**2 Timothy: Unashamed**

***“Guard the good deposit”***

**2 Timothy 1:13-18**

- Delivered at DHBC on June 1st, 2014 (Soli Deo Gloria)

**Introduction**

How is everyone this morning? I have had an interesting week. In my life I have found that if I’m not careful, my life will get diluted. I get focused on the wrong things. Sometimes, it is because I get lulled into complacency by routine and mediocrity. Sometimes, it is because the waves of chaos are continually crashing on my life – as soon as I am almost done dealing with one calamity another strikes. I can’t see anything beyond my own circumstance. Both in complacency and chaos I retain my belief in God. I am still convinced of the gospel, but it has lost its life and meaning to me – maybe not completely but partially.

I think this passed few weeks woke me from a bit of that. Two weeks ago my Grandma died. It was sudden, but she was not well so it was somewhat expected. And when you are confronted with the end of a life – particularly one well lived like my Grandma’s – it wakes you up from complacency. Two days after my Grandma passed away, our own baby girl was born. And as Natasha and I prayed over her, we both thought of our late Grandma’s that Evelyn is named after. Both these amazing women embodied a sacrificial love and grace. They were glue that held their families together and they were motivated by the gospel. So Natasha and I are praying over Evelyn that she will live like her namesakes – and I begin to realize what that is going to require from me as her father. Where is she going to learn to live like that? It is from me and Natasha. And the Holy Spirit began to convict me that I have diluted the gospel in my life and re-opened my eyes to the amazingness of what He has called us to.

And we do this as a church, don’t we? I mean look at what we confess:

that the God that created the world, the King of Heaven, the One who holds all things in His hands, the One that is free of sin and purely Holy. That He desired relationship with us so much that – even though we as a people spurned Him, turned away from Him and made Him our enemy – He came to be one of us. He wore flesh, He experienced despair, He experienced rejection, pain and futility. He subjected Himself to the effects of sin – in fact “He who knew no sin became sin for us” Why? “So that we might become the righteousness of God”. That Jesus came to earth to bring us back to Him – to experience true humanity again.

This is absolutely mind boggling – and yet most days it hardly affects us. It is in our minds, but its diluted. It doesn’t penetrate every breathe – even though each of those is a gift of God. It doesn’t penetrate every cell, every molecule, every thought, every relationship. Why? How can we not let it?

*Transition to Text*

That was Paul’s concern as he wrote to Timothy. You see, Paul wanted Timothy to take over the leadership of the church. And you got to understand, to Paul “the church” wasn’t a building. It wasn’t an event. It wasn’t a Sunday morning service. To Paul the church was a revolution. The church was a people that God had awoken to what true humanity was. The entirety of humanity was infected with an epidemic of self-destruction and the church was the only cure. It was the beacon, the city on a hill. The church was not a building, it was a people. A people so intoxicated by Jesus that the gospel affected everything they did. A people Heaven-bent on carry-forth the good news of Jesus even in the face of danger and persecution. It was a people that Paul served and loved but he knew he would not be around much longer and he knew that the church needed leaders so fixated on Jesus that they would serve the church well no matter what came up against them – and it Paul’s day, the entire power of the greatest Empire on earth came against them.

*Paul’s command* **(SHOW SLIDE)**

So what is it that Paul wants to communicate to Timothy? How is he going to lead these people?

Well if you look at v. 13 and 14 it is fairly obvious. “*keep* as the pattern of sound teaching … *guard* the good deposit … *guard* it with the help of the Holy Spirit”

Paul’s greatest desire is that Timothy hold tight to the gospel – so in this passage he exhorts him to do that and then he goes on to give two examples – one where people failed to guard the gospel and one where a person didn’t fail.

*Guarding the gospel*

So Paul is urging Timothy to guard something. That something is the teaching that Paul has given him – what Timothy has “heard from Paul” – that would be the ongoing teaching of the gospel that Paul taught which Timothy had heard repeatedly. Paul says that it needs to be Timothy’s “pattern of sound teaching.” Paul calls it the “good deposit” – that word “good” is a rich word that means pure and beautiful – good in every sense of the word.

*Not lifeless*

If we are not careful, we can misunderstand Paul’s directive. In our particular “tribe” of church’s – church’s that are more teaching orientated and doctrinal – we can get a very twisted sense of what it means to keep sound teaching or guard our doctrine. We can begin to think of guarding a doctrine like we set a wall around our statement of faith and make sure no one touches it. Here is our truth and we will fire on anyone that comes close to harm it.

Now there is a sense that this is true – we need to guard against false teachings, we need to be aware of what the Bible teaches about humanity, about sin, about God and about grace (among other things). But if we are not careful, what we believe becomes something we defend, not something we live. Think about it. In a castle, the jewels are locked up, guarded and protected. The treasure is kept safe. But who has seen it? Who has looked upon the Jewels of the Kingdom? Whose life does it affect? No ones. It is guarded, it is not experienced. We need to be careful that we do not treat the gospel this way. What a shame that so often God and His grace to us are a concept that we guard from “them” but not a reality we live in light of.

It is because of this that we have “churches” that are more concerned with burning the Koran or protesting funerals than living like Jesus. It is because we have walled off the gospel from our lives that we have Christians who confess Jesus with their lips but deny Him by their lifestyle. It is because we wall off what we say we believe from how we live that we have pastors (kinda like the one standing in front of you) we read all day about the graciousness of God and teach that our identity comes from our acceptance by Him through Christ – but then gets so offended anytime he even feels that his wife disrespects him!

But the words Paul is using here are not meant to give us a picture of a doctrine that is separate from us that we ideologically protect at all costs.

If the false way to understand it was how a castle protects it’s jewels, we could think of Paul’s command as how a fortified city protects its water source. Unlike the Crown Jewels, everyone in the city depends on the water source every day. Everyone needs access to it – regularly. But it must be guarded and protected because if an enemy tampers with the water source, it will have disastrous consequences. In fact when Paul calls Timothy to keep his words as the “pattern of sound teaching” – that word “sound” is a medical term that means “healthy” or “uncompromised”. Think of how medicine needs to be pure or how you can’t have foreign elements in an IV. We can’t have that in our doctrine. If we dilute or defile what the Scriptures teach us it will kill us.

What we believe matters. Why? Because it is true? Well ya. Because the Scriptures teach us? Ya, we better make sure they do. But it is more than that. Because we don’t just believe it, we live it. If we don’t live it, we don’t believe. God has to be more than a concept to us. He has to be a reality. The gospel isn’t just Truth, it is also Life. It needs to be inside of us.

Look again at v. 13, the word “keep” means to “have or to hold”. It is used to describe the relationship a mother has with her unborn child, or a general has with his authority or even the relationship a person has with his hands or his feet. The truth is do be a part of us. But how does it stay like that? No matter how convinced we are of something we drift. We dilute. It is the second law of thermodynamics (right physicists)

*Course Correctors:* ***(*SHOW SLIDE)**

So how do we not only keep our doctrine pure, but keep living it out? How do we keep drinking the pure water from the source. Paul actually gives three ways in this passage.

The clearest one in the passage is the Holy Spirit. Read v. 14. God did not leave us to ourselves but when we come to Him, God Himself – the Holy Spirit – dwells within us and holds us to Truth. We recently finished a sermon series on the Holy Spirit. What is His primary role? To point to Jesus. Or to put it another way, to remind us of the gospel – culminating in the work of Christ. And that is what He does in us, He is constantly helping us hold onto the Truth of the gospel.

The second course corrector is the Scriptures. Our passage this morning starts with Paul referring to the teaching that Timothy has heard from him. Unlike Timothy, we have not heard Paul talk, preach and teach over years and years of serving alongside of him – but we do have a fair bit of his writing. Luke, in the book of Acts, tells us the early church dedicated itself to the apostle’s teaching. We still have that. It is contained in our Bibles. This was entrusted to us. This needs to be inside of us. There is no substitute.

The third course corrector is the church. In verses 15-18, Paul gives a negative and then a positive example. These three people – Phygelus and Hermogenes who have deserted Paul and Onesiphorus who sought him out – are people that Timothy knew. In fact, he knew their stories. Paul wasn’t giving Timothy new information, he was pointing him to examples. Onesiphorus was most likely a member of the congregation that Timothy served and Paul points to him to encourage Timothy to continue to fight and hold to the gospel entrusted to him. That is a key purpose of why we meet together as a church – to remind each other of the gospel. It is also why we meet in home groups and pods. When we gather, we share our lives together, we share our struggles and we point each other to the gospel. I said earlier that the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit is to shine the light on Jesus – well sometimes He does that through the church.

*Content of Paul’s teaching* **(SHOW SLIDE)**

We are going to use the rest of our time to take a look at the content of Paul’s teaching. What Paul taught isn’t included in this short passage, but Timothy had no doubt in his mind what Paul was referring to. Lets look at just one reference to Paul’s teaching to Timothy from 1 Timothy 1:12-17.

Using this passage and the examples that Paul mentioned in our previous passage, I want to draw out four truths the gospel teaches us that will help us to guard the gospel. I’ve borrowed the phrasing of these points two UK pastors: Tim Chester and Steve Timis:

**(SHOW SLIDE)**

God is good, so we don’t have to look elsewhere

God gracious, so we don’t have to prove ourselves

God is great, so we don’t have to be in control

God is glorious, so we don’t have to fear others

**(SHOW SLIDE)**

**God is good so we don’t have to look elsewhere**

We aren’t told what caused Phygelus and Hermogenes to abandon Paul, but at the end of 2 Timothy (v. 10) we are told “Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me.” It may well have been a similar circumstance for the two Paul mentions in our passage. And who could blame them? By worldly standards, Paul wasn’t doing very well.

My boys haven’t been sleeping well and after having first aunty and then grandparents sleep in their room, we are having to fight them to go to bed every night. When they finally fall asleep, it is not uncommon for Tashi and I to look at each other and cry. We have had to get angry with them. We have had to discipline them. And fight and persuade and it is exhausting emotionally. And when it is over, my soul searches for something good.

Our culture teaches that we find that in stuff, or sex, or money, or entertainment, or fame or vanity or food or or or.

But listen to what Paul says in 1 Tim (v. 16) But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

We often think of eternal life as just time. Time and time and more time. But eternal life is not just more time, it is better life. The gospel gives us God. We get God, we are welcomed into His family, we are given His Holy Spirit. This is the creator of ecstasy, the dreamer of joy. God is good. The Westminster catechism tells us that the chief end (the purpose) of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Even in the midst of persecution or on the brink of death nothing will fill us like God. Nothing will quench our thirst for goodness the Author and Source of goodness.

**(SHOW SLIDE)**

**God is gracious so we don’t have to prove ourselves**

Back to 1 Timothy (v. 18) “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst.” As a former Pharisee and strict “rule keeper” it is a great shock to see Paul refer to himself as the worst sinner – his righteousness far out did mine. But Paul understood the depth of God’s grace. Paul had fallen into the pit of religion – that we prove ourselves by our obedience or our perceived holiness. And lets not delude ourselves and think that as Christians we don’t fall into this pit. We do. We begin to believe that we are better or we are worse because we fast (or more likely don’t) or that we regularly read our Bibles, that we vote Conservative or listen to Praise FM. Now, I’m not saying that any of that is bad but it isn’t where our identity comes from. We don’t have an “I’ll scratch your back if you scratch my back” relationship with God where we do good things and He gives us blessings.

I know you have heard this before, but you need to know why this is important. Do you remember those young budding romantic relationships of your youth? You know how every time they looked at you, everything they posted on Facebook you and your friends gathered around to analyze how they felt for you? Do you remember reading into everything they did, everything they said? Do you remember talking for hours analyzing a single look?

Why did we do this? Because you were unsure of your relationship with them.

Can you imagine if Paul had this approach to God. “Well, lets see. I’m in prison, everyone is leaving me, Timothy, my protégé who I see as a son is constantly ashamed. I guess God doesn’t love me after all. Apparently, I didn’t quite do enough.” NO! Why? Because Paul knows that God is gracious. He knows that He is accepted. He knows that his acceptance from God is not based his actions. It is not conditional. It does not change. If it did, Paul would fear he had not done enough to turn God’s favor or He would be angry at God because Paul had held up his end of the bargain and God apparently hadn’t.

But we don’t judge our relationship with God by are circumstances. We judge it by Christ. Because God is gracious – the fact we didn’t get a promotion, or lost a relationship or even a child is not a sign that God doesn’t love us.

**(SHOW SLIFE)**

**God is great so we don’t have to be in control.**

Both this point and the next draw from v.17 in 1 Timothy 1 “Now to the King eternal immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.” What an easy thing to say with our mouths. We do that every Sunday don’t we? But how often do we live as if it isn’t true. We constantly feel out of control, we constantly doubt whether God will provide for us – financially, materially, emotionally, ever-kind-of-ly.

Throughout 2 Timothy, Paul mentions he was in chains – talk about a lack of control. I don’t know about you guys, but when I forget the gospel and I start to feel like I am losing control – all my talk about God as king is out of the window. I need to escape, I need to find some stability. When we dilute the truth, when our water well is tampered with, when God is just a concept we do strange things to try to regain control.

But when we look to the gospel, when we see God as King, when we see He is great we can continue to stand and serve.

**(SHOW SLIDE)**

**God is glorious so we don’t have to fear others.**

When we confess that God is King, it means not only do we not have to be in control, but that his opinion is what matters. The last couple of weeks Barton has already talked about the theme of shame in 2 Timothy. What is shame? It is the feeling that others don’t accept you. That you have done something – or worse, that you are something – that people don’t accept.

Here again Paul mentions shame – v. 16. Onesiphorus wasn’t ashamed of Paul’s chains. He wasn’t ashamed to associate with someone who was despised enough to be put in prison.

Lets be honest, we aren’t going to be put in Onesiphorus’ position. But our commitment that God is glorious means that we don’t have to fear others. We don’t have to get our sense of worth from our boss, from our co-workers or even our spouse. God is glorious – and the gospel gives us him.

**Conclusion**

The truth of the gospel is transforming. It is unbelievable. If it penetrates deep into our hearts it completely changes us. And just like Paul told Timothy, we need to let it. We need to guard the Truth and the Life of the gospel. We need to let the Holy Spirit help. We need to let the Scriptures help. We need to let the church help.