

2 Timothy

I. Introduction

A. **2 Timothy 1:13-14** . . . Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. [14] Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

B. We live in a world that is ever changing – politically, socially, technologically, scientifically, medically, militarily, monetarily, morally, and philosophically – just to name some of what continues to change.

1. Sometimes the changes are for the better.

2. But often the changes make our world worse by increasing foolishness, self-centeredness, pride, disrespect, addiction, physical and mental health issues, ungodliness, injustice, cruelty, murder, suicide, rejection of God, ill-will towards God's people, and hostility toward God's moral standards.

C. These kinds of changes increase the darkness in our world, and in order to be God's light in our darkening world, we must retain the standard of sound words, and guard – through the Holy Spirit who is in us – the treasures God has deposited in us and entrusted to us.

1. Jesus said a city set on a hill cannot be hidden – which when applied to us means if we will shine the light of God and His gospel into our world, it will be noticed.

2. Jesus also said no one turns a light on and then covers it so no light can be seen – which means it makes no sense for God to put the light of His truth in us if we are going to hide it from the world around us.

3. Therefore, let us shine the light of God and His gospel in such a way that those around us may see this light in our good works, hear God's life-giving truths from our lips, and glorify our Father who is in heaven" (**Matthew 5:14-16**).

D. Prayer

II. Requirements for shining the light of God and His gospel into a dark world

A. **[13a] Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me.**

1. To actively and accurately shine the light of God and the truths of God's word into our world we need to retain the standard of sound

- words which have been given to us in the Bible, and taught to us by godly teachers from the earliest days of the church until now.
2. This statement – **retain the standard of sound words** – is intriguing because it establishes a clear boundary for what can be spoken and how we are to live while establishing a guideline that frees us in relation to the how, when, and where we shine the light of God and the gospel into our world through word and deed.
 - a. Though the boundary and guideline may not be easily discerned from our English translations, it becomes apparent when you dig into the definitions of the Greek words from which the English words are translated.
 - b. The clear boundary comes from the words, **retain** and **sound words**.
 - (1) **Sound words** speaks of a presentation that is free from error, and therefore an accurate representation of the truth. For us Christians, it is God and His word that we are to accurately represent in how we live and accurately present in what we say.
 - (2) This means that, in word and deed, we are to stay within the boundaries and remain faithful to the truths set forth in God’s word concerning God and His gospel.
 - (3) In other words, we are not to color outside the lines of Biblical truth. We are not to add or subtract, alter, redefine, or in some other way waiver from the essence of the truths presented in God’s word concerning God and His message to mankind.
 - (4) The point is, God has entrusted to us the basic, fundamental, and essential truths about Himself and His gospel, and He has given to us the responsibility to protect and remain faithful to these truths – in life-style, in teaching, and in evangelism.
 - c. However, the word **standard**, which can also be translated **pattern** or **outline** infers we have the freedom to express Biblical truth in ways we think best represents God and His word to those observing our behavior or listening to our words.
 3. Therefore, the Bible sets the **boundaries** for the light we shine into our world through our words and deeds, while our personality, education, experiences, understanding of God’s word, verbal skills and audience set the **guidelines** for how we convey the truths residing within the word of God.

- a. Jesus is an excellent example of this, for when talking about eternal life –
 - (1) He told Nicodemus (*a Pharisee*) that he had to be born again.
 - (2) He told the woman at the well (*driven by discontent*) that she needed to drink of the water He could give her.
 - (3) He told the rich young ruler that he needed to keep the law.
 - b. In relation to evangelism, Jesus gave very simple instructions to the man He cured from many demons. We read this in **Mark 5:19-20**, “Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.” [20] And the man went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.”
 - c. From his speech on Mars Hill (**Acts 17:22-31**), and his defense before King Agrippa (**Acts 26**), we see that Paul’s presentations were significantly more detailed, complex, and customized to fit his audience.
 - d. From Jesus’ and Paul’s examples we see that (1) **who we are** and (2) **who our audience is** are legitimate factors in determining how simple or complex we present the truths we are endeavoring to convey about God and His gospel.
 - e. The point of this is, we are free to convey the message of the gospel in ways that fit us and our audience best – be it simplistic, or more complex and customized, or somewhere in between.
 - f. What we are not free to do is to change the essence of the message. God gives us the responsibility to make sure our presentation always remains within Biblical boundaries and is faithful to the truths concerning God and His gospel.
4. But how can we know with some certainty what the essence of these truths are – especially when we don’t have the time or the means to study God’s word and search it out?
- a. Paul resolved this by reminding Timothy to retain the standard of sound words **which he had heard from Paul**.
 - b. We can put Paul’s solution to work in our own lives by carefully, thoughtfully, and prayerfully reading the NT.
 - (1) When I say carefully and thoughtfully, I mean slowly – be it one verse or paragraph at a time. And the reason to read it carefully and thoughtfully is so that you can (1) gain an understanding of the context surrounding the portion you are focusing on, (2) make sense of the portion itself, and

(3) consider how that portion applies to you personally, or further develops your understanding of God, and/or fits with other portions of scripture so as to give you a more comprehensive understanding of God's word.

(2) When reading your Bible this way, (1) it helps to use a dictionary – to ensure you understand the meaning of the words; (2) it helps to use a concordance or an internet search engine – to see if there are similar passages in other parts of the Bible, and (3) it helps to use some means of taking notes – because taking notes not only reinforces truths that stand out to you, it pushes you to sufficiently understand what you are reading so that you can put it into writing.

(3) When I say prayerfully read the NT, I mean each time you begin a time of study, (1) ask God to show you the truth in what you are reading; (2) ask God to give you a practical understanding of that truth; (3) ask God to show you how it applies to Him so that you grow in your understanding of Him and His ways; (4) ask God to make it clear how it applies to you and how you are to apply it to your daily living; and (5) remind God you are counting on His Holy Spirit to lead you into the truths He has for you in the portion you are studying.

- c. Add to your own study of God's word, the practice of listening to Bible teachers you trust – such as your pastor, a BS leader, commentaries, and other study helps.
- 5. One final thought – limit your presentations to others to what you know – so that you don't misrepresent a truth or topic by trying to say or explain what you don't know.

B. [13] Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, **in the faith and love which are in (are according to) Christ Jesus.**

- 1. The best way to continue growing in your understanding of God and His word, and in your ability to present a coherent message, is to seriously work at putting into practice what you are reading and learning from God's word.
- 2. In other words, your understanding of God and His word will be significantly enriched, enlarged, and made practical as you make an honest effort to live according to what you have already learned from God's word.

3. It is a well understood principle that in order to gain the best and most practical understanding of what you are learning in the classroom, you must go into the real world and put it into practice.
 4. This same principle applies to learning about God and His word – which is why we grow **as much** in our understanding of God and His word from living according to what we know as from what we are learning by reading and studying God’s word.
 5. In a personal way, this kind of learning leads to an ever-increasing godly life. But it also improves your ability to model and put into words the truths that those around you need to see and hear concerning God and His gospel.
- C. [14] Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the **treasure** (*or good deposit*) which has been entrusted to you (*or deposited in you*).
1. The word **treasure** in the NASB is a translation of two Greek words: the Greek word for ‘**good**’ and the Greek word for ‘**a deposit**’ or ‘to give in trust.’ This same Greek word is translated ‘**entrusted**’ in **vs 12** and here in **vs 14**.
 2. To guard the treasure entrusted to us is to keep it safe so that it cannot be lost, stolen, or changed into something of lessor value.
 - a. Thankfully, God does not leave it to us to do the guarding on our own. He gives **each of us** the Holy Spirit to dwell within us – so that by being present within us He can empower and work with us, individually, in guarding what God has entrusted to us.
 - b. And though you know this already, let me remind you that the Holy Spirit’s empowerment and work within us is only experienced by us as (1) we trust in Him, (2) we intentionally yield to His leading, (3) we purposefully make use of His power, and (4) we do the guarding God has given us to do.
 - (1) In other words, though His empowerment is always present, it only becomes apparent and useful as we put it to use in guarding the treasure God has deposited in us.
 - (2) And though He is always ready to work with us, He does not force Himself upon us, or give this kind of help where it is not sought.
 3. A well-known OT picture of this reality is found in God’s promise to empower and work with the Israelites so they could be victorious over the walled cities, well-equipped armies, and giants in clearing out the Promised Land.

- a. However, the Israelites had to enter the Land and face their enemies in battle before experiencing God's empowerment and help in clearing the Land of its inhabitants.
 - b. Though God's empowerment and help was not visible to them like the walled cities, well-equipped armies, and the giants were visible, His empowerment was always present and His help was always available – even if the Israelites did not make use of it.
 - c. The same is true for us today. Though unseen, the Holy Spirit's empowerment and help are present, available, and waiting for us to make use of them in guarding our God-given treasures.
4. However, to be forthright and fair, I must acknowledge that the Holy Spirit's empowerment and help do not make the battles easier, but they do make them winnable. You may get wounded. You may become exhausted. You may even want to give up. But if you continue to fight, you will win the battle, and eventually the war.
- D. So what is it we are being asked to guard? What is the treasure God has entrusted to us?
1. The context seems to imply the treasure entrusted to us is the Holy Scriptures – from which we learn about God, His nature, His ways, His will, right and wrong, righteousness and sin, love, law and grace, the old nature and the new nature, heaven and hell, salvation, eternal life, church life, and many other things important to knowing God, trusting God, and living the Christian life.
 2. But why does the Bible need guarding? It doesn't. Regardless of how people treat it or what they say about it, it has been and will always be the Word of God.
 - a. What needs guarding is God's intended – or we can say the orthodox under-standing and application of His word.
 - b. The reality is, the truths of God's word are under assault, not just by people outside the church, but also by some in the church. And their intention is to alter our view of God and godliness enough to get Christians to normalize ways of thinking, believing, and living that orthodox Christianity has for centuries held to be wrong, sinful, hostile to God, and heresy.
 3. And though guarding the integrity of God's word should be a whole church effort, **vs 14** makes it an individual effort. Why? Because it is easier to influence and sway individual believers than a whole church – and once an individual Christian has been swayed away from orthodox truth, he or she becomes an added source of influence

in swaying other Christians – which in time may include the whole church.

III. Conclusion

- A. Therefore, may we take seriously the need to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might . . . so that we will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil, false teachers, misleading teaching, and the influence of others in the church who seek to change God's word in order to call evil good.