

# Sermon: This Is Our Calling – Be Faithful<sup>1</sup>

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Sermon Text: 1 Timothy 6:20-21

*“Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you.” (NIV)*

Are you passionate about your faith and about living the Christian life? The world needs passionate Christians. The Lord wants passionate believers. The Church needs passionate disciples. “Passionate” means having strong desires, feelings and convictions – not being apathetic or careless. Are you passionate for the Lord?

Now, why do I start with this question? Because the Apostle Paul, who wrote this text (1 Tim. 6:20-21), was passionate for the Lord, and he wrote a concluding appeal to Timothy, a young disciple, to be a faithful and passionate disciple.

This appeal for believers to BE FAITHFUL contains four pleas that I want to share with you:

- 1) **Be faithful to the gospel way.**
- 2) **Stay focused.**
- 3) **Listen to the warnings. Do NOT wander.**
- 4) **Seek grace.**

## 1. **Be faithful to the gospel.** (verse 20a)

*a.) Be faithful and guard what is entrusted to you.*

Paul tells us if we are going to be faithful we must GUARD or WATCH OVER what has been given to us. Do you have a safety deposit box at the CIBC or Bank of America or Barclays or Bank of Nova Scotia? That box is there to guard your valuables. In Paul’s day there was no such thing as a safety deposit box, so when you went on a trip, you found a person who was very reliable and you left your valuables with that person. You said to him or

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon was preached in 2009 through a translator at the Prince Edward Island Korean Church.

her, “Guard what I have entrusted to you” – do not lose it or let anyone steal it. In the same way, Paul commanded Timothy to guard what Paul had entrusted to him – watch over it, be faithful to it.

*b.) What was Timothy to be faithful towards?*

Paul does not give the answer directly in verse 20. Rather, Paul assumes that Timothy now knows this answer. He has been telling Timothy what he has to guard and with what he has to be faithful all through this letter. Thus, Timothy now knows the answer to the question, “To what am I to be faithful?” See 1 Timothy 1:15, “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners . . .” and also 1 Timothy 2:5 and 6, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men . . .”. In other words, Timothy, be faithful to the whole truth of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you do not talk about Jesus and His work as God’s Son at the cross, then you are not faithful. It is JESUS CHRIST and His BLOOD as the ONLY WAY, TRUTH AND LIFE.

Jude says it this way: “. . . contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude vs. 3). The gospel is the most precious word in all the world. I must believe this; I must not turn to any other word.

*c.) Be faithful to spread this gospel.*

I know Christians who say they are committed to all aspects of the gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ but never help to see it spread. I call them “Ghetto Christians” or “Fortress Christians”. They appear very loyal to the gospel, but they have no passion for missions and spreading the gospel and no sense of personal testimony as salt and light Christians. They seem content just to believe the gospel but are not passionate to spread the gospel. Friends, that is not being faithful to the gospel. We are only fooling ourselves if we think that is being faithful.

*d.) Be faithful to the gospel way.*

I will only mention this in passing. I believe at the beginning of this letter Paul is not only exhorting Timothy to guard the doctrine of what is the gospel but also the goal to bear gospel fruit. That gospel fruit is love and a good conscience. That is why, in part, I have formulated this point as “Be faithful to the gospel way”.

***Here then is my first point – you must be passionately faithful to the gospel of the blood of Jesus Christ – He died for you. There is no other gospel but God’s Son Jesus Christ. You are called to be passionately faithful to this and to the spread of this gospel. It has been entrusted to you personally and you must make certain you remain in this gospel way.***

## 2. Stay focused. (verse 20b)

Paul knew that there are many temptations to hinder one from STAYING FOCUSED on the gospel. It is like trying to focus on many objects when taking a photograph. You must focus your lens on one object from which everything else will have perspective.

It is very easy in the Christian life to lose our focus – Jesus Christ. How do we lose focus? There are many ways. We can become so concerned about work, career, family, advancement, education, friends – all good things in balance – that we lose sight of the very essential quality of living first for Christ. He is the focal point from which everything else gains perspective.

There is another way to lose focus, and that is by starting to listen to the wrong teachers and talkers. Paul warns Timothy to turn away from two groups of folks: those who engage in “godless chatter” and, secondly, those who oppose sound truth and are, in essence, false talkers.

### *a.) Stay focused – avoid the godless chatters.*

Who are these folks? Well, they are empty talkers. I could even say empty preachers and empty people. All they want to do is talk about silly arguments – just talk and talk and talk. They are the kind that throw up bizarre and strange arguments that are of no importance. They just want to turn Christianity into a big discussion group. Now, discussion is good, and I hope that you attend Bible studies where discussion occurs, but not empty talk. You will learn there are some people who will try to take you into their arguments, and they go nowhere. They are not humble or teachable, just arguers. Always remember that you cannot argue someone into the Kingdom of God, but that this is the work of the Holy Spirit blessing the testimony of the gospel. Do not try to do the work of the Holy Spirit. Give the simple gospel and show love, but do not try to just argue all the time. It will not work. It is the Spirit Who humbles, convicts and brings to faith. Paul is saying to be faithful to the gospel you need to remain focused on Christ, and some Christians have fallen into the trap of becoming argumentative with empty talkers which will go nowhere. Give the simple gospel, love people and do not forget that you cannot argue people into the Kingdom.

### *b.) Stay focused – avoid the false teachers.*

Young Christians will face much temptation from false teachers who will tell them the Bible is not such a good book. They will also face false teachers who will deny the one way of Jesus Christ alone. In Paul’s day he saw a budding movement from false teachers which years later would develop into a large cult. He was warning Timothy to be faithful to the Word, to stay focused on Christ and not to listen to false teachings. These false teachers undermine the gospel of Jesus Christ alone. Can you name some false teachers? Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses are two obvious examples. Then there are more sophisticated ones like preachers who add to the

requirements of salvation or professors in universities who say all religions are the same and no one really needs to believe in Jesus alone. **STAY FOCUSED** and be faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ alone.

*Here is my second point then – you must be passionately faithful to the gospel of the blood of Jesus Christ, and you are to stay focused on this message. I ask you, are you staying focused?*

### **3. Listen to the warnings not to wander.** (verse 21a)

Verse 21 tells us that there are people who start the Christian life and then after time begin to WANDER away from the Lord. The best way to understand what Paul is saying is to read the parable of The Sower which Jesus gave in Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23. Many do receive the word for a season, and then things begin to choke out Christ from the centre of their lives. Yes, the word was given and the seeds did sprout, but then the thorns choked it out. Jesus interprets His parable with these words: “The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22). I see in 1 Timothy at least three different kinds of wandering – doctrinal wandering, false ascetic wandering and materialistic wandering. Each deserves a sermon in its own right.

**I will highlight five warning signs** to tell us if we are starting to wander from being faithful to the gospel. I am sure there are more but here are five signs of warning to wanderers from being faithful.

**#1. A lack of love for the Scripture.** Less attention given to reading the Word of God and study of the Scripture – this is a clear warning sign that wandering from faithfulness may be starting. Read the Word and ask the Spirit to give you understanding.

**#2. A decrease in love for God’s children.** When your fellowship grows cold and you spend less and less time with fellow believers, this is a clear warning sign that you are starting to wander away. The Lord says to you, “Come back now and be faithful.” Fellow believers are “members of one body” and were baptized with one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

**#3. A decrease or a lack of devotion to the Lord as evident in a decline in prayer.** Prayer is the believer’s communion house with the Lord. Prayer is the believer’s confessional room. Prayer is the believer’s power supply for spiritual strength and energy. The Lord wants our voices to address Him through prayer. If we are not praying personally, then we are in a dangerous place and are vulnerable to wandering.

**#4. A slow change in our thinking.** Now what do I mean by that? I have observed over time that solid Christians who start wandering from the Lord start to change their convictions. Once they were clear on what the Lord

expects of Christians, for example on moral issues like abortion or homosexuality. However, over time they start to come under the influence of other thinkers and start to wander away from clear moral standards. In other words, they begin to slowly change their thinking towards compromise. Now, every Christian should be growing in their thoughts and changing positively but always moving toward conformity to the Word of God not toward compromise. There is a big difference. Is your thinking being renewed by the Word of God and the power of the Spirit? (Romans 12:2)

**#5 A choking out of our passion for evangelism and mission.** Again, some have started with desires for evangelism and mission, but over time this is simply choked out. If this happens, it is a warning sign that wandering from the call to BE FAITHFUL has begun.

Friends, the Apostle Paul here is like a doctor seeing a patient. Let's call the patient "Mr. Christian". Paul examines the patient, Mr. Christian, and he says, "Oh dear, I see some signs that you are beginning to wander away from the call to be faithful to the gospel. I see that you have a lack of devotion to the Scripture; you have no interest in real fellowship with fellow born-again Christians. I see that you have no desire for personal prayer. I see that you are changing your thinking on clear biblical standards for holy living, and I see almost no passion for missions in your life. As Paul, the physician, I now must give my diagnosis: you are wandering from your first love. I now charge you to repent personally and return to being a faithful disciple of Jesus, Mr. Christian."

*Here is my third point – diagnose yourself with Dr. Paul helping you. Are you wandering from faithfulness? Ask the Lord to renew your focus.*

#### **4. Seek grace.** (verse 21b)

Now, there is one thing every Christian needs if he or she is going to BE FAITHFUL – God's Grace! Paul ends verse 21 with a beautiful benediction. Paul's whole understanding of the Christian life is that we live and walk by grace. No one comes to the Lord but by grace. Grace truly is amazing! Grace transformed us and brought about a new life in the Lord Jesus within us. What is grace? Grace is really descriptive of the whole work of God's tremendous mercy towards undeserving sinners. God loved me and He gave me new life through His Son. God saved me by grace – nothing I did could save me. Only by grace was I saved. Now, if I am to live a faithful life for the Lord, I must walk not in my own strength; each step must be taken by His grace. That is why I believe when Paul gives his passionate plea for Timothy, a young disciple, and hence to all believers, to be faithful, he also says, "Now what you need is grace to be faithful." Grace forgives failure, grace picks you up when you wander, grace empowers you to speak for the Lord and not

compromise. We need the power of God's grace. God's grace is sufficient!

In the next letter to Timothy, Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:14 these words: "Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you – guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us." That is a great verse! There it is again – guard the gospel that you have, but there is one secret – you must rely upon the grace of God which flows to you by the Holy Spirit.

### **Conclusion:**

The Lord wants you to be a passionate and committed disciple of His kingdom. Are you living only half for the Lord or is He your whole Lord? Paul is speaking to you by the Holy Spirit – God wants you to be faithful to the blood of Christ, the gospel. He does not want you to lose your focus. He is warning you like a doctor of the signs of wandering from the good way. But he gives you hope. Brothers and sisters, you can be faithful by God's grace.

