

Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch

May I Have Permission to Speak Freely?

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Good morning, men. And welcome to the Man in the Mirror Bible Study. We are in this new series, **Paul and Timothy: Passing the torch**. Brett did a wonderful job kicking that off last week with the concept that everybody needs a guide. And he used the Sherpas going up Everest illustration to drive home that point, and how Paul is a guide to Timothy. And so this morning, the title of the message is this, *May I have Permission to Speak Freely?* And it's both me asking for permission to speak freely to you, but it's also Paul asking permission to speak freely to Timothy or taking the initiative to speak freely to Timothy. And then let's look at the backdrop of your relationships with other men, men who are helping you as your guide, or men you are helping as their guide and just this whole idea of giving each other permission to speak freely. So let's begin with the situation.

THE SITUATION

So the Bible would tell you that you are special. Cheer up. God just wants you to be happy. You're made in his image. You're made for the abundant life. And so given all this, why wouldn't you want to just be happy, healthy, and wealthy? Why wouldn't you just want to pursue self fulfillment? I mean, when you read the Bible, you can definitely read it with rose colored glasses, but not everything of course in the Bible is rosy. There's a bit of a problem with wearing rose colored glasses and that is if you wear them, you may have difficulty making out red lights, stop signs or seeing red flags.

So that's not the whole situation, there's another scenario and that's the one that Paul's getting at with Timothy. Now, the backdrop here for Timothy and Paul in their relationship, it's hard to figure it out. Different people have different ideas, but let's just say it's a decade or maybe 15 years that they've had a relationship. Brett told you that Paul picked up Timothy at the beginning of his second missionary journey, probably around 50, 51 AD, something like that. And then now Paul is writing him sometime of early to mid 60s. And this last letter that we think it's the last letter that Paul has written out of his epistles and pastoral letters.

SUFFERING IS PART OF THE PLAN

And so the second part of this situation is that suffering is part of the plan. Paul has said things like, we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of heaven. He wrote in the book of Romans, rejoice when you suffer, because suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, character hope, and hope does not disappoint and many other things. And other writers too, like Peter, do not be surprised at the very trial that you're enduring and James says, considered all joy my brothers when you encounter various trials of various sorts, and so on. So suffering is part of the plan. And so this is the text then we come to after Paul finished in verse seven, which Brett again talked about last week, "God has not given a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." And we come to today's text so, or therefore for that reason, because God is not given this spirit of fear, but a power love and sound mind. So do not be ashamed.

All Mediterranean cultures are shame cultures in the time of Jesus. I read one scholar actually was a yeah, a scholar writing in a Mennonite Brethren Journal gave this incredible illustration. He said, imagine riding, there's a man, you're watching this take place. A man is riding a bicycle down the road and he crashes and he gets all scraped up and his bicycle is messed up in a thing. But the first thing he does after he falls down is he looks around to see if anybody's watching and sure enough, there's one person who sees the incident, but that person immediately turns away too and walks off. The man gets on his bicycle and he rides down the street, and around a corner, and only there does he stopped to check out his scrapes and bruises and to see the damage on his bike. That's an example of what it means to live in a shame and honor culture. And that's the culture that they're living in.

Paul says, do not be ashamed. They're living in shame culture. Don't be ashamed. Don't be ashamed of me. Don't be ashamed of the gospel. And he goes on and this is the second side of the same coin, right? "Join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God," which he's just talked about in the previous verse. May I have permission to speak freely, you need to be prepared for suffering. This is what Paul is telling Timothy. Paul says in first Corinthians 16:14, "My new life first, do everything in love." But in Ephesians 4:15, I think it is it says, "We want to help bring people to maturity by telling them the truth in love." So we want to be truth tellers. We want to do everything in love, but we want to be truth tellers.

And so Paul is here sharing a truth with his protege, his spiritual son, his friend, his brother Timothy and he shared it with us. And it's an exemplar for us and our relationships with each other and with the gospel that we should be joined in suffering, again, by the power of God. And then he goes on, "He has saved us and call us to a holy life, not because of anything we've done, but because of his own purpose and grace." God has called us to a holy life. Now I have heard some people try to make a distinction. This distinction that God has called us to be holy, not happy. I think that's extremely artificial. It's an either or fallacy in technical language. God has not called us to be holy but not happy. He's not called us to be happy, not holy. But I would rather say it like this, that happiness is the residue of holiness. Happiness is the residue of holiness.

So yeah, we want to live the abundant life. Yes, we want things even like personal fulfillment, but we do that not by focusing on getting the second things, but we do it by focusing on God. God is the first thing, God and his gospel is what we focus on. And then out of the overflow of that, all of these other things happen. You don't get God by pursuing personal fulfillment. You get personal fulfillment by pursuing God. And that's what he's trying to make the point here. He's called us to a holy life and happiness is the residue of holiness. It doesn't say he has called us to a happy life.

Now he wants us to be happy, but what he's called us to is a holy life. And then there's this recitation, as Paul is want to do whatever he starts talking about the gospel is like, he just can't help himself. He gets carried away and he wants to jump in and recount the gospel because he loves the gospel. He's not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. And that's the core belief that Paul operates under. So he gives this recitation. We won't go through it because we're not doing in this study. We're not trying to understand the core teachings of the gospel. Hopefully you already do. If you don't, hopefully you'll pick them up along the way.

But he does say, "And of this gospel, I was appointed a herald and a teacher." So he has this calling to talk about this gospel. And then I think perhaps, oops, the next part is the important thing here. And he says, this is why I'm suffering, because of what I was appointed to do, to talk about the gospel and I've been doing it, and that's why I'm suffering as I am yet, there's no cause for shame. It's interesting. This is what's called a chiasmic structure. I know that that probably won't be of any interest to except one of you who already knew it anyway. But a chiasm, the Greek letter X like that, a chiasm, basically President Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country." That's a simple chiasmic structure.

But Paul has basically repeated now what he said at the beginning in reverse order, you see this. So at the beginning it said, don't be ashamed. I am suffering. Here's why the gospel and now I'm suffering, no cause for shame. It's a form of repetition that's used in lots of literature and poetry and other things too. But it's a way of emphasizing that this is the point that he's trying to make. So he's just basically saying, hey, suffering is part of the plan and you don't need to be ashamed about it. You don't need to shrink from it.

And the reason he says this, that he can do this is, is that because he's convinced that God is able, God is able to guard him. He believes that with all of his heart. I have told the story here on a couple of occasions, but it just seems to fit so well here. The story of Admiral Jim Stockdale, some of you remember this in the book, *Good to Great*, which is now nearly two decades old. But Jim Collins had this encounter with Admiral Stockdale, who happened to be the highest ranking officer who was a prisoner of war during the Vietnam War and a resident of the Hanoi Hilton, which had basically no rights.

And he organized, he did a lot of really interesting things in there to organize the prisoners and give them hope. And if you could last this many minutes of torture, then you were allowed to give some information and then a certain number of additional minutes, you could give other information. So he very brilliant person. He's wore the Congressional Medal of Honor among other things for his efforts.

He was tortured over 20 times during his eight years in the Hanoi Hilton, he cut his face with a razor blade and beat himself with a chair to disfigure himself so that they could not force him to make video that would be used as propaganda against him. So Jim Collins was able to interview him and they were walking along and Stockdale was swinging his leg that still doesn't work right because of the torture that he endured and Collins do have the story ended, because this was many years later. And Collins asked him, he said, well, how did you make it? I mean, what was the secret? He said, well, the secret was, is that I had absolute belief that I would be able to endure and make it while at the same time, I was willing to face the most brutal facts of the existing reality.

And Collins let that sink in, he went a few more yards down the sidewalk. And then he said, well, who didn't make it? And Collins said, well, that's easy. The optimists. And he said, what do you mean? I mean, now Collins is stone, what do you mean the optimists? He said, well, the optimists said, surely we'll be freed by Christmas. And then Christmas came and went and then they adjusted. And they said, well, no, there's no doubt we'll be out by Easter. And Easter came and went and then, no question that we'll be released by Thanksgiving. And then Thanksgiving turned into Christmas, another Christmas. And then they ended up dying of a broken heart because they were wearing rose color glasses. You've heard the saying that a pessimist is an optimist with experience.

Paul has the optimism of the gospel and the realism of the Stockdale paradox that we must be, and to convert that to a Christian idea, well, I think it is a Christian idea, but to spiritualize it, we must be willing to face the most brutal facts of our existence while at the same time, maintaining absolute faith that we ultimately do prevail because he is able. So that's the Bible lesson, but what do we get out of this for us?

And I think this is where I want to get to the Big Idea. You need people in your life like this. I need people in my life like this. You need people and I kind of had an allergic reaction to anyone who tells me, let me tell you what you need to do. But you need, I'm telling you what you need, okay? You need to have someone like Paul in your life. And may I also add to that, you need to have someone like Timothy in your life. You need to have to whom you have been given permission to tell the truth. You need to have someone in your life you have asked you to tell you the truth and to give the truth.

And permission is important because we don't as believers, we don't want to violate the process of relationships. You can't just walk up to somebody and begin to tell them what they need to do. Paul is telling him the truth. Now, after they have they've worked together, they've been together. Paul was an Ephesus and they said that a great door of opportunity had opened up for him. He said, and there are

many who opposed me and Timothy was right there with him and saw that opposition. So Timothy had already been exposed to the idea that suffering's part of the plan. You need to have someone that you've given permission to tell you the truth. And you should find someone who has given you permission to tell them the truth. So the **Big Idea** then is more of an application to this. **Who do you have like Paul and who do you have like Timothy?**

Howard Hendrick used to say, and I could see him. He was a teacher, a seminary professor at Dallas Seminary. I could see him saying this, said it all over the country. "You need to have a Paul and you need to have a Timothy. Every man needs to have a Paul. Every man needs to have a Timothy." So who do you have of in your life like Paul and who do you have in your life like Timothy?

SIX QUESTIONS

Passing The Torch, Paul and Timothy, that's the name of the series. So I'm going to give you six questions for you to think about. And the first three relate to the Paul thing. Do you have a Paul? Do you have someone that you've given permission to speak truth into your life in love? Someone who could tell you that, hey, yeah, God loves you. You're the crowning achievement of God. You're his most excellent creation. He's wonderful loves you. You're having a better life. But he's also going to tell you that, hey, that's half of the deal, but the other half of the deal is that because we live in a fallen in the world, because of the flesh, because the flesh is wicked, weak and deceitful. And because the flesh is most wicked, most weak and most deceitful when it's disguised as piety, by the way, you need to understand this truth. Do you have someone like that? If, no, if you don't have someone like that in your life, is it time to find somebody like that.

And if the answer to that is yes, then what do you think is the next step you will take to turn that into a reality. It maybe someone at your table online. It might be somebody in your small group. It might be somebody in your church. You might have to ask more than one person to find that party, or it might be somebody that you're already in relationship with that you want to change the nature of the relationship so that you can fully gain all the benefit of the spiritual wisdom that that person is accumulated. So, how do you get good judgment? The man with good judgment was asked, how did you get such good judgment? He said, bad judgment. Somebody's been through a number of bad judgments so that they've become wise.

And then the other application is, do you have a Timothy? Do you have a Timothy? And if no, is it time to find one? If you're not investing in a younger person and that could be older chronologically, but younger in the faith person, is it time for you to do that, to find some somebody? And if so, what's the next step you will take to turn that into a reality?

Big Idea today, **Who do you have like Paul and who do you have like Timothy?** Who do you have like Paul and who do you have like Timothy? The questions that we mentioned at the end of the last series could be helpful here. Of course, the question number one is, is that person a believer, but then actually asking that person, where are you on your spiritual journey? And then the third question is, would you like to grab a cup of coffee? And when you ask a person, would you like to grab a cup of coffee and you sit down for an hour together, you start to figure out, where they are on their journey. And then also where the chemistry is, where the chemistry is. If the chemistry might work in either direction as a Paul or as a Timothy.

So I want to encourage you as you do the discussions, just to take this seriously. There are four questions that Man in the Mirror is looking into, and these will probably be refined as we go along to be more researchable. But one question is, what is it that's holding men back from taking action. You've heard me ask this question. I started this last May after attending a small country church in Alabama, having been there two years previously, going back the same 12 people sitting in the same 12 seats, the same 48 seats were empty that were empty two years before. And I know that all of those people would

have stipulated to loving God. They would've stipulated to loving people. They would've stipulated to sensing a call, to make disciples. They would've stipulated to understanding that the most important contribution that we can make to someone is to help them change the core affections of their heart. But they still we're not taking that action.

And so who's going to answer the question. What is it that's holding men back from taking action? Paul talked to people till he was blue in the face, right. Paul talked to people until he was blue in the face and he had a lot of disappointments. Let's just leave it at that. He had a lot of disappointments. I've talked to men for over 35 years now on a regular basis about making disciples, about the urgent necessity of making disciples. I wish I had more to show for it, to be honest, I really do. What is it that's holding men back from taking to action?

Second question. Why are young men leaving the church? Why are young men leaving the church? What is it that the older, more mature people are doing that is alienating the younger people to the point where they are leaving the church. And Man in the Mirror has a lot of research going on with regard to that. Now through Mirror Labs.

And then the third question that I'd really like to see answered, why are men returning to the church? Of those men who are coming back into the church, what are the differentiated success factors because if we can figure out why they're coming back, the implications of that are enormous because that's where you want to pour the gasoline on and strike the match. If you can figure out why they're coming back. It's good to know why they're leaving so you can stop the, put your finger on the deck. But if you can figure out why they're coming back, why are these certain churches just exploding with young people? How's that happening? What are the success factors, the differentiated success factors involved in that, then you could really make a difference?

And then the final question is, for all of the young men in churches that have stayed, why did they do that? Why did they do that? And the implications of that are very powerful as well. What's going on in the churches where young men did not decide to leave? And then how can we replicate more and more of that? These are the kinds of things that you work out between Paul's and Timothy's. You don't work it out, Paul's don't talk to Paul's and figure these things out. Timothy's don't talk to Timothy's and figure these things out. Paul's talk to Timothy's and Timothy's talk to Paul's, that's how you answer these questions. That's how we move the body of Christ into the next generations that are coming along. So, who do you have like Paul and who do you have like Timothy? That's where the difference is going to be made. Let's pray.

Our father, thank you for Paul's willingness to invest in Timothy and Timothy's willingness to invest in Paul and to work with him. And we just pray God that as we look at this idea of passing the torch between the generations, that somehow you would just work it, not just into our heads, but into our hearts and into the motivational grid of our hearts so that we just feel the passion that the zeal for your house would consume us. That we would just not have knowledge, but we would also have zeal. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.