in the Scottish Psalter. It's on page 404.

Psalm 119. We're singing verses 57. Down to the verse marked 60. And after we sing.

As usual. I'll ask two of the gentlemen present. To lead us in prayer. Just a couple of things to highlight. From the praying for one another prayer notes. That are sent out each week.

We're encouraged to pray for Thershow. Thershow Free Church. That's where Hugh Ferrier used to be. A few years ago. That's where his first charge. And there in another vacancy.

Not since Hugh. But there was another minister after them. A John Marker. He was in college with me. In HTC. So please remember the congregation in Thershow. A small congregation.

[30 : 28] Struggling in the northern presbytery. So please remember them. That the Lord would provide for them. A minister. And also we're asked to pray for Hope Church. In Coat Bridge.

They're doing a church renovation. They've been having holiday clubs. And all these different activities. So please pray that the Lord would bless them. Especially doing their church refurbishment.

That the Lord would use their building. For his glory. So just to remember these two congregations. Also remember the vacancies in our own presbytery. North U.S. North Tolstair. And other vacancies that would.

So our way off. So we're going to sing in Psalm 119. Verses 57. Down to the verse marked 60. As I mentioned earlier. These Psalms that we're looking at this evening.

They emphasize the word keep. To keep guard and watch. The Lord is our keeper. But as Timothy was encouraged. He is also to keep guard and watch over the gospel.

[31 : 28] And that's what the Psalmist says here. Verse 57. So we'll sing Psalm 119.

Verse 57 to 60. To God's praise. The Lord should portion art alone.

With trident juice, O Lord. Your hear from the Savior.

And the Lord have mercy Nerds. Or at this level of regions.

With my own heart. I don't know. Thy face unfavorably According to Thy gracious word Be merciful to me I thought upon My former wish And did my life well thrive Unto my testimony's pure

[33 : 42] My feet then turned I I did not sting or linger on As was that softful hour But history I lost to keep Myself I did prepare That's why I draw