

## 2 TIMOTHY 1:14

### GUARDING THE GOOD DEPOSIT

“By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”<sup>1</sup>

**S**ervants of Christ demonstrate a dynamic interplay of divine sovereignty and human responsibility in the exercise of the ministry God has assigned each one. One writer, citing an old maxim of the Faith, reminds us that “God does what only He can do as I, in reliance upon the Holy Spirit, do what He requires me to do.”<sup>2</sup> The text exalts the grace of God, speaking as it does of mere mortals as “God’s fellow workers” [see **1 CORINTHIANS 3:9**]. Always and ever, as we work together with God [see **2 CORINTHIANS 6:1**], His power and His grace are revealed through mere humans. This is especially true as we point others to life in Christ Jesus, a work that is to the praise of His glory.

God does assign whom He wills to deliver His message to the congregations of the saints. The preacher must always bear in mind that he is appointed to his holy labour by Christ the Lord. The message the preacher brings is settled—he can neither embellish that message nor detract from what he has received. The man of God is not responsible to enhance what God has said, attempting to make it more palatable to those to whom it is delivered, nor is he to temper the challenge that arises from presentation of the Word. He is charged with protecting what God has entrusted to his oversight. That entrusted to him is spoken of as invaluable, a treasure nonpareil. Questions naturally arise in light of the Apostle’s words written to Timothy. What is this treasure that is to be guarded? How does the man of God guard what has been entrusted to him? I seek to explore these and other questions in the message for this day.

**THE GOOD DEPOSIT** — “By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard *the good deposit entrusted to you*.” Before discussing the challenge Paul issues and the means by which the command is to be kept, it seems reasonable to identify what is deposited. Is that which is deposited entrusted to Timothy alone? Or is this a deposit entrusted to all elders? Is it possible that the deposit in question is entrusted to all the faithful? The question is essential if we are to understand what God is saying.

Paul refers to this deposit, a treasure, if you will, several times in these letters to Timothy. In **1 TIMOTHY 6:20** the Apostle admonishes Timothy, “Guard the deposit entrusted to you.” Earlier, he made reference to this treasure in **2 TIMOTHY 1:12** when he wrote, “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.” Now, the Apostle urges Timothy, “By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard *the good deposit entrusted to you*” [**2 TIMOTHY 1:14**].

Each of the instances when Paul uses this word is found in these Pastoral Letters. Whenever the Apostle speaks of this particular deposit, he speaks of a something quite definite. In **1 TIMOTHY 1:11**, he speaks of something entrusted to him. In **2 TIMOTHY 1:12** Paul writes of a deposit entrusted to him. In **2 TIMOTHY 1:14**, he speaks of “the good deposit” entrusted to Timothy. Timothy is a steward of this deposit, just as Paul is a guardian of that same deposit. From this, it is obvious that the deposit is not left in the care of only one individual.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> John A. Kitchen, **The Pastoral Epistles for Pastors** (Kress Christian Publications, The Woodlands, TX 2009) 330

In an earlier message delivered from this pulpit, I addressed this deposit. Quoting from that earlier study, I stated, “The Apostle speaks of a definite deposit—he speaks of ‘my deposit’; or in addressing Timothy, Paul speaks of ‘the good deposit.’ Timothy is a steward or guardian of this deposit, just as Paul is a steward or guardian of that same deposit. Obviously, the deposit is not restricted to one individual; God has entrusted to all elders a deposit of some sort. In the opening paragraphs of this First Letter to Timothy, Paul speaks of ‘the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which *I have been entrusted*’ [1 TIMOTHY 1:11]. Moreover, as we [have already seen], Paul admonished Timothy, ‘By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit *entrusted to you*’ [2 TIMOTHY 1:14]. Finally, Paul instructed Timothy ‘What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses *entrust* to faithful men who will be able to teach others also’ [2 TIMOTHY 2:2].

“Taken together, this leads to the conclusion that ‘the good deposit’ is the Gospel and all its accompanying truth revealed in Scripture. The one thing entrusted to each elder is the Gospel of Christ. J. N. D. Kelly writes, ‘The noun translated **trust** ... is a legal term connoting something which is placed on trust in another man’s keeping. The suggestion is that the Christian message (“the faith” or “the truth”, as it is so often called in these letters) is not something which the church’s minister works out for himself or is entitled to add to; it is a divine revelation which has been committed to his care, and which it is his bounden duty to pass on unimpaired to others.’<sup>3</sup>

“Here, the Apostle used the language of commerce. In the ancient world there were no safe deposit boxes. Whenever a man went on a long journey, he might leave his valued possessions with someone whom he trusted. When the valuables were deposited, it was up to the one receiving the deposit to keep them safe. According to ancient legal doctrine, a trustee was obligated to preserve a deposit ‘unharmful and unchanged.’<sup>4</sup>

“Paul identifies portions of that sacred trust that is deposited at multiple points in this First Letter to Timothy. For instance, Paul declared that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” [1 TIMOTHY 1:15]. There are not two means of salvation; indeed, ‘There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved’ [ACTS 4:12].

“Paul also testified, ‘There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all’ [1 TIMOTHY 2:5, 6]. We approach the Father neither through saints nor through priests; we come to God through Jesus His Son.

“Also, the Apostle stated the great mystery of godliness, that God ‘was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory’ [1 TIMOTHY 3:16].”<sup>5</sup>

Immediately before this particular verse, Paul spoke of “the pattern of sound words you have heard from me.” It seems best that we understand that when the Apostle writes of “the good deposit” in our text, he is speaking of the Gospel with all that the Gospel entails as referred to in the previous verse.

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<sup>3</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, **The Pastoral Epistles, Black’s New Testament Commentary** (Continuum, London 1963) 150

<sup>4</sup> Jouette Bassler, **1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus** (Abingdon, Nashville, TN) 121, cited by Philip Graham Ryken, **1 Timothy: Reformed Expository Commentary**, Richard D. Phillips, Daniel M. Doriani and Philip Graham Ryken (eds.), (P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ 2007) 287

<sup>5</sup> Michael Stark, “A Postscript for Preachers,” Sermon, October 19, 2014, SermonCentral, <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/a-postscript-for-preachers-michael-stark-sermon-on-guard-the-truth-188647.asp>, accessed 21 July 2015

Establish in your mind, then, that the Gospel we have received and by which we stand, is to be seen as a deposit entrusted to us by God Himself. This Gospel, the totality of truth we have received as believers, is not entrusted to elders only, nor even to “the church”; each Christian must accept that he or she is responsible both to receive and to guard this message of life. We are to live out the precepts of this Gospel each day. This is that holy Faith to which Jude alludes when he writes, “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” [JUDE 3]. Just as the Faith was under assault in that day, so it is under assault in this day. Early in the history of the Faith Jude warned, “Certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” [JUDE 4].

There are many issues in the world of the Faith over which we may disagree. None of us are infallible; we each will likely be astonished at distortions we held when at last we see Christ. I have always advocated that Christians, and especially preachers, should hold the doctrines they consider dear with a great degree of humility. This does not mean that we should constantly be changing what we believe and what we declare as true. It does mean that we should endeavour to distinguish between those truths that are essential and those that are secondary in the Faith. Having such humility before the Lord God and His Word will lead us to respect those fellow saints with whom we disagree. We know what we believe and why we believe it; but we should also know that others may hold to different views with what they consider good reason.

The pastorate is a poor place for a man to begin formulating his doctrine. Perhaps he will hone his beliefs in the pastorate, but he should not be constantly adjusting what he declares because it is shifting. There are passages of the Word that caution against precisely such drift. James cautions, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” [JAMES 1:2-8]. Individuals who equivocate on matters of truth reveal a disturbing character flaw. Instability in adherence to truth indicates instability in every facet of life.

Revealing the work of the Christ in His ascension, the Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians, “[The ascended Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” [EPHESIANS 4:11-16].

It is a terrible thing for a church to be “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning [or] by deceitful schemes.” It is worse still for those who provide spiritual guidance to a congregation to be unstable and constantly adjusting doctrine to suit the latest theological concept.

There is as well a temptation for many who declare the Word of God to compromise just a little. A pastor friend used to say of preachers who were willing to compromise their message, “I don’t want to fellowship with him; I might like him.” There is some wisdom in that statement. Because we begin to enjoy an individual, we almost unconsciously begin to seek their approval. Though we assure ourselves that we won’t alter our beliefs, we avoid speaking of those matters which we know are controversial or which might provoke a negative reaction. Being sensitive to an individual’s feelings on matters of opinion concerning temporal matters is assuredly justified. However, when we allow ourselves to become sensitive over matters of the Faith, we are stepping into a realm that invites divine disapproval and censure, ultimately leading to a loss of spiritual vigour and power. We begin to temper the truth and allow ourselves to dishonour the Master. We wander off the path and shake the faith of others.

If a Christian wanders from the path of life, it is a serious matter. The life of a believer is never lived out in isolation—our decisions can damage our relationship with the Master. Far more serious is the fact that one’s decision to compromise truth holds the potential for ruin for those who look up to that one as a model of the Faith. When that one compromising the truth is an elder, his influence over parishioners and those inquiring about the Faith can lead to ruinous disbelief. Multitudes of inquirers throughout the centuries have been turned from ardent pursuit of the Faith through the deviation of another who was supposed to be valiant for the Faith.

No one should be allowed to teach if he does not have a solid grasp of the Gospel message. Moreover, no individual, however solid his grasp of the Gospel, should be permitted to occupy the position of an elder until they obtain sufficient maturity to stand firm against error whatever the source of that error. There is no room for allowing one’s feelings to control proclamation of the truth. This is the foundation for the Apostolic admonition concerning receipt of elders by the congregation. We are warned that the elder “must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil” [1 TIMOTHY 3:6].

Please allow me to make an observation that is easily overlooked—the Gospel is balanced—both voice and life must be united in declaring the Faith through proclamation and through lifestyle. Those who are orthodox in proclamation often deny what is preached through ungodly lives. Those who are conscientious in conduct may be prone to temper the declarations of the Faith. There must be balance. Paul admonished Titus that the goal for all Christians is to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour” [see TITUS 2:20].

Let me illustrate by referencing an incident from the life of Mahatma Gandhi. “When the missionary E. Stanley Jones met with Gandhi he asked him, ‘Mr. Gandhi, though you quote the words of Christ often, why is that you appear to so adamantly reject becoming his follower?’

“Gandhi replied, ‘Oh, I don’t reject Christ. I love Christ. It’s just that so many of you Christians are so unlike Christ.’

“‘If Christians would really live according to the teachings of Christ, as found in the Bible, all of India would be Christian today,’ he added.

“Gandhi’s closeness with Christianity began when he was a young man practicing law in South Africa. Apart from being attracted with the Christian faith, he intently studied the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, and was also seriously exploring becoming a Christian, which led him to his discovery of a small church gathering in his locality...

“After deciding to attend the church service in South Africa, he came across a racial barrier, the church barred his way at the door. ‘Where do you think you’re going, kaffir?’ an English man asked Gandhi in a belligerent tone.

“Gandhi replied, ‘I’d like to attend worship here.’

“The church elder snarled at him, ‘There's no room for kaffirs in this church. Get out of here or I'll have my assistants throw you down the steps.’

“This infamous incident forced Gandhi to never again consider being a Christian, but rather adopt what he found in Christianity and its founder Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

Undoubtedly, the failure to embrace the Gospel and to live out the transforming power revealed through the Gospel has been the cause of many who have turned from the Faith. Failure to declare faithfully the Message of Life has likewise been the cause of the spiritual death of legions of the lost.

**THE CHALLENGE TO THE MAN OF GOD** — “By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, *guard* the good deposit entrusted to you.” The Apostle’s command is for Timothy to guard; specifically, he is to guard “the good deposit entrusted” to him. I am now focusing on the command Paul gives Timothy. This command is assuredly incumbent upon elders; but I contend it is the responsibility of the entire Body of Christ to take this command to heart. The command is to “guard.” It could be translated “keep,” “watch,” “care for,” “protect” or “preserve.” The choice of verb in the English doesn’t alter the concept conveyed by the word Paul chose.

The Apostle used the aorist imperative of the Greek word *phúlasso*. That particular piece of knowledge doesn’t immediately indicate much to most modern readers. However, the import of what was just said is that by his use of this particular verbal form Paul indicated that the action demanded was to be taken immediately! Combined with the present imperative Paul used in **VERSE THIRTEEN** (“follow”), Timothy’s responsibilities are highlighted. He is to keep on following the pattern of sound words while guarding the good deposit.

In **VERSE TWELVE**, Timothy was assured that God would guard what had been entrusted to the Apostle. In **VERSE THIRTEEN**, the Apostle had used the present imperative to command Timothy to follow (or retain) the pattern of the sound words he had heard from Paul. Now, Timothy is commanded to guard the treasure entrusted to him. It is a perfect example of the dynamic interplay of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. God is overseeing His work and His Word, and one of the primary means by which He does this is through faithful men.

Let’s think about what the Apostle commanded and how his command provides direction for the preacher in this day. The implication of Paul’s command is that no man can learn theology by reading a text book. By this, I mean that theological convictions are not formed through reading about what God says. Those who are appointed by God are taught by God. The Holy Spirit chooses whom He wills to provide instruction to His people; He also teaches those whom He appoints to this task. Any pagan can stand before a congregation and regurgitate facts and figures concerning linguistics, concerning psychology and sociology, concerning anthropology, concerning economic theory or concerning almost any field of study imaginable. Any heathen can recite a sermon, even sounding convincing. However, the unsaved individual cannot reveal the glory of the One True God, for that individual has never known God!

An old saying in the South sums up this idea: “I’d rather a man said, ‘I seen him when he done it’ and know that he saw something, than to have him say, ‘I saw him when he did it’ only to discover that he saw nothing.” Good grammar and proper syntax are meaningless if they fail to convey truth. Truth is not determined by what we feel to be correct—the standard for determining what is true is God Himself. Unlike modern democratic theory, truth is not determined by fifty percent plus one—truth is fixed by God who is true.

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<sup>6</sup> Dibin Samuel, “Mahatma Gandhi and Christianity,” 14 August 2008, <http://www.christiantoday.co.in/article/mahatma.gandhi.and.christianity/2837.htm>, accessed 23 July 2015

## 2 TIMOTHY 1:14

### GUARDING THE GOOD DEPOSIT

Historically, men of God prepared for service through a mentor/mentee relationship with an older preacher. Paul was mentored by Barnabas. Timothy travelled with Paul, being mentored by the older, more seasoned preacher. In fact, Paul names multiple individuals he appears to have mentored. In addition to Timothy, among those who accompanied Paul, we know of *Titus* who served with Paul and was then dispatched to the Isle of Crete. We are also aware of numerous individuals who accompanied Paul at various times during his missionary labours. Included among these are: *Aristarchus* (ACTS 19:29; PHILEMON 24; COLOSSIANS 4:10), *Epaphras* (PHILEMON 23; COLOSSIANS 1:7; 4:12), *Gaius* (ACTS 19:29; likely also named in ACTS 20:4), *Silas* (ACTS 15:22-40; 16:19-25, 29; 2 CORINTHIANS 1:19), *Secundus* (ACTS 20:4), *Sopater* (ACTS 20:4), *Trophimus* (ACTS 20:4; 21:29; 2 TIMOTHY 4:20) and *Tychicus* (ACTS 20:4; EPHESIANS 6:21).

We also see specifically named as co-workers, fellow prisoners or supporters numerous individuals who may well have been mentored by Paul: *Andronicus* (ROMANS 16:7), *Archippus* (PHILEMON 2; COLOSSIANS 4:17), *Demas* (PHILEMON 24; COLOSSIANS 4:14; see also 2 TIMOTHY 4:10), *Epaphroditus* (PHILIPPIANS 2:25; 4:18), *Erastus* (ACTS 19:22; 2 TIMOTHY 4:20), *Jason* (ACTS 17:5-9), *Junia* (ROMANS 16:7), *Onesiphorus* (2 TIMOTHY 1:16; 4:19) and *Urbanus* (ROMANS 16:9). There were no Bible schools or seminaries as such, though Paul did interact with disciples on a daily basis in the hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus [see ACTS 19:8-10]. This appears to be less an instance of formal schooling than a broadly opportunistic implementation of the mentorship Paul had employed.

What is important is to note that Paul's practise appears to have been to bring gifted individuals into his orbit in order to instruct them, honing the gifts which the Spirit had imparted. If we follow the model provided in the Word of God, we would encourage young men who believe themselves called to serve within an eldership to invest time in the presence of older, tested and proven pastors before assuming responsibility for a charge themselves. Spending time with a seasoned and tested preacher will yield rich benefits for both preachers and congregations.

Early in the history of the Faith, the churches were segregated into clergy and laity; this was the first significant deviation from the biblical model of redeemed people working together as the Body of Christ. In time, the clergy was elevated to a professional class, distinct from the laity. However, there was no segregation of the faithful at the first; such segregation into distinct classes occurred only gradually and as result of ignoring the model that was provided in Scripture. This trend of dividing the Body of Christ appears to have accelerated in more recent centuries with the demand for an educated clergy and emphasis on certification by a select group of examiners. The concept of a presbytery examining fitness for service has passed from the oversight of elderships to experts appointed by denominations. Baptists historically honoured the man who was gifted by God and who declared with confidence "Thus saith the Lord." Baptist pastors were thoroughly versed in the Bible as written in the vernacular; and they wielded that Word powerfully. There is no sin in education; there is grave sin in depending on education to the exclusion of the Spirit's guidance.

The tragedy of churches displacing character and calling with credentials and connections is that very soon courage is trumped by caution and fidelity to the Faith is disparaged in order to exalt fealty to fashion. This could account for our present practise of an ecclesiastical class that has grown nuanced in attempts to find accommodation with the prevailing cultural milieu until many church leaders unconsciously compromise the Faith rather than declare the unvarnished Word of the Lord. Promotion of denominational ends seems often to have become more important than advancing the cause of Christ. Efforts to accommodate the wicked desires of society grow in importance, forcing the truth underground. Fear of man silences the watchmen. The churches have grown complacent and the Faith appears flaccid and outreach ceases.

It does not require sharply honed prophetic skill to foresee a day in which the Faith will be effectively neutered by governmental regulation. Already churches are so hobbled by indebtedness to governmental subsidies that it is difficult for preachers to speak out against the prominent and blatant sins of society. Assuredly, we dare not speak of anything bearing on decisions concerning government lest we incur the wrath of elected officials.

We accepted definition of who we are and what we do from taxing authorities in order to continue receiving governmental benefits; we must be cautious in what we say or permission to issue tax receipts will be withdrawn. We invest incredible amounts of time and expend a substantial portion of congregational moneys to underwrite service before the Lord in order to fill out properly the assorted forms to ensure that we continue to receive permission to give those same receipts to donors. Would those who give to advance the cause of Christ continue their generosity if they did not receive a tax benefit? I don't know!

Government subsidies given to promote community services such as feeding the hungry and clothing the naked were at first welcomed by the churches. Christians told themselves that these moneys allowed the churches to expand their ministries of compassion. However, what was at first supplemental created dependence, and the regulations imposed to continue receiving the governmental subsidies grew more onerous until at last the people of faith were compelled to choose between continued receipt of the subsidies or obedience to their first charge—declaration of the truth and winning the lost! As goes government money, so goes government control!

If the man of God will be faithful to the charge he received when God appointed him to his service, he will not waver in declaring the truth and in applying it in every circumstance. However, those compromised by attempting to appease culture while holding to the Faith will quickly crumple in the face of opposition. It is disheartening to watch once great institutions and ministers yield ground in the face of unrelenting assault. Nevertheless, the Word of God stands, "Guard the good deposit entrusted to you."

A major Baptist University in the United States has quietly changed a ban on homosexual acts in its sexual conduct code.<sup>7</sup> It is obvious that the trustees and administration are worried about recent Supreme Court rulings. Regardless of how this school may try to justify their action, the leaders fear man far more than they fear God.

Late last year, Hillsong Church leaders refused to speak against popular sin, justifying their refusal by stating that Jesus didn't say anything about that particular sin. These leaders choose to be relevant rather than righteous. One pastor of that mega church is quoted as saying, "It can be challenging for churches to stay relevant. Because many mainstream churches upheld what they would believe is the long established view of what the Bible says about homosexuality. But the world has changed around and about them... So the world's changing and we want to stay relevant as a church. So that's a vexing thing. You think, 'How do we not become a pariah?'"<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Bob Allen, "Baylor drops language referring to 'homosexual acts,'" Baptist News, Thursday, July 9, 2015, <https://baptistnews.com/ministry/organizations/item/30260-baylor-drops-ban-on-homosexual-acts>, accessed 9 July 2015

<sup>8</sup> Antonia Blumberg, "Hillsong Church Pastors Won't Speak Out On Gays Because Jesus Didn't Either (UPDATED)," Huffington Post, 10/17/2014|Updated 10/20/2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/17/hillsong-church-gays\\_n\\_6002762.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/17/hillsong-church-gays_n_6002762.html), accessed 20 July 2015; Michael Brown, "On Gay Marriage and the Hillsong Movement: Did Jesus Call Us to be Relevant or Biblical?" October 20 2014, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/on-gay-marriage-and-the-hillsong-movement-did-jesus-call-us-to-be-relevant-or-biblical-128311/>, accessed 20 July 2015; Jonathan Merritt, "TRANSCRIPT: Hillsong's Brian Houston on same-sex issues, Religion News Service, October 15, 2014,



The adjustments in position to which I've just referred are but two instances of multiplied cases that could be cited. Many pastors made the accommodation years ago when denominational leaders chose to impose strictures to compel uniformity. I befriended one young pastor who served in a major Canadian denomination that compelled all missionaries to agree to a change in doctrine permitting the ordination of women. Those missionaries who could not make that accommodation were summarily dismissed from service. It is amazing how quickly staunch defenders of the Faith tumble from their stand when money is involved!

Earlier, I cited a previous study from Paul's First Letter to Timothy. Let me quote from that same message an additional point I made. "Paul was trusting Timothy to guard these doctrines; Timothy was a trustee of the Gospel. Similarly, each elder is a trustee of the Gospel. Every Gospel minister has received as a sacred trust the message of salvation in Christ the Lord—the incarnation, the atonement, the redemption and the resurrection of Christ Jesus. The elder is not free to make up his theology as he goes along; he must proclaim the message he himself has received. The man of God is not to innovate, but to preserve. Orthodox Christianity is not to be reinvented, re-envisioned or reinterpreted; it is to be cherished, guarded and defended. If the Gospel is neglected or mishandled, will not He who gave the deposit hold accountable those to whom it is entrusted?"<sup>9</sup>

All of this leads me to urge the congregation to accept responsibility for the preaching delivered from the pulpit. No, I don't mean that the congregation is to dictate to the preacher either what he is to preach or what hobby horses he is to ride, I mean that the congregation is to assess what is preached and strive to hone the skills of the preacher. If the preacher speaks the truth in love, building the people in the Faith and opposing error, the people of God must unite behind that man. If the preacher begins to deviate from the Faith, preaching a message that is unworthy of the Master of the church, the people of God must take responsibility to correct the preacher. I am speaking of a preacher who is teachable, and not one who assumes himself master and the people mere serfs serving his desires.

When Apollos came to Ephesus, his message was both fervent and accurate. Consequently, he spoke boldly of Jesus. However, he was somewhat rough around the edges. So, a godly couple took him aside and "explained to him the way of God more accurately." Because Priscilla and Aquila accepted responsibility to assist those whom God had appointed, they honoured God and strengthened His servant. The result was that when Apollos crossed over to Achaia, "he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus" [see ACTS 18:24-28].

**THE MEANS BY WHICH THE MAN OF GOD GUARDS** — "*By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us*, guard the good deposit entrusted to you." Left to himself, no preacher could ever fulfil the command to "guard the good deposit." We are each weak in different situations. Beware the man who says he has no fear or who boasts of his ability to stand firm in the hard place. His ability to watch is ensured only by the Holy Spirit at work in his ministry. In **VERSE TWELVE** we learned that God Himself keeps what He has entrusted to the preacher; the deposit is safe in God's hand. However, it appears now that Paul is saying that the security of the deposit is left to Timothy. Though the Apostle is stressing the human element at this point, Christians must understand that it is only with the aid of the Holy Spirit that the deposit is kept safe.

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<http://jonathanmerritt.religionnews.com/2014/10/16/transcript-hillsongs-brian-houston-sex-issues/>, accessed 20 July 2015

<sup>9</sup> Stark, op. cit.



Let's think about what Paul has stated. The elder is responsible before God and before the assembly to guard the Gospel and all that is implied by the Gospel. However, the elder must not attempt to perform this guard duty in his own strength. Neither native intelligence nor education will suffice to mount a guard when assault begins. Guarding the Gospel is to be done "by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us." Underscore in your mind that the work assigned to the elder is spiritual work. It is labour and not a mere vocation. We see the struggle mounted against error—both the subtle insinuation of error and the blatant assault by errant teaching; though the work is spiritual, it is demanding and it is exhausting. The preacher is dependent upon the Spirit of God. Otherwise, he will surely fail in performing his duties.

We know that the Spirit of God dwells within each Christian. Paul has taught elsewhere, "You ... are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you" [**ROMANS 8:9-11**]. That same life-giving Spirit supplies wisdom and strength to perform every task He assigns.

In the original language of our text, the word translated "dwells" is a present participle. This particular construction indicates a continuous action. Moreover, when Paul states that the Spirit "dwells within us," the prepositional phrase used means that Paul is telling Timothy, and thus telling all Christians, that the Spirit of God dwells within each redeemed individual. The Holy Spirit in this dispensation does not intermittently reside in His people—He is always present in the life of each believer. As one who is born from above and into the Family of God, the Holy Spirit lives in you. The Spirit of God does not flit about, now resting here, and then alighting there—He lives in the life of each believer!

This is an extremely important piece of information for the child of God. Having been born from above, the Spirit of God lives in each believer. The import of this information is the knowledge that the Spirit of God is not the unique province of preachers and teachers only; rather, the Spirit of God lives in the congregation as a whole and He lives in each believer. You, if you are born from above through faith in the Son of God, have the Spirit of God living in you! This matter is so important that I must stress it by repeating this fact—each believer has the Spirit of God living in him or in her! The Spirit of God is not an influence; He is the True and Living God who has taken up residence in the life of the child of God. As a Christian, wherever you go and whatever activity in which you may engage, the Spirit of God is present.

We are well aware that the assembly in entirety is the Temple of God; and the Spirit of God is present in His temple—the congregation of the righteous. Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Do you not know that you [plural] are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you [plural]? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you [plural] are that temple" [**1 CORINTHIANS 3:16, 17**]. God is jealous for His Temple. He takes very seriously threats against His Temple, the congregation of the Lord.

Wonderful though that knowledge is, know that the Spirit of God has laid claim to each believer. This is the reason Paul has written, "He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" [**1 CORINTHIANS 6:16-20**]. God is very interested in your actions and even in your attitudes since they reflect on Him who lives in you.

**2 TIMOTHY 1:14**  
**GUARDING THE GOOD DEPOSIT**

We rightly anticipate that a special endowment is provided to those who are set apart for pastoral duty among the churches. This endowment is closely akin to the charismata, the special gifts that are identified in **1 CORINTHIANS 12 and 14**. However, this does not alter the importance of knowing that the Spirit of God lives in each Christian. To be certain, pastors are gifted to perform the tasks God assigns, but the entire congregation shares in the defence of the Gospel. The preacher is the point man on guarding the Gospel, but the congregation is united in this task.

What does all this mean? It means that the pressure to accommodate culture will persist, and even increase for the years allotted to us. If we will be found as a congregation honouring the Master at His return, we must guard the message and how that message is applied. I am not one to worry much about conspiracy theories, but I am aware that the wicked one seeks to ruin the testimony of the faithful and to lay waste the congregations of the Lord. We are not immune to his devastation, nor are we unaware of his deceitful schemes. Legion is the churches that once stood firm in the Faith that have ceased to be fervent in the Faith today. We will join those listed on that despicable roll should we cease to hold firm this message of life.

I have sometimes been challenged by church members and adherents to temper my messages. Denominational leaders have at times warned me to be temperate in addressing sin. There is no pleasure in noting that many such individuals, though living out their years in relative comfort, almost universally were utterly ineffective in their service. A big name in the eyes of man means nothing in the sight of God. What does matter with God and for the advance of His Kingdom is fidelity to His command and fervency in declaring the Faith of Christ the Lord. Let this congregation determine that we will be faithful to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Pray for me that I will stand firm in the Faith and always seek to honour the Master as I endeavour to build His holy people. Amen.