

Joshua Willadsen  
18th Sunday after Pentecost  
Sermons  
October 3, 2010

## 2 TIMOTHY 1:1-14 "HOLD THE PATTERN OF SOUND WORDS"

1 Paul, Apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, 2 to Timothy beloved child, grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3 I am giving thanks to God, to Whom I serve as my ancestors with a pure conscience, as continually I am having remembrance concerning you in my prayers night and day, 4 longing to see you, remembering your tears, in order that my joy might be fulfilled, 5 while receiving remembrance of the sincere faith which is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I have become convinced that it is also in you. 6 For which reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God did not give to you a spirit of timidity rather of power and love and self-control. 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me His prisoner, rather suffer with me for the Gospel according to the power of God, 9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not according to our works rather according to His own purpose and grace, which He gave to us in Christ Jesus before the ages. 10 but being manifest now through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and gave light to life and immortality through the Gospel 11 for which I was appointed a Preacher and Apostle and Teacher, 12 for this reason also I am suffering these things; but I am not ashamed, for I know Whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to guard my deposit for that day. 13 Hold the pattern of sound words which you heard from me in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; 14 guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who dwells in you.

You may have heard it said, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Children on the playground are fond of this saying, especially if someone is calling them names and speaking insults against them. Part of growing up is learning how to deal with people who are mean toward you and in this sense it is good for children to develop "thick skin" and not be hurt by flippant words spoken by their peers. However, the truth is words can and do hurt us profoundly and I am not just speaking about our feelings.

Words have the power to inflict great evil upon us; words can and do lead to the entrapment and death of people. Adolf Hitler was a man of words; he gave brilliant speeches to masses. Hitler manipulated the German people with words; he told them myths and lies to secure his own power. Hitler called good evil and evil good; he persuaded people to give into their hatred for others in order to feel better about themselves. And of course Hitler's words brought pain, ruin, destruction, and death upon millions- upon the Jews, who were his scapegoats for the trials Germany suffered; upon Christians who resisted his words and dared hold to the Word of Christ; upon the German people themselves; and upon countless others who died in a World War that he provoked. Words can kill.

But words can also do great good; they can inspire people to do good and noble things. Words can free, build up, and give life. Take the words of the Declaration of Independence for example. "...We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all

men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness..." These words have inspired not only the American colonists to take up the cause of liberty and justice for all people, but also every succeeding generation of the American people. Since its founding upon these words of Jefferson, America has taken the lead in promoting liberty, justice, peace, and well being, not only for her citizens but for people and countries around the world. (I in no way mean to imply that America is a perfect nation, nor am I so naive as to overlook the evils our nation and her citizens have committed over the course of history, slavery for instance, however on the balance America has lived out the words of the Declaration of Independence).

Words can do great good or they can do great evil. Words can build up and promote health and life or words can tear down and lead to destruction and death. St. Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus, one called and chosen to be an authoritative witness to Christ's resurrection from the dead, and a Preacher and Teacher of Christ, reminded his dear protégé and son in Christ, Pastor Timothy, and the congregations under his care to "13 Hold the pattern of sound words which you heard from me in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; 14 guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who dwells in you." Paul wanted Pastor Timothy and his congregations to focus upon those words that indeed give health and life, that are sound and good, for life here and now and for salvation to come in the resurrection of the body. Paul wanted Pastor Timothy and his people to hold fast to the Gospel of Christ Jesus which gives life and salvation and not to be carried away into ruin, destruction, and death by false and godless words. This was St. Paul's desire not only for Pastor Timothy and the congregations that he served, but also St. Paul's desire for all Christian pastors and congregations, even for you and for me. So hear the sound words of the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, which are powerful to bring about our salvation in Christ Jesus.

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me His prisoner, rather suffer with me for the Gospel according to the power of God, 9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not according to our works rather according to His own purpose and grace, which He gave to us in Christ Jesus before the ages, 10 but being manifest now through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and gave light to life and immortality through the Gospel 11 for which I was appointed Preacher and Apostle and Teacher, 12 for this reason also I am suffering these things; but I am not ashamed, for I know Whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to guard my deposit for that day. 13 Hold the pattern of sound words which you heard from me in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; 14 guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who dwells in you.

Paul wrote these words while to Timothy while he was a prisoner for the sake of the Gospel, because he proclaimed to all the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. The Resurrection of Christ or anyone was foolishness to most Gentiles in the Roman world; they thought that the body was prison for the spirit, that death was release for the eternal spirit. The Cross of Christ was a stumbling block to many Jews, who were expecting God's Christ to come in power and glory to bring salvation and not in the weakness of the cross. Paul got into trouble with the Jews and the Gentiles because he was insistent and unwavering in his resolve to follow and preach Christ. But Paul was not discouraged by his imprisonment, but confident in the One who called him to be Preacher, Apostle, and Teacher.

Paul instructed Pastor Timothy and his congregations to hold to the pattern of sound words, to hold fast to the Gospel of Christ, even as they faced opposition and persecution, because forgiveness of sins, life, and eternal salvation are dependent upon these words that proclaim Christ. Other words, different teachings, even a different Christ than the sound words proclaimed by Paul lead to one to death, eternal death. There were plenty of different words and false teaching in Paul's day. There were those who denied the resurrection of the body, insisting that resurrection happened only in Baptism; there were some who got caught up into the secret knowledge of the universe and communion with God; there were some who lived only for pleasuring the body; there were others who believed in many paths to salvation; and still others who thought strict moral conduct and effort was the philosophy to life.

Paul gives further instruction to Pastor Timothy about these unsound and godless words in 2 Timothy 4:1-5, *"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: **2** preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. **3** For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, **4** and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. **5** As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

Today we face similar unsound words that lead people away from Christ to eternal death. Neo-Platonism, which views the body as a shell to be cast off in death so that the spirit may live on in communion with God, sadly has infiltrated Christian congregations and is leading people astray. The myth of Gnosticism, seeking hidden and secret knowledge by which a person can commune with God or the universe deceives many. Perhaps you have heard the myth of scientism, that God is no longer even necessary, because the laws of physics can explain the universe; in this belief rational humanity, that can observe and think is the master of the universe. The myth of moralism continues to entrap countless; this seems to be the myth that all sinners want to believe, that by our efforts to love and to do the right thing toward others or by our cooperation with God's will we can ensure His favor and our salvation.

But there is another myth that deceives many people, people who are or would be Christians, the myth that the Holy Scriptures are a guide book to your best life now. Sadly countless people read the Scriptures not with the Gospel of Jesus Christ at the center and focus, but wanting to know what jobs to take, where to live, and how to ensure a prosperous and happy life now. In one way or another all these myths deceptively make forgiveness, life, and salvation now and eternally a thing to be done by humanity rather than by God's grace to us in Christ; all of them make the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ unnecessary!

Words devoid of Christ crucified and risen lead to eternal ruin, destruction, and death, but the Gospel, the pattern of sound words proclaimed by St. Paul give

forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. The creed, be it the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed, we spoke today contain the pattern of sound words proclaimed Paul; they are Gospel. Look at them.

**I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.**

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered, and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

These are sound words by which you can discern and judge if my preaching and teaching or the preaching and teaching of any other pastor is Christian or not. As a pastor I am not above Christ, I am not above the Gospel, but I am a servant of Christ and the Gospel. I am called to hold to the pattern of sound words, to preach and teach them to you. So with the sound words of the creed that proclaim Jesus Christ crucified and risen for the forgiveness of sins check the words that I proclaim and check all that you hear. I have not been called to preach my self or my opinions on things, nor have other pastors; God has called me to preach Christ and Him crucified and risen that you and I might have forgiveness, life, and eternal salvation. So cast off all godless myths and hold fast to the pattern of sound words that proclaim Christ and have been passed on to us from the Apostles and recorded in the Holy Scriptures, Amen.