

Guard the Gospel

1 Timothy 1:1-20

Series Introduction

House Rules: Every house I've been in has its own rules. Some are shoes-off, others don't care ("I hope I don't have a hole in my sock"). Some people eat at the table, others in front of the TV. Some have no food on the furniture, while others treat it like a corner booth at IHOP.

- My house is no exception. We've got our own rules (e.g., the first person downstairs opens the blinds; we read, sing, and pray before bed). Maybe the most controversial, no *screen time* until you've done your reading. *Even in the summer!* If you want to watch your show or play your video game, you've got to read for 30 minutes first.
- Sometimes other kids stop by, see the TV or the PlayStation, and ask, "Can I watch?" Or, "Can I play?" And I'll ask them, "Did you do your reading?" They look at me like I've lost my mind. I'll smile and say, "My house, my stuff, my rules."

Why do we have house rules? Because they reflect the values and protect the culture of those who live there.

- Our church is a big fan of Chick-fil-A because they always donate chicken sandwiches to our events. This year, they gave us 100 free sandwiches for the Fall Block Party. If you go to Chick-fil-A, they have a rule for their employees. They don't say, "You're welcome." They *must* say, "My pleasure." I assume if they mess up, they have to read Psalm 51 ten times and lose Waffle Fry privileges for a week. **Why do they say this?** Because it protects a culture of joyful service. It's not just a job but a joy.
- Every family, every organization, has values, expectations, and rhythms they live by. And the same is true in God's house.

In God's House: The people of God belong to the household of God. In God's house, we play by God's rules. What he values, we value. What he loves, we love. What he commands, we obey.

- "I am writing these things to you so that... you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God" (1 Tim 3:14-15).
- This isn't about a building. It's about a *family*. The church isn't brick and mortar; it's people redeemed and gathered under the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. And like any healthy family, God gives us structure, order, and purpose so we can thrive together.
- That's what **1 Timothy** is all about: **learning how to live as God's people in God's house**. Paul is writing to his son in the faith (*Timothy*) as he leads a church he loves (*Ephesus*).
- As we step into "God House," we're going to look at the house rules.

The first rule we see is this: in God's house, we **guard the gospel**.

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,
² To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that

you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.⁵ The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.⁶ Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion,⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully,⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,¹¹ in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.¹⁸ This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,¹⁹ holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith,²⁰ among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

From this passage, I want to show *three reasons why* we guard the gospel and *three reasons how* we guard the gospel.

WHY WE GUARD THE GOSPEL

The Charge: There's a "charge" running throughout.¹ Paul starts this section with a "charge" (1 Tim 1:3) and ends it with a charge (1:18).² The charge is specifically to guard the gospel by teaching sound doctrine. **Why?**

- **Reality of Good and Bad Doctrine:** Remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons *not to teach any different doctrine* (1 Tim 1:3). Lit. "heterodoxy"³; "different"⁴ + "teaching."⁵ The opposite is "orthodoxy" (straight or right teaching). In many ways, Timothy is charged to "straighten out" the "crooked" doctrine in Ephesus.⁶

¹ παραγγελία; παραγγέλλω 1 Tim 1:3, 1:5, 1:18, 4:11, 5:7, 6:13. Noun form used only 5x in NT (2x in Acts, and 3x in 1 Tim).

² Military language. A commander handing orders to a soldier;.

³ ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω

⁴ Or "other"

⁵ Or "doctrine"

⁶ A "pastor!" theme also found in Titus for the people of Crete.

- There is *good* teaching and *bad* teaching. We live in a world that says, “It doesn’t really matter what you believe,” it only matters what you do.
- It *does* matter. It eternally matters because the gospel charts the only path home to the Father.
- This “sound doctrine” is “in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted” (1 Tim 1:10-11).⁷
- **The Beauty of Good Doctrine:** There is a beautiful end to healthy doctrine. The aim of sound doctrine is not winning debates or collecting theological trivia, but the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith (1 Tim 1:5).⁸
 - The goal, the target,⁹ of sound doctrines is love of God and others.¹⁰ You can’t love what you don’t know. Right belief leads to right worship, and right worship leads to right love.
 - Right doctrine is like a compass. You’re not meant to admire the needle; you’re meant to let it guide you to the right destination. If the compass of your belief is off by just a few degrees, you’ll end up miles from where you’re supposed to be.
 - When your teaching is in line with the gospel, it guides you to love God with a pure heart,¹¹ a good conscience,¹² and a sincere and unhyphocritical faith.¹³
- **The Danger of Bad Doctrine:** There is a real danger of getting off the gospel line. If you drift from the gospel, you wreck the ship. This charge I entrust to you... By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith (1 Tim 1:18-20). Certain persons have swerved from the gospel and shipwrecked their faith.
 - Timothy’s job was to keep the church aligned to the true gospel, like a captain steering by the light of the Word.
 - In Acts 20, Paul warned the elders of Ephesus, where Timothy now finds himself, that false teachers (i.e., wolves) would decimate the flock by twisting the Word of God.
 - This is why we build our worship, small group, and discipleship around the regular teaching and meditation on the truths of Scripture.
 - Jesus said: “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (Jn 17:17).
 - It is the “sacred writings” of Scripture, “which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15).
 - “Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God... And this word is the good news¹⁴ that was preached to you” (1 Peter 1:23, 25).

⁷ τῆ ὑγιαίνουσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ... κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς δόξης τοῦ μακαρίου θεοῦ, ὃ ἐπίστεύθη ἐγώ

⁸ τὸ δὲ τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας ἐστὶν ἀγάπη ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας καὶ συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς καὶ πίστεως ἀνυποκρίτου

⁹ *Telos*

¹⁰ Matt 22:37-38

¹¹ καθαρᾶς καρδίας

¹² συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς

¹³ πίστεως ἀνυποκρίτου

¹⁴ τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν

- When the truth of Scripture isn't taught regularly, something else will fill the gap. When God's Word isn't our lighthouse, we will shipwreck our faith and the faith of others.
 - We think it would be cool to get a shout-out in Scripture, not if you're Hymenaeus and Alexander. They're immortalized as examples of men who swerved from the gospel and are handed over to Satan.¹⁵ Real people in the real world with real consequences.
- When we get the gospel wrong, when we swerve from Scripture, we destroy ourselves and those who listen to us.
 - That's why the **ministry of the Word** must stay central in God's house. Don't be fooled by fanciful theories, entertaining crowds, or clever sermons. When we replace the Word with speculation, sentiment, or spiritual fads, we starve ourselves of what we need most. God has already given us what we need through his Word—everything required for life, godliness, and lasting joy.

The reason we must **guard the gospel** is that it matters eternally, it is the only path to salvation, produces love, and because drifting from it destroys faith. **But how? How do we, as God's people, in God's house, guard the gospel?**

- Three ways:
 - Teach the Gospel Rightly
 - Embrace the Gospel Deeply
 - Hold the Gospel Strongly

HOW WE GUARD THE GOSPEL

1. Teach the Gospel Rightly (vv. 3-11)

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith... ⁶ Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

Gospel Sufficiency: We guard the gospel by refusing to add to it, twist it, or drown it out.

Ephesians Error: Paul says the false teachers in Ephesus were obsessed with *myths* and *genealogies*, and clever speculation that distracted from the sufficiency of the gospel.

¹⁵ ¹⁶ But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some (2 Tim 2:16-18). Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds (2 Tim 4:14)

- The word for “sound” doctrine also means “healthy” teaching. The gospel nourishes our souls. When we trade it for false teaching, it’s like filling up on spiritual junk food. It might taste good for a moment, but it’s empty calories.
- E.g., myths, endless genealogies, speculations, vain discussion, etc.
 - These problems were endemic to Second Temple Judaism. There were multiple works written to retell OT stories with heavy speculation about angels, fictional speeches from the patriarchs, and secret knowledge.¹⁶ Filling in details about Abraham’s early life or Moses’ childhood with fictional embellishments, **opting to speculate on what the Bible doesn’t say, rather than listen to what it does** (i.e., theological fan fiction).¹⁷
- We live in a world addicted to noise—opinions, controversies, endless talking heads. Don’t trade the *sure* word of the gospel that you are called to steward from God...by faith for human speculation.
- Are you filling your heart with the soul-enriching truth of the unadulterated Word of God or the junk food of speculation?¹⁸ Are you feasting on God’s glorious revelation in Scripture or looking to fill in the gaps with dim guesses and human imagination?
 - When your mind isn’t filled with the beauty of the gospel, you’re vulnerable to fruitless tangents. “When central issues become peripheral, peripheral issues become central” (Begg).
 - Maturity in the faith is not leveling up from the gospel but digging deeper into it. We teach kids “stranger danger” (e.g., van, candy, puppies, WiFi, etc.). Why? Because kids don’t yet know how to tell the difference between kindness and danger. You shouldn’t have to tell a 20-year-old. You expect that with maturity comes understanding. Spiritually, it’s the same. Immature believers chase whatever sounds new or deep. But gospel maturity keeps you grounded; it keeps you from wandering off with the latest theological stranger. The more you know your Father’s voice, the less likely you are to get theological abducted.
- You don’t need mystical spiritual experiences or special angelic encounters, but a steady confidence in Christ and his word.¹⁹ Don’t try to figure out what the Bible didn’t say—treasure, believe, and obey what it did!

Bad Teachers: We see they don’t understand the very thing they teach by their interpretation of the “law” (e.g., Torah, OT, etc.). They’re talking about what they don’t understand. They want to be teachers but don’t know what they teach. They want to be professors but don’t know what they profess²⁰ (e.g., a business professor teaching organizational leadership who is an incompetent leader of an organization).

- ⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for

¹⁶ *Jubilees, 1 Enoch, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Likely Paul’s “Jewish Myths” (μῦθοις ἰουδαϊκοῖς) cf. Tit 1:14.

¹⁷ Cf. Midrash

¹⁸ Cf. 1 Pet 2:2

¹⁹ Pietism, cf. Col 2:16-24

²⁰ HT Begg

murderers,¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,¹¹ in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

- They were using the law *unlawfully*, improperly, and not for its intended purpose.
 - For a group of people obsessed with the Hebrew Bible, who would literally strap it to their foreheads and wrap it around their wrists, they missed the point.
 - The law of the OT is good, and Jesus did not come to abolish it but to fulfill it. But its purpose is not to save you. The law is for sinners, the lawless and disobedient.
 - Until they realize they are sick, they will miss the point. Jesus came for the sick, not the healthy.²¹ The law can expose sin, but it can't erase it. It's not a ladder to climb your way to God but a reality check to show us how far we are from him.
 - How can the law be a bridle to those who don't think they need a restraint? How could it be a mirror to reveal dirtiness to someone who thinks they are clean? How can it be a guide to Jesus for those who think they already know where they're going?
 - The law was never meant to make us self-reliant but God dependent.²² If the law drives you to yourself, that's not the gospel, that's not grace, that's self-righteousness, *which is no righteousness at all*.

Gospel: Don't add to the gospel (legalism). Don't subtract from the gospel (license). Don't distract from the gospel (speculation). Hear the gospel, the good news of Jesus, and place your faith in him.

- The good news of the gospel is this: you don't climb your way up to God; He came down to you in grace.
- Your sin separated you from God, but Jesus lived the life you couldn't live and died the death you deserved, so that through faith in Him you might be forgiven and made new.
- Salvation isn't achieved by rigorous effort; it's received by dependent faith.
- It's not Jesus plus effort, Jesus plus morality, or Jesus plus knowledge. It's Jesus alone.
- Don't add to the gospel. Don't subtract from it. Don't distract from it.
- The gospel is enough.

The gospel is not an abstract truth to be memorized but a gracious gift to be experienced.

2. Embrace the Gospel Deeply (vv. 12-17)

¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the

²¹ Lk 5:31-32

²² Contra legalism

foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Personal Journey: In thinking about the gospel, Paul takes a detour through his own testimony. The gospel is not just information he knows but a truth he has experienced.

Gospel Glasses: You might expect Paul to turn his theological guns at the false teachers (i.e., you sinner), but instead he turns them on himself.

- He sees his sin more than he sees the sin of others (i.e., foremost sinner)
- He sees God's grace, more than his ability.
 - He's not saying, "I proved myself faithful, so God rewarded me." He's saying, "Christ in His mercy counted me trustworthy, even though I wasn't."
 - The faithfulness Christ found in Paul was the faithfulness Christ produced in Paul.
 - That's the heart of grace. **Jesus doesn't call the faithful; he makes the called faithful.**

Blasphemer to Believer: Paul never got over who he was before Christ: blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent.

- Paul is profoundly honest about his sinful condition, which only highlights the gift of God: But I received mercy.
- The gospel reminds us that God doesn't treat us as our sins deserve,²³ but gives us what we could never earn.

Overflowing Grace: That transformative experience of the grace and mercy of God overflowed into every area of his life.

- The gospel humbles us because it reminds us who we *were*, but it also lifts us up because it reminds us who we *are* in Christ.

This gospel is worth fighting for.

3. Hold the Gospel Strongly (vv. 18–20)

¹⁸ This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ²⁰ among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Holy War: The gospel we teach and treasure is the gospel we must tenaciously keep.

- This is not a hobby, it's a holy fight. Everyone wants to fight about everything, the gospel is the thing worth fighting for.

²³ Cf. Ps 103:10

- It's not about power or prestige but a faithful witness for our generation and the next.
- If we lose the gospel, we lose our witness, our hope, and our souls.
- If we want a healthy church for this generation and the next, then we have to guard the gospel—teaching it rightly, embracing it deeply, and holding it strongly.

Conclusion

How will you respond? The gospel isn't advice to try but news to trust.

1. Do you know the true gospel? Have you admitted your sin and placed your faith in Jesus. Have you trusted in his grace and mercy to save you, or are you busy with spiritual fads or self-improvement projects?

2. Have you gotten over your gracious salvation? Do you find yourself looking down on others rather than up to Christ? Spend time today remembering what it was like to be lost in sin, despair, pride, and hopelessness. Remember what it was like when the chains of your heart fell off and Christ set you free. Remember the moment of mercy.

3. Have you grown weary? Recommit to the gospel fight. The glory of God and the salvation of our world are worth fighting for. The truth of the gospel and the tears of mercy fuel our sacrifice. If you've been sitting on the sidelines, get back in the battle.

- Jump back into God's Word this week.
- Jump back into Bible Study this week.
- Recommit to praying for the lost and sharing the gospel.
- Consider ways to use your gifts to serve the body of Christ and spread the gospel of Christ.

When he thinks of the sin God forgave and the grace he receives, Paul breaks out into praise to God: To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen..