

2 Timothy 1:12-18 | “Faithful Against the Flow”
Preached on January 22, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 1, and we will be in verses 12 to 18 today. *[pause]*

What do you do when the going gets tough?

Some people are ready to throw in the towel at the smallest sign of trouble, and others hang on no matter what. *[pause]*

In 1783, Charles Simeon was appointed as pastor of a church in Cambridge, England.

But as one author states, “many of the prominent members of the church opposed his convictions on reaching the lost with the gospel.

To show their displeasure they locked their pew boxes during the service and left them empty so that those who came to hear Simeon preach had to stand or sit in the aisles.

Eventually God began to work, and Simeon’s ministry had a powerful influence on the nation of England and the world through his efforts to encourage missionary work.

During the dark days of opposition Simeon wrote: ‘In this state of things I saw no remedy but faith and patience.’¹ *[pause]*

Are you faithful against the flow?

That is, are you faithful, even when others are against you and are all going the other way?
[pauseeee]

We have been working through 2 Timothy 1, and we have seen that Paul’s concern is that Timothy keep being faithful.

He ought to use his spiritual gift fully, be willing to suffer for Christ, and not be ashamed of Him.
[pause]

You see, at this time, persecution was ramping up, false teaching was prevalent, and some people were jumping ship.

That’s why Paul is really pressing Timothy to remain faithful. *[pause]*

But before Paul talks about what Timothy ought to do, He reminds him of what God does, He is...

I. The faithful, ultimate Guardian of the gospel. (12)

¹ Original source: *Charles Simeon*, Handley Carr Glyn Moule. Found at: <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/standing-strong-in-the-face-of-opposition>.

We did touch briefly on verse 12 last week, but I want to revisit it again, since it relates to what follows. *[pause]*

Look at verse 12.

After Paul talks about why he suffers, he 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.” *[pause]*

God’s power convinced Paul that God would come through.

He knew that God would guard what was entrusted to Paul, that is, the gospel.

He would preserve and protect the message that Paul was entrusted with sharing, so Paul could be confident in his mission.

He didn’t have to worry about serving a failing mission, but God would do what He planned.

So that meant that Paul could willingly endure suffering for this mission because it wouldn’t fail. *[pause]*

While some people thought that Christianity was a failing mission, saying, “Just look at Paul’s imprisonment and the apostatizing of others.”

Yet Paul was confident that God would come through. *[pause]*

The gospel would go forth in purity and power, changing people’s lives, for God is the ultimate Guardian of it.

As Charles Simeon said, faith and patience were what was needed. *[pauseeee]*

Just look at history.

For 2,000 years the gospel has been guarded by God!

It hasn’t disappeared along with the faded and failed philosophies of the world that have come and gone.

It hasn’t been morphed, twisted, or changed so that people can’t hear it and be saved. *[pause]*

Even though Christians have faced persecution.

Even though Christianity was often looked down upon.

Even though Bibles were burned, the gospel was guarded by the faithful, ultimate Guardian of it - God Himself. *[pause]*

That’s why we can trust the mission of God, because we remember *who* we believe in. *[pause]*

Paul says, "...I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard..."

Paul's confidence was a God-confidence. *[pause]*

Is your confidence in who God is?

Does God's power convince you that He will do what He said He will do? *[pausee]*

This is one reason why we can be faithful, no matter the circumstances.

Even if Christianity *looks* like it's failing.

Even if Christianity is persecuted, looked down upon, made fun of, and hated.

God will guard, protect, and preserve the good news of Jesus Christ, and that should give us utmost hope.

Because if the gospel is preserved, the message of salvation is still operative.

People can hear and believe the good news and be saved!

Lives can be changed. *[pauseeee]*

But here's the thing, just because God guards the gospel, doesn't mean we are called to sit back and do nothing.

For look what Paul says next in verses 13-14...

"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." *[pause]*

So God is the faithful, ultimate Guardian of the gospel, but we are called to be...

II. The faithful under-guardians of the gospel. (13-14)

We have a duty.

Paul tells Timothy to "follow the pattern of sound words", and to, "guard the good deposit entrusted to [him]." *[pause]*

Though God guards the deposit, Timothy is also called to guard it.

So God ultimately guards the gospel, but he uses us as a means to guard it. *[pause]*

This is a great privilege and responsibility, but thankfully, it's not solely on our shoulders. *[pauseeeee]*

Think of weddings with me.

In weddings, people usually choose a 2 year old boy to be the ringbearer.

Why we trust rings worth thousands of dollars with a 2 year old boy doesn't quite make sense, yet we do it. *[pause]*

Now if the responsibility for that ring is solely on the 2 year old to guard and protect it, it may easily get lost or dropped.

But imagine that wherever that 2 year old went with the rings in his hands, his father would follow him with his hands around the hands of the boy.

That would give us confidence, for it's not merely protected by the 2 year old, it's ultimately protected by the father. *[pause]*

That's sort of the idea.

We may be guarding the gospel with our hands, but God's hands are around ours, so that the gospel is ultimately guarded by Him. *[pauseeee]*

Now let's backtrack a little bit and see what exactly the under-guardians of the gospel are supposed to do.

Paul says, "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me."

Really, that word translated as 'follow' is more so 'hold onto' the pattern of sound words. *[pause]*

Don't let go of sound teaching.

Don't walk away from it, don't let sound teaching go off to the side, but hold onto it. *[pause]*

Basically, the sound teaching that Paul shared was the standard that Timothy must use.

Don't deviate from it or neglect it. *[pauseeee]*

One of the prime reasons that many people end up no longer being faithful to God is they do not hold onto sound teaching.

Instead of the Word of God being their standard and foundation, they are following after the lies of this world. *[pause]*

They follow the world's philosophies, their feelings, or current ideas.

In fact, Ligonier Ministries did a 2022 State of Theology survey, and their findings were staggering.² *[pause]*

²<https://thestateoftheology.com/data-explorer/2022/1?AGE=30&MF=14®ION=30&DENSITY=62&EDUCATION=62&INCOME=254&MARITAL=126ÐNICITY=62&RELTRAD=62&EVB=2&ATTENDANCE=254>.

One statement that participants had to either agree or disagree with was this - “God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.”

And get this: only 32% of evangelicals strongly disagreed with that statement. *[pause]*

Here’s another one.

The statement was: “God learns and adapts to different circumstances.”

So essentially the statement is saying that God changes, and almost *half* of evangelicals believed that. *[pause]*

What was also found was that 73% of evangelicals said that Jesus was created by God, 43% said that Jesus wasn’t God, and 65% said everyone was born innocent in God’s eyes.

Yikes.

This is so-called evangelicals saying this.

Truly, we have an epidemic of a lack of holding onto sound teaching in our country. *[pause]*

We are not to change our beliefs and the Bible to fit the culture’s views, but we hold onto the precious Word of God. *[pauseee]*

Paul knows that there is a temptation to turn away from or no longer hold onto sound teaching. *[pauseee]*

In our world, there’s the temptation to follow something new.

The Bible’s teachings are often seen as irrelevant or outdated.

It’s seen as insufficient, and so people want to follow the new ideas and thoughts.

But God never tells us to follow and hold onto new teachings that sound good, we are called to hold onto something that has already been deposited, *the* sound teaching. *[pauseee]*

You see, these sound words are also called “the good deposit”, for Paul says to guard the good deposit. *[pause]*

A deposit was something valuable that was entrusted in the care of another person.

So Paul is talking about the truth of the gospel.

It’s a treasure entrusted to us that we are called to guard, for it’s worth so much.

It’s valuable beyond measure, for it’s the message of salvation. *[pauseee]*

Paul tells Timothy to guard it.

Be like a watchman, keeping guard, protecting, preserving and defending the gospel. *[pause]*

We are guards of precious treasure!

Don't let robbers and thieves come in and trash the treasure, but guard it. *[pause]*

Now this is primarily a task given to pastors and elders of a church, as this task is given to Timothy, yet I believe that each of us is called to guard the gospel.

That's why Paul constantly reminded people of the gospel, for he wanted them to stand firm in it, and to not believe another "gospel".³ *[pause]*

You should be concerned with making sure that anyone who stands up in this pulpit or in Sunday School teaches the gospel accurately.

You should be concerned with making sure that other church members aren't deceived into believing lies.

If someone is adding to or subtracting from the gospel, you should be willing to challenge them about it, for to get the gospel wrong has eternal ramifications. *[pauseeee]*

The gospel is what we just learned back in verses 9-10.

We have been saved and called, not because of works, but because of God's purpose and grace in Christ, who died for us, giving us eternal life.

That is the precious deposit that we are entrusted with to take care of. *[pauseeee]*

In football, when the running back takes the ball and runs for the goal line, he has to hold onto and guard the football.

As he's running, there are people trying to grab, strip, or take the ball away, but amidst all of that pressure, he's to hold it and guard it, for it's precious to win the victory.

So that's our task: hold onto and guard the gospel.

It is truly a good deposit, entrusted with us, so we must treasure and protect it. *[pauseeee]*

Do you see Paul's emphasis?

Hold onto *sound words*; guard the *good deposit*. *[pause]*

He's showing us that the truth is sound and good.

It is the truth that is sound, healthy, and correct.

³ See Galatians 1:6-9.

It leads people to life and spiritual health, while other teachings corrupt and bring unwholesomeness.

It is truly *good*, for it is God's Word that imparts life. *[pause]*

Paul wanted Timothy to cling to the truth, for it's the anchor against the flow.

Though the world, and the ever-changing, ever-new ideas that swarm us are all calling for our attention...

...The sound teaching and good deposit of Scripture are what we are to hold onto, for they are sound and good. *[pause]*

It is the truth that sets you free;⁴ it's the gospel that saves.⁵

You take away the truth of the gospel, you take away the message of life, the hope of the world.

It's the truth that encourages and helps us to persevere, and to live out our calling in this world. *[pauseeee]*

Paul is showing us that truth and doctrine matter.

There are some in our day who say, "We don't need doctrine. We just need to live godly lives."

There are others who may not say that, but they live like that.

They are OK with shallow, Christ-less teaching that makes them feel good and itches their ears.

They rarely hear the gospel in their church, and don't even notice, for they are being filled with only self-help tips for living a better life now. *[pause]*

Talk of sin is replaced with talk of self.

Preaching salvation from judgment is replaced with preaching acceptance of all lifestyles and choices.

And the gospel of Jesus Christ is replaced with the self-help gospel, the works-righteousness gospel, or the prosperity gospel. *[pause]*

But when they leave the sound teaching and good deposit at the door, they are leaving the only message that changes and transforms!

They are leaving the anchor against the flow.

Because when your world is crashing around you, self-help tips won't sustain you.

⁴ A reference to John 8:32.

⁵ A reference to Romans 1:16.

When you fail time and time again, your works-righteousness gospel will only keep weighing you down in guilt.

And when you lose everything in this life, the prosperity gospel will prove it's a lie straight from the devil's mouth.

But when opposition and suffering comes, it's the truth, the sound words, the good deposit that comforts and moors you in life's trials because you have the hope of Jesus Christ.

That though we are sinners, Christ died to save us, so that we could stand righteous in God's sight, not because of our works, but because of his grace. *[pauseeeeeee]*

Now is intellectual knowledge of the truth alone the only goal?

No, for right doctrine should be tethered to faith and love.

Notice what Paul says in verse 13, "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, *in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*" *[pause]*

Truth isn't merely for head knowledge.

Truth isn't just to be learned, and arrogantly flaunted.

But we hold onto the sound words, "in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." *[pauseeee]*

We trust those sound words; we believe them.

We don't just know sound doctrine for knowledge's sake, and to be mere intellectuals, but we trust the truth. *[pause]*

We are also to hold onto sound words *in love.*

We speak the truth in love.⁶

If our sound teaching isn't connected with love, then something is amiss. *[pauseeee]*

It's such a temptation to just grow in doctrinal knowledge, while you treat others horribly.

It's easy to become doctrinal snobs, who know the in's and out's of theology, all the while we treat people like dirt.

This ought not to be, but we hold onto sound words "in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus". *[pauseeee]*

So we know what we are called to do, but how can we hold onto the sound words and guard the good deposit? *[pause]*

⁶ A reference to Ephesians 4:15.

In a world that says that truth is relative.

In a world that attacks Christian beliefs, left and right.

In a world that tries to say that the Christian faith is outdated and antiquated.

In a world that is full of various and diverse false teachings.

How could we hold onto the truth and guard it from pollution and corruption or neglect and disregard?

We can only do it “by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us”. *[pause]*

That’s what Paul says in verse 14. *[pauseeee]*

God equips and empowers us with what we need in ministry.

Faithfulness to the Word of God is only possible because of the Spirit. *[pause]*

In our flesh, we would jump ship at every turn.

In our own power, we would believe lies, and disregard the Scriptures.

But by relying on the Holy Spirit, we can remain faithful to the Word of God. *[pause]*

Will you trust His power?

Will you look to Him, and pray, “Spirit, help me to hold fast to the Word.” *[pause]*

Let’s all hold onto the precious, sound words of Scripture.

May we guard the good news of Jesus Christ, for it is the only message that saves! *[pause]*

Will you faithfully cling to the Word, or will you let the waves of falsity carry you away?

Don’t be duped by the world’s messages, but hold onto the message that shows us the way to life and immortality in Christ.⁷ *[pauseeee]*

After calling Timothy to gospel holding and guarding, Paul gives some...

III. Examples of faithfulness and faithlessness. (15-18)

Examples are often helpful, aren’t they?

They show us truths in real life, day-to-day cases.

They can be valuable object lessons that motivate us to do what’s right. *[pause]*

⁷ See 1 Timothy 1:10.

That's what Paul seems to be doing for Timothy in verses 15-18.

Listen to what he says. *[READ VERSES 15-18]*

Here Paul gives an example of faithlessness, and an example of faithfulness that Timothy was well aware of.

He says that all those who are in Asia turned away from him, and then he names two guys, Phygelus and Hermogenes. *[pause]*

You see, at this time, Paul was in prison, and the situation seemed bleak.

Just imagine you are a Christian at that time, and the great Apostle Paul is taken prisoner.

That could bring some discouragement, couldn't it? *[pause]*

What we find is that once Paul was taken prisoner, there were some who turned away from him, refusing to be identified with him.

They were feeling the pressure of the world, were ashamed of Paul, and most likely they were ashamed of the gospel that Paul preached. *[pauseeee]*

They were like people who at the first sign of it looking like the ship is sinking, they jump ship.

They are faithful only when it's smooth sailing, but in troubled waters, they become deserters.

They are faithful when it serves their self-interests, but make it hard, and they are out of there.

And sadly, this is the same sort of situation that we find in our day. *[pauseeee]*

It's no secret that in our day there are many leaving the faith.

A very popular term used nowadays is "deconstruction". *[pause]*

'Deconstructing' is the process of dismantling everything that you believed, and then trying to rethink it all.

It's really questioning your beliefs, but what happens is that many people who do this end up no longer believing essential Biblical teachings.

And others end up leaving the faith altogether. *[pauseeeee]*

There are certainly many factors as to why this is happening more and more, but one of the factors is definitely the increased hostility towards Christian beliefs. *[pause]*

When following the Bible makes you look weird, narrow-minded, or hateful, it causes many to jump ship.

When antagonism and pressure from the world starts being felt, many don't feel that it's worth it.

When Christianity looks like it's a sinking ship, people are like, "I'm out of here." *[pauseeee]*

It's easy to follow Christ when it's socially acceptable, but what about when it could lead to suffering?

It's easy to follow Christ when your self-interests are being met, but what if they aren't being met anymore? *[pauseeee]*

When the pressure was on, people weren't holding to the truth, but jumping ship.

Some of them may have thought: "Isn't the Christian faith a victorious faith? Why then is Paul in prison?"

Or, "I don't want to be like Paul in prison. If they came for him, maybe I'm next?"

But amidst all of that, Paul points out an example of someone who *was* faithful - Onesiphorus. *[pause]*

Though others turned away from Paul, this man was not ashamed of his chains.

In fact, he searched hard to find where Paul was imprisoned, found him, and often refreshed him. *[pause]*

Onesiphorus' help may have been material help, for prisoners were often reliant upon help from family and friends.

But most definitely, the help he provided that refreshed Paul was his presence and encouragement. *[pause]*

There's something that encourages, refreshes, and revives us when another believer is with us and encourages us in our trials.

They aren't ashamed to be associated with us, but sacrifice time and energy to serve us. *[pause]*

Onesiphorus' faithfulness was seen in his loving service to others.

He's a great example of faithfulness against the flow.

He held onto the truth, and it showed in his life. *[pause]*

Though many others turned away from Paul, he went searching for him, which probably risked his own well-being and his family's.

So for his service, Paul wishes for mercy and compassion to be shown to him and his family. *[pauseeee]*

I want you to each consider this question: Am I a good example of faithfulness, even when everyone else is running the other way?

Am I willing to sacrifice for and serve others, even when it's hard?

Am I afraid to identify with those suffering for the gospel because I might draw fire, or am I unashamed of Christ? *[pause]*

What about this: Are there Onesiphorus' in your life that you can remember and imitate?

I want you to think of 1 or 2 good examples of faithfulness that you know.

Thank them today for their good example, and let their example motivate you to faithful service. *[pauseeee]*

This morning, as we consider this passage out of 2 Timothy, God us teaches us that...

We must faithfully hold onto and guard the precious truths of the gospel!

Though everyone else is deserting, will you remain faithful?

In our day, many are “deconstructing” and leaving behind the essential doctrines of the faith, will you join in? *[pause]*

Let's not be like a tree in Fall, which lets go of its leaves when the storm rages, but let's be like a tree planted by streams of water.⁸ *[pause]*

May we as a church hold onto the sound words of Scripture.

May we guard the truth of the gospel.

It is truly *sound* words, and it is truly the *good* deposit - it's a treasure. *[pause]*

Though the world around us lets go of it and clings to the new fads and fancies that pop up, we hold it dear and preserve it, for we know its worth.

For it's the message of the good news of Jesus Christ, the hope of the world.

Who, though *we* were sinners in rebellion against God, came and died for our sins, and rose again to give us life.

In Him we find forgiveness, acceptance, hope, and life. *[pause]*

How could we abandon such news? How could we let it be distorted and corrupted?

God will guard it, amen! But we are called to hold onto it and guard it faithfully, too, by the power of the Spirit.

⁸ A reference to Psalm 1:3.