

Sunday Night Football Part 4: Guard the Faith 10.09.11

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:8-14 ESV

Video: "Football Advice from Pastor: Guard!" [1:39]

Intro: Doing things a little differently today. Mary Kay and I are enjoying some sun and surf and Myrtle Beach this week. So I've pre-recorded today's talk. I think you'll still enjoy it and benefit from it because we're talking about such an important topic: GUARDING YOUR FAITH!

Illustration: In football there are two positions called "guard." A right guard and a left guard. When the plays are designed this is where it begins. Blocking... Guarding... fundamental to football. Both are important and both must do their job in order for the team to advance the ball and protect the quarterback. Same is true of our Christian faith. To guard our faith is fundamental...

In our Christian lives we also have 2 "guards. Let's talk about each:

1st Guard: THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

Thankfully our faith is not dependent upon us. If we are a Christ-follower the Bible tells us that God's Spirit will guard our faith!

"I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me." 2 Timothy 1:12b ESV

Who is the "he"? Christ! In this passage Paul is asking his audience a question. Does his suffering result in embarrassment or shame? In their culture, (as well as our own) honor was important. Success was crucial. No one would suffer who was succeeding. If suffering then must be because we're not successful. Sadly we get our own definition of success all screwed up. How do I define success in my faith? How do I know my faith is valid - REGARDLESS OF WHAT HAPPENS TO ME? Paul was *convinced* that God could / would GUARD his faith.

We also read of a second guard:

2nd Guard: PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

We read here of a second guard, one that works in unison with the first. And that is you and me each taking personal responsibility to guard our faith in Christ Jesus.

"¹⁴By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you." 2 Timothy 1:14 ESV

Those of you who are grammar experts, who is the unspoken subject in the verse above? YOU! YOU GUARD the good deposit entrusted to you. Do you see it? Now clearly we do not do this on our own. In the same sentence we read the preface, "By the Holy Spirit who dwells within..." However, clearly there is a cooperation that must take place.

I don't just sit back and say, "God you do it all," while I sit back and do nothing. "God You do your faith thing and then I'll go about doing my own thing." NO! "My thing" must be aligned with "God's thing!" My salvation, the good news of the Gospel message, is the good deposit and it has been *entrusted to us*. The question is, "What will we do with it?"

Let's not allow our theology to get in the way of the good advice that Paul is giving Timothy. Many times we'll fall back on the truth that our salvation is based on the work of CHRIST ALONE. That's true! There's nothing you or I can do to earn our salvation, to earn our relationship and good standing with God. However, relationship is always a two-way street. Once the relationship is established - we must cooperate with God's Holy Spirit.

KEY TRUTH - You may be saved but never be assured of your salvation because of this very issue - you haven't guarded your faith. You haven't taken your own responsibility for it. **Illustration** - just like the offensive guards on the front line of the football team need to be in step with one another... they both have to be on the same playbook... you need to be in step with God's Spirit to guard your faith.

How do we do this? **FOLLOW THE PATTERN**.

Paul get's real personal with us. You want to know how to guard your faith. Do what I do. Follow what I do. Watch and learn.

¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 1:13 ESV

Illustration - In football the offense runs plays. They are orchestrated STEP BY STEP. Especially important with the guard. He pulls and leads blocks. Important to follow the pattern. Otherwise a mess; a broken play!

Paul tells us to follow the pattern. What is it? 3 verbs all intertwined in the Words of God that we find in this book, The Bible!

A. **KNOW** the Words of God.

¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me.
2 Timothy 1:13a ESV

Timothy had the benefit of Paul's instruction in person, day-to-day. Did you know that we also can have the benefit of Paul's "sound words" by reading the Bible? Not only Paul but James and Peter and Hebrews and Matthew and Mark and Luke and John!!!

Example - This is why we are making such an emphasis on YouVersion. I want you to know the "sound words." You're not going to get them from TV. And your weekly hour in church is not enough. Every day - through out the day - I want you in God's Word so the instructions from the Bible permeate your thoughts and actions.

¹³ ...for I know whom I have believed, ... 2 Timothy 1:12b
Do YOU KNOW what you believe? We live in a world filled with changing truths. Soft truth. 'You believe one thing. I believe another. And we can both be right.' Confusing. Leads ultimately to no truth. No belief. Anything goes. No one is right... or wrong!

The problem is this doesn't lead to faith or confidence in God to guard our faith. It weakens us. There is STRENGTH in allowing God to fill us with HIS truth.

B. **SHARE** the Words of God.

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, 2 Tim. 1:8a

This doesn't mean I need to annoy others. Or talk where and when others aren't interested. But it also means I'm NOT ASHAMED. IOW, I'm not living hoping people will just guess why I live the way I do. We need to put actions to our words AND words to our actions! **2 Ways:**

1st way - Support / Encourage / Partner with those who are actively pronouncing the gospel.

“...nor of me his prisoner, but **share** in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,” 2 Timothy 1:8b ESV

2nd way - Find and live out my own purpose and calling.

[Our Lord] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which **he gave us.**”
2 Timothy 1:9 ESV

C. **EXPERIENCE** the Words of God.

“and which now has been **manifested** through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus,” 2 Timothy 1:10 ESV

Paul could see God at work with His Word in a powerful way - personally and in the world at large. He experienced it. He could see it. We also should be so in tune with God's Word and God's Spirit that we begin to see and marvel at God's WORK all around us.

YouVersion Example: Mobiles / Internet. Coincidence or God's Work?

- Almost 30 million downloads of YouVersion Bible app.
- 1/3 to a non-English phone!
- Approaching 1 billion minutes per month of interaction.
- 153 versions / 45 different languages
- BHAG of developers? 500 million downloads, every language!

Play Video: “YouVersion Influence” [1:48]

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nxlu_B4tF6o

Webinar Quote by Bobby Gruenewald, Innovation Leader: “*Could we see 500 million people... engaging in God's Word?... Could this be not just the generation that begins to turn back towards God's Word, but could this be the generation that's more engaged in God's Word than any generation in history? ... Not just to reverse the trend, but completely flip it?*” 11/16/2010

Conclusion: Do I EXPERIENCE the Words of God working wonders in my world? If not, consider the balance of God's Word in your life.

ILLUSTRATION - When the offensive guard in football gets down into that 3-point stance, he is perfectly balanced. Ideally he can run block or pass block from that position without telegraphing his intent or direction.

We also need the balance of God's Word in our lives to help guard our faith. This means more than just KNOWING. More than just TELLING. We have to EXPERIENCE God's Word in our life to . An experience inside that convinces me that this Christian faith is true. This is right. This is what I have been looking for. You want to be able to say these words just like the Apostle Paul:

“I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I've committed unto Him against that Day!” 2 Timothy 2:12 [Mark's Memory]

PRAYER: Steve, will you come and lead us in prayer together?