

# Guard What has been Entrusted to you

By Rene Palacios

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** 2 Timothy 1:6-18  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 9, 2004

## Providence Presbyterian Church PCA

13801 Encantado Road NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87123

**Website:** [www.PPCPCA.org](http://www.PPCPCA.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/ppcpca](http://www.sermonaudio.com/ppcpca)

## 2 Timothy 1:6-18.

6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, 7 for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 9 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, 10 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, 11 for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, 12 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. 13 Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 14 By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. 15 You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. 16 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, 17 but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me-- 18 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.

*We worship you, we thank you for your goodness, we thank you for forgiveness of sins, we thank you for all the good things that you have provided for us and we promise to give you all glory, honor and praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

About a week ago, have a chaplain at the mission that's in training and he came to me and he said, "You know, I don't feel very good. I don't think I can preach in the chapel tonight." And of course, good minister that I am, I think I called him a sissy and something like that, but I told him, you know, "You can make it. It's just an hour. You can make it through the service. You'll do all right." You know, and honestly I just didn't

want stay until 8 o'clock and preach in chapel or schedule somebody else. And so he got through that but guess who woke up with a bad cold and a sore throat yesterday? So if you can't hear me, just throw something at Dan and he'll turn this up a little bit.

Now there are some theologians that have believed that the actual epistle of 2 Timothy wasn't actually written by the Apostle Paul and they say that someone other than Paul wrote this epistle and that this letter is, in essence, a holy forgery. You know, these critics contend that this was an accepted practice in that period of time. Now they have a lot of other reasons why they don't believe that Paul authored this letter but I don't want to discuss any of those issues except maybe for one. One reason that has been mentioned is that Paul dealt with such high themes in his other epistles and these letters, these pastoral epistles, especially 2 Timothy, don't measure up to what he said in the others. The language is different and the issues are just too mundane basically for someone like Paul to deal with at such an important time. I think they may be missing the point. The language may be different and the tone of this letter may be different but it's understandable if we consider the context of this letter.

At this time, Paul is locked up in a Roman dungeon and he knows he's about to die. This is the last letter that he wrote. In his previous imprisonment, it was not quite as bad. I don't think any Roman prison could be called good but he had some liberty, he had some freedom to preach the gospel, but it seems that this time in the time of Nero, he was in a Roman dungeon and there was no hope for him, at least not hope to escape or to get out of there. He knows that he's about to die but he is not afraid, in fact, he almost seems joyful in some areas in this epistle. He speaks of being poured out. He speaks of finishing the race. He speaks of having fought the good fight. He speaks of receiving his reward. He has kept the faith.

However Paul also knows that his duty is not finished until he's passed on the mantle to his son in the faith, Timothy. It's almost as if he's also seeking assurance from Timothy also that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is in good hands. Paul knows the challenges and even the suffering that Timothy and the others faced during this critical time as the flames passed on to a new generation of believers. Timothy was going to face much hardship and suffering, he was going to face entanglements of everyday life, he was going to face heresies and godlessness in abundance but Timothy had to hold the line. He must guard the gift. He must preach the word.

Now God calls us to preach when its convenient, when it is not convenient. We desperately need the gift of the Holy Spirit within us to be stirred up to remember what God has called us to and then to be faithful and even courageous to fulfill our ministry. Now Timothy seems to be in need of some measure of encouragement and perhaps even gentle rebuke at this time in his ministry. I don't blame Timothy. First of all, how do you measure up to someone like the Apostle Paul? Also, remember the circumstances of this church and Timothy's age. Imagine the type of persecution that Timothy faced as he preached the gospel. I don't think that most of us really have any idea what being a Christian under those circumstances is like, but Paul has not at all given up on Timothy and he has the exact prescription to help Timothy to carry on with his difficult ministry

and to guard what has been entrusted to him, and I believe that the true emphasis of this passage isn't Timothy's ministry but the empowering of the Holy Spirit to fulfill this ministry.

Now we looked at, first of all, we see that Paul tells Timothy, "fan into flame the gift of God." He needs to fan into flame or stir up this gift, not that the Holy Spirit has left him or not that the gifts for ministry have left him, but for some reason they had quieted down within him and so Paul is telling him, "You need to stir up this flame within you. It needs to become visible and needs to become effective." It's almost as if he's saying that the flame is not dead but it's hidden or it's neglected.

Now what was the gift? You know, literally it's the charisma, it's a gift of the Spirit, that he's been given these things to fulfill the ministry he's called to. Paul goes on to say, "which is in you through the laying on of my hands." It's not the gift of an office necessarily. Timothy was called to an office but it's the empowering of the Spirit to fulfill the office. In 1 Timothy 4:14 it reads, "Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you." Now it's not exactly clear if we're talking about if Paul is talking about the same instance where he laid hands on Timothy with the rest of the elders, or if he's talking about two separate instances, once where all of the elders laid hands on Timothy, and once where he laid hands on Timothy.

Now back from this time, you know, forward, as a practice the church would lay hands on men as they were brought into the ministry. Now there are some churches that hold to apostolic succession which is that the successor to the apostles are able to convey the faith onto other godly men. Now the problem with that and there were some good things about that because the church was being faced with heresies and you had men that were coming around that were saying, "Well, I belong to this man. He ordained me to the ministry. I belong to that one or I belong to this one," until there was a confusion of people after the apostles as the second generation came into place. And so the church began to say, "Well, let's see who really did ordain you, who you were around." And that was the kernel of apostolic succession. The problem was as time went on, you began to have men that were bishops that were passing on the ministry to other men that were not faithful to the doctrine, that were not faithful, that were living godless lives or were teaching heresies.

Now if ever have looked at lists of apostolic succession, first of all, churches that establish this, they can spend millions of dollars researching these things, but if you start to look at some of these men that supposedly had unbroken links in this, you will see some men there that you wouldn't, you know, you wouldn't trust to hold a dollar of yours. And so as time went on, you know, I think that people saw that this was not what was necessary for the church. Now of course, there are many churches that still hold to this but I think the church finally reached the point that they realized that the true succession was to men that held the line, men that maintained the faith, men that preached the true gospel, men that lived holy lives. That was the true succession.

We look at like, now as we look at this, he goes on to say, "for God gave us a spirit not of fear," literally God has not given us a spirit of cowardice. If you note the example of the apostles, you look at Peter where, you know, first of all he tells Christ, "I'll never deny you. I'll die for you. You know, I'll do whatever it takes to protect you." Then he cuts off the ear of the servant and then what does he do? He runs and then he denies Christ three times. But what happened to him that just a short time later he was able to stand up in front of a large crowd and preach the gospel without fear, not a coward but somebody that was strong in the faith, to where many were brought to Christ, what was the difference there? What was the difference with the other apostles? It's that they depended not upon themselves but upon the Spirit to minister, to do what God had called them to do.

Let me read you a little bit from, this is an article from Christianity Today, it's called, "India Undaunted," and it's subtitled, "Escalating repression can't seem to dampen the church's growth."

"Consider the pastor I will call C. D. Elijah. I find him in his small office above a car repair shop, unprepossessing set-up for a man who runs two large independent city churches while overseeing 40 full-time pastors in outlying churches. 'I feel the persecution is exaggerated, Elijah tells me. 'A few pastors get beaten up mainly in the costal belt of our state.' Then he shrugs his narrow shoulders, 'I was beaten up a year ago and I'm still here.' In fact, his beating put him in the hospital for several days.

He deals with violent episodes regularly. Just last week a church prayer meeting was disrupted by a group that wanted to put an image of the god Rama and fight to put bindis or colored dots on people's foreheads. 'We are not allowed to meet in a few places,' Elijah says, downplaying the incident. 'Still, people are responding and the church is growing. I say to my pastors, if you're afraid, you should go do something else.'"

So this is not a spirit of cowardice but it's a spirit of power, dunamis. Not in ostentatious display but the strength to overcome obstacles or difficulties, the strength to carry on. He also says it's a spirit of love, it's a committed love, and it's a spirit of self-control. And with this self-control, he's actually saying that it's the type of person that can keep their head in a crisis. It's the type of person that's able to steady the people around them, the person you can depend on in a crisis. Now why? Because he's depending upon the Spirit.

You know, when I was, I think I probably told most of you this, but when I was in Bible college, I think it was a good school but a lot of the things I learned weren't in the classes. But in this small college, you know, way out in the middle of nowhere in Arizona, the week before we got there somebody in a van blew up the van because they were on their way to the jail to break-out someone. Another time, they blew up the post office. Another time, there was a race riot where I actually got to see, "We shall overcome," with Jesse Jackson. You know, we actually had a bullet hole in our chapel. And then somebody burned down most of our school. And what I learned during those times as I looked at

some of these professors that I had, I saw one professor that lost 10,000 books and as he stood out there, he was an elderly man that had been a missionary in Spain and in Cuba and South America, he said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." And as I saw another teacher than had been working on his thesis the day before, he left it in his office, and as it burned up. Do you know how many days we missed of school? One.

Paul is telling Timothy, we need people like this to pass on the faith. We don't need people that are going to lose their head over every little thing but people that will maintain and hold the line because you're going into a difficult place, it's a difficult world but you're not alone.

Paul also tells Timothy, "Timothy, you need to share in suffering for the gospel. Do not be ashamed," first of all, "of the testimony about our Lord." Don't be ashamed of it. Look at Mark 8:38 reads, "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Now what is the testimony of our Lord? Paul goes to give a short accounting of that. He says that he saved us, that he called us to a holy calling, that it was not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace that he called us, that he did this before the ages began, that he did this before times eternal. He goes on to say that this great work is manifested through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, and he abolished death and he brought life and immortality to light through this gospel. Why would you be ashamed of that? Why would we be ashamed of that?

"Also, Timothy, don't be ashamed of me. Don't be ashamed of me, his prisoner, his bondservant. You know, I am a slave, I'm a bondservant to him and to the gospel. I've given my life to this. Don't be ashamed of me. I have been appointed to bring light to this world. I am a preacher." He's a herald that stands out and speaks this word. Now what kind of a herald was he? There were some people that said, "Well, he doesn't speak very well and he sure doesn't look real good." But it wasn't because of him, it was because of who he believed in.

He also said that, "I am an apostle. I am the one that God has called to set this foundation." Now what kind of men were these apostles? At one place Paul said that, "We apostles are the off scouring of the world." Have you ever been camping and you cook some eggs in a pan and the stuff that's left over that you have to clean, that's the off-scouring. Paul is saying, "That's what we are like." He also said, "I am the chief of sinners and God has called me to set the foundation for this church." He also goes on to say, "I am a teacher." And then Paul was also a prisoner for the gospel. He says, "I suffer because of this gospel." But even though he suffers because of that gospel, he says, "I am not ashamed." And why isn't he ashamed? "Because I know whom I have believed."

In this instance, he doesn't say, "I know what I have believed," but he says, "I know whom I have believed." By the presence and the power of the Spirit, he knows Jesus Christ. He knows whom he believes. He goes on to say, "I am convinced," he's been

assured by the Holy Spirit, "that he is able." He's not ashamed even though he is suffering because of the gospel and he's not ashamed because he is in good company in suffering. In Hebrews it speaks of people that the world was not worthy of. We think of someone that's like Stephen that was just a deacon, he was just a deacon, but 2,000 years later we still read of him and we still see the faith and the power that that man had as he preached the gospel because he knew in whom he believed.

There are many contemporary accounts of people that know whom they believe and they are not ashamed to suffer for this gospel. Let me read to you from Acts 22 as Paul recounts how he was brought to Christ.

1 "Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you." 2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said: 3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day. 4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, 5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. 6 As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. 7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' 8 And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' 9 Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. 10 And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.' 11 And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. 12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. 14 And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; 15 for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

Now Paul also goes on to tell Timothy "to follow the pattern of the sound words." Now first of all, "these sound words you've heard from me." He says to take heed to the doctrine, in other words, to study the scriptures, read the scriptures, give yourself wholly to them. "Study the things that I have taught you. Correct those who are in error. Reject the wolves."

Now he also goes on to say to do this in the faith and love that is in Christ Jesus, in other words, speak the truth in love but also having the faith and having the love, being able to maintain that. You know, me and my family have been members of this church, I think, for about six years now. We probably would have been members a lot longer than that but there used to be a pastor in this church that when I was a minister in a different denomination, I called him and spoke to him and that pastor definitely knew his doctrine but, to be honest with you, he was so mean to me and so rude that by the time we finished talking I felt about that big. So when I came back into the church, I didn't even know it was the same church. I think they had changed the name or something. They had definitely moved across the city. You know, it was a whole different story with Pastor Randy and the other elders here. You know, at that time I did have wrong views of things but the way that he spoke to me wasn't the right way to get me to know the truth. And so as we hear this doctrine, we need to do this with faith, we need to do it with love that is in Christ Jesus.

Now Paul goes on to tell Timothy, "Guard the good deposit entrusted to you." You know, guard your faith. Guard the gifts that are given to you for ministry. You know, we're not exactly certain that Timothy was at Ephesus when this book was written to him or that he was pastoring a church in Ephesus at this time, but it's not a stretch to say it was that he probably was in Ephesus. Let me read to you what Paul was saying to the elders in Ephesus as he left them. This is from the book of Acts 20:17. It says,

17 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. 18 And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the

disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

It was not going to be an easy job that Paul had called Timothy or these other elders to do. Now how were they going to accomplish this? They had to depend upon the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:26 says, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness." And 2 Corinthians 12:9 reads, "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." And 2 Corinthians 12:10 says, "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

And finally, Paul goes on to tell Timothy that, "You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes." You know, disloyal brothers. You know, there are some people that talk about everyone receiving their 15 minutes of fame, now think about Phygelus and Hermogenes, you know, they've had 2,000 years of fame and what were they famous for? For being cowards. For shrinking back. For not helping to hold the line.

Now if this is the church in Ephesus that Timothy is pastoring and talking to, what does Christ say to that church in Revelation 2? He goes on to tell them,

2 I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

I'm going to read something from Dr. Kim Riddlebarger. It says,

"Archaeological evidence indicates that the temple drew pilgrims from the surrounding areas—making it quite a tourist attraction—but that the temple held much land and financial clout, controlling much of the local banking interests. Ephesus was also the home to one of the world's largest libraries, as well as being a center for the occult. In the words of one writer, 'if there was any city in which the church needed spiritual discernment, it was Ephesus.' Indeed, this congregation will be commended by Christ because of that very fact. But the Ephesian church will also come under rebuke for having lost its first love, perhaps the inevitable fall-out in a church besieged by false doctrine and controversy.

This congregation has lost its first love and because of this, Jesus says, it has fallen from its lofty heights. In fact, they have fallen so far, that Jesus' threatened curse is very drastic—the removal of his blessing and his presence from this congregation.

What does Jesus mean when he speaks of losing our first love? Many have taught that this refers to losing our love for Christ, the symptom of which is that our relationship with God grows cold, we cease from praying, we are no longer concerned about seeing unbelievers come to Christ, and so on. But this misses the mark. Jesus has just commended this congregation for persevering in the faith and pursuing sound doctrine! Although many evangelicals believe this to be the case, the Ephesian's stress upon doctrinal purity has not lessened their love for Christ. Quite the contrary is true. Christ commends them for being faithful to him as evidenced by their discernment of false teaching!

Therefore, the loss of the first love is much more likely a reference to the fact that all of the doctrinal infighting this congregation has experienced has produced a bitterness and judgmental attitude within the congregation."

So you know, it is possible that maybe Timothy did too good of a job because in maintaining the faith, maintaining the catechism, maintaining the doctrine, you know, perhaps he became a little bit too wary of everyone.

But that's not the final word because Paul also mentions who? Onesiphorus. He says, "But Timothy, remember, there's also men that were faithful, men that refreshed me." He goes on to commend the household of Onesiphorus. He says, "He wasn't ashamed of my chains. He searched for me. He refreshed me." He goes on to say, "May he receive mercy on that day!"

Now an interesting thing about Ephesus and the Temple of Diana is that the symbol that they used was a tree. On all of their religious icons they would put a palm tree. And you hear the gospel and that Christ says, "To him that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." So what is he saying? On that day, you know, we're going to be facing all sorts of difficulties in this life, you know, especially this word, you know, to the elders of the church, he says, "You have to hold the line, you have to maintain the truth, but you must maintain the love also. But to the ones that overcome, I will grant the tree of life." Isaiah 64:4 says, "From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him."

So fan into flame the gift of God that is in you. Maintain the faith. Preach the word. Continue to love. And there will come on that day, he goes on to say, may he receive mercy on that day, the day when this is all over. May God grant us mercy on that day because we have held to the faith, we believed.

Let's pray.

*Father, those are such simple words, Lord, to fan into flame the gift and to maintain the faith, Father. Lord, you know also our lives and you know the world that we live in, that at times it seems so difficult, Father, as we see things about us but yet, Father, dependence cannot be upon ourselves but upon you, upon your Holy Spirit. So I pray, Father, that you would indeed anoint every person here and grant them strength and grant them blessing from your hand. Lord, I pray that they would maintain the faith, that they would also, Father, be stirred up to love. And we know, Father, that all these things are possible only through you, so to you we give all the glory and we thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.*