

Keep What God Has Given You

1 Timothy 6:20-21

November 13, 2022

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²⁰ *O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,”* ²¹ *for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.*

It is said that the end of the story is so important because it is what the reader takes away.

Some stories end with a happy ending, some with an unpredictable ending, some with promising a great future.

Today we arrive at the last two verses of Paul’s first letter to Timothy. And Paul wraps up his letter using this one word imperative or command to Timothy. What’s that word?

Guard, keep, watch over, observe.

What is Timothy to guard or watch over? Paul says in verse 20, “guard the deposit”, “watch over what you have been given”. What exactly is Paul talking about? At the time of this letter, Paul is a veteran leader in the church, an apostle, a disciple maker. Paul has traveled much for the sake of the Gospel. Paul has made many disciples. Planted many churches. And he has disciplined Timothy well. He calls Timothy his true child in the faith. And Paul knows that Timothy will take to his heart what his mentor says at the end of his letter.

So, Paul ends his letter with what he started and repeated throughout his letter. And now in last few lines of this letter, Paul says what he had been saying all along. Paul is very concerned about *sound doctrine*. About accurate knowledge. About the pure doctrine of the Gospel. That is what Paul means when he charges Timothy to “guard the deposit”. “Deposit” is another word for what Timothy has been given. The knowledge of God. True understanding about salvation.

I have five reminders or observations, one from each chapter. Each reminder or observation is some way related what Paul tells Timothy in verse twenty – “guard the deposit”.

Back in 1 Timothy chapter one, Paul began his letter like this, “*remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,* ⁴ *nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith*” (1 Tim 1:3-4).

Apparently, Timothy was not the only Bible teacher in Ephesus. There were other people who desired to be teachers. They wanted to be called rabbis. But they lacked proper understanding. They were making confident assertions. They were promoting myths and speculations.

It's no different from what we see today in some circles. Easy believe-ism. Legalism. Health, wealth and prosperity teaching. There is also a kind of teaching that I see some people profess. I call it entitlement belief. It's this teaching that I am a believer I am a son or daughter of the king. Therefore, I must be entitled to healing, prosperity and comfort from God. This teaching is unconscionable and not acceptable to God. Because it ignores the suffering the trials that people go through. These false teachers were promoting moral improvement without the need for repentance or confession. They were ignorant about true salvation. Even the great apostle Paul admits that he was once – *ignorant and insolent*. This is how Paul writes in chapter one – *“though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,”¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost”* (1 Tim 1:13-15)

The gospel is a glorious truth but also communicates the inconvenient truth about us. We are sinners. When you read the prodigal son's story, there is a point when you see this man in Jesus' parable. This man lived recklessly. He wasted all the money. But one day, he came to his senses. *“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!’¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you’.”* (Luke 15:17-18).

Before anyone calls their Savior, they have to first come to the sober realization they are sinners. Only the Holy Spirit gives that conviction. And those who put their faith in Jesus receive mercy and grace. From that point onwards your life is a life of faith.

So the first charge that Paul gives Timothy is in verse 18 of chapter one – *“wage the good warfare”*. Fighting the good fight requires vigilance, keeping watch like a good soldier does.

1. Life of confession.

The second way Paul tells Timothy to guard the deposit is soak his life in prayer. In chapter two, Paul begins this way – *“I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way”*. *“I desire then that in every place the men should pray”* (1 Tim 2:1-2,8).

2. Soak your life in prayer.

The third reminder Paul tells Timothy to guard the deposit is soak his life in prayer. In chapter two, Paul begins this way – *“I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way”*. *“I desire then that in every place the men should pray”* (1 Tim 2:1-2,8). Jesus said *“when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret”*. Not *“if you pray”*. Prayer is a crucial part of the believer’s life.

The third reminder is from chapter 3. This is where Paul reminds Timothy about the purpose of his letter. *“you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth”* (1 Tim 3:15). You belong to God. You have been purchased by the precious blood of Christ. Jesus paid the ransom for your salvation. You don’t belong to the world or the world’s system. The world is passing away along with its desires. You are children of God. Therefore, conduct yourself as God’s children who have received eternal life.

3. You belong to God’s household.

The fourth reminder is specifically for Timothy as a preacher and teacher but applicable to every Christian. Paul reminds Timothy to practice self-vigilance. *“Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching”* (1 Tim 4:16). Not every one is called to the task of teaching but every Christian is called to self-vigilance.

4. Self-vigilance.

The fourth reminder is a call to personal holiness. *“Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure”*. (1 Tim 5:22)

5. Personal holiness.

Timothy has been given the wonderful gift of knowledge. He had been trained in the words of the faith. Now he needs to guard that deposit. This is really practical everyday Christian living.

Now, Paul in verse continues and gives yet one more reminder about guarding. He needs to guard the deposit by avoiding certain teachings.

Let me read verses twenty and twenty one again.

O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," ²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.

The word "avoid" is really a participle. Meaning it is a continuous verb. Timothy needs to keep what God has given him by avoiding the teaching of certain people. What are those? Paul calls these things "irreverent babble" and "contradictions". Do you see people having an unhealthy desire for things that are controversial or things that result in speculations? Paul's directive to Timothy is to not engage in these discussions. The actual word that uses for this false knowledge is pseudo-knowledge. This is still the first century when Paul wrote this letter. But it is said that by the second century this pseudo-knowledge or Gnosticism as it was called became a major false teaching. Gnosticism is simply some people claiming that they had special knowledge.

Of the all disciples of Jesus Christ, Peter has had some very special times of closeness with Jesus. There is one experience that Peter has which he could take and make it about him and his ministry. It was the transfiguration experience. Peter could have said, "I have had this special privilege and I am superior to you all". But he doesn't say that. What does Peter say instead? "*we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention*" 2 Peter 1:19

The Gnostics thought the body the material world was a mirage and it was only the spirit world that was important. Paul's charge to Timothy: avoid them, turn away from them. There is no point in engaging them at their level. Fight the good fight. Guard the deposit. Because some by people by being wrapped in these contradictions and this babble have actually turned away from the faith.

Paul had already named Hymenaeus and Alexander who had shipwrecked their lives. In 2 Timothy 2:17, Paul says that Hymenaeus and Philetus have swerved from the truth.

Surely that is not something Paul would ever want his disciples to become.

So, Paul final words in this letter are a good warning to us. Stay the course. Guard the deposit. Keep what God has given you.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **Keep What God Has Given You.** 1 Timothy 6:20-21

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What are some ways Paul instructs Timothy to "guard the deposit"? 1 Tim 1:15 (Confession), 2:1-2,8 (Prayer), 1 Tim 3:15 (Conduct), 1 Tim 4:16 (Self-vigilance), 1 Tim 5:22 (personal holiness)

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. What does Paul tell Timothy to avoid? Why? Verse 20 and 21. 1 Timothy 1:4
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: What are some ways you can keep what God has given you?