

Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch

Can Your Love One Lose Their Salvation?

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Good morning men. And let's give a welcome to our guys online on the count of three. One, two, three Hoo-rah! Welcome, guys. We're glad that you are with us as well. We're doing the series **Paul And Timothy: Passing The Torch**. The title of this message today. **Can Your Loved One Lose Their Salvation?** I realized the sensitivity of the topic. It's been a lot of gravitas on me as I've been preparing over the last few days, because I have taken the, let's just call it pretentious position, of speaking to you on behalf of God for this particular topic. So, I want to be humble about that.

Do you have a loved one who has left or is thinking about leaving the Christian faith? Or do you have a loved one who is thinking about or starting to think about coming back to their Christianity? I was with a group of about 40 couples. And we made a list. They made a list. They wrote down the first names of their loved ones. And between 40 Christian couples, we came up with over 100 names, most of whom were people who had lost or given up on Christianity. Some were spouses who were with them, some were exes, some were sons. Maybe you have a daughter. Maybe you have a brother, a sister. Maybe you have an extended relative. Maybe it's a coworker or perhaps somebody from your neighborhood. Maybe it's a high school friend. But you have someone who has at some time or another made a profession of faith in Jesus, and now they've walked away.

There's a lot of research on this. I'm not going to go into any of it. Pew Research has done a wonderful job. There's been a tremendous change in the people who are professing Christianity, just over the last 10 years, about a 12% drop in the United States. Some people are perhaps rightfully, but some people are making this a five-bell alarm for Christians to wake up and think about. We're not going to be looking at that.

THE MYSTERY OF LOST FAITH

What I want to do is I want to start us today and talk about the mystery of lost faith. The situation in Second Timothy, Paul finds himself in Rome. He finds himself in chains. And he finds himself deserted by virtually everyone in Asia. He's all alone. He's had a couple people, Onesimus, and maybe a couple others, Timothy, who have supported him. But everybody else has deserted him. There's been a plethora of false teachers that have gone out. Preachers who have big egos essentially, and are leading people astray. A lot of people are abandoning their faith. It's a situation then, not unlike the situation that we see now. So, he's talked about his sufferings. He's invited Timothy to join him in the sufferings. And he's talked about the gospel.

And at Second Timothy chapter two, verse 10, we read this. "Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." So, he's telling Timothy that he is enduring. He's inviting Timothy in other places for Timothy to endure with him, or to persevere, or to put up with everything, all these things he's been talking about and everything else, for the sake of the elect. Now, this word elect, in some translations is translated, chosen or chosen by God.

There are different schools of theology, but essentially there are those who believe that the elect are predestined. And there is another group that essentially thinks that God through for knowledge knows who's going to accept Jesus. And so therefore, that's how they become part of the elect. We're not going to deal with that specifically. But the point here is that, Paul is saying that there are people out there who are chosen by God. And he's enduring all of these things that he's enduring, because there are people out there who are chosen, who are among the elect, who if they are properly approached will receive Jesus. Or perhaps have received Jesus, and maybe they are among the disobedient. Maybe those are some of the people who have actually abandoned their faith, but they are among the elect. So, I'm going to endure all of this for their sake so that they may obtain their salvation.

And then in verse 11 and the first part of 12, we see a tremendous promise. Here is a trustworthy saying. Apparently this was some kind of a well-known saying in the early church. Some commentators think it might have been part of a hymn. Nobody really knows for sure. But it was a saying that was in regular use. Paul says, "Here is a trustworthy saying. If we died with him, we will also live with him." This is what the theologians call regeneration. Regeneration is by the Holy Spirit. Salvation, we cooperate, or sometimes we don't even cooperate. We come kicking and screaming into the kingdom like CS Lewis, who was the most reluctant convert in all of England. But the point is that we are drawn by God to have this relationship with him. We die with Christ figuratively, so that we will also live with him. And then if we endure, Paul's word here, we endure everything, if we endure, we will also reign with him.

And then we come up to the next verses, which are a bit of a concern. And that's where we're going to spring from today. It says, "If we disown him, he will also disown us." So, what about all of these people who have made a profession of faith in Christ, have maybe been walking with Christ, maybe they've led Bible studies. They've been in Bible studies. They've been on mission trips. They've been part of a church. They've been on a church committee. They've been involved in leadership in a church, and now they've walked away. And this verse says, "If we disowned him, he will also disown us." It goes on. "If we are faithless, he remains faithful for he cannot disown himself." So, can someone, your loved one who has made a profession of faith, can they lose their salvation?

ETERNAL SECURITY AND ASSURANCE

Let's get into it. It's the subject today of eternal security and assurance. I would say that there is over the years, I have lots of study subjects, there is no study subject that I've looked at for the last four decades, more than this particular subject. This is one of the subjects to which I have devoted a lot of time. I'm going to go ahead and start you out with the Big Idea here. The **Big Idea** is this. And it's very long, so I just want to take a picture of it, but it's very important. **The promise of God is that no matter how seriously or radically your loved one falls away, they can never fully and finally fall away.** One more time? Yes. The promise of God is that no matter how seriously or radically your loved one falls away, they can never fully and finally fall away.

Hey, let me ask you a question. Why did Jesus come? Jesus came, yes, to seek and to save the lost. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Now the question is, can you uncall on the name of the Lord and not be saved? Is that essentially what we're saying? Asking that question this morning. The Bible represents your adoption papers. The Bible is the paperwork that God completed, filled out to complete your adoption. I have in the past, subtitled the Bible. Does anyone remember what my subtitled for the Bible would be? Shows you how ineffective of a teacher I am. There's no reason you'd remember this. But I promise you, this could be one of those things that would give you a great deal of solace and comfort. You might want to just think about jotting it down. A wonderful subtitle for the Bible. Bible doesn't have a subtitle. But if it did, a wonderful subtitle could be: Loving father, relentlessly pursues, a relationship with his children. From cover to cover, from Genesis to Revelation, we see a story of a loving father who is relentlessly pursuing a relationship with his children.

This is all very tightly summarized in the Westminster confession of faith. There are a number of different confessions. This is a particularly a good confession of faith. And I put a lot of words up here on this screen. I'm not sure what the best way to do this is. So, you know what I'm going to do. I'm just going to do the thing you're not supposed to do. I'm just going to read you an extended passage from the Westminster confession of faith. These are from chapter 17 and 18, which deal with the perseverance of the saints. See, everybody's been worried about this question forever. Can my loved one lose their salvation?

And this is what the Westminster says. They, speaking of her loved ones, whom God hath accepted in his beloved, Jesus, effectually called and sanctified by his spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from this state of grace. That's where those words come, the Big Idea. Can neither, totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere there into the end and be eternally saved. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, a lot of big words, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of the father.

What's the subtitle for the Bible, or could be a subtitle for the Bible? Loving father, relentlessly pursues a relationship with his children.

So, I think that the statement once saved, always saved, while it may be accurate, I think it's too simplistic. It's too trite. You just rifle it off the tip of your tongue, and then it's kind of like... In fact, it's so dismissive and so disrespectful that to use it with someone who's struggling to understand this, is a real disservice, I think. So, I went ahead and uttered the words, but now please just forget them. Okay. It goes on.

Nevertheless, this is the Westminster, nevertheless, they may through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalence of corruption remaining in them. So, what's that? Those are the voices of the world, the flesh and the devil. Right? And the neglect of the means of their preservation. This is you, by the way also, and your loved one. Nevertheless, they may fall into grievous sins. What kind of grievous sins? Adultery, sexual promiscuity, addictions, broken relationships, fraud, integrity.

Among those 40 Christian couples I mentioned, there were people there who had children or loved ones who had robbed banks and had been in prison, had suffered all kinds of addictions, had abandoned their families. Nevertheless, they made through these temptations, fall into grievous sins. And for a time, continue therein. I saw a video one time a man was talking about how his prodigal son had come home. And he said, "He walked away from his faith. And then after 15 years he came home." I said, "15 years?" So, he was living a prodigal life for 15 years. Oh my gosh.

And for a time you see, continue therein whereby they incur God's displeasure. God disciplines everyone he loves as a son And they grieve the Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened. Does anyone have a loved one who has made a profession of faith and maybe walked with God for a while, and now they've walked away and they have a hard heart? And it just seems like there is no hammer big enough to crack that nut, you see. And their conscience is wounded because of egregious things that they've done. Hurt and scandalize others. Cheating on spouses. And bring temporal judgements upon themselves like prison. And it goes on, and on, and on, and on.

And it says that your faith could be shaken, diminished, and temporarily discontinued by negligent, special sin, some sudden and vehement temptation, maybe just explosive anger and just do something. I had a friend one time here in town, a prominent dentist who asked me if I would write a letter to the judge because he had been driving down the road. And a couple guys had been harassing him. He pulled a gun out of his glove compartment, and put it out the window and aimed at them. And he got arrested. Just some vehement temptation. By God's withdrawing to suffer. Yet, you are never utterly destitute.

The Spirit by the Spirit, this assurance of salvation may in due time be revived. And in the meantime, you are supported from utter despair.

R.C. Sproul summarized all of this in perhaps I think the most elegant of his quotes or one of the most elegant of his quotes. R.C. Sproul, a famous theologian said, no true believer ever loses his salvation. You got that? And just think of the elegance of this. No true believer ever loses his salvation. Are there some people who have made professions of faith and were insincere in that profession of faith? Yes. Jesus talks about that in the parable of the sower. When he sowed the seed, some fell on the rocky path, devil just came a snatch away. But some fell on the rocky soil, sprung up. But then when temptations and tribulations came, they withered and fell away. They were emotional here. They never really, truly, and earnestly repent of their sin and by faith, accepted Jesus. You will never know the difference. So, that's a very hard thing to know. He says, no true believer ever loses his salvation.

To be sure, at times Christians fall seriously and radically, but never fully and finally, as we read in the Westminster confession. Now back to our text for this troubling text. If we disown him, he will also disown us. If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself. So, let's take two things. First, lost faith is not lost salvation. What did it say? If we are faithless, he remains faithful. Lost faith is not lost salvation. That's just what we've covered right here in the Westminster confession. There are so many verses that discuss this. I want to read a few of them to you that are my favorites or some of my favorites. I'm very interested in this subject as I said, eternal security assurance of salvation.

Lamentations chapter three versus 31 to 33. You know what? I'm not going to give you the addresses. I just want to read these verses to you. And just enjoy them, absorb them. Let the Holy Spirit minister to your heart. Think about your loved one. Or maybe you're the loved one. Maybe you are here because you've got one foot out the door and you're trying to, "Oh my gosh. I'm losing my faith. I'm thinking about leaving the Christian faith. And I'm here because I'm hoping I can hear something that will bring me to my senses." Or maybe you have left. Maybe you've been away. And you're thinking about coming back, you're giving Christianity another chance. Just let these soak in.

"In the same way," says Jesus, "it is not my heavenly father's will that even one of these little ones shall perish." So, is God trying to keep people out of his kingdom or is he trying to get people into his kingdom? "For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion. So great is his unfailing love, for he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone. See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands."

A bruised reed, he will not break off. A smoldering wick, he will not snuff out. Think about your loved one. He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion. I will never leave you or forsake you. For no word from God will ever fail said the angel. Jesus said, "Scripture cannot be set aside. My words will never pass away. My word, which goes out from my mouth will not return empty, but will achieve the purpose for which I'd sent it. And the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong firm and steadfast. Verily truly, I tell you, whoever is my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life and will not be judged, but has crossed over from death to life."

I don't read anything in scriptures... The scriptures talk about a second death that comes after. I don't read anything in scriptures that talks about dying after you have received Jesus.

All those, the father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me, I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. And I could go on and on and on and on and on.

But what about those who deny him or disown him? What does the scripture say? If we disown him, he will disown us. Well, it's a very simple question. Peter denied. It's the same Greek word that's in Second

Timothy. It's the same word that's in Matthew, where Peter denied three times that he even knew Jesus. Do you remember that passage? It's extraordinary. Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard and a servant girl came to him and, "You're one of them, weren't you?" And he denied it before them. And then another time and then another time. And then he began to call down curses on himself. And he swore to them, "I do not know the man." So, Peter did disown him. And the scripture, the text says, if we disown him, then he will disown us.

Well, how do you reconcile that? It's because if he disowns you, that doesn't mean he disowns you forever. He can restore. And he does restore. He restores Peter in John chapter 21 in that famous reinstatement. "Simon, do you love me?" "Lord, you know that I love you." "Feed my sheep." again, do you love me? Again, do you love me? Even if your loved one adamantly denies Christ, they can still will be restored. No one is beyond the reach of the long arm of the loving father who is relentlessly pursuing a relationship with every creature, every one of us, God put together in our mother's wombs. The **Big Idea** today. **The promise of God is that no matter how seriously or radically your loved one falls away, they can never fully and finally fall away.**

WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR YOUR LOVED ONE?

And then last, what can you do for your loved one? So the free thing you can do is you can endure. Paul says, "I endure everything for the elect." You should assume the best for your loved one. You should go ahead and assume that your loved one is among the elect. "Those who call on the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ will be saved, and their household," it says in Acts 16. You should assume that they are among the elect. And then having done that, then do what Paul says. I endure everything. All the drug abuse, all the methadone clinics I've had to go to, like with my own brother, methadone clinics, all these different things that you have to endure, you do that for these sake of the elect.

Look, my brother died of a heroin overdose. If he's not in heaven, based on a simple, plain reading the scriptures, and he professed faith in Christ. And he said to me one day, just a few months before he died, he said, "Pat." I asked him how he's doing on his journey. He said, "Pat, I want you to know I still believe, but you need to know it's really hard for me." Look, if I'm not able to have an assurance that my brother is in heaven and that someday I will see him. And if I'm not able to have that assurance that he's in heaven, then I really have no basis based on a simple, plain reading scripture that I have any assurance that I'm going to be there either.

Are you tracking? So, just endure everything. Just endure it for the sake of the elect. Don't answer questions your loved one isn't asking. Just keep your mouth shut. Don't try to fix your loved one. Don't try to manipulate them. Anybody know what commission breath is? You have a salesman, and they got commission breath. You can just tell, they're trying to work you to say anything they can to get you to... Don't be commission breath, shut up. Don't answer questions your loved one isn't asking.

And then this fourfold approach. It's quite simple. And I've shared this with many, many men over the years, and they've all found it to be useful, helpful. Number one, faith that God is able. Faith that God is able, that God can fulfill his scriptures and save your loved one. No matter how far down in the gutter they have fallen, or no matter how far down the gutter you have fallen. Faith that God is able. And then trust that God's word is true, that God isn't trying to trick us in his word into thinking that he's a very generous and loving and forgiving and gracious God. He is all of that.

And then unconditional love. And unconditional love is keep your mouth shut love. It's just being there when they are ready. And then prayer. One counselor told me that she works with the parents of a lot of prodigals. She said that sometimes they come back, sometimes they don't. And I said, "What?" And hypothetically, you can see how the parents of children who have walked away from their faith, might pray for a while, but after 10 years or maybe 15 years might start to lose faith and trust in God. But I

would urge you never lose faith, never stop believing the word of God that God is able and that you can trust his word and continue to pray.

I have a brother who's still not walking with the Lord. But I remember at the 20-year-mark, I prayed for him every day for 20 years. And I realized that I prayed for him and faith for 19 years. But for the last approximate one year, I had continued to pray, but I'd stopped believing. So believing prayer. There is nobody beyond the long reach. Nobody can fall. So look, nobody has done a worse job at being a Christian... We believe in the Christ of history, but the original people who are not Christians who are called Christians, they believed in the Christ of prophecy. So, they were believers too. Nobody did a worse job than King Solomon.

I mean, honestly. There's some people who've done some stupid things like David. I mean, David really had, his brain kind of just like he had epoxy, somebody put epoxy in the gears of his brain for a time. But King Solomon, oh my gosh. He loved foreign women. It says, he did all these good things. It says in First King's chapter 11, verse one, it says, "King Solomon however," and then it just nose-dives. Says he loved these foreign women. He had 1000 women that he had sex with. And it says, "He had disobeyed the Lord's command. You must not intermarry with them because they will surely turn your hearts after other gods. Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love and they turned his heart after these other gods." I could say a lot more about that. Nobody has screwed up their Christianity more than Solomon. He was worshiping foreign gods even. Well, we worship foreign gods too, but ours are different. Ours are like money, power, sex, things like that.

But when God was talking to David, Solomon's father, once, he said this, and I won't read you the whole prayer, but here it is. Is Solomon heaven? Could Solomon be in heaven? Could David's loved one, lose his salvation? Here's what the word says. I'll give you the verse on this one. It's First Chronicles, chapter 17, verse 13. God says, "I will be his father, and he will be my son," speaking to David about Solomon. Listen. "I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. I will never take." First Chronicles, chapter 17, verse 13.

The Big Idea today and it's ponderous. Oh my gosh. This is such a weighty, weighty topic. I realized that. **The promise of God is that no matter how seriously or radically your loved one or you falls away, they or you can never fully and finally fall away.** The word of God. Let's pray.

Our dearest father, every everyone who hears these words, virtually everyone has heard these words say, has a loved one, somebody they care about. And it just looks like it's a hopeless situation. I pray father, that you would tutor the words of your scriptures to their hearts, so that they would have the faith, so that they would believe that you're able, have faith that you're able, that they would trust your word is true, that they would express unconditional love and they would pray in faith for that loved one. We ask this, in Jesus name. Amen.