

***“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” – Titus 1:9.***

Let us today consider the idea of stewardship, and specifically our stewardship of the words which God has preserved and entrusted us with here in this place, at this dark hour of human history. I propose to put that idea of stewardship in the context of Titus 1:9, and linking our stewardship of God's Word to our need to hold it fast.

To consider our stewardship, we must understand what a steward is, and maybe most importantly, is not. A steward is a person who is responsible for the management and maintenance of another person's affairs. This can, and generally would include financial, and personal affairs the handling of which would require utmost trust and empowerment of the steward to act on the behalf of their employer or master. The Greek most frequently translated as steward or stewards is Strong's #3623, and the primary definition is

***oikonomos – esp. a steward, manager, superintendent (whether free-born or as was usually the case, a freed-man or a slave) to whom the head of the house or proprietor has intrusted the management of his affairs, the care of receipts and expenditures, and the duty of dealing out the proper portion to every servant and even to the children not yet of age***

The steward is not the owner of the things over which he or she has charge, but an overseer. They do not have ultimate authority to do whatever they wish with the goods, and must always put their master's wishes, goals, and expressed instructions before their own ideas or their own thoughts on what should be done with the master's property.

One of the greatest examples in Scripture of a steward is that of Joseph, as he dwelt in the house of Pharaoh's Captain of the Guard, Potiphar. Genesis 39 tells us

*“And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured” (Genesis 39:4-6).*

That is an amazing thing that could only have been arranged by the God of Mercy. Here is a young Hebrew entrusted with the entirety of the wealth of Pharaoh's captain of the guard, who Pharaoh would have obviously entrusted with his own life. The man trusted Joseph so thoroughly with his being that the only thing he knew for sure he had was the bread on his table at night when he sat down to eat. There is no better example of what a steward should be to his master. The phrase “right hand man” doesn't do justice to the idea. This is what we should strive to be for our Lord and Master with those things He has entrusted us with in this life.

The most important thing we have been entrusted with is these words. Hopefully Sam's recent sermon on the history of the Bible showed everyone just how effective Satan's attempts throughout human history to snuff out these words have been. He has all but succeeded in getting organized religion to follow a book of lies and call it the Word of God. Throughout human history, God has entrusted the maintaining and defending of the Truth, His truly revealed divine will to His people, His

churches, wherever they have been and whomever has been in them.

1 Corinthians 4:1 tells us *“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God”*. The “mysteries of God” are the Gospel, His Word, His revealed will and testament to His creation. While Paul is discussing primarily here the pastors, there is application to all those who faithfully preach His Word in their generation to warn sinners to flee the wrath of God.

So what does a steward of the mysteries of God do? What duties do they have as stewards of these words? I propose to you that there are three primary duties that the stewards of God's Word have.

### **First – Know the words and seek to understand them**

*“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” – 2 Timothy 2:15.*

If you don't know what it is you are in charge of, how can you properly take charge of it, and then dispense it in an appropriate manner. The servants of God have an absolute affirmative duty to study the word, to take the inventory of it as it were, and to know what that inventory is at all times. The reason you need to know what's in inventory is found at 1 Peter 3:15

*“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”.*

We must strive not for a bumper sticker theology that is full of quips and colloquialisms, but be able to soundly provide the reason that we have the hope we do – from Scripture. Our goal is to meaningfully reply to those who say

*“...Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (2 Peter 3:4).*

We must also know the inventory of our Father's words so that we may dispense them in times of need for our brethren; not in some generic sense or in a method of trying to display how much more Scripture one of us knows over another, but in a specific, timely manner that is aimed at being the most helpful, whether that help is a comforting word in a time of sorrow or an admonishing one that helps a person regain perspective. In 1 Thessalonians Paul delivers a terrific mini-sermon regarding the resurrection and closes it with

*“Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:18).*

Words from our Father reminding us of the end result of this great labor we are engaged in are refreshing and energizing, and if we are well versed in them, we can dispense them and serve one another with them regularly.

### **Second – Repeat the words and teach them**

The words have been entrusted to us for one basic reason – that they be repeated with great clarity and plainness. No re-working, no interpretation, no interpolation for mass consumption. Just deliver the message that has been given to us to deliver.

*“And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he*

*may run that readeth it” (Hab. 2:2).*

*“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”  
(Mark 16:15).*

That word preach used in Mark is Strong’s 2784, kerusso (kay-roos’-so), and it means to be a herald or to officiate formally as a herald. A herald doesn’t modify or provide commentary on the message, they open the message and shout it out loud so that everyone on the town square can hear them. They dispense it, they don’t look to recruit anyone to the cause proclaimed in the message or make it palatable to the masses; they simply stand in the town square and repeat the words they’ve been given to deliver.

It is important to keep this repeating of the words in sharp focus when we then look to teach them.

*“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:24-35)*

Friends, we are under constant assault by those who would interfere with our teaching by trying to badger us into changing the message. Teaching the message does not mean we alter it. We must approach the teaching aspect as Paul instructs us with meekness and patience, but we must never, ever alter the message. As stewards of these words, it is not our place to alter their composition or soften the blows to our listener’s conscience when we deliver the message. Being patient doesn’t mean that we compromise or deliver a watered-down version of what we have been entrusted with. Being apt to teach and patient doesn’t mean that we try to shuck and jive around the hard truths we encounter about sin and sinners to recruit people to our cause. It means that we forbear with their hard hearts, we are patient with their hard speeches, and we carry on. We continue teaching until the time to do so comes to an end.

We must all remember also when we are studying and considering this abundance of words we have been given that it is not only the world at large we are charged to teach.

*“Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons” (Deut. 4:9)*

We must teach our little ones these words, that our duty be fulfilled to them as well, that they should learn these precious doctrines and the revealed will of our Lord. We are assailed by our enemies for this teaching, especially it seems by those who depart from here, but we must not falter in it. We must not succumb to the relentless and unending assault we are under to stop teaching these words for what they are – the Truth of God. We must not be seduced away from teaching our children these right things by those who would wrest and twist those teachings or try to turn them back on us with sophistry.

Which brings me to the third general responsibility I believe we have as stewards of the words.

### **Third – We must hold them fast and defend them**

Titus 1:9 tells us of the duty to hold fast these words:

*“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” – Titus 1:9*

Titus 1 is primarily addressing the qualifications of a pastor, but it has larger, more general applications to those entrusted with the preaching of the Gospel in any age to the world at large. I thought Gill’s comments about “holding fast” were particularly good:

*“Holding fast the faithful word – The doctrine of the Gospel, so called because it is true, and to be believed; it is the word of truth, and truth itself, and contains nothing but truth; and because it never deceived any, that gave credit to its doctrines, and its promises; and because it is pure, unmixed, and unadulterated, and is the sincere milk of the word; and because in it is a glorious display of the faithfulness of God to his perfections, to his holiness and justice, to his law, and to his covenant, word, and oath; and of the faithfulness of Christ, to him that appointed him and to his covenant engagements, and which has appeared in the discharge of his various offices: and this is not only to be held forth by the elder, but to be held fast, and tenaciously abode by; in opposition to all wavering about it, departure from it, dropping or concealing any part of it, and pusillanimity concerning it; whatever temptations there may be to the contrary, through popular applause on the one hand, and reproaches and persecutions on the other; and though there may be many that may endeavour to wring it out of his hands”*

Our enemies are constantly trying to wrench and wrest these words away from us. Every hour of every day, especially in this day and age where words flow over the globe in greater abundance than water, there is a literally constant assault on the Truth. It comes at us from every angle, 360 degrees in three dimensions; from the media, from preachers, from politicians, from teachers; on billboards, TV shows, movies, newspapers, comic books, tweets, facebook posts, YouTubes, Vines; everywhere. You name it, Satan is using it to try and change these words, to make them mean things that they don’t or soften what they mean. He exerts a tremendous amount of effort to do this because he clearly understands this one thing – the words matter.

It is commonly said in politics that whoever controls the lexicon of a debate – that is the language used and the definition of the terms in it – controls the outcome. That is what we are dealing with here. A worldwide, Satanic attempt to change the definitions of words and thereby reverse the long standing, clearly articulated revealed will of God in His words that we are the stewards of. He wants to control the lexicon, and for the most part, he has succeeded in doing so. Except when it comes to God’s servants. You should have no doubt about this, however, that he seeks ways to get us to change our lexicon. We must be vigilant in the matter, as good stewards are vigilant of the master’s wealth.

Consider an example we are intimately familiar with from our preaching. Etymologists indicate that the word ‘gay’ came to start meaning fags sometime after WWII, departing from its traditional meaning of happy, joyful, or bright and colorful. Starting some time in the 70s, there was a very deliberate move by the fag lobby to get journalists to stop using the word ‘homosexual’ to refer to them in news accounts because it led people to think of them in a derogatory manner. It is reported that the New York Times was the last of the major news houses to hold out until they changed policy in 1989.

Why would this matter? Simply put, if you put a word in front of enough people enough times, in the right way, it changes how they think about the word or whatever is associated with it. It’s the fundamental premise of advertising and modern media. The word ‘homosexual’ rightly carries with it the stigma of perversion and being unnatural. The word ‘gay’ makes you think of bright happy colors.

Certainly this person who is identified as 'gay' couldn't be all that bad, after all they're 'gay'!

Consider the word 'fetus'. Until 1973, unborn babies, were, well, babies. Who would think of brazenly, wantonly killing a little smiley-faced baby? Who could possibly think of that wonderful gift of God and consider for one second ending its life? No one but a Satanic monster, of course. After 1973, when an unborn baby became a lump of cells called a 'fetus', that gut instinct, that natural inclination to protect the defenseless in the womb all went away, so that now it is a badge of honor to discuss how many 'fetuses' you've had ripped from your womb.

That is the power of words. Words have meaning. Words have purpose. We must defend these words of Truth and not compromise on what they mean or how they are used. We must hold fast to the doctrines and the words that define them. This is not forensic minutiae or a matter of polemics. This is the core of our job!

We speak to the example of fag/gay, and baby/fetus pretty regularly, but I want you to consider the larger lexicon we must insure we are equipped, ready, and zealous to defend. Consider words like

**Love** – how often are we assaulted and battered with this word in a day? Everywhere around us some lying preacher is busy talking about how God loves everyone. Redefining the word love to mean some sappy universal, unconditional love for all human beings, which is clearly not in Scripture. Again, I refer you back to Sam's sermon on the history of the Bible for an understanding of how long Satan has been working at this with his being able to subtly shift people to using a Bible that isn't based on God's word and how powerful that is. The word love no longer means anything close to the Scriptural definition when it is used regarding God!

**Hate** – how many times a day, even how many times an hour in a day are we referred to in some form or fashion as hateful, hatemongers, full of hate, yadda yadda yadda. I would venture a guess that it is multiple times a minute at this point, considering the amount of global media we find regarding our ministry. We speak of God's pure, unadulterated, righteous hatred, but the enemy seeks to turn it into our personal hatred of someone. This of course is done in an attempt to draw attention away from the truth, that yes, God hates people. We cannot waiver on this point, ever.

**God** – yes, consider even the word God, and defending what it means in our discourse with this generation. The god that this generation worships is not the God of the Bible. This is an important issue for us to use in our ongoing preaching. The worship of God, our creator, is of utmost importance; who God is as sovereign creator must be properly framed in the minds and our hearts of men to worship Him in truth and according to His instruction. It is our duty to teach that!

There are many such examples of doctrines and words which we must "hold fast" and be faithful stewards to our Master in defending and preaching until His return.

Of course, we must also defend these words through "*[S]ound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you*" (Titus 2:8); not adding our own emotional reasoning or letting our zeal for our master become more than what is necessary to energize us in the fight. When we let our words, and our ideas infiltrate the purity of God's words, we risk being as that unjust steward of Luke 16, who thought himself wise and crafty when his stewardship was called into question, and took it upon himself to collect half of his master's debts, hoping to find favor with the debtors. He is called an unjust steward because he didn't have permission to take such leeway with his master's things, or to rearrange those affairs in such a manner as to hurt his master's financial outlook. We must remain true to the words, not just their

sense, but the words as well, refraining from *ad hominem* and filler that does not glorify our master. We must be, every one of us, workmen in the use of God's words.

I say all these things today because it has occurred to me of late, not that we are slacking in our duty here, but that we are under an increasing level of vitriolic attack against our methods, our doctrines, and our words. Many of those attacks are subtle, and work to twist and wrest the meanings of our words from us and replace them with half-truths or outright lies. Those whom we once called friends, children, parents, etc., who have left this path to pursue their worldly lusts believe they have an inside track on how to do battle with us. They believe they can take our words, the weapons of our warfare, and use them against us. If we are vigilant in our stewardship, remembering that these **are not** our words, but the words we are entrusted with, they will not be able to overcome us.

Friends, these attacks are only going to increase, and the only way for us not to succumb to the subtle whispers of our enemy is to stay vigilant in our stewardship. We must guard our master's treasure well.

We have been at this post, watching over these words for some 23 years now on the streets, and longer as a church, and keeping our stewardship in front of our eyes is a good idea. We must exercise ourselves in these matters so if it is another 23 years, our lamps haven't run out of oil, and we won't find ourselves without our wedding garments upon us when our master returns to take account of our stewardship.

I love you all and thank you.