

TUTORIAL
4.4

Keep, guard, entrust

This tutorial discusses the idea that we are to make the Truth part of our own lives, see that it is not changed or lost, and then pass it on to others.

God completes perfectly everything He sets out to do

One of the characteristics of God that we see many times is that what He does, He does well. After each step of creation He said that it was good. Many of the things we do, we have to plan as we go, but God sees the end from the beginning and so always completes what He sets about doing. Nothing takes Him by surprise.

The plan of salvation - how He would bring men back into communication with Himself - is a complete plan, with nothing left out. Each of the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah proved to be correct. The pictures and signs were all accurate to the last detail. And then when He came, Christ, the living Word, said and did all that the Father asked of Him.

John 17:4 and 8 *I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.*

8 *for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me.*

His plan for the church too is a perfect one. Although we do not always see each part of what He has done, is doing and will do - we can be confident that it will be as he wants it to be. He said that Satan and all the forces of hell can't stop His church being built.

His plan for individual believers is also perfect and complete. He made a way for them to be redeemed (bought back) and washed through His blood, and for them to live in victory over sin, through His resurrection. And his plans for how we will live with Him forever, those will also come about - exactly as He plans.

Ephesians 4:12,13 *Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. 13 This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.*

God's Word is one entire body of truth and needs to be passed on intact

The treasure - God's Word - as we have said, is also complete. Through his Spirit, He has given us all we need to know - to be born again, to worship Him as our Father, and to live as His mature sons and daughters.

All too often, God's children have not really understood this. They have not treasured all of God's Word. They have not seen it as complete and perfect or been committed to understanding and protecting and passing on the Whole Truth which has been given to us.

Rather than seeing God's Word as a whole, with each part providing a balance, too often they only concentrate on certain sections. Or they chop it up, looking at small parts separate from the whole, never seeing it as one story, one letter from God to man, one body of truth.

Still others feel they have to come up with new and exciting programs - original ways of packaging truth. Many times the basis for these are the felt needs or desires of people.

Some are only concerned with telling people what they need to know to be saved. Rather than carefully laying foundations so that people see their need for salvation, they present the answer before hearts are prepared.

Many too are not committed to teaching all that the new believer needs to know of the truth so they can live as God wants them to. This is like a mother giving birth to a child and then leaving it to look after itself.

Fear can keep us from a commitment to passing on the treasure intact, but God's Spirit gives us all that we need

In 2 Timothy, Paul the apostle writes to his young trainee, Timothy. Paul has been sentenced to death, and this, we understand, is his last letter - written from a Roman dungeon. In the first few verses Paul reminds this young man that it was God's Spirit Himself who gave Timothy the ability to do the task which Paul had been training him to do. And he says:

2 Timothy 1:7 *For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.*

For Timothy to do the task that Paul is now handing over to him, he will not be able to be fearful. Sometimes it is fear that keeps us from committing ourselves to the task of teaching God's Word in its entirety: "What if my knowledge is lacking? What if people are not happy with it? What if they reject the truth, or I'm not able to take on this task?"

But Paul told Timothy that thoughts like that do not come from God. His Spirit gives us, first of all, power. What is this power? It is God's Word itself. As we faithfully teach and pass on God's Word, He takes it, makes it come alive in people's hearts and produces change in their lives.

But people are not always responsive to our teaching. They don't always appreciate what we are passing on to them. We can become fearful of wasting our time, of not being liked. But as Paul reminded Timothy, it is God's Spirit who produces love in our hearts for those we are to teach. We cannot love them sufficiently, but He can give us Christ's love for them.

Sometimes it is fear of our own failure that keeps us from committing to such a huge task. What if I can't keep up with the study and preparation? What if I say I'm going to do it but then fail? Again, it is God's Spirit living in us that can give us the clear minds and disciplined lives that are required.

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2 Timothy 1:13 *Hold on to the pattern of wholesome teaching you learned from me—a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus.*

Timothy had spent time with Paul, both on his own and with other people. During those times he would have been watching Paul's life and the way he worked. No doubt they discussed many things together, and Timothy heard Paul teaching others. The treasure, the truth, the faith, had been passed on to him. Paul tells him to "retain" or keep the treasure. He was to make it his own - live it and practice it. Make it part of his life.

2 Tim 1:14 *Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you.*

And then Paul says that Timothy is to guard the treasure that has been entrusted into his care. Paul is about to die. His ministry is over. Now Timothy must take the truth which has been entrusted to him and see that it is not harmed or changed or lost in any way. And Paul says that the Holy Spirit will be helping Timothy with this.

2 Tim 2:2 *You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.*

So Timothy is to keep and guard the treasure. But not so he can enjoy the truth for himself. This is a treasure which must be passed on. He is to entrust it to others who can then also keep, guard and pass it on intact.

Paul then uses three illustrations to remind Timothy of some important principles for the task he has been entrusted with. He talks about a soldier, an athlete and a farmer:

- Each of these is a long-term occupation.
- Each one requires careful planning, commitment and consistent effort if the goal is to be reached.
- Each requires discipline and some kind of sacrifice.
- Each brings reward if seen through to the end.

Passing on the Treasure intact takes a long-term, disciplined commitment if the rewards in other people's lives are to be seen.

Just like everything that God sets out to do, in His Word He has provided everything we need to know: for salvation, for the Christian life, the function of a church and for the future. As we consider the task of teaching God's Word to others, we need to be committed to the long-term goal of first keeping, then guarding, and finally entrusting this treasure to others.



DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. The tutorial discusses how God's Word is one body of truth and so needs to be passed on intact. What part would you say learning the culture and language of people has in this picture of passing on truth in its entirety?

2. Today there are many evangelistic methods founded on the principle that 'quicker is always better'. There *is* an urgency in communicating God's Word, so how can we weigh up how is too long? In your opinion what would be some of the *non-negotiables* - things that could not be left out in the communication of truth?



ACTIVITIES

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1. In 2 Timothy 2:3-7 Paul says, “**3** Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. **4** Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them. **5** And athletes cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules. **6** And hard-working farmers should be the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor. **7** Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things.”

Reflect on these verses and write your thoughts about what Paul was trying to communicate.