

# Hold Fast and Keep – 2 Timothy 1:13-14

By Ensener Nerro

## Introduction

- Relay race story (RENSU: Red, Blue, Yellow, Green teams; 3rd place; I'll tell you what prize I won at the end).
- Paul uses this race imagery often:
  - 1 Corinthians 9:24–26 — run to obtain, temperate in all things.
    - Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:
  - Galatians 5:7 — hindered from truth.
    - Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?
  - Philippians 2:16 — not running in vain.
    - Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.
  - 2 Timothy 4:7 — finished course, kept faith.
    - I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.
- Context: Paul in prison, final letter, encouraging Timothy as a father and as a coach.
  - Paul writes as a father, as a mentor, and as a coach. He knows Timothy is facing pressure. He senses that Timothy may be slowing down — discouraged, maybe even ashamed.
  - That's why earlier in this chapter, Paul tells him in verse 6, "Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee." Rekindle the fire, Timothy. Don't let your zeal fade.
  - And in verse 7, he reminds him, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."
    - That phrase *sound mind* can also be translated as *self-discipline*.
    - Paul challenged Timothy to focus.
- Now, as we come to verses 13 and 14, Paul gives Timothy two commands to help him finish his course faithfully.
- Let's read them together.
  - 2 Timothy 1:13-14 – "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us."

## I. Hold Fast the Pattern of Truth (v.13)

“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

- Explain
  - The phrase *hold fast* means to grip firmly — to cling to something and not let go. It carries the idea of holding possession of the mind, keeping your convictions firm in your heart even under pressure or fear.
- Comment
  - Paul is saying, “Timothy, don’t loosen your grip on the truth.” It’s like running a relay — you don’t hold the baton loosely; you grip it tightly so you don’t drop it.
- Explain
  - Then Paul says, “*the form of sound words.*”
    - The phrase *form of sound words* means “a pattern of healthy teaching.”
      - The word *form* (Greek *hupotupōsis*) means a pattern, model, or blueprint — something to trace your life after.
      - The word *sound* comes from *hugiainō*, where we get our word *hygiene* — meaning healthy, whole, clean, and free from corruption.
- Comment
  - Sound doctrine is *healthy teaching* — it strengthens rather than weakens; it heals rather than harms.
  - Paul is saying, “Follow the blueprint of healthy, life-giving truth you’ve received from me.”
  - Timothy had heard this teaching from Paul — the gospel, the Word of God, the truth about Christ — and he was to cling to that same pattern.
  - While Paul doesn’t specify every “sound word,” it’s clear he’s referring to the core truths about God, Scripture, and the gospel itself.
  
- Transition:
  - But notice *how* Paul tells Timothy to hold it — “In faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 1:13b, )
- Explain
  - Faith and love are the two hands that hold truth rightly.
    - **Faith** — trust and dependence on God, even when the culture opposes His Word or when fear tempts us to compromise.
    - **Love** — a Christlike attitude that handles truth with humility, gentleness, and care for others.:
    - Paul’s instruction shows that holding fast to truth isn’t just about **accuracy**, but **attitude**.
    - The same truth that guards our doctrine should also shape our demeanor.

- **Comment**
  - Paul is saying, “*Timothy, hold truth tightly — but hold it tenderly.*”
  - Truth must be gripped firmly so it isn’t lost, but handled lovingly so it isn’t weaponized.
  - It’s possible to be **right in doctrine** and **wrong in spirit**.
  - That’s why Paul ties “faith and love” to “sound words.”
  - Sound doctrine must always produce **sound living**.
- **Cross References**
  - **Faith:**
    - *1 Timothy 1:19* — “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.”
      - Holding faith isn’t just believing; it’s *staying steady* when others drift.
    - *Hebrews 10:23* — “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;).”
      - Our faith rests on the faithfulness of God, not our own strength.
  - **Love:**
    - *1 Corinthians 13:2* — “And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”
      - Faith without love is empty; knowledge without love is cold.
    - *Ephesians 4:15* — “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”
      - Truth and love are not opposites; they are partners in Christlike maturity.
    - *Colossians 3:14* — “And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”
      - Love ties everything together — even doctrine — into a complete whole.
  - **Faith and Love in Christ:**
    - *Galatians 5:6* — “Faith which worketh by love.”
      - Genuine faith always expresses itself through love.
    - *1 Thessalonians 5:8* — “Putting on the breastplate of faith and love.”
      - Both faith and love protect the heart against doubt and bitterness.
- **Application**
  - Are we holding fast to truth?
  - It’s hard to hold on to something you don’t have confidence about
  - It’s hard to hold on to something you don’t have knowledge about
  - Do we know what sound doctrine is
    - If we were to do a pop quiz right now about the Bible – about Gods nature – about our faith – would you have an answer?
  - Some of us know more about a political party than we know about the church
  - Some of us know more about our sports team than we know about Christianity
  - Some of us know more about a pop star than we know about the Holy Spirit
  - When we ask you to share your testimony – would you be able to share on the spot? – if not – why not?

- If you're part of this team – and you're running for Jesus – have you done your best to equip yourself with what he has given you?
  - You have Scripture
  - You have a church
  - You have access to a pastoral staff
  
- Transition:
  - Just like in a relay race — it's not enough to *grab* the baton; you have to *guard* it until the finish line.
  - You can't run well if you're careless with what's been handed to you. So in verse 13, Paul says: "*Hold fast the form of sound words*" — that's your **grip**.
  - But in verse 14, he says: "*That good thing which was committed unto thee keep*" — that's your **guard**.
  - One is about **holding truth faithfully**; the other is about **protecting it carefully**.
  - Let's look now at how Paul tells Timothy to keep that good thing — not by his own strength, but "*by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.*"

## II. Keep the Treasure of the Gospel (v. 14)

“That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”

- **Explain**
  - Paul now moves from holding to keeping.
  
  - The word keep means to guard, protect, or preserve from corruption or loss.
    - It's an active word — not passive.
    - It means to watch carefully over a treasure entrusted to your care.
  - “That good thing” refers to the sacred trust of sound doctrine and ministry responsibility that God had placed in Timothy's hands.
  
  - Paul used similar language in 1 Timothy 6:20:
    - “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust.”
      - Timothy's job wasn't to improve the gospel, but to protect it — to preserve it, and to pass it on unchanged.
  - As Paul would later say in 2 Timothy 2:2,

- “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”
- I think Paul’s concern is generational faithfulness — keep passing it on
  - The gospel baton must be passed unbroken.

- **Comment**

- In the relay of faith, it’s not enough to **grab** the baton — you must **guard** it all the way to the finish line.
  - Dropping the baton doesn’t just affect your race — it affects the whole team.
  - It’s NFL season – and we all know Patriots are going to the top.
    - If you were playing offense and you got the ball – your job is to protect that ball – you don’t want it to fall out
- That’s what Paul is telling Timothy:
  - “Guard what you’ve been given. Protect the treasure.
- But notice — Paul doesn’t say, “Keep it by your own strength.”
  - He says, “by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”
    - If we can go back to verse 7
      - For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.
      - Connect
        - Do you want to know why we don’t have to fear – instead have power, and love, and a sound mind?
        - Because we have the Holy Spirit
          - The Holy Spirit gives the believer discernment to recognize false teaching, courage to stand firm under pressure, and endurance to keep going when weary.
- And Paul includes himself — “which dwelleth in us.”
  - This is not just Timothy’s responsibility — it belongs to the whole church.
    - Every believer, indwelt by the Spirit, has a role in guarding the gospel.

- **Cross References**

- 1 Corinthians 4:2 — “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”
  - We are not owners of the gospel — we are stewards.
- Philippians 1:16–17 — Paul says he is “set for the defence of the gospel.”
  - Our calling is not to change it, but to defend it.

- 2 Thessalonians 2:15 — “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught.”
  - Guarding truth means standing firm on what has already been revealed.
- John 14:26 — “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost... shall teach you all things.”
  - The same Spirit who inspired the Word helps us understand and preserve it.
  
- Application
  - When a runner receives the baton, their task isn’t to make it shinier or lighter — it’s simply to carry it faithfully to the next runner.
  - That’s our calling with the gospel.
    - We don’t edit it.
    - We don’t water it down to make it more appealing.
    - We guard it — we keep it — and we pass it on through the power of the Holy Ghost.
  
- Conclusion – Don’t Drop the Baton
  - When I ran that relay race, I didn’t want to drop the baton. My job was to take what was given to me and run my part faithfully. I wasn’t responsible for the whole race — just my section.
  - Paul had carried the gospel faithfully for his leg of the race.
    - Now he’s passing the baton to Timothy. He’s saying, “Don’t drop it. Hold it fast. Guard it well. Finish strong.”
- And now, that baton has been passed to us — the church today. We have been entrusted with the same gospel, the same truth, the same mission.
  - Hebrews 12:1–2 says:
    - “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,  
Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”
- Run your race with focus.
  - Hold fast to truth.
  - Guard the gospel by the power of the Holy Ghost.

- But the way – my prize for winning 3<sup>rd</sup> place was
  - 2 ramen
  - And 1 small bag of powdered detergent
  
- Questions
  - What makes it difficult to hold firmly to biblical truth in today's world, and how can we stay grounded in what's true?
  - In what ways can we guard the gospel from compromise or distortion in our daily lives and in the church?
  - Why do we need the Holy Spirit's help to stay faithful to God's Word, and what does that look like in practice?