

2 Timothy 1:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Paul commands Timothy to "hold fast" (echō, ἔχω combined with imperative force)—grasp firmly, maintain tenaciously. The object is "the form of sound words" (hypotypōsin hygiainontōn logōn, ὑποτύπωσιν ὑγιαίνοντων λόγων). The noun hypotypōsis (ὑποτύπωσις) means "pattern, model, standard"—a reliable template or outline. "Sound" (hygiainontōn, ὑγιαίνοντων) literally means "healthy" (from which we get "hygiene")—doctrine promoting spiritual health versus error that corrupts.

Paul refers to the apostolic teaching Timothy received directly from him—not novel speculation but transmitted truth. In an era without New Testament Scriptures widely available, oral apostolic tradition was crucial. Timothy must faithfully preserve and transmit this "pattern of sound words" without addition, subtraction, or distortion. This protects against both liberalism (abandoning core doctrine) and innovation (adding non-apostolic teaching).

This holding fast must occur "in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (en pistei kai agapē tē en Christō Iēsou, ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ τῇ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). Faith and love form the indispensable context for maintaining sound doctrine. Faith alone without love becomes cold orthodoxy producing arrogant heresy hunters. Love without faithful doctrine becomes sentimental compromise tolerating soul-destroying error. Both faith and love must be "in Christ Jesus"—rooted in union with Him, not human achievement.

Historical Context

The early church faced constant threats to doctrinal purity. False teachers in Ephesus taught "profane and vain babblings" (2:16), denying bodily resurrection (2:18) and promoting asceticism based on proto-Gnostic dualism (1 Timothy 4:3). Without completed New Testament canon, churches relied on apostolic teaching transmitted orally and through letters. The "pattern of sound words" Paul mentions represents early creedal formulations and hymns (like Philippians 2:6-11, 1 Timothy 3:16) summarizing core gospel truth. Timothy's responsibility was preserving this deposit against corruption and passing it faithfully to the next generation of teachers (2:2).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What specific doctrines constitute the "pattern of sound words" you must hold fast against contemporary challenges to biblical truth?
2. How can you balance contending for sound doctrine (faith) while maintaining Christlike love, avoiding both compromise and loveless orthodoxy?
3. Who are you teaching and training to preserve and transmit sound doctrine faithfully to the next generation?

Interlinear Text

ὑποτύπωσιν	ἔχε	ὑγιαίνοντων	λόγων	ᾧν	παρ'	ἐμοῦ
the form	Hold fast	of sound	words	which	of	me
G5296	G2192	G5198	G3056	G3739	G3844	G1700
ἤκουσας	ἐν	πίστει	καὶ	ἀγάπῃ	τῇ	ἐν Χριστῷ
thou hast heard	in	faith	and	love	which	in Christ
G191	G1722	G4102	G2532	G26	G3588	G1722 G5547
Ἰησοῦ·						
Jesus						
G2424						

Additional Cross-References

Titus 1:9 (Faith): 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.

2 Timothy 3:14 (Parallel theme): But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

Philippians 4:9 (Parallel theme): Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Romans 6:17 (Parallel theme): But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

2 Timothy 2:2 (Faith): 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.

Revelation 3:11 (Parallel theme): Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Revelation 3:3 (Parallel theme): Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

1 Timothy 1:14 (Faith): And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 2:20 (Word): An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

Jude 1:3 (Faith): Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

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