

Guard The Good Deposit Entrusted To You

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[0 : 00] I'm going to start this evening or this time just now with a question, with a question. The question that I have for us is, it's quite a provocative one I suppose, is what do you feel losing in your life?

What do you feel losing in your life? The reason I'm asking that is because however you answer that question is actually really interesting because I can guarantee, I can guarantee that there is a direct correlation in life with where you put something in place to protect or guard against that loss from happening.

How you answer that question, what you feel losing in life, your life will correlate, you'll do something that guards or protects against that loss from happening, it's the thing that you fear the most.

Let me give you an example about how you might do that in life, about how you might guard or protect. If you fear your house being broken into, being burgled, the extent to how big that fear is will correlate to how much what you do in your house to protect or guard it from being broken into and in many respects not saying that's a bad thing.

Of course we want our houses to be secure and that perhaps differs from different parts of Scotland to another, how much we fear that from happening. There's lots of things you could do though if that was a fear that you might have.

[1 : 39] You could get a house alarm, you could get a guard dog, that might seem reasonable for certain places but if you really had that fear and the fear was a bit more or maybe you had more to lose, I don't know, you could get a security guard, you could get security cameras, a security gate, you could get a panic room, you could get body guards.

You see the degree to which you fear the loss correlates to what you'll do to ensure that the loss doesn't happen.

There are lots of things that you can do to protect and guard yourself and your family. The degree to which you analyse the threat, it correlates or causes the type of response that you make.

Maybe the more you have to lose the more you seek to guard or protect it. The real fear is that if you don't make those changes, those necessary measures, then you think you're going to lose the things that are valuable to you.

So I wonder how you answered that question. What do you fear losing in life? It really says what you really care about. I wonder how you answered that question.

[2 : 59] What do you fear losing? Now recently, me and my wife Annabelle, I know this morning I had an illustration about me watching Tell It and I've got another one here.

You might think that all we do is watch Tell It. Let me show you, that's not the case. There was a programme recently on Disney Plus. Great documentary with a guy called Chris Hemsworth.

You might know the guy who plays Thor in the Marvel films if you're into that kind of thing. But all these eight episodes, they focus on Chris Hemsworth has a fear of losing his memory when he gets older and that his kids won't remember his kids.

That is his fear. So each episode is looking at the different things that he wants to do as a 30-year-old man to sustain his brain.

Don't get me wrong. Some of those things are kind of wacky and he tries out for a week trying to swim in ice cold water.

[4 : 03] Don't get me wrong, that sounds like... It doesn't sound like something that would work, doesn't sound like a lot of fun. He also fasts for four days in a row because he thinks that... So he tries all these different things out.

But what he really says is that he has a fear of this, of losing his memory. Now you might think from what I've said that I think fear is bad.

But actually, I don't think that. Fear is an emotive response that is given to us by God. It's not necessarily a bad thing, it is given to us by God in order that we protect the things that matter.

It's part of God's way of allowing us to harm so that we can guard against it when we feel and we get that rush of adrenaline. There's two things that you do, you either fight it or you do a runner.

They call it the fight or the flight response and that's in order to protect yourself. Either run or fight it. This letter to Timothy, it's a letter written from the Apostle Paul to the younger pastor Timothy and it's written to encourage Timothy in his ministry.

[5 : 15] But right from the off, right from the off what we see is that Paul actually has fear. Paul has fear, but his fear is a healthy fear.

It's a healthy fear of the gospel message being lost. That is what he fears. He fears the gospel message being lost. And perhaps, maybe you might say the key verse of the whole letter, it actually comes in chapter one.

It comes in verse 14 where Paul writes, by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, he's writing to Timothy, by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

You see what he's saying? He's saying, this is the thing I fear the most is that the good deposit entrusted to you is going to go.

I fear that for Timothy and I fear the effect that that will have on the church if it happens. It is a healthy fear because it is a gospel fear.

[6 : 24] It's a good, emotive response that is given to him by God. Now we don't know what Timothy is going through as a pastor at this particular time.

We do get an idea of his character that he's perhaps a timid sort of a man, but he's told to guard, he's told to protect what is dear.

And if you're here tonight and you're still thinking about the Christian faith, as we look at this passage together, what you're getting here is an insight into the things that matter the most to God's people, to Christians and why Christians will fight tooth and nail to ensure that the message about Jesus Christ, about the truth contained in the Scriptures is to be guarded and protected.

And so that's what we're thinking about this evening is guarding the good deposit, guarding the faith. And we're going to think about that just looking at two things. It's guard the faith handed down to you and then guard the faith with loyalty to Jesus.

Guard the faith handed down to you and then guard the faith with loyalty to Jesus. So firstly, guard the faith which was handed down to you. And the first sort of seven verses, particularly from verse three, Paul reminds Timothy of the rich heritage, spiritual heritage to which he belongs.

- [7 : 53] And what we see is he appeals to three relationships that Timothy has, either historical or current relationships. The first one, the first relationship is regarding the origins of the faith that have been passed down, both to Paul himself who's writing the letter and to Timothy.
- We see that in verse three. You see that in verse three, look with me. I thank God, whom I serve, as did my ancestors with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.
- He's making an appeal to Timothy that this faith that he has is the same faith as the ancestors, the heroes that have gone before.
- It's the same faith as Moses of Abraham of David, Jacob, the heroes of the Old Testament that served God, are Timothy's ancestors as well.
- But Sutley highlights how both his and Timothy's ministry aligns with the heroes of his past. It is a rich heritage to which they belong to.
- [9 : 08] And as New Testament Christians, we follow in that same tradition. The faith that we have is the same faith.
- It's the same God that we trust in, as did Moses, as did Abraham, as did David. As did Jacob, the heroes of the Old Testament, the same as Paul and Timothy, our spiritual ancestors.
- The same as our spiritual ancestors did. He appeals, that's the first relationship that he appeals to. The next relationship, the next in verse four, we see that there's a deep connection that Paul has himself with Timothy.
- Verse four, as I remember your tears, as I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.
- Not only do they have this rich historical heritage, but they have very close personal relationship with one another. Timothy grew in his faith under Paul's mentorship.
- [10 : 24] And I'm sure for us, we know that there are people in our own life who we have a deep spiritual connection with, those who taught us the faith, who mentored us when we were just babes in the faith and they showed us what it meant to live as a Christian, taught us what it meant.
- And then we have the third one. The third one comes in verse five, and this is very powerful, it's very powerful, it's very emotional I think. He reminds Timothy of the faith in Timothy's own biological family.
- Verse five, I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelled first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now I am sure dwells in you as well.
- Paul purposefully makes the connection between the faith of his immediate relatives and of Timothy himself. Verse five, he ends with, I am sure dwells in you as well.
- He makes the connection between the faith of those whom before and the role they've played in his life, his ancestors, his family and with Paul himself. It's a highly emotional play.
- [11 : 44] What are you going to do my dear Timothy, with this faith passed down to you? You remember don't you Timothy, where your faith comes from?
- You do remember don't you Timothy, how the faith of your own mother now lives in you. You know that Timothy, the gift of faith that lives in you.
- A few years ago my granddad passed away and as my dad and the rest of his family were going through some of his old possessions, they found my granddad's old bugle.
- My dad has told me that this bugle was a lasting memory from his childhood that it hung on the back of their back door. My uncle said at the time as he found the bugle, would anyone like to have this?

And as soon as he said it, my old man shouted, yes, I'll have that. Now this old bugle if you were to see it looks nothing much.

[12 : 50] It looks a bit battered and it probably wouldn't mean anything to anyone else. But to my dad, this is a family heirloom and no doubt it will get passed on and will bring back happy memories for him as he sees it.

And there'll be stories connected to this bugle. It is a family heirloom. Faith. Faith in Jesus Christ is the heirloom that we pass on.

It is the most precious heirloom. Just as a side point, I just want to pause. If you didn't grow up in a Christian family, it was still passed down onto you by your spiritual family.

It is still the heirloom that gets passed on. You became part of God's family when the spiritual heirloom got passed on. It just came a different way and we should expect that to happen.

But the real point that Paul wants to bring home to Timothy, it comes in verse 6. What are you going to do with your spiritual heirloom? What are you going to do with this gift of faith?

[14 : 02] You see that in verse 6, for this reason, for this reason, he's saying, for the three relationships that he's calling on, for this reason, because you have the gift of faith, this treasured heirloom passed down from your ancestors, from me, from your own granny and mommy, because God lives in you, because I've laid my hands on you.

Fan in. Fan it into flame. Fan it into flame, the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. Fan it into flame, Timothy.

What it really suggests is that Paul is writing to Timothy because he fears that that flame looks from where he's writing, like maybe it's going to go out.

That Timothy's flame, perhaps, maybe it's not burning as bright as it once did. We don't know the situation. Timothy's a young pastor. Maybe he's burnt out, scared, or maybe questioning that serving God in the way he once did is not for him anymore.

What he needs most of all is encouragement to remember who he is, where he came from, what God has done through him, that God dwells in him, lives in him by his spirit, and that the spirit that lives in him, verse 7, does not make him timid or fearful, but gives him power, gives him love, gives him self-control or self-discipline, you might say.

[15 : 40] Let me ask you this evening, does your faith need fanning into flame? Maybe we all go through moments when we're a bit like Timothy, burnt out, scared, and where serving Jesus feels difficult and onerous as opposed to when we first came to know him, when we experienced that first illuminate and power of Jesus' spirit.

Can I reassure you that if you have faith in Christ, if you trust in him, if you do have the same faith that Paul had, that Timothy had, that those passed on to you had, and that same spirit lives in you is the spirit of God.

The spirit of God lives in you. Just imagine that. The power of God, more powerful than the most ferocious storm, more powerful than anything in the Hall of Cosmos, the power, the love of God, the same love that God has of you.

He's all in Son. He loves you as He's all, the same amount, no less than He loves His own Son and of self-control.

The same self-control that enabled Jesus to obey His Father every time. That spirit of power, of love, and of self-control is the same spirit that lives in you today.

[17 : 05] This is the faith handed down that we need to guard. So we're going to move on from to thinking, okay, this is the faith that we need to guard.

How do we go about protecting it, guarding it, which moves us on to what we're going to think about next? Guard the faith with loyalty to Jesus.

After telling Timothy to fan in a flame the gift of God, the laying out of his hands, ministry pulse spells out what that looks like. It looks like loyalty to Jesus, loyalty to Jesus.

Loyalty that's seen in two areas of Christian living brings us two things. Firstly, it's loyalty in the face of adversity.

That's the first thing that we're going to think, loyalty in the face of adversity or suffering we might say. The second aspect of loyalty is loyalty by proclaiming the gospel.

[18 : 04] So loyalty in the face of adversity and loyalty by proclaiming the good news. We're going to just go with one at a time. So the first one is loyalty to Jesus in the face of adversity or suffering, however you want to call it.

What we see is Paul exhorts and encourages Timothy to demonstrate that loyalty to Jesus at how by suffering with Paul, which we know that's only possible because of verse 7.

You do not have a spirit of fear but of power of self control. It is only possible to suffer with Jesus, to suffer alongside other Christians because you've got the spirit of God living in you.

If you ever feel like this is too hard, remember there's the spirit of God that gives you the ability to do that. The only reason you can be loyal to Jesus in the face of adversity is because of his spirit that dwells in you.

Which is why Paul can say to Timothy verse 8, so do not therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me who is prisoner.

[19 : 18] But share in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God. You see what he equates, that suffering for the Gospel is suffering for Jesus.

Suffering for the Gospel is suffering for Jesus. Paul has suffered for Jesus. He suffered for the Gospel. We know that from the testimony of Paul's life, in prison, beaten, whipped, shipwrecked, humiliated, but he suffers because he's loyal to Jesus Christ.

Verse 11, he writes, Paul, of this Gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and teacher.

That 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 which has been entrusted to me.

Timothy, stick with me. Stick with me, Timothy. Don't be ashamed about the Lord.

[20 : 38] He'll look after us. He'll guard us, Timothy. If you do this, Timothy, no, I'm not going to pull any, I'm not going to pull the wool over your eyes. You'll become a target. But stick with me, Timothy.

Stick with me, my dear Timothy. Verse 15 to 18, he wants to demonstrate to Timothy what that might look like.

He gives concrete examples of what it might be look like to stick with him or alternatively to desert him. Verse 15, we have the deserters.

You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygellus, that has turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and homogenes.

But he's also experienced this amazing testimony of this man, Honisiferaus, who stuck with him. He's seen, may the Lord grant, shall mercy, shall mercy to the household of Honisiferaus.

[21 : 46] Verse 16, sorry, may the Lord grant mercy to the household of Honisiferaus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

But when he arrived in Rome, he searched for me earnestly and found me, may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day.

Timothy, Timothy, don't be like those who've deserted me. Don't be like Phygellus and homogenes. Timothy, be like Honisiferaus, not ashamed.

But he searched for me, found me, he refreshed me, Timothy. Be like Honisiferaus, fan your gift into flame.

If any of you avid sports fans, you'll know the term of what they call fans who only sing when the team's winning.

[22 : 47] Fair were the fans. They're there when the sun is shining, when the things are going well, when the team's winning. The team goes on a bad run, when it's doom and gloom.

Are they still there? Don't be fair, whether Timothy. Suffer with me, be loyal to Jesus. Be like Honisiferaus, who is happy and not ashamed to be associated with me, even though I'm despised.

Fan the gift into flame, guard the good deposit. Now, I wonder who is our modern day Honisiferaus? A few months ago, there was a clear, obvious one, wasn't there, in politics.

Kate Forbes. Kate Forbes, our Honisiferaus, who's not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Are we going to stick with her? I don't mean her politics.

I'm not going to get into that. But being willing to be associated with her Christian belief, sticking with those who are publicly taking it in the neck for Jesus by showing loyalty to Him.

[23 : 55] So that's the first loyalty. Loyalty to Jesus in the face of suffering. Lastly, loyalty to Jesus.

Loyalty to Jesus by proclaiming the good news. Paul reminds Timothy of the good news, what Jesus has done, not just for Him, but for them both. Notice how he says, us, just look with me, from verse 9.

He says, 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 and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who abolished it and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

This is the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is true for Timothy, it's true for Paul, and it's true for all of us who put our trust in him. Paul is reminding Timothy about the Gospel that he believes in, that this is the faith that was passed down to them.

If he wanted it any clearer, if he's forgotten, and maybe that's where the fear or where the flame seems to be going out, that this is the heirloom. Notice the heirloom actually is more than a message.

[25 : 16] The heirloom is a person. The heirloom is Jesus Christ himself because we inherit him. When Jesus appeared in history, the salvation that was planned before the beginning of time was revealed, it was understood for the first time.

Before Jesus came in the Old Testament, there was hope, but it was like trying to look at your reflection in water. Have you ever tried that?

You can see partially, but you don't get a true reflection of what you really look like. But in Jesus' life, his death and his rising from the dead, the picture becomes clear. It's like looking in the clearest mirror for the first time.

Because in dying and rising to new life, in abolishing death, the nature of eternity, of life after death, what it looks like becomes clear.

In Jesus' death and new life, in his overcoming of death, we see immortality. Because we see it in the face of Jesus Christ.

[26 : 22] This is what Jesus promises and offers us. The greatest thing we all fear, death is defeated. Jesus promises a way out of our greatest fear.

The thing we all try to guard against. Of this Gospel, verse 11, I was appointed a preacher and a host and a teacher.

Not another Gospel, this Gospel, this good news. The good news that your slave, wife, clean whatever you've done in your life that's made you feel like you're not worthy is cleansed.

There's now a banner over your life that says forgiven and accepted. And the life you were made for is restored and renewed. This is the only Gospel, the only good news that can save you, which is why we must do everything to protect and guard it.

Know the Gospel can save. There is no other person that can forgive you and promise this to you. It's of this Gospel, the life-changing death-defeating peace-promising Gospel of which Paul is a preacher.

[27 : 32] And another word in the Greek for that word preacher is the word it comes across in other translations is the word herald. I think herald is an excellent word.

So is preacher, but I think herald is an excellent word. You might recall when Charles was being crowned king, I don't know when that was, I remember his coronation, but when Queen Elizabeth first died we saw that week when there was so much pomp going on.

But at that time there was the English herald. He was the bloke wearing the royal standard with the scroll who announced with trumpets the new reign of the new king as the herald, he heralded the start of a new reign, the reign of King Charles.

Timothy, this Gospel is good news. Timothy, I'm heralding the reign of a new king, the king, the Lord Jesus.

Verse 13, follow the pattern of the sound words that you've heard from me.

[28 : 49] Be a herald, Timothy, be a preacher. Guard the good deposit by loyalty to Jesus, heralding the reign of the king. Because where it is, as it is heralded, the heralding of it, the proclamation of it, the reminder of the truth, it actually protects and guards it from being lost.

The more we speak of it, it protects it from dying away. Proclaiming it to one another, proclaiming it to non-Christians protects it from being lost.

Herald the good news, guard the good deposit by heralding it. And the baton has been passed on to us.

We have the responsibility now of guarding the faith, of fanning it into flame by heralding it. Like someone heralded it to us to ensure it was passed on to protect it, we must guard the good deposit by passing it on.

By handing down the heirloom of faith, the truth that we find in Jesus Christ, who is the inheritance that we will receive. The most precious gift is a person.

[30 : 04] It's knowing Jesus Christ as your personal savior. He is the heirloom that gets passed on. And we protect the gospel by passing it on.

Jesus has called each of us, each of us, to a holy calling. Each of us is called to be holy. We've been called to be holy people.

We're a kingdom of priests. Isn't that amazing phrase? We're a kingdom of priests. God's kingdom, He's made each one of us as mediators to a dying world.

Each one of us has been put in that pre-slipped position to be orators of the good news. He's called us to a holy calling.

There is a right fear of the gospel being lost. So fan the gift into flame. Fan it into flame with whatever you can. Fan that gift into flame.

[31 : 13] The spirit that you have is the same spirit that the Apostle Paul had. You know the Apostle Paul doesn't have any more access to the living God than you do. Do you know that?

The Apostle Paul approaches with the same confidence to the living God, to Jesus Christ, in exactly that, no more than you, you've got the same access to the Lord Jesus Christ than the Apostle Paul.

The same access. You can pray to Him. His prayers are not heard more than yours because He was an Apostle. Your prayers are just the same. You approach the same God and He loves you just as much and as much as Timothy and as much as His own Son.

Fan the gift into flame. We do not have a spirit of fear but of power and of love and of self-control. Jesus is worth being embarrassed for.

He's worth being mocked for. He's worth suffering for. Jesus came to save you, to call you to give you life and He loves you and He wants to bless you. Fan into flame.

[32 : 20] God, the good deposit. Let me pray. Almighty God, the salvation that you've called us to is astounding. It is amazing that we have the same access to the living God than any of those Christians that have gone before.

It is amazing that you hear us and that you love us and that you speak to us. It is amazing that you've redeemed us.

We love your Gospel message. We love the impact that it has had on our lives. When we meditate and think on it, it makes us love you all the more.

I pray that you would renew and refresh us daily. The message, this wonderful Gospel message that we have that we would never be dulled by it or it would never become just an everyday thing but that we would always be amazed and wowed by how great this wonderful salvation is that we can call on you as Father and that we have your own Son as our friend and Savior and brother.

He is the Lion that comes for us and protects us. I praise you. I ask that you do a work in our hearts and I pray that you do where some of us may be where we feel timid and fearful and weak.

[33 : 58] I thank you that in humility as we feel that, as we feel poor and needy, that humility you draw near to us. I so fan that gift into flame in those of us where we feel timid.

I find us that same spirit, the spirit of God that lives in us is that of power of love and of self-control. That we might live and work for your praise and glory all the days of our lives that goodness and mercy would follow us and that we would dwell in your house forever.

We praise you, Almighty God. We long to see, as we said this month, we long to see you face to face. We long to encounter you, to experience you, to know you for our eyes to be enlightened.

We never want that message to be lost. We thank you that it is not essentially down to us but it's your message and it has never been lost for 2,000 years.

We ask you to guard it through us and to herald it through us so that many would be saved and that your people would be built up and encouraged to live for you.

[35 : 10] We ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.