

Guard the precious truth

(2 Timothy 1:14, reading vv 1–18)

2 Timothy was the last inspired letter which the Apostle Paul wrote. In prison again and with his death near, Paul had some weighty instructions for this young man who was probably his most devoted companion, except maybe for Luke. Paul presented the times as one of persecution from without and growing apostasy from within.

Timothy was relatively young, prone to illness, and timid. Paul challenged him not to shrink back, but to endure and stand for the truth, firmly holding on to it and guarding it. We live in the same last days as Timothy and face similar challenges. The task remains the same: Guard the truth! Three questions lead us into understanding this important task.

I. *Why is it worth guarding?*

1. The truth and the gospel are worth guarding because they are sound words (1:13).
Cf. 1 Timothy 1:9–10. “Sound” can refer to physical health or correctness. The pure Word of God is both unspoiled and healthy for us.
2. The truth and the gospel are worth guarding because they are precious (1:14).
A deposit is something which is entrusted to someone else for safekeeping. “Good” can mean beautiful, useful, praiseworthy or excellent. The Word of God, therefore, is an excellent valuable.
3. The truth and the gospel are worth guarding because we must give account as stewards (1:14; 2:2; 1 Tim 6:20).
Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:1–2. Stewards who have been entrusted with something are expected to be faithful. Our faithfulness will be rewarded.

II. *Why does it need guarding?*

1. We need to guard the Word and especially the gospel from neglect (1:13; 3:1–5).
“Keep” the pattern of sound teaching (v 13) implies the possibility of neglect. The situation described in 3:1–5 results from the neglect of Scripture.
2. We need to guard against purposeful distancing from the truth (1:15; 4:3–4).
Some around Paul had distanced themselves from the truth with the exception of Onesiphorus (1:15–16). Those who preferred false teachers (4:3–4) were distancing themselves from the truth.
3. We need to guard the truth and the gospel against distortion (2:18; 3:8, 13).
Some had gone astray from the truth (2:18). Others opposed the truth (3:13). False teaching is a constant danger due to its deceptive nature and deadly consequences.

III. *How are we capable of guarding it?*

1. We have the Holy Spirit who helps us (1:14).
Every child of God has the Spirit of God who produces the character qualities which are needed such as patience, gentleness and self-control. Cf. 2 Timothy 2:24–25a; 4:2.
2. We have from God the spirit of power and love and discipline (1:7).
Timothy needed not be timid, because he had received a different spirit from God.
3. We have available the same love and faith which is in Christ Jesus (1:13).
Faith and love, qualities from God, describe how the pattern of sound teaching is to be kept. It is the example to be lived (1 Timothy 4:12), the goal to pursue (1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22), the model to be followed (2 Timothy 3:10), and the abundant gift of God (1 Timothy 1:14).

To guard the truth believers need to grow in grace. You guard the truth, when you speak the truth in love, when you walk in the truth, when want to do what is right, when you gently and patiently correct others, and apply the Word to your own life.

There will be temptations to compromise the truth. There will be pressure against the exclusive message of the gospel, against the high moral standard of God, and against the selflessness to which believers are called.

You are called to guard the truth. It is worth it. It is the message of abundant life in Christ.