

## 2 Timothy 1:11-18 — Guarding the Gospel

January 31, 2021

In the military, one of the highest honors is to stand guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. If you have visited Arlington National Cemetery outside of Washington D.C., you know how seriously each soldier takes the task of guarding this tomb. A soldier has continuously guarded this tomb 24 hours a day, seven days a week, since 1937. The



soldier that guards the tomb walks back and forth on a rubber mat in good weather and bad, in stifling heat and bitter cold, without fail, without complaining, and without changing expression.

That unbroken streak almost came to an end on the night of September 18, 2003. That night, Hurricane Isabel pounded the Capital. For the first time in the tomb's history, the soldier on duty was given permission to leave his post and seek safety. Sergeant First Class Frederick Geary was on duty that night. While he was given permission to leave the tomb in the hurricane, he didn't. That night, 24 trees came down around the tomb, one of them landing only yards away from Sergeant Geary. Why didn't he leave? When he was interviewed in the morning, he said he didn't leave because he wanted to be faithful to his duty, faithful to the end.

This morning, we continue our study in 2 Timothy. This is Paul's final letter. He knew he only had a short time until the Roman emperor executed him for

being a Christian. In this letter, he was passing the baton of leadership from himself to a young man named Timothy who would take his place as a leader in the church when he was gone. Paul and Timothy knew each other well. Timothy traveled with Paul on and off for 15 years.

The focus of this letter is Paul telling Timothy what he must do in order to be faithful to the end of his life, just as Paul was faithful to the end of his life. In these verses, Paul told Timothy that to be faithful to the end he needed to guard the gospel. No matter what storms came into the church, no matter how difficult it became to stand for the gospel message in his generation, he needed to stand guard over it more faithfully than the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is guarded today.

Paul's challenge to Timothy to guard the gospel is found in 2 Timothy 1:9-18. Let's read those verses then begin our study.

...who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. 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. 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. 2 Timothy 1:9–18 (ESV)

In these verses, Paul gave Timothy, and he gave us, four things we must do with the gospel: 1. I must know the gospel; 2. I must share the gospel; 3. I

must be willing to suffer for the gospel; 4. I must guard the gospel. Let's work our way through our study.

### **I must know the gospel.**

...who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel... 2 Timothy 1:9–10 (ESV)

We briefly covered these verses at the end of last week's message. They encapsulate the gospel message that Paul told Timothy to defend. Since we need to know what we are guarding, let's begin with a quick review of the gospel message from these verses.

#### **God saved me.**

...who saved us...

The gospel is that God saved us. We didn't save ourselves. We are like the ancient Israelites in slavery to the Egyptians. The ancient Israelites were enslaved to the Egyptians, and there was nothing the Israelites could do to find freedom. The Egyptians were painfully working them to death. Just as there was nothing the Israelites could do to free themselves from slavery and death in Egypt, there is nothing we can do to free ourselves from slavery to sin in this life plus the eternal death that comes from sin. The good news of God is that just as God came to the Israelites' rescue --- bringing them out of death in Egypt and leading them to the Promised Land --- God has done the same thing for us. He has brought us out of slavery to sin and is leading us to the Promised Land of being with God forever. Moses was the deliverer for the ancient Israelites. Jesus

is our deliverer. The first point of the gospel that we must know is that we cannot save ourselves. God loves us. God saved us.

I like the way Jonah talked about God saving us in Jonah 2:9. In the book of Jonah, we find Jonah running away from the city of Nineveh. As a result, Jonah ended up thrown overboard from a ship where a great fish swallowed him whole. In desperation, he prayed inside that massive fish. Part of that prayer is recorded in Jonah 2. I like the way he said this in his prayer.

**Salvation belongs to the Lord! Jonah 2:9 (ESV)**

"The only way I am getting out of this fish is if God saves me." That is exactly what God did for Jonah. God had the fish spit Jonah up on dry land. God saves! God didn't just save Jonah. He didn't just save the Israelites. That is exactly what God did for us through Jesus. God saved us. The gospel is about God saving us because we can't save ourselves.

**God changed me.**

**...called us to a holy calling...**

What does it mean to be called to a holy calling? It means God didn't just save us from the consequences of our sin but he also saved us from sin's control in our lives. In this verse, twice it talks about God calling us. When we read about calling, our instinct is to think about invitational calling. This is where people may or may not respond affirmative. If you call a friend on the phone and invite him or her to dinner, he or she may or may not be able to make it. Theologians talk about the calling spoken of in this verse as different from invitational calling. It is effectual calling. When God calls us, we can't help but respond. We have to respond. When God saves us, he calls us to a holy life, and we can't help but

respond with a change in the way we live our lives. When God saves us, we go from loving sin to detesting sin. We go from living for ourselves to having hearts that want to please Jesus. It is not that we generated this change in our lives. It is effectual calling. God created this change in our lives.

I love the way Paul talked about this in 2 Corinthians 5:17, which is one of my favorite verses.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

When God saves us, he supernaturally makes us into new creations. He gives us new hearts. He makes us new people. He changes our hearts from being comfortable in sin to being convicted of sin. Any change in our lives and breaking free from the power of sin in our lives is not something we do, it is something God does in us. God gets all the credit for saving us.

**God saved me by his grace.**

...not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace...

God saved us not because we deserved to be saved but because of his own purposes and grace. Some people think God saved them because they are better than others or are more deserving than others. That is absolutely not true. None of us deserves to be saved by God from our sin. God, for his own purposes that none of us know, chose to save us. What we do know is that his saving of us was all by his grace. We deserve none of it.

Some think that God looked down the corridors of time and saw that some people would be more deserving of his grace than others and he chose to save them. That is absolutely not true! The good news of God is none of us deserve to

be saved. We are all helplessly lost in our sin. The only reason God saved us was his purposes that we will never understand and his grace that we do not deserve. We will never know why God chose to save some of us and not all of us, but we do know that none of us deserved to be saved by God. We get no credit for being saved. God gets all the credit for saving us and changing us.

**God chose me before I could choose him.**

...which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began...

The only way anyone is saved is by Jesus. Placing our faith and trust in Jesus who died on the cross for our sin and conquered the grave is the only way to be saved. Some people think that we get some credit for our salvation because we chose to repent of our sin. We chose Christ to save us from our sin. We deserve some credit for our good choices. That isn't true. According to this Scripture, the only way we could choose to trust in Jesus is because God chose to put us together with Jesus in eternity past before the world was created. God chose to put me with Jesus in eternity past before anything existed so in the present time his Holy Spirit would soften my heart so I would respond affirmatively when I heard the good news of Jesus.

The idea that God looked down the corridors of time and saw some people would be more deserving of his saving grace than other people is demolished by this verse. He chose to put us with Jesus before we existed and before we had done anything good or bad. This way God gets all the credit and all the glory for saving us. We get none of the credit for saving ourselves.

If you think it is amazing that God saved us in eternity past as we look in the rearview mirror, look out the windshield and see what is in front of us for all

eternity. God's plans are to make us the most blessed beings in the universe for all of eternity future. The future for us is not flat. It is not unchanging. It is the continual unveiling of more and more of God's grace through Jesus that we do not deserve and cannot even begin to comprehend.

...so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:7 (ESV)

God's saving grace and changing grace to us in this life is just a warm-up. The rest of eternity is God's grace to us through Jesus, getting brighter and better without end, continually expanding and building in intensity for infinity. We deserve none of this. Isn't God's grace to us through Jesus amazing?

**God the Father saved me by Jesus, his son.**

...which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus...

The way God carried out his plan from eternity past to save us in the present was by his own Son Jesus Christ. It was always God's plan in eternity past to save us through Jesus; he just carried out that plan in time and space through the the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection was the blooming of God's plans that he determined in the distant past to make us the most blessed beings in the universe all by his grace.

**God activates my salvation when I heard the gospel.**

...who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel...

God planned our salvation by Jesus in eternity past. That salvation became a reality in space and time through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. God then activated his plan from eternity past to save us here and now by

us hearing of the gospel of Jesus. Whenever the good news of what God has done for us through Jesus is spoken, God's Holy Spirit takes that message and supernaturally uses it to draw the people God has chosen in eternity past to be with his son to love Jesus and to trust in Jesus. It is through the gospel message that we are convicted of our sin and we are born again when we trust in Jesus to save us from our sin. The gospel message is God's chosen method to activate his saving grace in the lives of people.

Let me summarize what we have learned about the gospel we must know.

- **We are saved by God's grace alone and by faith alone.**

This is antithetical to all the other religions in the world. All the other religions are lists of things we must do for God so we can save ourselves. The gospel message is what God has done for us through Jesus because we cannot save ourselves. For example, Islam tells people they must follow the five pillars of Islam so they can save themselves. Buddhism tells people they must follow the seven-fold path so they can save themselves. Hinduism has so many things people must do to save themselves that I, and most Hindus, have lost track of all they must do. The Bible says the opposite message. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves. We will never be good enough. We can never do enough. Our sin is far too serious. That is why God chose to save us through Jesus. God is the only one who is great enough and powerful enough to save us from our sin. This is what the Bible tells us.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)

- **We are saved by faith in Jesus alone.**

All other world religions are wrong because they point to someone else to save us besides Jesus. Jesus isn't one of many ways to be saved. Jesus is God in the flesh. Jesus is the only one who died for our sins and rose from the grave to prove he conquered death. God planned in eternity past to put those he would save together with Jesus, not with anyone else. Jesus is the only savior. Anyone who claims another religious leader will make them right with God is dead wrong. This is why Jesus said:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6 (ESV)

That is the gospel. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone. God saves us. God transforms us. God did this all for us through his grace that we do not deserve. This is the gospel we must have clear in our hearts because we must defend it. We must guard it. We must not let anyone change it, because a different gospel is a gospel that will not save or change lives. That brings us to the rest of our message.

**I must share the gospel.**

...for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher... 2 Timothy 1:11 (ESV)

God didn't just decide in eternity past that he would choose to save some people by putting them together with his son, but he also chose the way God's eternal plan of salvation would be activated in our lives. God's eternal plan of salvation is activated in people's lives only when they hear a verbal proclamation of the gospel message. Some of you work on assembly lines. You may have a great witness with the person who works next to you on the assembly line but the gospel message will not get into his or her life and change his or her heart by

osmosis. The only way for God's eternal plans for them to be activated is if you tell them the good news about Jesus.

Some of you may quibble with me about this a bit. You say, "Can't someone read about God's plan of salvation in a gospel tract and be saved?" Of course they can! The written word and the verbal word are equitable in this scenario. The point is that people cannot come to Christ and be saved unless someone verbally tells them about Jesus. This is why when we are reaching people with Jesus at CrossWinds, we reach people with Jesus by telling them the good news of Jesus. There is no other way for them to be saved.

Since a verbal presentation of the gospel is the only way someone can be saved, this is why Paul told us he was appointed by God to be a preacher, apostle, and teacher of this gospel message. Let's break this apart.

**Paul was appointed as an apostle.** Who are the apostles? They were the ones chosen by Jesus to take the good news of what God did for us through Jesus to the world. Jesus chose them and invested in them for three years, then he commissioned them to carry the gospel message to the world.

Paul was an apostle, but as he said, he was abnormally born. He wasn't an original apostle, but on the Damascus Road in Acts 9, Jesus appeared to him and commissioned him to this office.

Obviously, there are no apostles alive today. How do we know what the apostles taught? How do we know we are faithful to the same gospel message Jesus gave them? That is a good question. The answer is the New Testament. The books of the New Testament were either written by an apostle or by

someone that was a close associate of an apostle so we know what the apostles taught about the gospel message. This is why the church is to be constantly putting its finger in the text of the Bible. The Bible anchors us to the apostles' gospel message and keeps us from drifting into speculation and creativity that tampers with the gospel and does not save anyone. This is why Paul told us the role of the apostles was to provide a foundation for the church which we are to follow.

...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone... Ephesians 2:20 (ESV)

**Paul was also appointed by God to be a preacher and a teacher.** What is the difference between these terms? A preacher was originally someone who publicly shared the news. Take yourself back to a time in the ancient world before the Internet. CNN and Fox News did not exist. The way people learned the news is a herald ran into town and publicly announced the news in the city square. They were called preachers. They were not allowed to customize the news to their own liking. They were only allowed to fairly and accurately present the news. This is why the gospel is called the good news. Instead of all the bad news heralds announced in the city square, a gospel preacher was to announce the good news of what God had done for people through Jesus in the public square. They were not to shape the gospel news, just to faithfully present the gospel news.

A teacher was different. Their focus was on the application of information. A preacher told you the news. A teacher helped you understand and apply that news to life. Obviously there is overlap between these words because sometimes

gospel preachers don't just share the good news of Jesus but they also share what the implications are of that good news for daily life. They blend together.

Paul was not challenging Timothy to be an apostle. That office had a limited number. Paul was challenging Timothy, and he was challenging us, to faithfully preach the good news of Jesus and to teach the implications of the good news of Jesus.

I know that can feel like a daunting task. Some of you immediately feel you are inadequate to the task of sharing the gospel message and teaching the implications of gospel truth. I understand that feeling. Don't feel overwhelmed. There is more to this story. One thing all of us can do is we can share the story of how Jesus changed our lives. We can share our testimony. Paul told us that is an effective way to share the gospel each of us can use. Go back a few verses as we find this verse.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord... 2 Timothy 1:8 (ESV)

The word testimony literally means the story about the difference Jesus made in your life. Another way to translate this word is to share the evidence of how Jesus changed your life. In my opinion, one of the most powerful ways to share the gospel message with others is simply telling the story of how Jesus changed our lives. All of us can do that work.

So, I must know the gospel message. Once I know the gospel, I must share the gospel. Nobody is saved by osmosis because he or she stands next to me. I must tell them the good news of Jesus. When I feel inadequate to do that, I simply tell people the story of how Jesus changed my life. I tell them my

testimony, which is one of the most potent ways anyone can share the gospel message with someone else.

**I must be willing to suffer for the gospel.**

...which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed... 2 Timothy 1:12 (ESV)

We covered this last week but we will spend a few more minutes on the topic of suffering for the gospel this morning. The more we share the gospel around people who need to know Jesus, the more likely it is we will suffer for the gospel when we talk about Jesus. Whenever we tell people who do not know Jesus the good news of what God has done for them through our savior, there will always be one of two reactions from our audience. Some will be drawn to Jesus. God's plan to save them in eternity past will begin to be activated. They will either trust Jesus or at least be drawn closer to Jesus.

Others will react the opposite way. They will find the message of what God has done for us through Jesus completely repulsive. In their anger against the gospel message, they will vent their anger against us.

In the spirit of winter, one night this past week I found myself watching videos on train snow blowers. Some trains use a huge snow blower on the front of the train. They are impressive. They go through a drift of any size,



but they are slow. Even more impressive are snowplow trains that have a huge "V" plow on the front. They go fast. When they hit the snow, the snow flies for hundreds of yards either to the right or to the left. You need to check those videos out on YouTube. They are impressive. One thing is for sure about the snow on

the track, it is going left or going right. It is not staying in the middle on the track. When I saw that, I thought that was a great illustration of what the gospel message does to a crowd. It always produces a supernatural response in which some will be drawn to Jesus and others will be repulsed away from Jesus. After people hear the message, nobody remains neutral about Christ. Paul said it this way:

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? 2 Corinthians 2:15–16 (ESV)

When we talk about the gospel and what God has done for us through Jesus, to some people that will smell as bad as a rotten fish. To other people it will be sweet like the smell of a flower.

We must expect these different reactions if we are going to reach people with Jesus. We must not be surprised if we end up suffering for the gospel message when we share the gospel message. The good news is not everyone will be opposed to this message. Many will be saved and drawn to Christ through this message. That is why we speak the gospel.

Why are some people so opposed to the gospel?

**There is supernatural opposition to the gospel.**

When we share the gospel, spiritual warfare takes place.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

Satan does not want people trusting in Jesus, so he will do everything he can to distract people and keep them from hearing about Jesus. I have traveled

on many mission trips, and every time we would begin talking about Jesus, distractions and interruptions happened. It was spiritual warfare where Satan and his demons were fighting against the effective communication of the gospel so people wouldn't be saved by the power of the gospel.

### **Pride fights against the gospel.**

...then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery... Deuteronomy 8:14 (ESV)

The other reason people are opposed to the gospel is because it cuts against the nature of the human heart. Our pride wants to be able to say that we earn something. We want to be able to say we can fix something. We want to be able to say that we conquered our drinking problems or that we fixed our failing marriages. The gospel says we can't fix ourselves. We can't change ourselves. We are helpless. Jesus is the only one who can fix us and the only one who can change us. The only way to accept the gospel is we need to swallow our pride and admit we can't do anything but run in desperation to Jesus.

Since the gospel is the only way to be saved, and when we share the gospel we will always face opposition to the gospel, Paul told Timothy and he told us, when we face that gospel opposition, do not start changing the gospel to make it less offensive. Instead of changing the gospel, we must guard the gospel.

### **I must guard the gospel.**

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. 2 Timothy 1:13–14 (ESV)

Paul said to Timothy, and he said to us, there is nothing more valuable on this earth than the gospel message. That message is the way God saves and changes lives. That message of faith alone, grace alone, by Jesus alone is the only message by which we can be saved. Guard that gospel message more attentively than the military guards the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Guard the gospel with your life. No matter how much opposition we face and how much pressure we face, do not let that gospel message be changed.

Let's break apart what Paul said about this gospel message. Paul said the gospel message is **sound words**. That literally means healthy words. The same Greek expression is used in the gospels to describe people that were healed by Jesus. They were sick and diseased and they were transformed by Jesus to be sound, to be healthy and well. The words of the gospel take people diseased with sin, sick with sin, and the gospel message has the power to heal them, to make them healthy and well, just like Jesus healed those of physical sickness, the gospel message heals people of spiritual sickness.

Notice how Timothy was given the sound words about Jesus that he learned from Paul in a **pattern**. That means an outline or a sketch or a blueprint like an architect would make before erecting a building. Paul told Timothy, and he was telling us, that Timothy's job was to teach and expound the gospel based on the gospel blueprint Paul gave him. Timothy was not allowed to add to the gospel or remodel the gospel to make it the way he wished it appeared. He was to faithfully follow the gospel blueprint Paul gave him. No creativity was allowed.

This is why we teach from the Bible at CrossWinds. Just like Paul charged Timothy, we want to faithfully follow the gospel blueprint given us in Scripture. We do not want to get creative. We do not want to remake God in our own image. We do not want to change the gospel outline and drift into theological speculation and guesswork when we are dealing with the issue of people's souls. If we change the gospel blueprint, we change the gospel's ability to save and change lives.

Paul's words were to not just be seen as healthy words leading to spiritual life but they were to be considered a **good deposit to be guarded**. The gospel message was to be guarded by Timothy. It is to be guarded like it is a national treasure. Speaking of national treasures, I learned online how they take care of the Declaration Independence, one of our country's national treasures. The Declaration of Independence is kept in a titanium case filled with argon, which is an inert gas. The glass on the case is bulletproof and designed to filter out UV light to prevent the document's decay. That is how Timothy was to guard the gospel message. He was to protect it with his life. Jesus entrusted the gospel treasure to Paul. Paul was now entrusting the treasure of the gospel to Timothy. He must keep it safe. The gospel message is now entrusted to us. Like Timothy, we are not to customize it, tweak it or change it to suit our liking.

Why would anyone want to tweak the gospel? Remember that when we share the gospel we will face opposition to the gospel message. The quickest way to remove that opposition is to change the gospel to make it less offensive. The problem is that when we change the gospel message, we destroy the gospel

message's power to save and change lives. We strip the gospel message of its supernatural power.

What does a different gospel look like in practice?

If we tell people Jesus is the only way to be saved, and we post that on Facebook, we will get many angry comments. If we change the message a bit and say Jesus is only one of many ways to be saved, then everyone is OK with our message. The problem is the message is no longer true, and the gospel has lost its power to save and change lives.

If we tell people on social media that the only way for anyone to be right with God is by his grace we receive through faith, many people won't like that. If we change the gospel a bit and tell people God does his part to save us and we do the rest of the work to save ourselves, that message is much more acceptable in this world. The problem is that it is no longer the true gospel message. It is no longer a message that will save and change lives.

Timothy's job was to guard the gospel message from everyone who wanted to twist it or change it. We have that same job. If we allow someone to change the gospel. If, under pressure, we allow ourselves to be bullied into changing the gospel message to something different, we are robbing not just ourselves but the generations that come after us of the saving power of God.

**Leave a legacy of faithfulness to the gospel.**

You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. 2 Timothy 1:15 (ESV)

Asia is the land area we looked at in the first week of our study. The capital city of Asia was Ephesus,



where Timothy was pastoring. Paul spent almost three years of his ministry planting the church in Ephesus. He was instrumental in planting many of the other churches in Asia, such as the church in Philippi, Colossae, Galatia, and other cities.

In Acts 19:10, Luke said that all the residents of Asia heard the Word of God and many believed. Paul had great gospel success in this part of the world. Something happened. Here, we read everyone in Asia went from considering Paul their pastor to turning away from Paul. Why did Paul experience this mass defection? It doesn't clearly state the answer to the question in 2 Timothy, but the book implies that it was Paul's arrest and impending execution by the Romans that brought about this change of heart by so many in the church. People didn't want to be associated with Paul because they didn't want to get arrested and have their heads chopped off like Paul.

There was more than just a mass defection from following Paul, the person, in Asia. There was a mass defection of the gospel message, the gospel blueprint as taught by Paul in Asia. When people were leaving Paul and his gospel message, they were turning away from salvation.

Who are Phygelus and Hermongenes? Most likely they were the ringleaders of the defection and were encouraging everyone to stop following Paul and his exclusive message of salvation by faith alone, by grace alone, in Jesus alone.

As I thought about this during the week, I couldn't help but think about the horrifying legacy these guys were leaving by not just defecting from Paul and the

gospel themselves but by encouraging others throughout Asia to follow them. Think about the damage they caused in the lives of so many people for generations to come. They had the saving gospel, but by leaving Paul and tinkering with the message, they lost the saving gospel. What a horrifying legacy to leave behind in history. No doubt they were pressuring Timothy to follow them in this defection. That is why Paul told Timothy to guard the gospel.

There was one bright exception. A man called Onesiphorus:

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. 2 Timothy 1:16–18 (ESV)

This man was not a distress to Paul. He was a refreshment to Paul, in a literal way. In this culture, when you refreshed someone, it usually meant you at least had them over for dinner. I am sure Paul spent many meals in this man's home as well as Onesiphorus being kind to him in many other ways. Rather than turning away from Paul when he was arrested, he traveled to Rome and spent a long time searching for Paul until he eventually found in in the Mamertine dungeon. This guy was an incredibly faithful friend who was not just faithful to Paul but faithful to the gospel blueprint.

I ask you, what kind of legacy do you want to leave behind with your life? Under the pressure of our culture to change the gospel and make it less offensive in our world, will you turn away from Paul and the blueprint of the gospel message and leave a legacy like Phygelus and Hermongenes who snatched salvation out of the hands of thousands? Will you be like Onesiphorus and stay faithful to Paul and faithful to the gospel blueprint no matter how much

opposition you face and at the end of the day be a great refreshment of the saving truth of Christ in your generation and the generations that follow? Will you faithfully guard the gospel as you stand against the hurricane-force winds in our culture that want to force us to retreat from the gospel truth? Will you have a gospel retreat or will you be faithful to the end?

If we choose to stand for the gospel in our generation, it will not be easy. Whenever we speak the gospel, God promises us we will face opposition to God's saving message. The good news is when we guard the gospel, we do not stand alone. God promises to help us.

### **The Holy Spirit enables us to guard the gospel.**

**By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. 2 Timothy 1:14 (ESV)**

God promises his Holy Spirit will help us faithfully guard the gospel entrusted to us, especially when we suffer for it.

### **God himself stands guard over the true gospel.**

If we go back to verse 12, we see something even more important. God is so committed to the gospel message that even though he entrusted the gospel message into our hands, he promises to supernaturally preserve the gospel message himself.

**...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. 2 Timothy 1:12b (ESV)**

Paul said, "I know Jesus. God is just as committed to preserving the gospel message so people can be saved as he was to creating the gospel message through his own son." If you want to be part of a project you know God is committed to supernaturally back, the project God is most committed to is the

communication and preservation of the gospel message so it is passed from one generation to the next. There is nothing God is more committed to than the gospel. It is the most valuable message in the world. It is a national treasure. The gospel message is the way God saves people and changes their lives.

The question we must ask ourselves is how will we respond to the gospel? Am I believing, sharing, guarding and willing to suffer for the true gospel or am I letting culture press me into believing a false one?

Your answer to that question is the most important question you will answer in this world.



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