

Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 1 . . . Passing Your Spiritual Torch (2 Timothy 1:1-5)



NOTES

This epistle is the most touching and personal of all Paul’s writings. It is his final letter and has, therefore, been called his “last will and testament.” In this book, Paul passes his spiritual torch to a new generation of believers—especially to young Timothy, who is the leader of the church at Ephesus.

Paul wrote this letter in A.D. 66 or 67, during his second imprisonment in Rome. After his first imprisonment, Paul was apparently released for a couple of years. During this time, the Roman emperor Nero blamed Christians for the burning of Rome and made Christianity an illegal religion. Sometime after that, Paul was again arrested and later executed.

In the first five verses of this last epistle, Paul reveals **four** principles required for effectively **passing your spiritual torch**. First . . .



Pass it with purpose (1:1).

Paul begins this letter: *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ* (1:1a). Though life seems so unfair at this point, Paul has no misgivings about God’s purpose for his life. Therefore, he reminds his readers he is *an apostle* (APOSTOLOS, a-pos´-tol-os), which means, “one sent forth with a message.” The modern equivalent is the word “missionary.” Paul was not one of the original twelve disciples, but he was personally called and commissioned by the Lord. As with each of us, God had a special purpose for Paul’s life. In Acts 9:15b, what does God tell Ananias is His purpose for Paul’s life?

Paul was *an apostle* not because he sought the position but *by the will of God* (1:1b). Though he certainly doesn’t understand it all, Paul knows somehow God has a good purpose for the Roman axe that looms in his near future.

Suffering is not an indication we are out of God’s *will* because doing God’s *will* usually requires sacrifice and suffering. Choosing to do God’s *will* for our lives often requires making the same choice as Moses. How is his choice described in Hebrews 11:25?

Paul was *an apostle . . . according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus* (1:1c). He was to declare *the promise of life* to those who were dead in trespasses and sin (Eph. 2:1). The phrase *in Christ Jesus*, or “in Christ,” appears more than 90 times in his epistles. Probably the best known instance is 2 Corinthians 5:17. Personalize and write it below:

When **passing your spiritual torch**, remind your successors that Christians have the most important purpose in the world because the Gospel **is the promise of life . . . in Christ**. So, pass your spiritual torch **with purpose** and . . .



Pass it with parental affection (1:2a).

Paul probably first met Timothy when he and Barnabas visited Lystra on the first missionary journey (Acts 14:8-21). On the second missionary journey, Paul again meets Timothy and is so impressed with him he gets Timothy to accompany him and Silas on their journey (Acts 16:2-3).

Years later, Paul warmly writes: *To Timothy, my dearly beloved son* (1:2a), which reveals the intimate relationship between them. Apparently, Timothy’s father was not a believer, so Paul became Timothy’s spiritual father. This is an example of God’s special way of filling the voids in our lives.



One blessing of being a Christian is belonging to a spiritual family with spiritual parents, brothers, and sisters. Jesus expresses this truth when His mother and brothers, who think Jesus has lost His mind, come to take Him back to Nazareth. They wait outside and send someone to tell Jesus they are there (Mk 3:31-32). Jesus looks at His disciples sitting around Him and says, *Behold my mother and my brethren!* (Mk 3:34). Then, what does He say in the next verse (Mk 3:35)?

In other words, we as Christians are a spiritual family, with sons and daughters in the faith to whom we will one day pass our spiritual torches. Therefore, pass your spiritual torch with **purpose, parental affection**, and . . .



Pass it with prayer (1:2b-3).

This is why Paul prays a triple blessing for Timothy: *Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord* (1:2b). Paul is expressing his genuine desire for God’s best in Timothy’s life. *Grace* is a request for supernatural strength, like God gave Paul to endure his thorn in

the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7-9). *Mercy* (ELEOS, el'-eh-os) is a request for kind acts beyond what is expected or deserved. God's *peace* (EIRĒNĒ, ay-ray'-nay) refers to inner tranquility that only comes from experiencing God's grace and mercy. *Peace* is the "spiritual tranquilizer" that keeps us from panic.

Chained and sitting in a cold, damp dungeon, Paul can no longer preach or travel, but he can write and pray, so he does. Paul writes: *I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day* (1:3). When Paul prays, Timothy is always on his mind. As Jesus passes His torch, He prays for two things concerning His disciples. What is His first request (John 17:15)?

Jesus wants His disciples to be in the world, but not of the world (Jn 17:16). We are to be insulated from the world, not isolated from it. That is only possible through Jesus' second request for His followers in John 17:17. What is it?

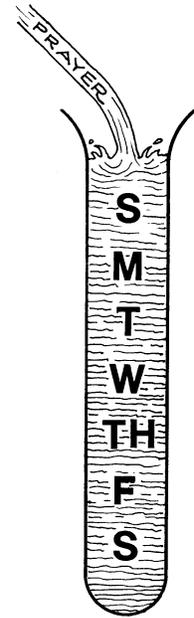
When I was dating Virginia, I got a new Bible. She wrote in the front of it: "This book will keep you from sin; but sin will keep you from this book." To be kept from the Evil One, we must allow the Word of God to *sanctify* us by living what it teaches.

As Jesus and Paul prayed for those who would follow them, we all need people for whom we pray and to whom we will one day pass our spiritual torches. Therefore, pass your spiritual torch with **purpose, parental affection, prayer**, and . . .



Pass it with praise (1:4-5).

Few things prepare people to accept the spiritual torch like praise. Paul is a master in this area because he knows the power of praise. Paul writes, *Greatly desiring to see thee . . . that I may be filled with joy* (1:4a & c). There is no greater praise than letting people know their presence brings *joy* to our lives. There are also very few people who fill us with *joy* when we are in their presence. However, as Christians, we have a common relationship that does fill us with *joy*. Read Psalm 16:11b-c and explain.



The phrase *being mindful of thy tears* (1:4b) probably refers to the tearful parting Paul experienced when he was arrested and shipped off to Rome. Paul had a similar parting with the elders in Ephesus. After Paul kneels and prays with them, what does Acts 20:37 record?

In our lives, there are very few people for whom we weep when we have to part from them. Paul's life is an example that the people with whom we have the strongest bonds are those we have helped find and prepare for God's purpose for their lives. These people will someday receive our spiritual torches.

Paul's praise continues: *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also* (1:5). Timothy's father was a Gentile, and nothing is said of his faith, so he may not have been a believer. However, it is clear Timothy's *unfeigned*, or sincere, *faith* was modeled by his mother and grandmother, who were possibly led to the Lord by Paul.

The best way to help someone develop an *unfeigned*, or authentic, *faith* and prepare them to carry the torch is praising them regularly. The Evil One uses discouragement, which is often the result of a lack of praise, to lead many believers into temptation. Therefore, when passing your spiritual torch, pass it with praise by obeying what command in 1 Thessalonians 5:11?

A major part of having a "journey to a faithful finish" is preparing others to accept your spiritual torch. Pass your torch with **purpose, parental affection, prayer, and praise**.

Paul's life gives us an excellent example of a "journey to a faithful finish." Answer the following questions by looking at the diagram of Paul's Christian life on page 11:

How many epistles did Paul write? _____

How many years between his conversion and martyrdom? _____

How many of his epistles were written during his imprisonments? _____

PAUL'S CHRISTIAN LIFE

