

Guard – 1 Timothy 6:20-21
Walk This Way. Midweek
5.22.19

1 Timothy 6:20-21

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Introduction:

- Guard the Deposit
 - Dad, hold this booger for me
 - The ring when I proposed
 - Driving to: The great value of the ring changed my actions and it became my singular focus.
- This word *deposit* is taken from the ancient world.
 - In the age BEFORE personal safes and safe deposit boxes, a person who was going to be away for some time might ask another to care for a treasured possession.
- He would entrust this possession to another, depositing it to him, and this person was bound by a sacred oath to protect it.
 - In his letters to Timothy, Paul, who knows that he will not always be able to encourage and mentor Timothy, entrusts to him the gospel message.
 - Timothy would be expected to guard this message and to find worthy, godly Christians to whom he could in turn entrust it.
 - And so the gospel has been protected and has carried from one generation to the next through the long, storied history of the church.
 - And so it has been handed in trust to you and to me and to all who believe.

Outline:

- What is the Deposit/What has been entrusted to us?
 - Right Teaching and Living Out of the Gospel
- What does it mean to Guard this deposit/to guard what has been entrusted to us?
 - Defending
 - By deflecting
 - By engaging
 - Advancing
 - By staying on course
 - By sharing the good news of Truth in love

In other words:

- We have a call to Guard the sound teaching of the Gospel
- Two ways to guard this deposit:
 - Defend the Gospel by deflecting and engaging

- Advance the Gospel by staying on course and sharing the uncompromised truth in love

What is the Deposit? - What has been entrusted to us?

- The right believing, teaching and living out of the Gospel.

2 Timothy 1:9-14

⁹He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. ¹⁰This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher, ¹²and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day. ¹⁴Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

- The deposit is salvation! UNPACK
 - Saved us & Called us to live a Holy Life – THIS IS THE GOSPEL
 - By His grace and His purposes
 - He abolished death and brought life
 - This is the good deposit we have been given!
 - As Jesus left – he said to His apostles: Keep, Hold and Guard this
 - Make sure the pure Gospel is taught and lived out
- So what then is the book of Acts?
 - The apostles guarding THIS Gospel of Good News about Christ!

Matthew 13:44

⁴⁴“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field.

- This Gospel is the treasure in a field – that we do everything in our power to keep and protect!
- One Commentator:
 - This defines the essential work of the church and its leadership today.
 - It is not responsible to do new theology but to guard and exposit the apostolic deposit.
 - As William Barclay has suggested, an elder and preacher does well to remember that his duty is not to himself but to the truth and to his children and his children’s children.
 - If in our day the church is weakened and enfeebled by inattention to the deposit,
 - if in our day Christian ethics are more and more melded into the world because of neglect of the deposit,
 - if in our day the Christian faith is distorted by attempts to make it culturally relevant,
 - we would not be the only losers, but also our children and their children.
 - We must guard the deposit. The apostolic urgency has not diminished.

- So Paul is encouraging Timothy to believe, teach and live out the Good News of the Gospel
 - It has been deposited to us – that we may guard it.
- To use the example earlier – this is the ring that we have been entrusted with:
 - It is priceless
 - It shouldn't be tainted or compromised
 - It should be protected and presented unblemished!

How are we supposed to Guard this deposit? – How do we guard what has been entrusted to us?

1 Timothy 6:20-21

²⁰ Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding irreverent and empty speech and contradictions from what is falsely called knowledge. ²¹ By professing it, some people have departed from the faith. Grace be with you all.

- Why does he go there?

1 Timothy 1:3-11

³ As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine ⁴ or to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies. These promote empty speculations rather than God's plan, which operates by faith. ⁵ Now the goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. ⁶ Some have departed from these and turned aside to fruitless discussion. ⁷ They want to be teachers of the law, although they don't understand what they are saying or what they are insisting on. ⁸ But we know that the law is good, provided one uses it legitimately. ⁹ We know that the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinful, for the unholy and irreverent, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ for the sexually immoral and homosexuals, for slave traders, liars, perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching ¹¹ that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which was entrusted to me.

- How do we guard the deposit?
 - Two positions to take in our guarding:
 - Defending the Deposit
 - Advancing the Deposit

Defending the Deposit

- We have a responsibility to protect the Gospel
- Through the passages we just read, there are two aspects of defending the Gospel:
 - Deflect
 - Engage

DEFLECT

- What do we mean deflect?
 - Literal – shield, bounce off
 - ...avoiding irreverent and empty speech and contradictions from what is falsely called knowledge.

Titus 3:9-11

⁹ But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰ Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning. ¹¹ For you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self-condemned.

- Paul did not want Timothy and Titus to waste time in refuting these erroneous ideas. He was to ignore them. The “knowledge” of the heretics included empty discussions about fables, genealogies, and asceticism.
 - Doesn’t this happen today?
 - There are some discussions in our circles where people have done this!

1 Timothy 1:5-6 (Again!)

⁵ Now the goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. ⁶ Some have departed from these and turned aside to **fruitless discussion**.

- How many of you have been in/witnessed a heated discussion in the church over a topic that didn’t matter?
 - It was outside the scope?
 - Sometimes, we need to deflect these things – because they DON’T PRODUCE FRUIT
 - I’ll give some examples in a minute
- Other times we need to:

ENGAGE

- Sometimes when there’s an attack – we need to not just deflect, but we need to squash the attack – FOR THE SAKE OF THE PURITY OF THE GOSPEL, THE PURITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE PURITY OF THE CHURCH

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

¹⁴ If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take note of that person; don’t associate with him, so that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵ Yet don’t consider him as an enemy but warn him as a brother.

- Same sort of correction in the church in 1 Corinthians 5 and Matthew 18
 - Part of guarding the deposit is to engage wrong teaching and wrong living
 - So the Gospel, the person and the church will be preserved!
- How do we know whether to engage or deflect? Spiritual Discernment:
 - Ask for wisdom

James 1:5

⁵ Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him.

- God is faithful to show us and guide us in a way that honors him!
 - He’s given us a Spirit of Wisdom, Jesus modeled Wisdom and God is the author of wisdom – 1 Corinthians 1-3
 - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom

- When you don't know how to honor the Lord in a situation
- ASK
- Ask: How serious is the attack?
 - Some people argue that Paul is telling Timothy to guard the deposit – which is what others might call the apostles “Rule of Faith”
 - That there is some sort of “ground rules” that the early church abided by
 - Best preserved in the Old Roman Creed which later (5th-6th century) became what we know of as the:
- Apostles Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

- Don't get hung up on the descended to hell bit – I would argue the best translation is that this language is borrowed from the OT language of “Sheol” which is better translated as grave.
 - So he went to Sheol – he descended into the grave (death)
- But step out of that and we have our best understanding of some of the core beliefs early Christians held
 - Deflect or Engage
 - How serious is the offense?
 - This is why Paul often used the language: AVOID
 - But Paul is also very serious about Gospel fidelity
 - Does it compromise Gospel purity, making it a different Gospel?
 - Engage – in love (which we will talk about more in a second!)

Advancing the Deposit

- How do we guard the deposit?
 - Defend and Advance
 - Part of Guarding is also accomplishing the mission you were entrusted with

- Think of the engagement ring: Defending it is one thing, but the purpose was to ask my wife to marry me!
 - Part of my stewarding that ring was to advance it to its intended end – my wife’s hand
- Now to guard the deposit is not just to play defense, but also play offense.
 - Two ways to advance the deposit:
 - Staying on course
 - Sharing the Gospel Truth in Love

STAYING ON COURSE

1 Timothy 4:7

⁷But have nothing to do with pointless and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness.

- What is the purpose of this life?
 - To glorify and worship our God through obedience
 - Godliness is reflecting our God so that when people look at us they see God
- Part of guarding the deposit – is committing your life to following that mission!
 - To do this
 - YOU MUST BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
 - To Stay on the course and advance the Gospel that you are called to guard – you have to be dedicated to not getting sidetracked
 - Only considering the things of this life that are pushing you toward godliness
 - Toward looking more like the one who entrusted to you this deposit

2 Timothy 1:11-14

¹¹For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher, ¹²and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day. ¹⁴Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

- Paul had a singular mission that drove him – make much of Jesus
 - This is part of guarding the deposit
 - Stay on course to advance the deposit
- Further, to advance the deposit:

SHARE THE GOSPEL TRUTH IN LOVE

2 Timothy 4:1-5

I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of his appearing and his kingdom: ²Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching. ³For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. ⁴They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. ⁵But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- You have been entrusted with the Gospel to defend it and advance it!
 - We have a call to preach the Gospel AT ALL TIMES
 - You may be thinking: I'm not a preacher
- But truthfully:
 - Words and Deeds are both ways we preach – you're always preaching something
 - You'll either be preaching a life that points to you or points to him
- And to guard the Gospel is to make the Gospel about Him
 - NOT ABOUT YOU

Conclusion:

- Think of it this way: HAVE YOU EVER PLAYED THE GAME TELEPHONE?
 - Imagine for a second that we played that game: The blue dog ran up the street to the neighbor's house so that Sally might pet him and give him a treat.
 - In this one sentence, there are a lot of details to remember!
- With the apostles: THEY WERE ENTRUSTED WITH THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL – passing it all the way down to us.
- And this is no light matter like a blue dog going up the street.
 - The gospel and doctrine, as given by the apostles, must be defended and preserved.
 - Timothy had been equipped by God to do this; now he must set his heart and mind to the task.
 - The work was entrusted to him, just as valuables are deposited in a bank for safety.
 - Timothy was handed the responsibility of guarding the riches of the gospel against false teachers and keeping the church unified in the face of divisive teachings.
 - He deflected when necessary and engaged when necessary – using God-given discernment so as not to compromise the Gospel
 - Then he passed it to the church in Ephesus
 - They passed it...
 - And now we have it – and we're called to defend it and advance it to the next person – so they may believe the truth and pass it to their generation
 - Until Christ Returns
- Do you believe in this deposit?
- Are you defending it? Deflect or Engage
- Are you advancing it? Staying the course and Sharing the Good News in Truth and Love