

WEEK THREE – GUARDING THE FAITH

Read 2 Timothy 1:6-18 and 2:1-13

If we are to guard the faith, we need to know what has been placed in our care. Timothy was blessed to have been brought up knowing the scriptures from being a child. Not only did he learn the scriptures, but it is evident from descriptions of his life, that he had put that learning into practice. Throughout this book, Paul constantly reminds Timothy to be aware of what has been entrusted to him because it is precious. He also reminds him about suffering as a good soldier and keeping the rules in order to win the prize. There are no short cuts in developing our spiritual lives.

We know that Timothy accompanied Paul on most of his second journey. Timothy would no doubt have stepped outside his comfort zone to do this. His somewhat sheltered upbringing and obvious close family life were vastly different from the experiences of accompanying the Apostle. He became Paul's constant companion and co-worker in sharing the gospel. In AD52 he accompanied Paul and Silas to minister in Macedonia. Having stayed in Berea and Thessalonica, whilst Paul went to Athens, they then met up at Corinth. In *1 Thessalonians 3:2*, Paul says: "We sent Timothy to visit you. He is our co-worker for God and our brother in proclaiming the Good News of Christ. We sent him to strengthen you to encourage you in your faith...."

- Paul had confidence in Timothy and his ability to preach the gospel. This statement demonstrates how quickly Timothy grew into his calling. Are you growing spiritually, and if so, what helps you to do this?

Whilst we can and do, experience immense joy in our Christian walk, we are not here to play games.

- What do you think is our essential calling as Christians?

Read Philippians 2:19-23

- Do we care about the welfare of others, physical and spiritual? How do we demonstrate this care?

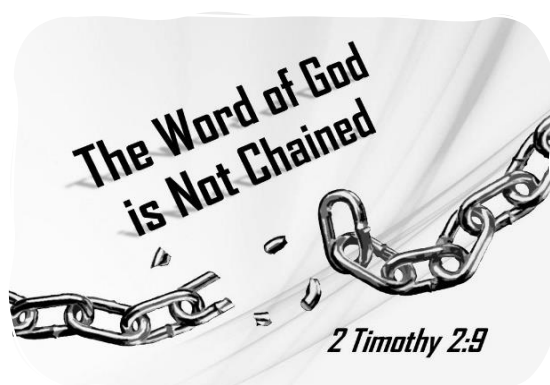
Read again 1 Timothy 1:8-9

- Do we appreciate the privilege we have in coming to know Jesus and having the opportunity to serve him?
- What do we learn from these verses that God has done for us through the gospel?
- How do we guard what God has given us?
- Why is it so important to do this?

Read again verses 1-10 of chapter 2

At the end of chapter 1 Paul gives examples of disloyalty and loyalty. Those of the earlier followers in Asia had deserted him. It must have been devastating.

- How do we make ourselves strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus?
- What is your understanding of verse 4? Does it mean we should not be involved in things outside of our Christian faith?
- Paul says: *“But God’s word is not chained”*. What do you think he meant by this?



In that great gospel song by John Gibson, it says:

It was for freedom that Christ has set us free.
 No longer to be subject to a yoke of slavery.
 So we're rejoicing in God's victory,
 Our hearts responding to His love.
 His Spirit in us releases us from fear

- Paul understood the reality of being physically chained. How might we be ‘chained’?

Often in studies like this, we make assumptions as to what people understand. So, let's make it clear what is the gospel, or the faith that we are guarding, in simple terms:

The word 'Gospel' literally means '**Good News**' and it is mentioned over ninety times in the Bible. Broadly speaking, the Gospel is the whole of scripture; the mega narrative of God's plan to restore humanity to Himself. **Specifically speaking, the Gospel is the good news about Jesus. The story of who He is and what He did.**

We also need to guard ourselves:

Proverbs 4:20-27

My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words.

Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body.

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech.

Look straight ahead and fix your eyes on what lies before you.

Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. Don't get side-tracked; keep your feet from following evil.



Prayer:

Thank you for the message of guarding your word. May we treasure it in our hearts and be prepared to share it with others.

Amen