

Staying True

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[0 : 00] All right, well, as we come to the Word of God this morning, we're picking up where we left off last Sunday, and we are in 2 Timothy, Paul's second letter to Timothy. So if you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to 2 Timothy.

Our passage for this morning is verse 13 to 18. Let me just remind us a little of what we heard last Sunday. Paul is writing this letter to Timothy, and he's doing so from prison. He's in jail in Rome, the city of Rome, and he's actually chained up even into jail, and he's suffering. As we'll see a little later in this letter, Paul knows that his days are numbered, and that he will very soon be executed.

He's already had a first hearing or trial of sorts, and he's writing this letter now to Timothy, a younger man who has been a co-worker of his and spreading the message of Jesus all over the Mediterranean world.

Timothy eventually came to be stationed in the city of Ephesus and has been working with the church there. And so Paul writes to him probably there in the city of Ephesus.

[1 : 12] And as Paul nears the end, this is what we heard last Sunday. We heard Paul urge Timothy not to let his spiritual gift go unused, but to rekindle and fan it into flame, use it.

And he reminded Timothy that the Holy Spirit lives in him and that he gives us power and love and self-discipline. All things that are needed for Timothy to go on using his gift amidst the challenges of persecution that are happening in his region.

And Paul also reminded Timothy of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ and his salvation and the promise of life and immortality that comes through Jesus, despite the fact that we all die.

And Paul urged Timothy not to be ashamed of the gospel, of the testimony of the Lord or of him, but rather to join with him in suffering for the gospel.

Let's pick up Paul's words. We'll back it up a bit to verse 11 and I'll read it for us. In verse 11, Paul says, And of this gospel, I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.

[2 : 29] That's why I'm suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame because I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.

Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phagellus and Hermogenes.

May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me.

May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day. You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

[3 : 38] So just a short passage for this morning. And there are three pieces here that we're going to be looking at. The first piece is verses 13 to 14. Paul urges Timothy to guard the teaching.

Then, in verse 15, Paul tells of some who have abandoned him. And then finally, in verses 16 to 18, he talks about a few who have stayed true.

And so we're going to look at these in order, starting with first, Paul's charge to Timothy. In verse 13.

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.

Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. What is Paul saying here? What does he mean?

[4 : 46] Let's just bring in the context a little bit from up above in verse 11. Of this gospel, I was appointed a herald. What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching.

Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. So what is the good deposit that Timothy is to guard? The gospel.

Yes, the gospel. The good news of salvation. This good news about Jesus. The same good news that Paul has been heralding.

That he's been teaching. That's what Timothy has heard from Paul. That is the good deposit. And that's what Timothy is to guard and keep as the pattern in his own teaching ministry.

Let's think about that word deposit for a moment. What's a deposit? Well, in this language that the Bible was written in, the word used here usually refers to the property of someone that has been entrusted to another.

[6 : 00] So in this case, Timothy has been entrusted with something. But it's come from another. It belongs to another. In this case, he's been entrusted with a teaching or a message.

The good news. The testimony about Jesus. Paul uses all these words kind of interchangeably. There's this testimony about Jesus. This news about Jesus. A message about Jesus.

A teaching concerning Jesus. And it's sound. It's good. It's true. And where did Paul get it? He says he got it from Jesus Christ himself.

Back up in verse 1. He is an apostle of Jesus Christ. Meaning that he's been sent by Jesus Christ to speak on behalf of Jesus. And to bear witness to the truth about Jesus.

Just like all the other apostles who were eyewitnesses of the things that happened with Jesus. So Paul has this teaching from Jesus, from God. And he has taught it to Timothy.

[7 : 02] What you heard from me, Timothy. And this teaching that I've given to you, Timothy. You now guard it.

Keep it. As the pattern of sound teaching. Implied. Teach it to others. Teach to others what you heard from me.

What I taught to you. And this is huge. What is Timothy supposed to teach in his church there in Ephesus? He's not to just make something up.

Or just figure out some of his own thoughts. Or share from his own wisdom or experience. Timothy is not an apostle. He does not have God speaking through him by the Holy Spirit.

In the same way as Paul does. And so Paul says, Keep that teaching that I gave you. That I deposited to you from Jesus.

[8 : 03] Keep that. Guard it. Make that the teaching of your ministry. For those of us who teach in the church. Whether pastors or elders. Or alive teachers.

Or Sunday school teachers. We are not to just make something up. That sounds good. Or that feels right. God himself has spoken into human history.

Through Jesus. And through the apostles. By his Holy Spirit. Such that these words that we have in our Bibles. Are the very words of God. God. This is the good deposit.

These are the things that Jesus taught. That Paul taught. And this is what we are to teach. This is what we are to keep as our main message.

And so every sermon. Every Sunday school lesson. Must be a sharing of these words.

[9 : 04] A discussion of the truth of these words. As my preaching professor used to say. And he wasn't the first to say it. Others said it before him.

But he used to say. The main point of the sermon. Should be the main point of the passage. If these are God's words. We don't need to.

To kind of. Springboard off of this. Into talking about a bunch of stuff. That we think about it. We need to focus on. What is God trying to say. Through his designated apostle.

Or through his son. Or through the prophet. To us. And we don't need to. To add. Or supplement. Or minimize. Some of the things.

That maybe we don't like. We need to proclaim. This good deposit. We need to keep it intact. We need to keep it whole. We need to explain these words.

[9 : 59] And meditate on them. And apply them. So that all of us. As Christ's people. Can understand them. And trust them. And live. In accordance with them.

So. In this first part. We see that there's a body of teaching. From God. From Jesus. And as it filters down to us.

We as a church. Are stewards. Of this good deposit. And in our cultural moment. It may be tempting. At times.

To drift away from. This teaching. Or maybe to be embarrassed. By some of these words. In here. Or in the case of Timothy.

With all the persecution. Going on in his time. Or. You know. Paul here is in jail. And soon to die.

There's a temptation. Maybe. To be ashamed. Of these words.

[10:54] Of the gospel. Maybe just say. Only the parts. That the world around us. Likes. Maybe just focus on.

The parts about love. But there's other things. That Jesus said too. He talked about sin. He talked about hell.

He talked on a number of. Difficult things. And so we cannot. Neglect those things. That too. Is part of the good deposit. It's part of the teaching.

That we have received. Guard that good deposit. Says Paul. Keep it whole. Keep it intact. Keep it true. To what you heard from me. And do so with faith.

And with love. And here's some encouragement Timothy. You're not left. All alone to yourself. To protect the good deposit.

[11:56] That you've received from me. He says. Guard it. Through the Holy Spirit. Or by the Holy Spirit. With the help of the Holy Spirit. Who lives in us. Timothy.

You're not alone in this. God's Spirit lives in you. He lives in me. And he is there to guide you. And help you as you teach. And proclaim the same good news.

The same gospel. The same testimony about Jesus. That you heard from me. Let me just say it one more time. Our job.

Is not to improvise. Not to write our own script. It's to get this good deposit. This already good deposit.

And sound teaching. To the people in our church. And to the people in our community. And the people in the world around us. And the Spirit is in us.

[12:53] And with us. To help us do this. So that's his first point here. Guard the teaching, Timothy. Let's go to the next section.

Verse 15. Where Paul describes how some have abandoned him. Paul writes. What a statement. This is one of those ones we might just skip over. Because it's got so many weird names. And a weird place in it. But what a statement. Can you imagine the tone of sadness in Paul's heart.

As he writes this. Where is the province of Asia. Back in these days. In the first century. It's the region on the map that's shaded yellow.

In the middle. That's a lot of people. That's a lot of churches.

[14:00] This is modern day Turkey. But back then. Some of the cities that they had. Troy. Pergamum. Thyatira. Smyrna. Philadelphia. Tripoli. Laodicea.

Colossae. Sardis. Halicarnasus. And Ephesus. This is the place where Timothy is. Ephesus. Let these words sink in.

Timothy. You know that everyone in the province of Asia. Has deserted me. Some of these cities you may know from the book of Revelation.

All of the seven churches in the book of Revelation. Are cities of this region. Of course Revelation was written after this. Much later.

How does Timothy know this? He says you know. How does Timothy know this? Because he himself has been serving.

[15:00] Right in the middle of this province. In Ephesus. You know that everyone in the province of Asia. Has deserted me.

Now this is hyperbole. Paul does not mean that every single Christian. In Asia. Has turned away from him. Timothy is one who hasn't. And as we'll hear in a moment.

On a sephorist. And his household. Who we'll hear about. Shortly here. They also have not deserted Paul. But the vast majority. Of Christians.

Of believers in the province. Have turned their backs on Paul. The preacher of Christ. Why? Because being a Christian.

Is not just unpopular. It's coming to real suffering. It's coming. To violent treatment. It's coming to imprisonment.

[15 : 59] For the followers of Jesus. In this region. This is why Paul. Is in jail. And chained. Because he has been. The single. Greatest.

And loudest. Proclaimer of Jesus. In all the surrounding regions. He's been going. Back and forth. Between the churches. Here and there. And everywhere. Declaring this message. About Jesus. And now. In this province of Asia. Many. Probably the majority. Of people. Outside the church. Have turned their hearts. Against the Christians. And the church is there. And so most. Have. Within the church. Even. Deserted Paul. They've cut ties with Paul. They've renounced. And rejected Paul. Because it's his gospel. That they deem responsible. For the suffering. And persecution. That's coming their way. And Paul names two men here.

[16 : 55] Who Timothy knows. From Asia. Vigelis. And Hermogenes. Probably pronouncing those wrong.

This is the only mention. Of these two individuals. Anywhere in the Bible. And so far as we know today. There aren't any surviving. Historical sources. That mention these two guys. Anywhere. Or shed light on who they are. Or what. Anything about them. But Paul mentions them. Because Timothy. Knows who they are. They've deserted me. Quite literally. They've turned away from me. Now we may wonder. As we read something like this. Whether Fagellus. And Hermogenes. Will be in heaven or not. Whether they were true believers or not. But when it comes right down to it. There's just not enough. To know. There's not enough here to say. It's possible that they were true believers.

[17 : 56] And that they. Acted shamefully. They gave into temptation. And into fear. And they distanced themselves from Paul. It's possible also that.

Just like in the. The parable that Jesus told. Of the sower. That they. Are like the seed. That was sown among the rocks. And that now that the. Scorching sun of persecution. Is. Is bearing down on them. They're withering. Because their acceptance of the gospel. From the get-go. Was only superficial. And shallow. We don't know. But can you imagine. How Paul's feeling. At the thought of this. Thankfully. In the dark reality. Of an entire province. Turning their back on Paul. There's one. Bright light. Shining in the midst of the darkness. Verse 16. [18 : 53] May the Lord show mercy. To the household of Onesiphorus. Because he. Often refreshed me. And was not ashamed of my chains.

On the contrary. When he was in Rome. He searched hard for me. Until he found me. May the Lord grant. That he will find mercy. From the Lord on that day. You know very well. In how many ways. He helped me. In Ephesus. So there's. There's one man. And his household. And there's probably a few more. But one.

That Paul mentions. That Timothy knows. Who has not. Turned. His back. On Paul. This man. In his household. Onesiphorus.

And it would seem. From the end of the verse. On screen here. That. During some. Moment. When Paul. And Timothy. Were together. In Ephesus. Onesiphorus was there.

[19 : 49] And Paul says. You know. You remember. How many ways. He helped me. Paul says quite a lot here. About the kindness. And the.

The help. Of Onesiphorus. Let's just look through. These things. Quickly. Verse 16. Onesiphorus. Often refresh me. Says Paul.

Now we don't even know. The relationship. That he had. With this man. Whether he traveled with him. Or whether Onesiphorus. Went back and forth. To see him sometimes. But this is quite the statement.

He often refresh me. Many times. He encouraged me. He helped me. In the midst of my. Weariness.

And my afflictions. And specifically of note. Paul says. That Onesiphorus. Was not. Ashamed. Of his chains.

[20 : 46] He was not. Ashamed. Of my chains. What is it that Paul has. Asked. Timothy. Just moments ago.

Back up in verse 8. He said. So do not be ashamed. Of the testimony. About our Lord. Or of me. His prisoner. Nearly everyone.

In the province of Asia. Has deserted me. They've been ashamed. Of my chains. They've been ashamed. Of my imprisonment. But Onesiphorus. Was not. And Paul gives.

A specific example. Here. Of how this. Was true. Shown to be true. In verse 17. On the contrary. When Onesiphorus. Was in Rome.

He searched hard for me. Until he found me. Think about this. If Paul's suffering. For preaching. The name of Jesus.

[21 : 41] To the point that he is. In chains. In a prison cell. In Rome. The capital city. Of the empire. There. Wouldn't it be dangerous.

Wouldn't it be risky. To pay visits. To Paul. We should also know. That in these days. Rome didn't provide. Men in jail. With.

A whole lot. It was often. Left up to the family. Or close friends. To provide for the needs. Of their loved ones. In prison. And so who knows.

What shape. Paul was even in. When Onesiphorus. Found him. And notice how Paul. Describes it. He says. Onesiphorus.

Searched. Hard. For me. Quite literally. Diligently. He searched. Diligently. For me. Until. He found me.

[22 : 38] How easy. Would it have been. For Onesiphorus. To just. You know. Ask around a bit. Hey. You guys know. Where Paul is. Anybody know. Where they have him. Oh no.

Okay. Well. I guess it didn't work out. This time. Lord. Please keep him safe. And just be on his way. But the sense we get here.

Is that Onesiphorus. Had a difficult time. Finding Paul. And yet. He just kept going after it. And going after it. He refused to give up. Until he found him.

And so Paul. Blesses. Onesiphorus. And his household. We notice the household part there too.

Almost like maybe. There was more involved in this visit. Than just Onesiphorus coming. We don't know. It could be that Onesiphorus' family. Put together some food and supplies. Much like we hear at the end of the letter.

[23 : 32] To the Philippians. And brought those things to him. We can only imagine. How much. That visit. From a brother in Christ.

Must have meant. To Paul. As he. Suffered alone. In prison. And so Paul. Blesses Onesiphorus. And his household. He says. May the Lord show mercy. To the household of Onesiphorus. And to Onesiphorus himself. On that. Day.

This is a blessing. Now it's possible to think here. That because of that word mercy. That Paul's like praying. For Onesiphorus. To be spared judgment. On the final day. But we have to remember. That the word for mercy here. In this original language. It's broader than that. It's bigger than that. It can mean. A sort of compassion. Kindness.

[24 : 29] Pity. And so that's what Paul is. Is praying. It's a blessing. Upon Onesiphorus. And his family. Like Onesiphorus. Has shown me.

Such compassionate. Kindness. By coming to minister. To me. Here in the jail. And so may God. Treat him. And his family.

In like manner. Not just now. But even on that final day. May God. Take. Onesiphorus. Jesus. Compassionate kindness. Into account. And reward him.

For it. With the same. It's a statement. Of blessing. And it. It calls to mind. Those words of Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount. Do you remember them? Jesus said.

Blessed are the merciful. Or the compassionate. For they will be shown. Mercy. They will be shown. Compassion. So this is what Paul.

[25 : 22] Has to say to Timothy. First he charges him. To guard the teaching. Then he gives these. Negative examples. Of the people. In Timothy's province.

Who have turned away from him. Don't be like them. Timothy. Be like Onesiphorus. Who has been unashamed. Of me. And my chains.

And of the gospel. Even risking his own life. To see me. And to minister to me. So what do we take. From all this. For ourselves.

Here today. 2024. North America. Different context. Well I already mentioned.

The first way. That we can apply these words. Is teachers. And in shares. Of the good news of Jesus. We're not to try to come up. With our own original teaching. Or message. We have.
[26 : 19] The good deposit. The same one. It's been entrusted. To us as well. The same gospel. That Paul preached. And shared with Timothy. The same words of instruction.

That Paul gave. By the spirit of God. As an apostle. We have them right here. This is what we're to teach. This is what we're to proclaim. And that places responsibility. On us who teach. In the church. To stay. True. To this. Pattern. Of sound teaching. The main point. Of the passage. Should be the main point. Of the sermon. The gospel accounts. That we have. In our bible. Should be this. The true stories. That we relay. To our kids. In alive.

What about. For those of you. Who are not teachers. I would suggest to you. That these words of Paul. Here in verse 13. And 14. Should also shape. Our sermon appetites.

[27 : 17] What kind of teaching. Should we desire. In the church. What kind of preaching. Should we hunger for. And expect. What should we anticipate.

And hope for. When we come. To this time. In the service. On Sunday mornings. We should desire. That what is taught. Is the same. Good deposit.

Same sound teaching. We should listen. Not just to be entertained. Or to have our interest. Peaked on some. Current. Issue. Or to hear.

Just about our. Felt needs. If this is the good deposit. If this is the pattern. Of sound teaching. Then this is what. We should hope to hear. Week after week.

This is what we should expect. In alive. And in Sunday school. And in the songs we sing. My aim. In preaching. And teaching. Is just very simply.

[28 : 14] For lives to be changed. I believe that God's word. Is powerful. And that through his word. He changes hearts. And minds. And saves.

And so that's my aim. As a teacher and preacher. It's to open up. This already good deposit. And lay it before us. So that we can hear it. We can consider it. We can understand it. We can put our trust in it.

And we can be changed. By it. And so if this is the. One of the big ways. That God changes our lives. Through hearing his word.

Taught and preached. I want to encourage you to come. On Sunday mornings. Hungry. To hear from the Lord. Through his word. Hungry to hear these words. This is one of the ways.

That the passage applies to us today. It tells us what we should be teaching. And it tells us what kind of teaching. We should be hoping for. And hungering for.

[29 : 13] In our church today. Second. We get these contrasting examples. From Paul. Of these. People in the province of Asia. Who've turned their backs on Paul.

And then. We get the example of Onesiphorus. Onesiphorus. And I think. Onesiphorus is given. As an example. To Timothy.

And for us. To follow. Onesiphorus was not ashamed. Of Jesus Christ. Or of Jesus Christ's messenger.

And the words that he was preaching. And speaking. This is how the Lord Jesus wants us to be too. Unashamed of him. Unashamed of his words.

Unashamed of the gospel. Willing to bear contempt. Insults. Or even disgrace. For his sake.

[30 : 08] This is what Jesus is calling Timothy to here. And this is what Jesus wants in us too. Do not be ashamed. Of the testimony about our Lord. Or of me.

His prisoner. Wrote Paul. Be like Onesiphorus. Paul's saying. I wonder.

Did Onesiphorus know. That he would end up in the Bible. For generations of people. To read about him. For a single act. Of compassionate kindness. To a dear brother in Christ. During a stopover in Rome.

Probably not. And we may never. In our lifetimes. Have the opportunity. To visit someone in prison. For their faith. But are there other ways.

That we need to be courageous. And risk. Contempt. Or insult. For the sake of Christ. Christ. This is my hope.

[31 : 10] And my prayer. That. We here in Davidson. Would be known. For stepping out. And speaking up. In faith. And with courage. Even if it feels risky.

Let us be like Onesiphorus. Unashamed of Christ. Unashamed of his words. Unashamed of his people. That other thing.

That Onesiphorus was known for. Was refreshing Paul. Encouraging Paul. This is something to think about too. Even the Apostle Paul. Had times where he was.

Needing refreshment. His suffering was real. His loneliness was felt. His body knew weariness. He knew the feelings of discouragement. We hear another passage. And another passage. Of one occasion. Where he expresses wonder. If his efforts had been in vain. He knew discouragement.

[32 : 07] Praise God for Onesiphorus. Who saw these things in Paul. And was sympathetic. And was there to encourage him. In those moments. And so I think we are given.

An example to follow here. That we should be. An encourager. A refresher. Like Onesiphorus. And maybe just a caveat here. To do this well.

Requires a couple things. It requires first. That we understand. How others are feeling. And how others are really doing. What's really going on.

In their lives. Which means. That we need to listen. We need to listen well. We need to let them. Do the talking. Only then.

Can we really. Offer. Thoughtful. Sympathy. And encouragement. Encouragement. So be an encourager. Be a refresher. Like Onesiphorus.

[33 : 06] But. Let's not just go around. Like some. Who are just. Looking to fix people's perspective. And dispense truth. Into every. Situation. Without fully understanding.

How a person's feeling. Or. What's going on. In their lives. That kind of encouragement. Often does more harm. Than good. To be a refresher. Like Onesiphorus. We need to first.

Be willing to get down. In the trenches. With a brother. Or sister. And see things. And feel things. In the trenches. With them. That's what Onesiphorus did.

He went to the jail cell. And met. With Paul. He saw him there. With the chains. On his hands. So be a refresher.

Be an encourager. But be one like Onesiphorus. Who comes with. Compassionate kindness. Why did Paul pray. Blessings of mercy. On Onesiphorus.

[34 : 04] And his household. It was because. Onesiphorus. Had shown. Such mercy. Such compassion. And kindness. To Paul. In the midst of his troubles. I couldn't help but think.

Of the parable. Of the good Samaritan. In that parable. It was the Samaritan. Who was willing to stop. Willing to care.

Willing to help. At his own expense. It was the Samaritan. Who was not so eager. To get where he was going. And do his stuff. Onesiphorus.

Did the same thing. With Paul. When he was in Rome. He sacrificed. He risked. He didn't give up. On meeting with Paul. When he had the chance.

This is a hard thing. To emulate. Or to follow. Because compassion. It's a quality. That you don't just get. By trying harder. This is something. The Lord has to work.

[35 : 01] In our hearts. And so. We need to ask him. To make us. Compassionate. And kind. To build that heart. In us. So yes.

I think Onesiphorus. Is an example. For us to follow. And may we. With the spirit's help. May we live like he did. May we be unashamed of Jesus. And his words.

And his people. May we be a refresher. May we be an encourager. May we be kind. And compassionate. Just as the Lord Jesus.

Has been to us. In our moments of desperate need. Let's pray. Amen. Father in heaven.

Thank you so much. For these words. We ask that they would sink. Deep. Into. Our hearts. Into good soil. And that they would bear fruit. That we would be changed. Lord.

[35 : 58] We haven't had to suffer. Anything like. what we're reading about here. But we pray that more and more we would have the courage and the faith so that in whatever situation we find ourselves, we would be ready.

We would be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in us with gentleness and respect. We ask this for your name and for your glory. Amen.