

Keeping the Doctrine

*preached by Rev J. O. Soyinka
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"Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).

The verse we have read is an exhortation from Paul the Apostle, one of the veteran teachers of the Bible doctrine, to Timothy, charging him to retain the salvation he had received to the end of his life. Timothy was told to maintain the salvation; and take heed unto himself and the doctrine. As Paul's spiritual son, he had been taught very many things about the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Paul had imparted many teachings to him and had made him understand the doctrine and therefore, warning him to retain the faith in order to be an effective teacher and minister of the Gospel.

Although he was not privileged like the other disciples to be in the company of Jesus Christ physically, yet he was one of the veteran ministers. It was after the ascension of Jesus Christ that Paul was converted. Notwithstanding, Jesus Christ made him understand all those things which he should know about the Gospel. Jesus appeared to him and directed him to those who had been in the faith before his conversion. He was directed to Ananias who explained to him and made him know the things he should know. Not only that, after sometime, Paul was directed to other Apostles such as Peter and James. He was exhorted and made to understand the principles of the Gospel. Paul the Apostle embraced the teachings. He believed them and was obedient to all the precepts. He also started to teach other people including Timothy, the doctrine. So, he warned Timothy to embrace the sound doctrine and keep it, continue in it and heed every precept.

"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" (2 Timothy 1:13,14).

It was Paul the Apostle who was telling Timothy in another place that he should hold firm the form of sound words, which he had received, which he had heard from him in faith and in love. He went further to tell him that that good thing which was committed unto him must be kept. What was that good thing? It was the sound doctrine of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ. is' power of God. It is a good thing; it is very, very valuable. But what will make us enjoy the goodness of the Gospel, the full benefits of the Gospel and also make it our bonafide property is keeping the sound doctrine.

"THAT which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

("For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1-3).

The above was the testimony of John who was one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. He told the people as Paul did that what they had heard and handled was the Word of Life. It is through the Word they could

have fellowship one with another, and with God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. The testimony of Paul the Apostle, though not converted during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, was not different from the testimony of any of the disciples of Jesus Christ about the Word of Life.

***"Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.
"And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?
"Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.
"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:14-17).
"JESUS went unto the mount of Olives.
"And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them" (John 8:1,2).***

Before the disciples of Jesus started to teach others, they had sat at the feet of Jesus Christ, and had been taught thoroughly by Jesus Christ Himself. We have read in John chapter 7 that when the feast was half way, Jesus Christ came and started to teach the people. Among the people who were taught at that occasion were the disciples of Jesus Christ. Some of them were called while fishing, some while collecting taxes, and others from different walks of life. Immediately they were called by Jesus Christ, they accepted the call and were saved from their lives of sin. They were later sanctified.

When Jesus Christ was teaching in the temple, the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Scribes who were there wondered. 'How did He know all these things which he was teaching the people? This Man was never a student under any of the known professors of that time. Where did He get all the teachings that He was imparting to people?' Jesus Christ knew their mind; He knew their thinking. He told them plainly that His doctrine was not His, the doctrine be longed to God the Father, Who sent Him to the world. Therefore, you should understand that the teaching we are imparting from this pulpit is not our own teaching, it is not our own doctrine, it is the doctrine of Jesus Christ. We should receive it and go out to impart it to other people.

When some people come to our place of worship, they will want to know what our tenets are. They want to know our doctrine, and what we stand for. We tell them that we have no doctrine; we have no tenets other than the Bible. We are confident to tell people so because all that we teach are taken from the Bible. All that we stand for are taken from the Bible. All that we impart to people are taken from the teachings and practices of the Word of God. Therefore, we are confident to stand on our feet anywhere and before any person. If there is any teaching from any quarter which does not have basis in the Bible, the Word of God, that is not the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Therefore, if all of us who have come from the four corners of Africa will receive these teachings, stand on them, keep them faithfully, I have no doubt its my heart that it will not take time before the whole of Africa will be won for Christ.

If we have full understanding of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, what then have we to do with it? Let me sound a note of warning here. We do not understand the doctrine; we do not have full understanding of the Word of God, yet, God wants us to understand It. That is why in this organisation, we have instituted Bible study classes and Sunday School in every branch church. We have Sunday school lessons which we impart to people and the purpose of that is to make people understand the sound doctrine. We have special meetings, special gatherings where the sound doctrine is imparted to us. At the time of conventions like this, we gather for three weeks annually and sound doctrine — Bible teachings — are imparted to people because we want people to understand the Word. We want the saints too to have the full understanding of the Word and everyone of us is to take advantage of the opportunities which God has opened to us.

***"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19,20).***

Before Jesus Christ gave the Great Commission to His disciples, very many things have preceded he

Commission. Before He gave them this order, three years' period of teaching had preceded the Commission. These people had been with Jesus Christ, they had followed Him to several places, they had seen His life, and they had seen examples in Him. Before Paul could tell Timothy that he should keep the doctrine which he had received, the doctrine he was sure of, the doctrine which had been confirmed to him, the doctrine had been taught Timothy. Before Jesus told His disciples to go out and teach people, He had taught them the doctrine. He expected them to teach those things they had learnt of Him, those things they had seen in Him, the things that had been imparted to them. Here in this organisation, we do not sift the Word of God. We believe the whole Bible, we believe the whole Word of God. We do not just take one and drop the other. We do not take one and discard the other. We have accepted the whole Word of God and we are happy that the power of God backs up every step we take. We see the backing of God, we see the support of God in everything that we do and in every teaching that we impart to people. So, what we deliver to you is the sound doctrine of Jesus Christ and Jesus has promised that He will be with us to the end of the world.

"What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" (Matthew 10:27).

There is no secret in the doctrine of Jesus Christ. There is no darkness whatsoever in it. What Jesus was telling His disciples was that the doctrine He delivered to them, was the doctrine which He Himself had received from God the Father. He was telling them with authority that they should go out and teach the people those things which He had taught them privately or publicly. He told them that those things they had seen in Him, they should go out and teach to people. In this organisation, we do not hesitate and we do not mince words to tell people that everybody who claims to be saved must live a sinless life and that everybody who claimed to have been saved must be able to depend on God for the healing of his body whenever he is sick, because the Word of God backs us up with full authority.

***"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:
"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up;
and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:14, 15).***

Everything we teach people here have the backing from the Word of God. That is why we have full authority and say without mincing words that we should line up with the Word of God. If we embrace all the teachings, keep them and live by them, they will be blessings to us and not only us but all those who hear us. We will work out our own salvation right to a successful end and not only our own salvation but the salvation of those who will listen to us.

***"THOU therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
"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" (2 Timothy 2:1,2).***

I pray that we may not lose the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I pray earnestly that we may not miss the opportunity we have to receive the sound Word of God from this holy pulpit. If we miss the opportunity of learning the true doctrine, we shall have a lot to regret. But if we take heed to the Word, we shall not only be a blessing to ourselves but to people who are saved through our ministry. Paul was telling Timothy that he should be strong in the grace of God, he should be strong in the doctrine which had been imparted to him and about which many people had witnessed. The same injunction is being passed on to us that we should keep the doctrine of Jesus Christ, because any failure on our part to live in the Word of God will cause our salvation to be shaky and we shall deprive many people of getting saved through our ministry.

How sad it would have been if Philip had not been in a position to be sent to the eunuch by God! He was in Samaria in a mighty revival and God called him suddenly to go in the way of the desert. He didn't know for what purpose, but the Ethiopian eunuch was passing by. That eunuch of Ethiopia had come to Jerusalem to worship. He had spent and had been spent in search of the truth. He came to Jerusalem, having the semblance of godliness, but lacking the power and understanding. Now, why don't you for a moment look into your own family circle and think of your village, your ethnic group, the people around you, how thick the darkness they are in. Phillip saw the Ethiopian eunuch reading the Scriptures, but didn't understand it. That is the position in which our people are. They go to church, they hold and read the Bible,

but do not get any substance from it because they do not understand it. Phillip asked him, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' He said he didn't.

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

"And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?"

"And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:35-37).

When people come to our Church and hear the Gospel preached, they sometimes wonder if they had the same Bible. It is the same Bible, and our own edition is not different from theirs. We thank God for the sound doctrine we have. The eunuch of Ethiopia delivered his copy of the Scriptures to Philip. It was from the same Book, the same passage which the eunuch had been reading that Philip preached to him about Jesus Christ. He told him how Jesus Christ was born, His mission and how He came purposely that those who believe in Him might be saved from their sins. He told him His name would be called Jesus because it is God Who has ordained Him to set people free from their sins. As they were going, the Word of God started to work in the life of the Ethiopian eunuch.

The eunuch then understood the Scriptures. Philip must have mentioned that believers in Jesus Christ must be baptised because when they came to where there was water, the eunuch told him, 'This is water, what hinders me from being baptised?' Philip told him, 'If you believe with all your heart. The Scriptures tell us that with the heart we believe but with the mouth we make confession.' He told him, 'If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, you may be baptised.' The eunuch exclaimed that he believed wholeheartedly. Both of them entered the water and the eunuch was baptised. How happy that man was! He was saved by believing; the grace and joy of salvation filled his heart. He was baptised and immediately, Philip disappeared and the eunuch could not see him again. But he was filled with joy and went his way rejoicing. Philip also, wherever he was, would be filled with joy that he had been an effective worker for the Lord Jesus Christ. We too, need to avail ourselves of all the opportunities that God has accorded us.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is one and the same everywhere. His teaching is the same, Wherever the teaching of Jesus Christ is wholeheartedly accepted, it has the same effect. The first line of a song reads, *Onward Christian soldiers*. Another verse says *We are one in faith, one in doctrine, and one in love*. No matter where we are we want to take our stand on the sound doctrine. Any one who doesn't take a firm stand on the doctrine of Jesus Christ, who has anything different from what we preach, from what we hold dear and what we stand for, is not a member of this organisation. It is necessary for everyone to meet the same standard of the Gospel wherever they may find themselves. If we take a firm stand on the sound doctrine, the signs which Jesus Christ has promised will follow. He says, "These signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." That is provided they stand on the sound doctrine. Everyone should take a firm stand and be one with us in faith, in doctrine and in love.

After we have been taught, what next?

"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

"For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 8-11).

Embracing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and standing firmly for it requires us to be determined to pay whatever it will cost. We have no power of our own, we have no strength, our power is in the Word of God, our strength is in the Word of God. If we take our stand on the Word and live our lives according to the doctrine, it is God Himself Who will empower us, strengthen us and make us stand. We believe in the grace of salvation. If anybody claims to have been saved, but does not live according to the Word of God, such a person is a fake Christian. If you hear the Word of

God from the teachings, from the sermons that what you have done is not good or that the particular step you took is condemned by the Word of God, and you do not accept that you have made the mistake, it means you are not a Christian. You may claim anything, you may profess whatever you want to profess, but if you are corrected by the Word of God and you refuse to take correction, it means you are not a Christian.

Jesus Christ tells us that He has not brought peace to the world but separation. He says there will be separation between the son and the father, between the wife and the mother-in-law. What will bring this about? It is the doctrine of Jesus Christ. If the father holds the doctrine firmly and the son doesn't, there will be separation between them. If the mother-in-law holds the doctrine of Jesus Christ firmly, and the daughter-in-law doesn't have anything to do with the Word of God, there will be separation. That is exactly what will bring separation and the Word of God is giving us an injunction here that, if anybody has come to us who doesn't bring the sound doctrine, he has not the Father and the Son. The Bible says we should not even bid him godspeed nor greet him. Not that we should hold any malice against such a person, what the Bible is telling us is that we should not have anything to do with him. We should not be party to his way of life; we should not give him any backing in whatever he does. There can be no fellowship between us, but separation.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

The portion of the Bible We have just read says, we should avoid them. If anybody comes round to tell you that if your wife doesn't satisfy you, you can divorce her and marry another, just maintain one wife at a time, that is a false doctrine. The peddler of such a doctrine should be avoided. Or if anybody comes to you and says that you can be half Christian and half sinner, the Word of God says you should avoid him. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is sound, and wherever it is accepted, it is a straight line doctrine and it will land you in Heaven. What we have received is something that is sure. May God plant us in the sound doctrine so that we may go out and teach all nations.

'Keeping the faith!' I want to read an excerpt from one of the sermons of the erstwhile General Overseer, Rev. Raymond Crawford, the son of Mother Crawford. He mentioned that in the congregation, we are all well dressed and we are fine looking; there is no fighting, no argument, and no grudge in the Church. The Church is not a place where people fight; in the Church, we appear like angels, but there is one particular thing that will portray whether we are Christians or not. *"God pity the Apostolic Faith, when its men, women or children cannot be detected as Christians through their conduct, conversation, their dressing and their appearance. Bible believing Christians are the only Christians there are. If we believe the Bible, we will have trust in the Bible. We will testify of the Scripture, not only by words but our very presence, our activities, our behaviour, our business associate, our social contracts and everything that we do, the same will brand us as followers of the lowly Nazarene."*

The Apostolic Faith Mission has been known throughout the world as a mission which has sound doctrine, and a mission which is very close to the Bible. But he lamented the day when the members, men and women of The Apostolic Faith, will not be detected by their appearance, will not be known by their ways of life, either in marriage, at the time of delivery of children or their business associations. He lamented that age when they shall not be known by the way they live!

We pray that you will obey the Word of God which you have heard. May it guide you into the will of God and the patience of God.

"FINALLY, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

"And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

"But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

"And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you" (2 Thessalonians 3:1-4).

This is God's challenge to you this morning.