

Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch

The Power of Grace in a Judgmental World

Rough Transcript

Brett Clemmer

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Well guys, welcome to the Man in the Mirror Bible study. We are continuing in our series on Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch. If you have a Bible, go ahead and turn to 2 Timothy. Believe it or not, we're going to look at a single verse in 2 Timothy, just the first verse of chapter two. But before we get into this, tell me whether you agree with this or not. We live in an extremely judgmental world. No. We live in an extremely judgmental world. In fact, that judgmentalness has a name, it has a word that people you used to be judgmental. Do you know what that word is? Tolerance.

We use the word tolerance in our society and it doesn't mean what people say it means. It's really kind of a logical fallacy. It's a false flag. It's something that people use I think sometimes when they don't want to tolerate you having a different point of view from you so they just call you intolerant. It's like one of those just great labels that you can throw at somebody. And it sort of squashes the argument right away. Like as soon as I call you that, if you argue then you're being what? Intolerant. It's like a no-win situation.

I don't think it's really tolerance that people want. At the root underneath that, I think what people really want is autonomy. They want the ability to decide for themselves what is true and not true. It starts with just, "I want independence. Hey, we live in America, 1776, Revolutionary War. We just want our independence. That's all we want." And so in the fabric of our culture, especially in the West is this idea of sort of self-determination, self-direction. And we use the word autonomy and that's great. I'm all against tyrannical governments. I think everybody who's listening to this is against tyrannical governments.

But then it takes on this other sort of nefarious definition, autonomy does where I'm no longer just sort of determining what job I have or what school I go to or where I live or what businesses I choose to do business with. Now that autonomy has come down to the level of truth. Like I want to autonomously decide what is true and what is not true. And so people want this autonomy and they want to be strong. They want to have the power that they think that self-determination brings to them.

And at the heart of every man, though, I think is this desire to be saved. But when you are autonomous, you want to save yourself. The world is difficult. Things don't go the way that you want them to go. You have heartache. You have sickness. You have brokenness. We know that we don't like that. We know that we live in a world that's a cult to live in. We know that we need to be saved from it. And so when you're really focused on autonomy as your primary value, then what you want is you want to save yourself.

But I think just autonomy is a dead end street. Autonomy when you take it to the at level is a lonely existence. It sort of proclaims moral independence, And ultimately it separates you. Certainly it separates you from relationship because what happens is as you more and more try to save yourself, as you more and more seek your own autonomy, as you more and more seek to define your own truth, the

group of people that agree with you becomes smaller and smaller and smaller until at the end of the day you are standing there on a ... You're the king of your own island. Congratulations. You're all by yourself.

And so this is the danger of autonomy because in the end you can't save yourself. So Paul even talks about this in Romans, in Romans 7 that famous passage, "the things I want to do, I don't do. The things I don't want to do, I keep on doing." Like Paul recognizes this dilemma that we have in our hearts and in our souls that we can't save ourselves. And so Paul even says at the end like, "Who can save me from this body of death?" He's talking about the will and the affections and then he talks about this body of death. He says, "Who can save me from this body of death?"

So into this quagmire of human existence, a loving father sends a solution. And Jesus Christ comes into this world where we know that we can't save ourselves. We desperately desire to not be isolated. We desperately desire to have good relationships with other people. And we can't do it because the more we focus on our own strengths, abilities, our own best thinking, the more isolated we become. And then Jesus steps into that mess and the means that Jesus uses to save us is called grace.

THE PROBLEM WITH AUTONOMY

So if you have your Bibles turn to 2 Timothy. We are going to be looking for the power of grace in a judgmental world. And this is the problem with autonomy that we can't save ourselves, that will just end up isolated. And so grace comes along and has this credible power. So in 2 Timothy, now we've gone all the way through the first chapter. So a really quick review. I'm just going to hit a couple of points here. We talked about how Paul calls Tim his agapetos teknon, his beloved son. And this idea of a relationship, that's built on trust and friendship and love.

Paul talks about tells Timothy, "Don't be ashamed of what you're teaching. Don't be ashamed of what you believe. It is going to cause you suffering." He said, "We're sharing in this suffering, but when Jesus Christ comes, He brings two things. He brings life now and he brings immortality," Paul says. He brings life, which is the now and He brings immortality, which is the future. It's an amazing way to talk about the gospel. And he says, "Timothy, follow the sound words." What does he mean by that? He knew means that the gospel is wise. The gospel makes sense.

That people are going to tell you that the gospel is not true. They're going to tell you that Jesus didn't really come or He was a nice guy, or He was a good teacher. And that you're calling Him the savior of the world, you're saying that belief in Him is required for salvation to have eternal life. That's not sound. Those aren't sound words. And Paul says, "No, absolutely those are sound words. You can believe on it."

And he even talks about the Holy Spirit coming and that the Holy Spirit dwells within us. He calls them in verse 14, a good deposit. He guards the good deposit entrusted to you. So those sound words, that's the good deposit. The Holy Spirit guards that in your heart so that you cannot be snatched away from God. And then last session, we talked about he calls out Phil and Herman. Do you remember? I'm never going to get these names. Phygellus and Hermogenes as the guys sort of representing everybody that abandoned Paul in his difficulty, but this guy Onesiphorus who didn't regard Paul's chains as something to be ashamed of who came to Rome looking for him and sought him out earnestly and then provided comfort.

And we talked about how Onesiphorus is a great example of what Jesus does for us. That He's not ashamed of our sin. He comes to us in our sin and brokenness and He earnestly seeks us out and He brings us refreshment. Then Jesus brings something Onesiphorus could never bring, He brings salvation. And the means that He brings that salvation by is grace. So let's look then at verse one of chapter two. He says, "You then my child be strengthened by the grace that is Christ Jesus."

So let's look at a little bit of this. First of all, when you see the word then, then is one of those therefore words. When you see the word therefore, you figure out what it's there for. So you'll see the word therefore or you'll see the word for. Sometimes they'll say something, they'll say for and then they'll say

something else. So then is another one of those words that connects what's to come from what's behind. So basically he's saying this first part of the letter based on all of this, like you believe all of this, Timothy, and then you go to this next step.

This is why the guys that make the chapters and the verses made this the beginning of chapter two because he's sort of saying that part's done, now let's go to the next part. And he introduces this next part with this next phrase. So then that's the signal that we're making a change. And then he says, "My child." So this goes back to the agapetos teknon. So he starts the book with this. Now, he's starting the next section with this. And then he says, "Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Let's pause here for a second because we're going to get into what grace means. This is really, really hard to explain well and so we're going to pray that I say the right things, and that the Holy Spirit translates everything I say into the actual right things and writes it on your heart. So let's pray together.

Father, thank you so much for your servants like Paul and Timothy. Thank you that Paul was so prolific with his letter writing so that we have these words that you inspired him through the Holy Spirit to put down on papyrus and that we would have now to read, billions of copies of it to read. Just an amazing act on your heart, Lord of power and grace for our lives.

And Lord, as we look at this idea of grace, would you speak into our minds and hearts? Would you show us your truth in your Word so that we can follow you more closely so that we can live lives of power and of grace, Lord, but of utter dependence on you. And we lift this up to you in Jesus name. Amen.

THE POWER OF GRACE

All right. So we're going to look here at the power of grace. And so what we're going to do is we're going to look here, we're going to go to another letter. We're going to go to Paul's letter to the Ephesians to do this. Now, where is Timothy when Paul writes 2 Timothy? He's in Ephesus. So kind of fitting that we would go back to a previous letter to the Ephesians. I don't know if Timothy would've had access to this letter. I probably could have done a little bit more study on that to figure out, but it's a good possibility that he would know of this letter and maybe even other letters that didn't get preserved that Paul wrote to this area that he was pastoring.

Let me say this that grace is a breath of fresh air in a rotting world. Grace brings a restoration of the order and the harmony of God. In the midst of corruption and chaos, grace brings you strength and this is the point of this verse, this sentence that Paul says to Timothy, that grace brings you strength when your own strength fails you. That's what grace does. That's the power of grace. So let's look at Ephesians 2. I'm going to read the first nine verses here. So if you have a Bible follow along. And if not, it's up on the slides.

Ephesians 2. "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. But God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together in Christ. By grace, you have been saved.

And raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace, you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing it's the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast."

All right, this is one of those passages that is sort of the quintessential passage on grace. This passage defines grace. So let's walk through it together. So at the beginning he says, "You were dead in your

trespasses and sins." So this is our starting point. Our starting point is that we are dead. Now, what does he mean by dead? Well, we are unable to not sin in our natural state. It doesn't mean we always sin. It doesn't mean we're not trying not to sin, but ultimately I think you will all agree that as hard as you try, as much as you want to be good, you are unable to never or sin. With a righteous and just God, we can never measure up to the standard of his holiness.

And so we're dead in our trespasses and our sins. That's what this means. Then Paul then talks about what it looks like. And so he talks about the world, the flesh and the devil. And he actually talks about the world, the devil and the flesh. So first of all, he talks about we're following the course of this world. So all around us is the world telling us lies. Telling us what reality is and giving us values that are not God's values. And so we might follow the value of maximizing our pleasure or maximizing our wealth or having a kid who is a soccer star. We can have all these things and we call these things idols.

Anything that we worship more than God, that's an idol. This is the course of the world that's defined idols, things that you worship more than you worship God, that separates you from God. And then he says, "Following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. And you're like "Well, I'm not a Satanist." "We follow the prince of the power of the air," Paul says, "When we're not saved by Christ." We are tempted. We are seduced.

When you are so drawn to something that you know is not good for you, where does that come from? Like you're drawn to something that you know is not good for you. It's not your flesh that wants that. People around it's not good for you. What is that? Well, that's the power. That's the prince of the power of the air though. That's Satan whispering in your ear metaphorically and it's at work in us. And he says, "the sons of disobedience," these are people that are not obeying God. And then in verse three, he talks about our flesh. "We all once lived in the passions of our flesh carrying out the desires of the body. And then the result of that, of all of those three things is that we are children of wrath."

Now, that is not a popular concept that we are children of wrath. I don't think we think of wrath righteously. We think of wrath wickedly. So when you think of wrath you think of punishment because somebody who is powerful didn't get what they want. Or because somebody's feelings were heard or because all these worldly things, but God's wrath is righteous. And so His wrath is the right response to injustice. That's God's wrath. It's different than the way we use wrath.

So we are children of wrath. We are entitled to be judged. And then when we are judged and found wanting, the word that they use to describe God's reaction to that is this word wrath. So you don't like the word. It's kind of harsh. It's harsh, but it's but true because God is holy and you don't want a God that's not holy. You don't want a God that's not righteous. Because God's wrath actually shows His goodness. Because if there was no wrath, if there was no wrath as a sign of His righteousness, then there would be no difference between good and bad. Everything would be fine. And then God's not really righteous. He's just sort of accommodating. He's not holy. He's not different. There's no higher standard. He's just, I don't know, maybe one of us with a lot more power, which is Zeus.

That's what the Roman gods did. They were just like people that had a ton more power than anybody else. They didn't really understand it so they called them gods, a little G, gods. That's not what we worship. We worship the God. And so this is where wrath comes from. All right, you ready for grace yet? Because I'm getting ready for grace here. All that's the bad news. Here's the good news. "But God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive." Who wants to be made alive? I want to be made alive.

There was a lot of times when I walk through life I don't feel alive. When my sin wears me down. My frustrations wear me down. My temper wears me down. The people in my life that let me down weigh me down. And God comes into that death, into that chaos, into that corruption. And He makes us alive

together with Christ. How? By grace. By grace, you have been saved from this world of chaos and corruption and death. That's what grace does. That's the power of grace is that it saves us.

"And raised us up with Him, seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So that in the coming ages, He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness towards us in Christ." So what is this about? This is about God is glorified when we in the next age and when we are glorified, when Christ comes back and we're in glory, we're in the new heavens and the new earth that brings glory to God. Do you realize this? Like our being saved brings glory to God. That's grace is that God looks at saving us as bringing Him glory and honor. That's a pretty amazing thing when you think about it.

And then this is sort of the quintessential, sort of the culmination of this passage. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not your own doing. It's the gift of God." So what do we know about this? Grace comes through faith and grace is a gift. So let me give you a bad analogy. There's things about this metaphor that work, but I'm not Jesus. My metaphors aren't perfect. Here's my metaphor. Some people would say ... Let me give you a worse metaphor first. Well, Jesus is like a life ring. All you got to do is grab onto the life ring and it saves you. That's kind of a bad analogy. An inanimate object and you got to hold your arm on.

And frankly, the bad thing about a life ring, anybody ever been saved by a life ring? I know some people that have, they're like, "You are afraid. You are scared to death of falling off the whole time." You're holding on like you're drowning. Holding on to something is not the easiest thing in the world when you're drowning. And so that's why a life ring is a bad analogy. Drowning is a good analogy for what we are in this world, but a much better analogy than a life ring is a Coast Guard swimmer. Because what does a Coast Guard swimmer do? He jumps in the water with you. He comes after you. He wraps his arms around you. You can kick and scream and try to dunk him under the water. He's not going to let you do it.

He might even knock you out. They don't tell you that, but don't fight. If you ever get saved by a Coast Guard swimmer, trust me, don't fight. Let him save you. If Jesus ever comes to save, you don't fight Him because He'll knock you out if He has to. He will not give up. He will not relent. You can't get away from Him. He will not let you drown. Why? That's grace. That's the power of grace. He refuses, He refuses to let you drown.

So that brings us to our **Big Idea** and that's this. A lot of times big ideas are uplifting, this one not so much. **Autonomy is a dead end. It's a dead end because you can't save yourself.** Autonomy is a dead end. You can't save yourself. You need to let Jesus save you. That is the power of grace in a judgmental world.

RESOLVING THE CONFLICT

So how do we resolve the conflict then of autonomy versus grace? And the answer to that is surrender. The way that you resolve the conflict between autonomy and grace is you surrender. You say, "I'm not going to be in charge. I'm not going to be in control. I'm not going to decide what's right and wrong. I'm not going to fight the guy that's trying to rescue. I'm going to follow his rules."

If he tells me to lay on my back so he can wrap his arms around me, I'm going to lay on my back so he can wrap his arms around me. If he tells me to be still so that he can pull me more efficiently, I'm going to be still. If he tells me to keep my head back and my eyes up, I'm going to keep my head back and my eyes up so that the water, the briny, gross-tasting water that wants to get in my mouth and into my lungs and drown me can't do it.

Surrender. That is the way that you resolve the conflict. So let me say this. The power in following Christ is not that your problems go away. It's that you're not faith facing the problems alone. That you have strength to face them. That you have the Holy Spirit to guide you and to comfort you. And that you have

the promise of ultimate victory through the salvation of Jesus Christ and you don't deserve it. And that's grace.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much that you sent Jesus to rescue us. That He jumped into the choppy seas of this world and came and sought each one of us out, and He grabs us and that He pulls us to safety. That through the whole process of being rescued, Lord, between now and the time that we get to see you, He is right there with us. That you, Lord, through the power of your Holy Spirit you are helping us face the difficulties that we face.

And Father in a world that wants to define truth, would you help us, Lord? Not to be shrill and not to be angry, Lord, you have enough wrath. We don't need it too. Lord, would you help us to be loving? Would you help us to show other people what we have that we would guide other people to the safety, the salvation of the cross, the power of the spirit, Lord? That you would help us share your grace with other people so that they could experience your love and your salvation. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.