

Paul, Timothy and Troubled Times Part 2

Turn to 2 Timothy as we continue our series. Paul is approaching the end of his life and is writing to Timothy for possibly the final time. It carries greater impact when we consider this is his final message, his last letter. What was at the top of the list of things Paul wanted to share with Timothy? Look at Paul's message. **“So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel...And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. What you have 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.” 2 Timothy 1:8-14**

Paul refers to himself as an apostle (one who knows Jesus and his good news), a herald (one who announces good news) and as a teacher (one who explains and makes plain the good news). Paul tells Timothy to guard the “good deposit” that was entrusted to him. In essence, I believe Paul is telling Timothy to **Remain loyal to the word of God!** Fidelity, faithfulness to obeying and observing God's word. Remember, Paul is warning Timothy that persecution was coming. Pressure would build to deny the word of God, to renounce the gospel, to renounce faith in Jesus as Savior and Risen Lord. Heresy and false teaching was spreading and pressure would grow to compromise the word of God, to doubt its' validity, its' truthfulness, to simply stop obeying God's word and his commands. Paul is telling Timothy, remain loyal to God's word! Don't be ashamed of it, don't be timid in proclaiming it, in living it, in teaching it.

Let me emphasize how important Paul's message to Timothy is for us today. I don't know if outright persecution is coming, but certainly censorship of parts of the word of God is already happening in our culture and our world. Pressure has been building to deny the validity and veracity of the word of God. “It's just an ancient book written for a different age and culture. You can't build your life on an outdated morality.” Pressure will build to silence the preaching of the word of God and to marginalize the church. It was happening in Timothy's day and it's happening around the world today and it's happening in America but the call remains the same: Remain loyal to the word of God.

Loyalty to what extent? How loyal? I see three ways we are to remain loyal to God's word and to the gospel. Suffer for it, guard it, and don't stop communicating it to others.

Suffer for the gospel. Paul writes, **“But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God who has saved us and called us to a holy life.” 2 Timothy 1:8-9** Remain loyal to the word of God to the extent that we are willing to suffer for it! To die for it! Remember Paul is in prison because of the word of God. “That’s why I am suffering as I am.” But what is there about the word of God that causes people to hate and oppose it and those who preach and teach it? Good question. Perhaps part of the answer is found in the power of the word of God to illuminate sinfulness and our helplessness to do anything about it. Think about it. As born again believers, we don't exactly like it when something in the word of God convicts us, when the preacher speaks truth that confronts us. Then consider those who are not saved, the unregenerate, who don't believe and then they are confronted with their sinfulness in the light of the word of God. They resent their sin being exposed by God's word and resent you as the messenger. They want to silence the message and the messenger. “Don't tell me I'm a sinner, that I've sinned against God. Don't tell me I need a savior or that I can't save myself. I'm doing fine on my own!” (Are you?) The truth is all have sinned. All of us need a savior because we can't save ourselves. It is by grace alone that we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ. Because his word is truth and his truth alone can set people free, we must proclaim it regardless of the price. We can't water it down or mute it. We don't bludgeon people over the head with it, and don't expect sinners to stop sinning just because we say this is the word of God, but we have to continue to proclaim his word because it is the only way men and women can be saved. If we keep living according to his word we will suffer for it, but we are in good company with Paul and Timothy and millions of others over the centuries. Remain loyal to the word of God, even if it means suffering. Then Paul tells Timothy to remain loyal to the word of God and...

Guard the Gospel. **“What you have 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.” 2 Timothy 1:13-14**

Paul tells Timothy to guard the good deposit that was entrusted to him. He is referring to the word of God, the message of the gospel that Paul had proclaimed to him, that his mother and his grandmother taught him. Paul says keep the word of God as the pattern of sound teaching for his life. Keep the word of God as the architectural blue prints and plans by which you build your

life. Keep the word of God as the standard by which you measure everything else, as the pattern for your life. It is to be the guide, the rule and ruler, the model for everything and every choice in your life. Guard the word of God so it remains the pattern for your life!

No one with any wisdom decides to build a house without plans. “Let’s just pour some concrete, buy some lumber and see how it turns out.” Trust me, you won’t be happy with the results. Or if you have a set of plans, but you don’t use a measure to cut accurately, you won’t be happy with the results. “I decided to put ten foot ceilings in the house but I just went by my feelings on each cut. That feels like ten foot to me.” Trust me, you won’t like the results. You’ll have a house that looks like that Ripley’s believe it or not place in Branson.

Do you understand what I’m saying? If you base the decisions of your life on your own feelings, “this feels like truth to me”, you won’t be happy with the results. In fact, the results will be disastrous for you and for others in your life, maybe for eternity. I’m appealing to you today, this book is true and it must be the pattern for your life. The teaching of this word handed down to us from saints of God over centuries, hold on to this, believe this, live according to this. Paul says, “guard this.” Guard it so it’s not stolen from you, not lost, not corrupted. Don’t let circumstances or friends or peers or the pressures of the culture steal the word of God from you.

Paul reminds Timothy in verse 15, **“You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.”** They deserted Paul and abandoned the faith, they gave up on the word of God. Don’t let it happen to you Timothy! Don’t let it happen to you church. Guard the word of God. You know this is truth. We will look at this again in a couple of weeks, but in chapter 3 Paul warns against deceivers denying the word, but he says “you know those from whom you learned” this word. You know those faithful teachers and preachers and grandparents and parents who taught you the word of God, you know the integrity and character of their heart. They weren’t lying to you. Guard that word that’s been deposited into your heart and your life! Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you and who testifies and bears witness in your heart to the truth. Rely on Him and his faithful witness and work. Rely on the Lord who is able to guard the deposit in your life.

Paul writes in verse 12, **“Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.”** There are a couple of ways Bible scholars view this passage and both make sense. The verse literally reads, “I am convinced that he is able to guard my deposit unto that day.” The

traditional interpretation is that God is able to keep what we have entrusted to him, what we have deposited in him and that is, our faith, our hope, trust, confidence, our calling, gifts and talents, our very life, every sacrifice, every act of surrender, everything belongs to him. I trust him and believe he will guard it all, faithfully. The other view is that God is able to keep and preserve what he has deposited in me. In other words, God has deposited his word and his gifts and calling in my life and he is going to watch over me and with the help of His Holy Spirit enable me to remain steadfast as a good steward of all he has deposited in my life. It's the assurance we know him and we aren't on our own but He is there to help us, to strengthen and empower us. If we face suffering, he will be with us, guarding his deposit in our lives.

Either way, either interpretation, we are confident of God's help because as Paul says, "I know whom I have believed and I am convinced, persuaded that he is able to keep everything I've given to him and to preserve everything he has deposited in me as well." Therefore, I can remain loyal to his word. I am willing to suffer for the gospel, to guard the gospel, because I know in whom I have believed. I know him. I know his love, his mercy, his power, his faithfulness and I know he will keep me with the help of His Holy Spirit so I'm going to keep living for him, obeying him and staying true to his word, without compromise! Regardless!

I don't know how to get this across with the sense of urgency and the importance I think it deserves, but let me say it again, we must guard the word of God, we must guard its' integrity, its' application to our lives, guard the pattern of sound teaching that has been handed down to us, that has been deposited in us. Don't let anyone convince you to compromise the word of God or to apply some other model or blue print or pattern for your life. Guard the word of God. Rely on the Holy Spirit's help. Remain loyal to God's word. Suffer for the gospel, guard the gospel. Even if everyone else compromises or rejects the faith and walks away from God and the church, you must remain faithful.

It's quite a statement Paul makes in verse 15, that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me. He says "You know" implying this is something Timothy is aware of so he doesn't feel the need to explain it further. We don't know if that is an exaggeration when he says "everyone" or if he is talking about a particular delegation or group of believers. Maybe the group heard about Paul's arrest and fearing their own arrest or persecution, they deserted Paul. I don't think there's any question that what Paul sees in their desertion is they have abandoned their fidelity to the gospel and to the faith. He then mentions one that didn't desert him,

Onesiphorous. The fact that he prays the Lord would show mercy to the household of Onesiphorous suggests that perhaps he has died, perhaps he was executed himself. Some compromised, some deserted Paul and the gospel, and some remained steadfast and loyal to God and his word, willing even to lay down their life. It is a call to Timothy and to us, fidelity to God and his word, suffer for the gospel if necessary, guard the gospel, and then Timothy...

Communicate the gospel. “You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” 2 Timothy 2:1-2

Paul tells Timothy to be loyal and faithful to keep communicating the gospel. In chapter 4 he writes, **“I give you this charge: Preach the Word.”** Paul intended that Timothy remain faithful in teaching, preaching and proclaiming the word of God. This isn't just a command for pastors to be faithful teachers, this is a command for all of us to communicate the gospel message to others. Make the good news of the gospel known to everyone, everywhere. Use whatever methods and means available but communicate the gospel. Take what you have heard, what you have learned, what you know and share it with others. Teach it, preach it, live it before the world. This book is alive. This is the living word of God and the message of Jesus, the message of salvation and life through faith in Jesus, this is the only hope for the world.

You've heard me say it repeatedly in recent days, but our focus must be on Jesus and on proclaiming his word. People are dying and they need a Savior. We have to find ways to effectively communicate the gospel, the good news about Jesus. Listen to John Stott's summary. “Our first duty is to communicate this gospel, to use old ways and seek fresh ways of making it known throughout the whole world. If we do so, we shall undoubtedly suffer for it, for the authentic gospel has never been popular. It humbles the sinner too much. And when we are called to suffer for the gospel, we are tempted to trim it, to eliminate those elements which give offence and cause opposition, to mute the notes which jar on sensitive modern ears. But we must resist the temptation. For above all, we are called to guard the gospel, keeping it pure whatever the cost, and preserving it against every corruption. Guard it faithfully. Spread it actively. Suffer for it bravely. This is our threefold duty.” ...John Stott

The challenge is before us. God help us remain loyal to your word!