

Paul and Timothy: Passing the Torch

People Who Use Faith For Personal Gain

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Good morning, men. And welcome to Man in the Mirror Bible Study. Shout-out to our guys online. Welcome, and join me giving them that warm Man In The Mirror welcome on the count of three. One, two, three- Ooo-rah

Welcome guys. We're glad to have you with us as well. Okay, the series is Passing the Torch, looking at the lives of Paul and Timothy together. So Paul is writing this. He's an older man. He's writing to a younger man, probably maybe 15 years younger than him. They've been in a relationship for 10 or maybe 15 years. Paul's writing from a prison cell in Rome back to Ephesus where Timothy is becoming a church leader, is the church leader. He'll become the Bishop of Ephesus. He'll be the Bishop of Ephesus until he dies probably around the age of 90, a very revered person in the Christian Church.

Paul said of Timothy in Philippians chapter two. He said, "I have no one else like him. Everyone looks out for their own interests. but Timothy looks out for the interests of others." Paraphrasing. He said, "I have no one else like him." So Paul's an older man. So I'm an older man. You're getting older when the phone rings and the first thing that comes to your mind is, "I wonder if that's CVS calling me to remind me that I have a prescription that's ready to be picked up."

But I really got a big reminder of what it used to be an older man this week. We had our concrete, some of the concrete in our driveway break up. So I needed to have it replaced because of roots that were coming up. We have seven live oak trees, beautiful live oak trees in our yard, and two on the side of the driveway and one had buckled the concrete and it had gotten so bad, needed to have it fixed. Well, they went in there and they cut down some of the roots, but I was very sensitive to them cutting out a root. I'd rather have to replace the concrete in a few years than replace one of these big giant live oak trees. So I said, just cut down the root and if it buckles again, so be it. So I was talking about all this with our lawn guy this week. And he said, "Yeah, it shouldn't be a problem." He said, "You're not going to have to worry about it during your lifetime anyway." You're fired.

So the thing that's happening here is that Paul is looking at this young man that he has this great admiration and respect for. They have this great relationship and he wants him to be successful. He wants him to be able to have a good relationship with God and with people and to have a good ministry, to have a good life.

And so, today we're going to look at another installment in the instructions and counsel advice that he's giving him. The title of the message today, **People who use faith for personal gain.**

PAUL'S CONCERN

Now, Paul's concern here is that Timothy is going to be exposed to certain kinds of people. And he does not want Timothy's faith to be bruised or worse, to fall away in some way from his faith. And you might be a healthy person this morning. And so this might be a word for you on how you can instruct, teach, mentor, coach someone else. Or you might be a hurting man this morning. You may be a person who

has been hurt by another Christian, or even a church leader. You've been hurt and you have had a crisis of faith.

Maybe you are in it. Maybe you are at the beginning of that crisis of faith. Maybe you're right deep in the middle of it, or maybe you've already worked through that, and maybe you're healthy again. And so this would be a message for you to understand what has happened to you and to make the adjustment, or if you have regained your health, if you come out the other end of it, you probably have someone in your life who right now is going through such a crisis of faith because they have been hurt by another Christian or a Christian leader even. Perhaps it's somebody who is a younger person, and they don't have the bandwidth, they don't have the experience. They don't have the whatever to know how to cope with what's happening to them, or happened to them. They're in a crisis of faith because of something that a Christian did to them. Something that a Christian leader did to them. And they are needing help.

Or it might even be one of your own children or one of your siblings or a spouse, might be somebody in your own family. It might be you, whomever it is, whether you are healthy or hurting this morning, we're going to talk about people who use faith for personal gain. And this is Paul's concern for Timothy. And as I've expressed, also to you.

So let's take a look at the scriptures. Paul begins in II Timothy 3:1. "But mark this, there will be terrible times in the last days. These will be difficult days, perilous times." And the idea of last days, we talk about it here from time to time, more than one verse expresses this. But basically with the Lord a 1,000 years is like a day and a day is like a 1,000 years. So, we're in the last day's Bible time. It's the time between the first and the second coming of Jesus. This is theologically well accepted as the last day.

So not only when Paul wrote this, but today would still be considered the last days. You remember I said a few weeks ago, 13 million years for light from the closest star in Orion's Belt to hit your eyes, 13 million years, 13 million light years. So, couple 1,000 years, last days. "Mark this, there are going to be some terrible times in the last days," these days. "People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedience to their parents." Paul loves lists, doesn't he? "Disobedient to their parents. Ungrateful."

Do you remember the parable of the 10 lepers? All 10 were healed. They went away, but only one came back to say thank you. Were the other nine not happy that they had been healed? Well, of course they were. But they didn't come back and expressed gratitude. Only one out of 10 did. Unholy, without love, unforgiving, get offended by a family member, or you are the offender to a family member and you just can't get to forgiveness. Forgiveness is the elephant in the room, by the way, for most situations. Slanderous. Brett talked quite a bit about social media and his message, a lot of slander going on, even among Christians, without self-control, brutal, brutal with words. Brutal in other ways too, of course. Not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash. Conceited lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God. Having a form of godliness, but denying its power. So it's interesting. Who is Paul talking about here?

Paul is not talking about the heathen, the pagan world. Paul is talking about what's going on inside the visible church. Those who are professing faith, but living like unbelievers or living like pagans. That's who Paul is talking about here. These are people that are professing faith or presenting themselves to other people as Christians. So Paul is not the first one to have experienced this. Jesus had 12 disciples, and Judas, one of them, would be a very apt description of Judas here. Lovers of themselves, lovers of money, ungrateful, not lovers of the good, so forth. Lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God. Having a form of godliness. I'm a disciple of Jesus, a form of godliness, but then denying its power. Power here is dunamis, the word from which we get dynamite, the power of the Holy Spirit. Notice what I've highlighted here. Lovers of themselves, lovers of money and lovers of pleasure. Lovers of self, lovers of pleasure, lovers of money. And then, not lovers of the good, not lovers of God.

So anyone who is in the visible church. Inside the visible church is the true church, but inside the visible church are other categories too. There are seekers there. There are backs sliders there. There are counterfeits there. So, when you go inside of a physical church, or even in this building, not in this group, because you guys are the crème de la crème, but if you go to just a normal church, a normal church on a Sunday morning, there will be some people like Paul and Timothy. But there will also be some people there who have a form of godliness, but they deny its power. They're there for what they can get out of it. They're there to make business deals. They're there to make contacts they're there because they want to seduce women even, they're there for whatever reasons that they're there, that's why they're there.

And so here's what Paul says about all that, he says, "Have nothing to do with such people. Have nothing to do with such people." Now we're going to explore this a little bit more, but this is the main instruction that he gives in this particular text. So when you have these kinds of people who are in it for what they can get out of it ... I remember this story. I was in Columbia, South Carolina speaking, and a young man came to me and he was hurt, he was bruised, because he was like a Timothy who had not had a Paul yet, telling him what he might be able to expect or what he should at least be on the lookout for from other Christians. And so he had had a deacon in the church sell him a used car, made him a pretty good deal, but sold him a used car.

Two months later he found out it was completely rusted out on the underside. So a deacon in his church had defrauded him, sold in this car, and basically a guy who, even though he is a deacon in his church who was having a form of godliness, but he was a lover of money and not lover of this young man. "So have nothing to do with such people. They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women. Now, the first thing that you would think here might be sexual. And that certainly is a possibility there. This would be a few women, these are probably women in Ephesus that Paul's referring to, but this would not be the vast majority of women. But this would be a few women who would be gullible. And then these kind of men would take advantage of them. They might take advantage of them sexually, but they might also take advantage of them financially.

And we'll see in a text here in just a moment where Jesus makes a comment. Jesus basically reserves his harshest words for these kinds of people. They take advantage of women emotionally. And these are women who they're loaded down with sins themselves and sway by all kinds of evil desires. They're always learning, but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. And so there are some people in the visible church who would take advantage of such women. Hmm, sad. "Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses," these were two Egyptians sorcerers. They're mentioned in several different pieces of extra biblical literature, but these probably would be examples of two of the magicians who matched the miracles that Moses turning water to blood and so forth. "But just as they opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth." So now I can't quite figure out how Paul has conflated people, people who are lover the lovers of themselves to teachers, but he's at least in my opinion, it looks like he's conflated them. So he's talking now about specifically teachers.

"So also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds who are, as far as the faith is concerned, who as far as the faith is concerned are rejected." They're rejected. So they are professors of faith who are not really genuine Christians. Okay? "But they will not get very far. Because as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone one." Well, how will it be clear? Well bad company corrupts good character. Every parent has taught their child that right. Bad company corrupts good character. So you know that you can take one candle and put it in a dark room and it will light the whole room. And you also know that you could take one bad apple and put it into the barrel, and what will happen? It'll spoil the whole barrel.

I was thinking about this to be, what if you had though one good apple and you put it in a barrel of bad apples? It's going to go bad too, right? So yes, we are called to be salt and we are called to be light, but

we need to be vigilant about the folly of these other men. And okay, we'll get more onto this in a moment. Whoop.

As I said, Jesus reserved his harshest words for a certain kind of people. It was teachers of the law and Pharisees. Interesting, religious leaders. Jesus, think about that, Jesus reserved his harshest words for religious leaders. And that's because of the damage that they can do when they are lovers of themselves, having a form of godliness, denying his power. He said this, Jesus, there are two passages and Matthew 23, long, "Woe you Pharisees and hypocrites." Long, long passage, sort of a shorter version here in Mark 12:38-40. Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law." Watch out for the teachers of the law. Fascinating. "They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces." This is why I don't wear flowing robes. Maybe, who doesn't want to be treated with respect? But it's this puffery. And they like to have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets.

I was the president of my fraternity in college. And then after college we didn't have an alumni association here in town, so I started the alumni association. The fraternity had its annual banquet and I was invited along with others to come back, like the alumni are. And since I had started the alumni association, I was a young guy. I had not had these kinds of lessons and I was puffed up. I wanted a place of honor. I just assumed that since I had started, since I was a former president of the fraternity and I had started the alumni association, I just assumed that I'd be sitting at the head table. So I walked up with my poor wife up to the front, looking for my seat. And then I was told, "You're sitting back there." And of course, beyond the humiliation, it was a great lesson in not being a person who is a lover of whatever. But rather to try to be a little bit more humble.

"They devour widows' houses." So this probably would be taking over their houses, getting them to give their houses to the greater good of the religious faith so that they might take advantage and get the financial benefit of it. "They devour widows houses. and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely." That's what Jesus said. Very harsh words from Jesus. So how do we put all this together into a big idea? And I think that a good way of doing it, and it may not be the most cleverly worded **Big Idea** you've ever seen, but I think this is it. **Steer clear of anyone using Christianity for personal gain.** Just steer clear of anyone who's using Christianity for personal gain.

Now, how many people are we talking about here using Christianity for personal gain? Is it 80%? Is it 50%? Is it 30%? Is it 20%? Is it 10%? What percentage of people are using Christianity for personal gain? What percentage of people are lovers of pleasure, lovers of self, lovers of money? Well, here's the answer. All of us are some of the time. And some of us are all of the time. And you could be induced with a lot of false guilt here because you have been a sinner. But Paul remember, said, "I don't understand what I do. The good I want to do, I don't do. And the bad things that I don't want and the evil things I don't want to do, those things I keep on doing." So all people do these things some of the time, but some people do these things like Judas all of the time.

And I don't know what the percentage is, but I don't think you should get too excited if you are sitting there and feeling guilty. Because you might be a little bit a part of the terrible times of the last days. You might be one of the progenitors of that at any particular moment. I think that Jesus has given us a couple of examples that we can probably lean into. I do think the idea that only one of the 12 disciples really was falling into this category of using Christianity for personal gain. That would be less than 10%, 8.33%, less than 10%, one in 10. I think it's a valuable example that Jesus said in his parable that one of the, or was it a parable? I can't remember if it's a parable or an actual story, but anyway, I guess it was an actual story where 10 lepers were healed and one came back. So, some people all the time like a Judas, but all people some of the time are going to fall into this category.

If someone is a serial lover of pleasure, a serial lover of money, then that person ought to examine themselves to see if they are really in the faith. The Bible tells us, Paul tells us to do that kind of thing as well.

PAUL'S NOT SAYING AVOID SINNERS

Now, the next thing I want us to talk about is that Paul's not saying to avoid sinners, Paul is not saying to avoid sinners. There is another text we're going to take a look at here in I Corinthians 5:9-11. So Paul has written first in first Corinthians that there was a man who had been having sexual relations with his father's wife. And he calls it very evil. And he tells the Corinthians to put this man, I'll just read it to you.

So in I Corinthians 5:1, it says this. You could just listen, "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that does not even occur among pagans. A man has his father's wife, and you are proud." Then down in verse five, "Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord." Very mysterious. We're going to talk more about this. Then in versus 9 and 11, to 11, he says, "I wrote to you and my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people." Not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral or the greedy and swindler and idolaters. Well, they're everywhere, right? I mean, they're everywhere. This is why you have passwords. This is why you have keys. This is why you have locks on your doors. This is why you don't let your children walk to school by themselves. They're everywhere.

He says, "When I talk about not associate with these people, I don't at all mean the people of the world. In that case, you'd have to leave the world." Jesus said, "You're in the world, but not of the world, but I am sending you into the world." You can't be an ambassador for Jesus. You can't be a witness for Jesus. You can't be salt. You can't be light if you are not in the places where the sinners are. The sinners are the ones who need to have the opportunity to see the light in you. To taste the saltiness of your faith, to witness you being an ambassador of the ministry of reconciliation.

So Paul's not talking about, when he says, "Have nothing to do with them." He's not talking about the non-Christian. He's talking about people inside the body of Christ who are using Christianity for personal gain. You see, you see this? All right, let's continue. "But now I'm writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister, but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or swindler, do not even eat with such people."

This is very severe, right? Now just think about this for a moment. You have someone who he's talking about in our passage today, who, they're slanderous, they're ungrateful, they're unholy, they're rash, they're lovers of this, lovers of that. And so he says, "You must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother's sister. Don't even eat with that person." I wonder what if that person happens to be your wife? Or what if that person happens to be one of your children?

So, there is a sense when sometimes physical separation is called for, but in most cases you're still going to be in the same church with those people, you're just going to keep your distance. If there it's a familial relationship, you're not going to kick them out of your house, you're just going to be a very much more cautious person with them. So you have to use little wisdom, a little common sense here to how this applies.

So again, he says, "He doesn't mean the people of the world that you're not to associate with them." So I took our son and his wife to the Formula 1 race in Miami. And some percentage of the people there are just, wow, they just seem like worldly people. They just seem like worldly people. The way they dress, the way they talk, the amount of alcohol they were consuming. But does that mean you don't go to the race because there are some sinners there? Well, if anything, I was there as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. That's one of my primary roles in life is to be an ambassador of Jesus. Jesus didn't hang out with the religious people, remember? Who did Jesus hang out with? He hung out with the tax collectors and the prostitutes and the sinners, the sinful people, that's who Jesus hung out with.

So it's very important to understand that when Paul's saying, "Have nothing to do with them," he's not at all talking about sinful people. He's talking about people in the church, and we'll talk a little bit more about it, the fact that they are unrepentant type of people. All right. So then the Big Idea, just steer clear. It's just a simple idea. Just steer clear of anyone who's using Christianity for personal gain. I'm in the Christian publishing business, right? There are a few publishers I just, I will not work with, because I just know, having worked with them before, their motives are just ... They're in it for personal gain. They're trying to figure out how much money they can make. They don't really care about the ... I'm overstating the case to make a point. But they don't care as much about the message and the impact, which is why I write. They're interested in, well most of the Christian publishers anyway, are owned by larger corporations that are not distinctly Christian. So there's a bottom line. There's a profit margin, which is important. I mean, you have to make a profit. But you kind of get the idea sometimes that some of them, kind of in it for the money.

"NOTHING TO DO WITH THEM" IN ACTION

So last thing is just nothing to do with them in action. What would that look like having nothing to do with these kinds of people who are in Christianity for personal gain? I've already told you about what happened about this man who was sleeping with his father's wife. Probably was not his birth mother. Could have been, but doubtful.

So when Paul's saying, "Have nothing to do with him," it's interesting because he does say, that was in first Corinthians in II Corinthians 2:6 he writes,

"The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. They had nothing to do with him." Watch this. Watch this. Now, instead you ought to forgive and comfort him so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. And it says a few other things. So when we say, don't have anything to do with someone, that doesn't mean forever. The purpose of not having anything to do with someone is so that they would come to repentance. And then there is a season for that, and then it's time to comfort that. Okay, so how quickly do you not have anything to do with him?

Matthew 18:15 says, "If your brother," this is Jesus. "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault just between the two of you." So somebody's used Christianity for personal gain against you. Maybe you feel like they've done you wrong in a business deal, whatever the case might be, go to him, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won back to your brother. "But if he doesn't listen, then take two or three witnesses, and then if he still doesn't listen, then take him to the church. And then the church should discipline him." And like Paul had said. Titus 3:10, last verse we'll take a look at, "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him." But that doesn't necessarily mean forever. That just means as long as he's one of these people that Paul's been talking about. Someone is using their faith for personal gain.

I wish I had a really, really good story to wrap up this morning, but I do have a story. I was at the 10-year mark of my spiritual journey. And our church was going through some upheaval. And the chief elder, there were two microphones in the church, one on the right, one on the left. I was sitting on the right hand side with a group speaking in one direction on the issue at hand. And then there was another microphone on the left hand side of the church where people could come up and speak for the other side of the argument. I say argument, the discussion or whatever.

The leading elder in the church after I spoke got up and was very animated. And he was on the other side of how he felt about whatever the issue was. I don't even remember what the issue was. But he stood up after I spoke and he called me a silver tongued devil. This is the leading elder in the church called me a silver tongued devil. Now I thank God that I'd been a Christian for 10 years at that point. If I'd had been a Christian for two years, I would've gone over and beat the crap out of him. If I was a new

Christian, I would have killed him. No, not really, but I was mature enough. At least at that point, I leaned over to my wife and I said, "Well, I guess that's our last Sunday at this church."

And we left, that's one of the ways to have nothing to do with them. Just remove yourselves. James 1:27 says, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this to look after widows and orphans in their distress and keep oneself from being polluted by the world, even when the world comes into the church." **Big Idea; Steer clear then of anyone who's using Christianity for personal gain.** Whether it's reputation, money, whether they're trying to win respect of others, whatever it is, whatever kind of personal gain it is, just steer clear of anyone using Christianity or personal gain.

Let's pray. Our dearest father, thank you so much for your word. Thank you so much that when we look at the entire Corpus of the word, how just it blends together and it's so cohesive and it makes so much sense. But Lord, we do need to spend time to dive into it to figure out all these correlations and compliments and so forth. I pray God that we would understand how to react to people who are using Christianity for personal gain. That we would not overreact. I pray that we would not over accuse people, that we would understand that it's probably a small percentage. And Lord, that we would understand that some people are like this all the time, but all of us are like this sometime. And that you would show us in our own hearts where we are the ones who are doing the hurting.

And Lord, for any of us who are sufferers at the hands of other Christians, or even leaders, pray that you would heal our hearts through your word here today and through discussions at the tables. And then also, if it's a family member, Lord give us a special degree of wisdom, particularly if they've been hurt, just what we can do to come alongside them and love them. We ask these things, Jesus, in your name. Amen.