

# Guarding the Good Deposit

1 Timothy 6:20-21

Reggie Sanchez, Gospel Community Church, 11/19/2017

**Text: 1 Timothy 6:20-21**

*O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.*

## I. Introduction:

### 1. Belief about Perceived Truth will govern your actions

I personally hold it to be true that what a person believes is true will govern his or her own actions on a daily basis. What you determine is truth is arguably the most important decision you will ever make. Whether for good or for bad, people's beliefs will always drive their actions. If a person believes that there is no such thing as truth or moral absolutes, that person's life will live out whatever the desires of his heart are, even if those desires are evil, and he will expect that there will be no consequences for his actions because there is no such thing as moral absolutes. If a person is stuck in sin or bad habits, but believes that they have constant justifiable excuses for those things, that person will continue to stay in that place due to the fact that through their excuses they believe it can't be any different. If a person believes that meaning and purpose and life are found in money or achievement, that person will go to great lengths to accomplish things and acquire possessions in their pursuit of significance.

If a person believes that the cause of Christ and his Gospel is worth everything, even their very lives, that person will live a life of tremendous sacrifice and love in service to the King. If a person who was previously crippled by guilt and fear, believes Jesus truly paid for his sins at the cross, that person will live with a clear and joyful conscience because of his faith. If you believe that it is God who will truly make you happy, then you will live your life in a way that centers what you do on him and that causes you to pursue his purposes and glory. If a person gets his faith strengthened with a fresh sense of the truth that God is good, God is for him, and God loves him deeply, then he will have great encouragement and joy throughout that day because of what he believes. So what you believe is true, has profound implications for your actions.

### 2. The Truth

Jesus claimed in John 8:32 Jesus said that the truth will set you free. Many people, like Pontius Pilate who uttered the exasperated question in John 18:38, "What is truth?" have not even thought about what criteria they use to determine truth. Jesus told Pilate in Jn. 18:37 that the reason Jesus came into the world was to bear witness to the truth. Earlier in the Gospel of John Jesus claimed that he himself is the truth (John 14:6). Additionally, he later went onto say in John 17:17 that God's Word is truth. So, Christ is the one who testifies to the truth, he testifies that he himself is the truth, and he also testifies that God's Word, which is thoroughly centered on Christ, is the truth as well. The issues of right and wrong are defined by the truth of God's Word. The issues of truth and error are defined by God's Word. Who we are as people prior to coming to Jesus is defined by God's Word. Who we are as believers who are found in Christ is found and defined in God's Word. The truth about who God is for his people whom he has saved and who he is towards unbelievers is also found in God's Word. The truth about heaven, hell, and eternal life are all found in God's Word.

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As Christians and as God's church it is our job to know the Word of God, to know the God of the Word, and to live out, proclaim, and defend God's Word to a dying world. If we forfeit the Word of God, forget the Word of God, change the Word of God, do not know the Word of God, or rebel against the Word of God, we are lifeless, truthless, and completely irrelevant even if we attract thousands to a truthless gathering that we wrongly call worship. The Word of God is to be a blessed and cherished thing by every believer, in every generation, that we might be a people of God's truth and a city on a hill that genuinely shines the light of God.

As we close out our study of 1 Timothy tonight, I would again remind you that Paul's purpose in writing the letter, according to 1 Timothy 3:15 is so that Timothy and the church of Ephesus will know how things are to be conducted in the household of God, which is the church, which Paul calls the pillar and buttress of the truth. For the church to buttress the truth is for the church to come under the truth and lift it up. If the church forfeits the truth then we cannot possibly buttress it, and we therefore lose our identity and purpose. So as we conclude the letter by studying 1 Timothy 6:20-21, which is a very straightforward text, we will meditate on the calling on the church to hold to God's truth according to God's grace. So let's begin considering our text tonight which is 1 Timothy 6:20-21.

## II. Guarding the Good Deposit

### 1. The Call to Guard the Good Deposit. (vs. 20a)

Here we have the last two verses of the epistle and the first statement we encounter in verse 20 is, "O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you..." After everything Paul has instructed Timothy about, from dealing with false teachers, to establishing qualified leadership, to defining roles in the church, dealing with a crisis involving widows and the discipline of elders, and more, Paul concludes with this plea to Timothy to guard the deposit that was entrusted to him. I believe this deposit that is entrusted to Timothy is the ministry of the Gospel, from the Word of God, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul began the letter in 1 Timothy 1:3 exhorting Timothy to insist on sound doctrine. In 4:6, after exposing false teachers who were advancing the doctrine of demons, Paul told Timothy that if he taught the Word of God faithfully he would be a good minister of Christ Jesus. In 2 Timothy 1:14 Paul again exhorts Timothy to guard the good deposit he has been entrusted with, and in that context it is very clear that it is Gospel ministry according to the sound words of the Bible. So here, at the close of this letter, is Paul's strong urge to Timothy to guard the ministry of the Word of God that he has been entrusted with.

Why? Everything a person is called to know about God, all of the wonderful truths about Christ dying as a substitutionary atonement for sinners that they might have eternal life, all of the truth about righteousness, holiness, and a proper definition of love, and all of the issues he must deal with in his ministry are to be informed by, guided by, and ruled by Jesus himself through his Word. In discharging his ministry, Timothy must lead as one who is under authority, one who is surrendered to God's Word, and one who leads and guides the people by God's Word. His own ideas are meaningless, his own thoughts will profit nothing, his own opinions and speculations are completely irrelevant. As a minister all he has to give the people is God and his will revealed through the Word. If Timothy loses that, he will lose everything in his ministry of any eternal significance. The Word of God has a wonderful power within itself. I want to share with you some testimonies God's Word makes about itself to underscore the importance of it.

### 2. Inspired, Pure, True, Unbreakable

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“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” 2 Ti. 3:16 (see also 2 Pe. 1:21). The first key truth about the Word of God is knowing that the Scripture ultimately originates from God and not man and because it is from God, it is profitable to instruct and correct wayward man, and this verse tells us that this is true of “All Scripture.” So in dealing with sinners how important is the Word for Timothy in his ministry? How important is this for a marriage, for parenting, for the workplace, for evangelism, for life in the body? We cannot derive our “truth” and how to process the issues of life from Dr. Phil, Oprah, MTV, the Kardashians, Sports Center, CNN, Fox News, or any other worldly source. Your filter for truth must be the Word of God and if you allow yourself to be polluted by worldly thinking, you will be deceived and harmed.

As I read earlier, Jesus said in John 17:17 that God’s Word is “Truth.” Psalm 19:6 tells us that the Word of God is “Perfect,” or “Pure.” In John 10:35 Jesus said that, “The Scripture cannot be broken.” In Matthew 5:18 Jesus said, “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” So the testimony of the Word of God is that it originates from God and not man, therefore, it is pure, perfect, true, infallible, inerrant, and everlasting because it cannot be broken and it will endure forever and all that it claims will indeed come to pass.

### 3. What Does the Word of God do?

So those are some of the characteristics the Word of God says about the Word of God. If those things are true, and they are eternally and irrefutably true, what does the Word of God claim that the Word of God does? For starters I would argue that the Word of God reveals God in Christ. In fact, there is such an intimate connection between God and his Word, that Jesus himself, who is God, is also called the Word of God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” (John 1:1). The description of Christ at his 2nd coming in Revelation 19:13 gives Jesus a special name, “He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is ‘The Word of God.’” God is so closely connected to his Word, that one of his names is the Word of God. Yes it is possible to know the Bible and not know God, however, it is not possible to be completely ignorant of biblical truth and know God. Knowing even one verse, if it is a Gospel-revealing verse, is sufficient to save a sinner and bring them into a relationship with God. However, he comes to enter into that relationship by knowledge of God through that one verse. If he did not hear the truth of that one verse, he would not believe and would not be saved. It is impossible for a Christian to grow in closeness with God apart from the Word of God. Let’s consider more of what God’s Word claims about itself.

Because “God is light and in him is no darkness at all,” (1 John 1:5) it then makes perfect sense that the Scripture would also claim to be light because it reveals the God who is light, “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path,” (Ps. 119:105). God is light and his Word that reveals him to darkened sinners is light. So if there is any hope for humanity, which dwells in darkness apart from God, it is to see the God of light in his Word, which is also light. In the dark recesses of the ignorance of God shines the light of God’s Word that imparts understanding through revealing the glorious light of our glorious maker. Darkness is scary, and if you are in pure darkness it makes you long for a light. Spiritually speaking, God’s Word is that light.

The Word of God is also that which brought creation into existence as we see recorded for us in Genesis 1. 2 Peter 3:5 and Psalm 33:6 also claim that the heavens and earth came into existence through God’s spoken Word. Hebrews 1:3 additionally claims that the universe is also currently being upheld by the Word of Christ’s power. Everything that

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presently exists, things in heaven and things in earth, owe their existence to the creating power of the Word of God. The 1st law of thermodynamics is that matter cannot be created or destroyed. That is true with man or anything else in creation. However, God is able to do what nothing else in the universe can do, namely, create out of absolutely nothing, and he creates by the power of his Word. All things, including people, the crown of God's creation, came into existence by his Word. It is the most powerful force in the universe.

Not only is God's Word powerful to cause the first creation to come into being, but also it is powerful to cause the new creation to exist as well. All people who come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, who believe he became sin for us on the cross when he was punished in our place, that he gave his righteousness to us as a free gift when we fled to him for salvation, all who savingly believe the Word of his Gospel have become new creatures in him (2 Cor. 5:17). So just as with the first creation, the Word of God creates the people of God in the New Creation. When the Gospel is preached, understood, and believed, that person is literally made new by the Word of God. Paul tells us in Galatians 2:20 that not only for himself, but for all believers, that, "I am crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives within me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me," (Galatians 2:20). When we are saved we possess the very life of God in our own souls! He causes us to become alive to his glory, his beauty, his wonder, his person, and his ways and it is so transformative that it is literally new life. 2 wonderful passages declare to us how we come to share in this new life and what the Word of God has to do with it.

Romans 10:17, "Now faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ." All throughout the letter of Romans Paul is laboring to help us see that salvation comes through faith in Christ and his Gospel alone, and in Romans 10:17 he tells us exactly where that faith comes from. It comes from hearing the Word of Christ. You cannot believe what you do not know or have not heard about. You must hear the message and understand it before you can ever possibly believe it, and it is the Word of God that creates faith.

2 Peter 1:3-4 is very helpful as well on this topic as verse 3 tells us this, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence..." Ok let's stop there. Look at the wonderful statements here! God's very power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of God! What more glorious statement can be made for sinners? So how did this happen? Did God just zap us in our sleep? Did he abduct us into an alien spaceship? How did he give us all things that pertain to life and godliness and give us the knowledge of him? I mean what if I don't have those things now, but I tell you I want them, how would you counsel me to receive them?

Hopefully you would tell me about verse 4, which helps us know at the human level how we are to pursue the life and knowledge of God, "...by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature." So life in God, the knowledge of God, the calling to a life that pursues God's own glory and excellence and a life by which we become partakers of God's divine nature, or in other words, sharers in his very life, is through his precious and very great promises. That is very profound. Do you want to connect with God? The only way to do that is to know his promises from his Word, understand them, believe them, and receive them through the Gospel of Jesus Christ because all of God's promises are yes and amen in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). We lay hold of God, we lay hold of life, we lay hold of all that God is for us in Christ, by believing his promises. Where do we find those promises? In God's Word. All of the Christian life is a life of faith in his promises. I'm not sure you can do a more

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important thing for yourself than arm yourself with the promises of God, and meditate upon them, and choose to stand on them each day.

God's Word is not just something that changes us once we initially become new in Christ, rather, it is something that is to minister to us on an ongoing basis. Psalm 19:6, "The word of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul." How often does it revive the soul? It does so on an ongoing basis throughout our lives as believers. Everyday our soul will need reviving. You ever feel discouraged that on one day you feel so alive in the Word of God and on the next day you feel so dead to it? That happens to everyone! What do you do when that happens? You don't shut the Bible, you don't go to food, or shopping, or TV, or the world, you go to the Word and ask God to please send his life-giving power, through the Word, to your dead soul to raise you up again. He will do it, Jesus has prayed that the Father will sanctify us on an ongoing basis by his Word (Jn. 17:17). The Father will answer Christ's prayer for us and he will answer our prayer as well when we plead for the reviving of our soul and God's sanctifying power in our lives to come through his Word.

Another amazing benefit to the Word of God is that it is only when we hear and believe the testimony of Scripture concerning the glory of Christ that we receive the Holy Spirit. In John 7:37-39 Jesus tells us that if we have faith in him according to the Scriptures we will receive streams of living water flowing from within us. John then tells us that the promised streams of living water are the Holy Spirit. So if we would receive the Spirit we must have faith in Christ according to the Scriptures. Well if we do not know what the Word of God says about Christ, we cannot have faith in him according to the Word of God, and if we lack this faith we will lack the Spirit as well, so how significant is the Word?

Another wonderful truth about the value of the Word of God is that it is essential to abiding in Christ. In John 15:1-11 we have the tantalizing promises from Jesus that we have available to us, a relationship with him that is so close, that it can be compared to branches connected to a vine. Jesus is the vine and believers are the branches. The branches derive their life from the all sufficient vine, and as we are connected to the vine, we will bear much fruit. I have no idea how many times my heart and longings for God have been stirred by John 15, but it is a lot. In verse 7 Jesus tells us that, "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you." So the Word of God is essential to our abiding in Christ, and it is essential to so shaping our affections, our goals, our dreams, and ultimately our prayers, that it will lead us to pray according to God's will, and we will experience many wonderful answers to our prayers from God, which will increase our capacity to love and will increase our joy according to verses 10-11. This kind of love relationship unto real fruitfulness in his Kingdom is possible because Jesus tells us in verse 3 that the Word of the Gospel has made us clean from our sins. That text is loaded with unfolding the astounding benefits of the Word of God. I cannot think of any greater motivation to build the Word of God into our lives than what is declared to us in John 15.

In Ephesians 6:10-20 we learn that the armor of God with which we are to fight off Satan and his demonic forces, is all empowered by God's Word. Satan is going to lie and God has countered those lies with the truth, but if we don't know the truth we cannot take up the shield of faith in the truth, because we do not know the truth. We cannot put on the helmet of salvation because we don't know the biblical truth about salvation. We cannot stand on the Gospel of peace because we do not know the Gospel of peace. We cannot put on the breastplate of righteousness because we don't have a biblically informed view of what righteousness is, and going off of the world's definition we will call evil good and good evil, and the Scripture pronounces a woe upon those who do this (Isa. 5:20). If we do not know the Word of God we will not be able to yield the Sword of the Spirit and strike a blow to our enemy. We will get completely devoured by

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Satan and his team if we do not know God's Word. But if we do know it, we will be able to stand against his deceptions, his lies, and his assaults for the Word of God is a mighty, mighty weapon! In fact, it is the Word of God, according to Revelation 19:15 that Jesus uses to destroy his enemies at his coming, "From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of god the Almighty." Oh how victorious against evil is the Word of God when it is rightly understood, sincerely believed, and steadfastly obeyed!

So those are some of the truths about God's Word, that God's Word claims about itself. I cannot appeal to anything higher to motivate you to be a people committed to and dedicated to his Word. If you have eyes to see, these promises are alluring and staggering, and should cause you to hunger and thirst to meet with your God in his Word. And returning to our text, after surveying what God's Word promises and declares about God's Word, it makes perfect sense why Paul would so strongly and passionately urge Timothy to guard the Good deposit of the Spirit-empowered ministry of the Gospel according to the Word of God. Look at what we saw the Word promises to be and do in the life of a believer and in the life of a church. What will happen if this Word is forsaken? All of the great Kingdom things we long to see happen in our lives and the lives of loved ones will be impossible. All of the benefits of the Word will be forsaken if the Word is not known, and Christ will make war against us with the sword of his mouth, which is exactly what he promised to do to the church in Pergamum who was holding to the false teaching of Balak as well as the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:12-17).

### III. Guard Against False Knowledge

#### 1. Guard against false knowledge

Returning to our text in verse 20 of 1 Timothy 6, we see Paul give Timothy further critical instructions. The first half of the verse told us what he is to pursue, namely, guarding the good deposit, the 2nd half of the verse tells us that he is to avoid that which would compromise his guarding the good deposit of the ministry of God's Word, namely, "...the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge..." One of the reasons Timothy must guard the Word of God so closely is because he himself, as well as the church he is serving in, will be attacked by irreverent babble and this babble will disguise itself as "knowledge." It will claim to be wise, it will claim to be helpful, it will claim to be from God, and it will masquerade as the key knowledge for one to really know God, for one to really grow and be special, and in its arrogance it will wear the title of "The deep things of God," or that which is key to reach some sort of elite status of theological intellect.

This teaching is not harmless, in fact, Paul says in verse 21 that it is deadly by declaring, "for by professing it some have swerved from the faith." It masquerades as light, but it is pure darkness, it is demonic, and it destroys people's faith and the only defense against it is the good deposit that Timothy is to guard, namely, the Gospel-centered ministry of the Word of God.

Let's review the attacks this church has already endured from false teaching just from what we know of in 1 Timothy. In chapter 1:3-11 there were those who were pontificating as teachers but were promoting false doctrine through misuses of the Law, strange teachings from genealogies, as well as other speculations tied to myths. Whatever these teachings were, they were to be exposed and silenced by the Word of God. We know from 1:18-20 that Hymeneus and Alexander were likely the leading promoters of these heresies and had shipwrecked their faith through their blasphemies and were

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disciplined out of the church. Claiming to be wise with their false knowledge, they became fools, and forsook the faith and were dealt with by Paul, and Timothy is to guard the Word of God and be faithful to correct and deal with these things when they arise.

We know Timothy had to install elders and deacons and use biblical standards for that. We know Timothy had to establish men and women's roles in the church and the Word of God is to guide that as well. In addition to this Timothy likely had to deal with disciplining unqualified elders out of the church and that needed to be done according to God's Word.

We know from 3:14-16 that the mystery of genuine godliness is found in Christ. Through his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, as well as the heavenly and earthly witness to his glories that the church is to be on mission to proclaim, Christ and his glory are those things which really serve to promote godliness in his people. This contrasted sharply with the false teachers in 4:1-5 who were exposed as those who were under Satan's influence, those who promote the doctrines of demons, and teach salvation and righteousness through abstaining from certain foods and from marriage, which are all things God created to be received with thanksgiving by believers. In 4:6 Paul told Timothy that a requirement of him being a good and faithful minister of Christ Jesus is exposing these false doctrines against this false knowledge that is being promoted by false teachers.

Finally, we saw in chapter 6 that there were false teachers who loved to start quarrels and dissensions through their craving for controversies as they wrangle over false words in their ungodly teaching. All of their teaching and controversies are for the purpose of them getting rich through their "ministry." Again, Paul exposed and refuted these guys through the Word of God. Timothy is to guard that Word and deal with the ungodly babble.

So look at all Timothy had to deal with in just this one slice of what was going on in his ministry in Ephesus! How could he possibly begin to have any hope at all if he neglected the Word of God? You want to attack all of this with man's wisdom? It will fail with flying colors. Only the Word of God can accomplish the work of God in all of these situations. Whether it is leading the wayward to repentance, or expelling the ungodly from among you, whether it is removing disqualified leadership, or appointing godly leadership, or anything else, the Word of God must be known, believed, and applied, because in the storms of ministry, everything Timothy believes will be severely tested. His eyes and natural inclinations will tell him one thing, while the Word of God tells him another. There will be times he is doing what God's Word says to do, yet it seems like it is not working. He will have to be disciplined, have great faith, and stand on the revealed Word of God in these times no matter what his eyes tell him, or naysayers tell him, or false teachers tell him, or his flesh tells him.

Like Timothy, in your life you will have trouble, difficulties, controversies, battles to be fought, and issues to get through. If you forsake the Word of God, if you run to the irreverent babble of the world to be your guide, you will inevitably fall away from the faith. But, if you do not forsake it, if you stand on it daily, if you let it guide you, if you seek God's presence in it, if you submit to its commandments, you will stand firm in the faith and in your God. This is not an easy way of life, but it is the most blessed and joyful way.

2. By God's Grace

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In order for Timothy to fulfill his calling and walk, in order for us to be able to stand in the day of blessing and in the day of trial, we must have God's Word, we must stand on it, know it, and believe it. But, that is not enough. We need something more, and that something more is revealed to us at the end of 1 Timothy when Paul closed the letter by saying, "Grace be with you." These are the last words Paul leaves for Timothy. As we bring ourselves to his Word, as we stand on his promises, going one step beyond this, we need God himself, by his real and literal grace, to take his Word, and create the fruit of the Spirit inside of us that we do not possess. When we are afraid we can take the promise from Isa. 41:10, "Fear not for I am with you, be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand," and pray God will create the God-confident courage this promise is striving to produce in us, and move forward in faith. Then, when God's grace is operative he gives us the ability to be courageous as we stand in the promise. Sometimes the courage surges through us and is easy to exercise, and other times it barely trickles enough for us to do what we need to do, but at the end of the day, the grace of God, uses the Word of God, to empower the people of God to walk in a manner that reflects the glory of God!

I believe that this means that when we are standing on the Word, we have to actually seek the person of God while we are in his Word. The Word of God is not a magic book that we read as though a few verses will cast a spell over us and give us a new day. Rather, the Word of God is a highway that leads us to the living God himself. It is an avenue by which we pursue God, it is a key that unlocks the door of the presence of God, it is a vessel through which the presence of God is mediated to us. Understanding the Word of God is not our ultimate goal, connecting with God is the ultimate goal and it is understanding the Word that is the instrument to our connecting with him! We need the truth for sure, but much more than that, we need the grace of the living God, operative and moving in our lives.

I commend you to the Word of his truth. Guard it, protect it, learn it, know it, stand on it, obey it, believe it, but more than anything, connect to God through it. Any Christian and any church that wants to navigate the Christian life in communion with God, in a fruitful and loving manner, and in a way that will cause God to say at the end of his life, "well done good and faithful servant," must be a creature of the Word, who uses it to lay hold of the God of grace. The death of Jesus on the cross for our sins is the price that was paid to reconcile us to God. If he was willing to do that when you were not a believer, how much more will he be willing to meet you in his Word as you come to him in desperation seeking his presence and his help? He loves you and he will meet you. The closing of 1 Timothy is the key to the entire Christian life. Know, believe, live off of, obey, and cherish the Word of God as you depend on the grace of God to use his Word to create life in you, revive you, give you hope, courage, patience, joy, peace, kindness, gentleness, self-control, love, and closeness with the Lord.