

“Holding Fast to the Standard”  
2 Timothy 1:13-14  
(Preached at Trinity, March 6, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Remember the context of this passage. Timothy was sent in a pastoral role to the church of Ephesus. There were some in this church who were teaching false doctrine and were gaining a following. They were calling into question Timothy's doctrine and even questioning his ability to lead the church.  
Paul is in prison with little light, little sanitation, and no prospect for relief – except by death. He was cold and alone, deserted by almost all. Yet, Paul's chief interest remained the wellbeing of the church.
2. Paul also had a particular love for Timothy. Timothy had come to faith under Paul's ministry. Paul often referred to him as a son.  
**2 Timothy 1:2 NAU** - "To Timothy, my beloved son"  
**1 Timothy 1:2 NAU** - "To Timothy, *my* true child in *the* faith"
3. Timothy often struggled to maintain his confidence in the face of opposition. He was sometimes prone to fear. Paul is writing this second letter to encourage and build him up. In **Verse 12** Paul reminded Timothy of the confidence and assurance to be had in Christ—even in the midst of great trials.  
Now in **Verses 13-14** Paul reminds Timothy of the necessity maintaining sound doctrine.  
"Retain the standard of sound words"
  - a. One of the greatest problems in the church today is that professing Christians do not know what they believe. They have little or no Theology.  
\*\* They have a vague concept of God the Father, a sentimental view of Christ, and a mystical view of the Holy Spirit.  
\*\* Salvation has been reduced to asking Jesus into your heart.  
Doctrines once held dear by the reformers like Justification by faith alone have lost all meaning.  
\*\* And there is a huge disconnect between doctrine and practice. God's Word has little bearing upon how we live.
  - b. For too many the church has lost all significance. One church is about as good as the next. Churches are chosen according to size or location or programs – seldom for soundness of doctrine.
  - c. Worst of all, we're living in a day when the whole concept of truth has given way to relativity. In other words, truth is whatever is true for you.
  - d. If we are dogmatic in holding to Biblical truth we are labeled as intolerant, unloving, insensitive, or even unchristian.

- e. Paul describes our generation perfectly in **2 Tim. 4:3-4**  
**2 Timothy 4:3-4 NAU** - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."
- f. I have offended people simply because I spoke the truth. If I would have told them what they wanted to hear they would have loved me.  
**Isaiah 30:9-10 NAU** - "For this is a rebellious people, false sons, Sons who refuse to listen to the instruction of the LORD; <sup>10</sup> Who say to the seers, "You must not see *visions*"; And to the prophets, "You must not prophesy to us what is right, Speak to us pleasant words, Prophecy illusions."
3. In **Verses 13-14** Paul is admonishing Timothy to "Retain the standard of sound words." Let's look at the text.  
 A proper understanding of these words are essential to our understanding.
- a. The word translated *retain* is ἔχω – to have or hold  
 Here it carries the idea of holding in one's possession  
 KJV: *hold fast*
- b. The word translated *standard* is ὑποτύπωσις – It was often used to describe a rough sketch used by an artist to serve as the pattern for the remainder of the painting. ESV translates it *pattern*
- c. The word translated *sound* is ὑγιαίνω – It is the same word used in Chapter 4,  
**2 Timothy 4:3 NAU** - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,"  
 In his letter to Titus Paul gives it as one of the qualifications for pastor.  
**Titus 1:9 NAU** - "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."
- d. The fourth word is the word translated "words" - λόγος  
 The Word Paul was preaching and teaching was that which he had received from God by divine revelation. - "sound words which you have heard from me"
4. Knowing the great struggles Timothy is having against the false teachers and heretics in the church, Paul is giving him the standard by which he must carry on the debate.  
 "Retain the standard of sound words"
5. There are three principles being taught in these verses.  
 Our duty, Our attitude as we maintain this duty, Our source of power in accomplishing this Duty.

I. The Duty Placed Before Us - "Retain the standard of sound words"

**V.14** – "Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*."

A. There is a Standard of Truth

1. The Epistle overflows with this reality – It is the Word of God  
**2 Timothy 4:2** - "preach the word"
2. Paul is referring to theological truths as revealed in the Holy Scriptures  
What is Theology?  
Theology is God's revelation of Himself to man  
B.B. Warfield – "Theology is concerned with God and his self-disclosure and with the relations between God and the universe."  
  - a. It comes to us objectively through the Scriptures
  - b. It comes to us as absolute truth (it destroys the "I feel" or "I think" mentality)
2. God has revealed Himself clearly in His Word – There is a standard of truth to which we must hold fast. It has been defined in confessions and systematized throughout the ages as our doctrinal inheritance.

B. Biblical Theology effects the way we look at the world—how we think about and process what is happening in the world.

1. Biblical Theology controls how we approach God
2. Biblical Theology makes demands upon our behavior – it controls how we live – it affects our life.  
This is why people "will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires"
3. Doctrine is the "standard" – it provides the parameter or rule for our life. Saying we hold to sound doctrine is not an empty claim. It controls everything.

C. We must hold fast to the standard no matter what the cost.

1. **V. 12** – "for this reason I also suffer these things"  
Paul was in prison for preaching these truths.
2. There may be temptation to compromise truth.  
Under threat of personal loss or for personal convenience.  
Under the threat of opposition.

D. These truths have been entrusted to us – "the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*."

It is the solemn responsibility of every believer to uphold the integrity of God's Word

1. We must see that the church's standard always rests upon doctrine. It must be the ballast in every generation. It provides the basis for the communion of the saints. We are united upon sound doctrine.
2. In every society a set of beliefs will be established as "normative."  
The church must always maintain Biblical doctrine as the norm.

David Wells in his book, *No Place for Truth* – “In the West, modernity has determined what is normative. ... We are called to see that the Church does not adapt its thinking to the horizons that modernity prescribes for it but rather that it brings to those horizons the powerful antidote of God’s truth.”<sup>1</sup>

- II. Our attitude as we maintain this duty – “in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”
- A. “In faith” – Absolute confidence in our Master and His Word
1. Our attitude must be, “I know I am not upon this earth long but while I’m here I’m and going to serve Christ no matter what the cost”  
“for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”
  2. We must say with Joshua, “but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”
- B. “in love”
1. In love towards Christ – our high motivation for holding to His Word  
**John 14:15 NAU** - "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."  
**John 15:10 NAU** - "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."  
**1 John 5:3 NAU** - "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."  
**1 John 2:5 NAU** - "but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:"
  2. In love towards our fellow man
    - a. Our message is offensive, we must be dogmatic in its presentation. But the offense must never be over our abrasive behavior. Paul says in Ephesians 4 we must speak the truth in love.
    - b. All that you know has been revealed – you have nothing by which to boast
      - (1). We must be patient towards the lost
      - (2). We must be patient towards a confused brother
    - c. We must always remember that it is never loving to withhold truth

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<sup>1</sup> David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993, page 100.

III. Our source of power in accomplishing this duty.

**V.14** – "Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*."

- A. The reason so many today have departed from sound doctrine is because they cannot hold to the truth – they lack the power  
**2 Timothy 3:5 NAU** - "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power"
- B. That we keep these truths “through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us” implies two things
1. We have been taught of Him - These truths demand illumination  
 Theology is never just an intellectual understanding  
**John 14:26 NAU** - "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."  
**1 Corinthians 2:12-13 NAU** - "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, <sup>13</sup> which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*."  
    - a. Preaching is powerless without the power of the Holy Spirit
    - b. These great truths we keep have been delivered to us
  2. We have been granted the power to keep and defend the truth.
    - a. This includes both preservation and perseverance  
 God has the power to guard what we have entrusted to Him **V.12**  
 God gives us the power to guard what He has entrusted to us **V.14**
    - b. God by His Spirit grants us the power to carry on the Christian ministry  
**Acts 1:8 NAU** - "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."  
      - (1) He enables us to keep the Word pure
      - (2) He enables us to boldly defend it in spite of personal harm

Conclusion:

May God grant us boldness to hold fast this sacred trust. To maintain this high standard.