

Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch

Put on Your Own Oxygen Mask First

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Well, good morning, men. Welcome to Man in the Mirror, men's bible study. So, we are in this series, **Paul and Timothy, Passing the Torch**. We want to welcome all those who are joining us online, all around the world. We want to give you a very warm and rousing Man in the Mirror welcome. And so, would join me in doing that on the count of three. One, two, three. Hoorah.

Welcome, guys. We are glad to have you with us as well. So, in this series, Paul and Timothy, Passing the Torch. Let's just review the situation. Paul is toward the end of his career, perhaps towards the end of his life. We don't exactly know what became of Paul, whether he was executed in Rome, where he is writing to Timothy from prison, or if he's released and then later moves over to Spain and some of the western parts of the known world, at that time, to spread the Gospel.

But whatever the case, he's in prison. We know that he's been at least in chains for some part of the time, because he says he has been in chains in a different part of the text. He has been deserted by almost everyone when he was giving his first defense. He had, in this book, about 20 different colleagues in ministry that he's mentioned. Sadly, five are mentioned by name who have either become false teachers or have turned against him, or in the case of one, he's done much harm. Five of his 20, so about a quarter of his colleagues have turned out to be... Let's just call them bad apples.

Now, it's fascinating, because he has a certain perspective that has come after many years of doing work for God, doing work for God. Those of you who have been walking with God for any number of years, also have many disappointments. You have people who have let you down. I have said, on multiple occasions, that the most unpredictable part of my career has always been who's going to do what they said they would do. We've had men come here and with tears, with tears in their eyes, just sobbing, say, "This is the most important thing that's ever happened in my life. This is the greatest thing that's ever happened in my life. I'm going to be here every week now for the rest of my life," then you never see him again. I mean, this is true.

Now, I don't say that in a negative tone, because do everything in love. I say that because the world is just a very difficult and hard place. The elephant in the room is the fall. The elephant in the room is that men are pulled in different directions because the world is not perfect. The world is not the kingdom of God.

Did I just hit that twice? I guess I did. The title of the message for today is put on your oxygen... Did I say that right? **Put on your oxygen mask first before attempting to assist others**, right? We've all heard this, and it is a huge metaphor for self-care, for self-care. So, against this backdrop of this situation, Paul has this outstanding young protege, Timothy. He's wanting to give the last charge, the last commission, the last advice to his protege, Timothy. It's the advice of a seasoned pro.

THE ADVICE OF A SEASONED PRO

It's the advice of a seasoned pro. So, he's seen all of these different situations. He's been through all of these different problems. This is what he decides to say, "What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus."

So, keep the pattern of sound teaching. Well, what is this pattern of sound teaching? How was it given? Well, it was given through communication in relationship. So, this is a letter that Paul wrote to his protegee, Timothy. So, there's written communication, but they also hung out together. They spent 10 or more years in a relationship doing different ministry projects together, itinerating around that part of the Mediterranean. And then, also, Timothy would've heard Paul teaching sermons. Paul would've taken Timothy with him on trips. I do this from time to time. I did this last weekend. I had a speaking engagement about an hour and a half from here over in Brandon, Florida. And so, I asked a man to go with me just to hang out, to get to know him better. I did that once couple years ago with another man, where we went up to Jacksonville or Ocala or wherever it was, to speak at another men's... But when I travel around the state doing local men's events, I will try to grab somebody and just take them along.

And the reason I do that is because I see how Paul has done this with Timothy, and it helps. It helps... Well, it's always helped me. Bill Bright did this with me. I got to do this for two and a half years with Bill Bright, just basically travel around with him. I just observed him. I watched him. It wasn't so much what he taught me like, "Let me teach you something," but it's just watching him was so powerful. And so, I think that's a great way to keep the pattern of sound teaching. Well, yeah. Okay.

So, next verse. Are you doing this or am I doing this? I think this works.

So, it's not on. We have a leprechaun over here. Thank you so much. Yeah. And so, reading on. The next verse says, "Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you." So, these are two imperatives, right? Keep the pattern of sound teaching and guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. And so, just this whole idea of guarding, guarding against what? We will learn in coming weeks that there is a lot of false teaching that's been going on that Paul's had to deal with. I'm going to read to you a couple of these passages, just so you'll get the idea. And as I say, we will be covering this in future lessons.

However, in 2 Timothy 2:14, just listen. It says, "Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words. It is of no value, and it only ruins those who listen." So, there had been a lot of people that Paul's been in contact with that spend their time quibbling about words. Does that ring any bells about today? Things that are going, quibbling about words. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter." Any of that going around? "Because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus." So, there are two of the five mentioned in this particular passage, "Who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and so destroy the faith of some."

So, today, the kind of false teaching that we need to guard against though, it could be licentious behavior. A lot of teaching would sort of downplay the importance of living a strict, moral, obedient life dedicated to the holiness of God, but rather a wink at scripture and do your own thing. I believe in all 9 of the 10 commandments, that kind of idea. And then the other extreme is to be legalistic, over on the other end. It's almost an incalculable number of young people who have been driven out of the church in our generation because of the moral over-moralizing. Is that even a word? Yeah. Being too moralistic, too legalistic, and too strict in the way of interpreting all the little jots and tittles of the scripture and making all kinds of rules and regulations.

Look, anytime you make a rule where Jesus did not make a rule, you are in error, okay? So, being too legalistic or being too licentious, these are the two extremes. The gospel calls us to liberty, liberty, the

freedom that's in the gospel. So, some things are strictly prohibited, some things are strictly commanded, but everything else is lawful in scripture. That's a good litmus test for whether or not you should be involved in doing something or not doing something. If it's not commanded or prohibited in scripture, then you can do it. Now, it may not be beneficial, but you can do it. So, you should make that judgment about whether or not it's beneficial, because based on whether it's wise or not, but not whether or not it's something that would exclude somebody from the gospel.

So, way off track here. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you, and guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, at Man in the Mirror, we have a team of field staff. They're called area directors and regional directors. And then we have a headquarters staff. Whenever we have a new training, a training of a new group of men, I usually get in... Well, I don't usually, I always get invited to come and address that group of trainees. I always start with the principle that's being taught right here. I call it principle number one. Principle number one, and it's the Big Idea for the day.

Principle number one is this: your work for God, your work for God will always be a reflection of your walk with God. Your work for God will always be a reflection of your walk with God. So, Paul has lots of things he wants Timothy to do, and he is going to be charging him to do them, commissioning him to do them in the lessons that come. But notice here that the very first principle that Paul is teaching Timothy is keep the pattern of sound teaching, guard that good deposit that you have. So, that's the advice of a seasoned pro. But here's why, here's why.

HERE'S WHY

In 2 Timothy 3:1, and we're going to be looking again at this in more detail in the future, but I just want you to absorb these words. We're a Bible study. The reason we spend so much time in the Bible is because we're a Bible study, but that's not the only reason. The reason we spend so much time in the word, in the Bible, is because this is what has the power to change lives. It's not by attracting you to a personality. Today, with regard to here's why, a lot of places that would have considered the prosperity gospel to be a huge error are now today themselves preaching a gospel of personal fulfillment. It's fascinating to me how, for example, the word sin is basically, it's not completely gone from the lexicon of Christians, but you just don't hear sin talked about as much anymore.

When I'm trying to figure out, "Well, why do I have a bad attitude towards someone or why did I say that mean thing?" The only way I ever get to the bottom of it is if I figure, "Okay, well, what is the sinful attitude or what is the sinful part of me from which that's coming? And then just wrestle with that until I identify that this is my pride. My pride is wounded. I'm lashing out at that person. I'm angry at that person because of my human pride. Because I don't feel like they're respecting me as much as I should be." That takes a little bit of courage to do that. But honestly, I don't know how you could ever get to a right walk with God until you identify what's really going on with you and then repent. That's all you have to do is just identify it and then apologize to God and repent of it and try to make a change.

But this gospel of personal fulfillment is a real impediment to being honest with ourselves. This is honest. This is Paul, 2 Timothy 3:1, "But mark this, there will be terrible times in the last days. And these are the last days." In Bible time, with the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day. So, Jesus died the day before yesterday in Bible time, in one sense. "There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, ungrateful, unholy." Yep. "Without love, unforgiving." Wow. "Slandrous." Okay. "Without self-control." Oh yeah. "Brutal." Sometimes. "Not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, concurred, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." Oh yeah. "Having a form of godliness, but denying its power. Having a form of godliness, but denying its power."

And so, this is what Paul is the backdrop, part of the backdrop. This is the why that Paul has given this pro advice to Timothy to guard the good deposit that's been given to him, and then to keep the pattern of sound teaching. That's the here's why. But what if you don't? What if you don't? If you don't, you're going to end up being a burned out, perhaps bitter person, Christian, as a Christian. And you know this is true because you know many believers who have not tended to their own walk with God and maybe have done great service for God, but they've gotten burned out and they've walked away from the faith.

I was with an 82-year-old man recently, he's not doing well, he was in a nursing care facility. 82-year-old man, a friend of mine from the past. And when we finally got down to why he was so discouraged and so depressed, it was this: he had lost his purpose. He didn't have a purpose. He'd gotten burned out. He'd gotten away from God. So, he didn't have a purpose for his life. He wasn't doing any work for God because he didn't have a walk with God. He's also walked away from the Lord completely.

So, the idea here that Paul's giving to Timothy is put on your own oxygen mask first and then assist others. And the Big Idea states it this way, **your work for God will always be a reflection of your walk with God.** You see this? Your work for God, it's just always going to reflect your walk with God. The most important thing is your walk with God. And then out of the overflow of that, you can do work for God. You've heard me say it this way before. That you should fill up to the overflow in your personal relationship with Jesus, so that you have enough Jesus for yourself and then some left over out of the overflow to give away to other people.

Many Christians, myself included, you probably too, have at least at some point in your life been doing so much work for God that you didn't take care of yourself. You didn't do self-care. You didn't put on your own oxygen mask first. And then all of a sudden your oxygen level goes down. You're exhausted. You're working out of the reserves. You don't have enough Jesus for yourself. You're working out of the reserves. And so, you're doing the work for God, but you feel absolutely bitter about it, angry. I can't believe I have to do this. Because you are ministering out of the reserves of Jesus that you really need for yourself. You don't, at that point, have enough Jesus to give some to anybody else.

So, the message then is to fill up in your own relationship with Jesus and make that the first principle, so that then you will have an overflow of Jesus to give away to other people. Now, can you always do this every time? If you're a caretaker for a certain season? No, you can't. But this is the idea, this is the principle and this is the thing we should aspire to.

HERE'S HOW: 3 BEST PRACTICES

And then just for the final part of this, here's how you can do it with three best practices that we get from Paul in the text. These are not some ideas that are just pulled out of thin air. So, let's just take a look at the text. I've emphasized some different words here. "What you've heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the deposit, the good deposit entrusted to you, guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us."

So, if we step back from this, the first best practice that we see from Paul is communication in relationship. This is a letter. This is a note. This is a text. This is a text that Paul sent to Timothy to not just encourage him, not just to teach him how to experience personal fulfillment, but it is an exhortation. An exhortation is an enthusiastic piece of advice, an urgent piece of advice that's given. Keep as the pattern of sound teaching and guard the good deposit. Those are earnest imperatives, too. So, the first best practice is if you're a Paul, send some notes to your Timothys from time to time. If you're a Timothy and your Paul has had an impact on you, send him a note encouraging him or give him a call or better yet, go out for a meal or do some traveling together or go on a hike or whatever. But the idea here is there is an actual communication that takes place.

It's been fascinating to me how many times I have met a man who is extremely down, extremely discouraged. Feels like he's got the weight of the world on his shoulders. He feels isolated, he's lonely.

Meanwhile, everybody that knows him is always saying, "Wow. Jim is such a great guy. Man, I just love Jim. Man, Jim is such a servant. Man, Jim has such a good heart. Wow, Jim, there isn't anything he wouldn't do for you. Jim would give you the shirt off his back." But nobody's telling Jim that. They're talking about him, but they're not talking to him. So, let's talk to each other Pauls and Timothys. Let's talk to each other. That's number one best practice.

Number two is to do this with faith and love. Paul said the three things that last forever are faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love. These are the attributes or the characteristics. This is the attitude with which we guard our hearts, with which we keep the pattern of teaching. We do it with faith and love. Faith is believing God anyway in the face of impossible circumstances. Faith is the assurance of things that we hope for and the convictions of things that we don't see. Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find. And then love, which is...

When you begin to look at Paul's writings, the writings of all the Bible writers, but especially the writings of Paul, he will say things like, "The entire law is summed up in this one command." In other words, this one thing, love one another as Christ has loved you. Or all the commands, do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, are all summed up in this one command, love your neighbor as yourself. So, to bring this attitude, if you will, to the relationship, to bring this attitude to guarding the deposit, to keeping the pattern, and then to do it, to guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. I highlighted here us just so you will know, this is all of us, the Holy Spirit. He's not saying with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you, Timothy, and me, Paul, but it's all of us. When we pray the Lord's prayer, we don't say our father in heaven give me this day my daily bread, forgive me my sins, keep me from evil, don't let me yield to temptation, right? It's us.

In the last time, I gave a message how the Mediterranean culture is a shame and honor culture in this day. It also was a community versus an individualistic culture. Everybody's heard about Asian cultures being more communal-based, community-based, and Western cultures being more individualistic. But the ethos of the scripture is it's an us kind of a culture. So, we communicate with each other to enhance our walk with God. We have the attitude of faith and love. And then we do it together, but we do it with the help of the Holy Spirit. Now, the help of the Holy Spirit is the elephant in the room. Because everything else you can do with your own human strength to the best of your ability. But when you take yourself and you put the Holy Spirit into the equation, you have now just become the Incredible Hulk. You have now just got bulging, spiritual muscles. You have all the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, John 14:26, "And the counselor, the helper, the advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the father will send in my name," says Jesus, "will teach you all things, and remind you of everything I have told you." So, Jesus isn't here. Jesus is with the Father. You believe in Jesus, but who you have with you, inside you, in the temple of your body, is the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the one who sent him to you. Now, the spirit is Jesus and Jesus is the spirit. The spirit is the spirit of Jesus, but Jesus is in heaven. It's the Holy Spirit that we have inside of us. All of us, we have the Holy Spirit. Jesus has sent him to teach us all things and to remind us of everything that Jesus has told us. The beauty of that is that when we take advantage of this best practice of guarding this deposit with the help of the Holy Spirit, when we open ourselves up to the help of the Holy Spirit, He will fill us up to the overflow in our relationship with Him.

Principle number one. Your work for God will always be a reflection of your walk with God. So, brothers, if you are a Paul and you have a Timothy, encourage your Timothy to focus first on keeping the sound pattern of teaching, on guarding the good deposit on his walk with God. Encourage him to focus first on his walk with God. And then if you are a Timothy, receive this message from Paul himself. That whatever you want to do for God, it's all always going to be a reflection of your walk with Him. So, focus first on your walk with God, put on your own oxygen mask first before attempting to assist others.

Let's pray. Heavenly father, thank you so much for this word, for Paul, for his life, for Timothy's life, for the exemplar that they give us. I guess the backdrop, that while the circumstances vary, the core

elements of culture have not changed all that much. We pray that you would bless each of us as we seek to apply your word to our lives and to the lives of those men with whom we are engaged as Paul's and Timothy's, and we ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.