

How to Press on to Pass on the Torch of the Testimony

by Stephen Kaung

The Christian life is a relay race where each generation passes on the torch of the testimony of Jesus, and faith is the key to overcoming the spiritual battle of the ages.

Duration: 58:51

Scripture: Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Faith Endurance", "Discipleship Training"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, endurance, and passing on the torch of the testimony of Jesus. It discusses the concept of faith as the substantiating of hopeful things and the conviction of the unseen, highlighting the need to run the race with endurance and fix our eyes on Jesus. The speaker urges believers to be faithful to the Lord, overcome obstacles, and train the next generation to continue the testimony of Jesus, whether in anticipation of His imminent return or in preparation for the future.

Transcript

Will you please turn to the book of Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 11, verse 1. Hebrews chapter 11, verse 1. Now faith is the substantiating of things hopeful, the conviction of things not seen. I will repeat. Now faith is the substantiating of things hopeful, the conviction of things not seen.

Chapter 12, verse 1 to verse 3. Chapter 12, verse 1. Let us also therefore, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, laying aside every weight, and sing which so easily entangles us. Run with endurance the race that lies before us, looking steadfastly on Jesus, the leader and completer of faith, who in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider well him who endures so great contradiction from sinners against himself, that he be not weary, fainting in your minds.

Let's have a short word of prayer. Dear Lord, we do thank thee for gathering us again this morning. We thank thee for thy presence here, because thou art faithful to thy own word.

Dear Lord, we do pray that thou will open every heart to thy own word. Let thy word fall into good ground, that we will bear fruit a hundredfold to your glory. We commit this whole time into your hand.

Lord, take charge over this time. Say whatever thou want to say to us this morning. We are here to hear thy word, not only to hear, but to let thy word become our life, that thy name may be honored and glorified.

We ask in thy precious name. Amen. Thank God for bringing us to this last day of speaking.

We hope, by the grace of God, what we have heard in the past few days will have their deep effect to our lives, that we are not just hearers, but also doers of the word of God. During this last of my own session, I would like to share with you how to press on, to pass on the torch of the testimony of Jesus. Our Christian life on earth is like a relay race.

The first group of people will be ready to run with the baton in their hands. They run with endurance. They run with hope.

They run in such a way that they overcome all obstacles and finish their part. of the race. Then we'll pass on the baton to the next group, and the next group will continue to run.

And then we find group after group will be running until the goal is reached. We find that in the first century, how the apostles and those of the first century, how they ran in their lives, but because our Lord Jesus seemed to have delayed his return. Therefore, the next group must be raised up to continue the running.

And now we are in the 21st century. Brothers and sisters, we have been running, and we are still running. But if the Lord should delay, again, we want to say it is not the desire of our Lord to delay his return, because he is most anxious to come back to receive his own to himself.

I don't think there is anyone who can be more anxious to come back and return and reclaim his own than our Lord Jesus. Again, we have to confess that it is our fault, because we are not yet ready for him. So, dear brothers and sisters, now we are in the 21st century.

What is our heart attitude? Our heart attitude is that we do expect our Lord to return in our time, because all the prophecies in the Bible that concerns the coming of the Lord that are before his coming have all been fulfilled. We are now not waiting for another prophecy to be fulfilled before the Lord will return. So, dear brothers and sisters, how close is the coming of the Lord? Because all the prophecies that precede the coming of the Lord have been fulfilled.

As we say before, there are still other prophecies remain to be fulfilled, but these prophecies are concerned with the coming of the Lord and afterwards, not before. Brothers and sisters, I always feel that we are in a very thrilling time, because our Lord Jesus can return at any moment. What is our attitude? Are we waiting for him? Are we anxious to see him? Or is it that we are hoping that he will not come so soon, because we are not ready? So, brothers and sisters, this is a most thrilling time for each and every one of us.

What are you waiting for suddenly? Some will be taken, but some will be left. Those taken are those who are ready, precious to our Lord. But those who are left, they have to go through great tribulation in order to be restored.

So, brothers and sisters, faith is the victory. Now, the Bible mentions a number of things, but it does not give us any definition. So far as faith is concerned, what is faith? I think the closest to the definition of faith can be found in Hebrews chapter 11.

Now, I'm reading from Darby's translation, because I find that it is a very accurate translation. In Hebrews 11, when we are told, faith is the substantiating of the things hopeful, the conviction of things not seen. What is faith? Faith is the power to substantiate a substance from outside into within you.

For instance, as we come to this auditorium, I suppose everyone will notice that on the platform here, there is a picture. Why do we see it? Because we have eyes wide open. If a person who is blind should come into this auditorium, and we told him there is a picture on the platform, he does not see it.

He cannot see it, because he has no way to make this substance enter into himself. He doesn't have the power of substantiating. Brothers and sisters, we have the thing hopeful, but then God, if by the grace of God we have faith, we can substantiate the hopeful thing into our very being and transform our lives.

And that is what faith is. So the Bible tells us faith is the victory. If we have faith, if we believe, we know that what we have hoped for will become a fact.

Brothers and sisters, people in the first century, because our Lord comforted them, I go, but I will come back. I will receive you to myself. I'm preparing dimensions for you, and afterwards I will come back and receive you.

The Lord has promised, and we know that his promise is always fulfilled. I do not know how you feel, but I do feel very deeply that our Lord Jesus can come back in my time. It is the prayer of my heart that I will see him when I'm alive.

It is not my hope to die. It is my hope, by the grace of God, to be raptured alive. Now, again, I have to remind you that many of the hymns concerning the coming of the Lord that we say, do you ever realize that there is something not quite right? Because all the hymns concerning the coming of the Lord always tell us the trumpet shall sound, and the angels cry, and the Lord shall return, and the dead in Christ shall be raised, and those who live who still are living.

Now, notice this. In 1 Thessalonians 4, those who still live on earth. This is a hint that have been those who live that have already been raptured, but those who still live, then the dead in Christ will be first raised before they will be transformed, and where will they be taken? Not to the throne, to the air.

Why? Because the Lord has already secretly come from the throne to the air. So 1 Thessalonians 4 is a rapture after the great tribulation. All the saints will be gathered, not in heaven, but in the air, where there will be the judgment seat of Christ to decide whether some will be rewarded with the millennium, and some have to go through discipline in order to be fully restored.

So, brothers and sisters, how important it is for us to reign with hope. You remember in the first century, not only the 12 apostles, but others, such as Paul. How did they run? I think we are all familiar with the story of Paul.

He was Saul before he was converted. He was a pious Jew. He studied law under Gamaliel, the greatest teacher, rabbi at his time.

He became a Pharisee. Now today we think badly of Pharisees, because our Lord said, ye hypocrites, Pharisees. But remember, that man Saul was a true Pharisee.

He tried to do everything in the law, according to all that he could. He was zealous for God, but unfortunately, he was blind. He didn't have revelation from above.

So, he persecuted the followers of Jesus, fearfully. Now, I often wonder, how could a gentleman like Saul seize those who believe in Jesus, men, women, children, and brought them to judgment, even to witness their death? How could a gentleman like Saul went through what he had seen among those believers and not being touched? I often wonder, how he could watch Stephen being stoned to death, and yet Stephen's last cry was, Lord, do not put the crime upon them. He must be touched.

However, he tried to bribe his conscience by double his effort in persecuting the followers of Jesus. He was mistaken, but he was real. Thank God, he looks into his heart, and therefore, the Lord met him on the road to Damascus.

He was going there to persecute the Christians, but instead, the Lord appeared to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the gods. Saul didn't know the one who was talking to him. So, his first question was, Lord, who are you? In other words, he realized that the one who was talking to him was Lord, but he didn't know him.

So, our Lord Jesus said, I'm Jesus whom thou persecutes, and immediately, Saul capitulated himself before the Lord. His next question was, Lord, what do you want me to do? In other words, he put himself in the hands of the Lord Jesus, and from then on, how he faithfully ran the race, until finally, we find in his second letter to Timothy, this was written before his martyrdom, and then he said, I have run, and let's turn to second Timothy chapter four. We begin with verse six, for I'm already being poured out, and the time of my release is come.

I have combated the good combat. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.

Henceforth, the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will render to me in that day, but not only to me, but also to all who love his appearing. You know, our Christian life is composed of three directions. One direction is towards the enemy of God.

The second dimension is towards ourself, and the third dimension is towards the Lord, and here we find in all these three dimensions of life, before his martyrdom, he could declare, I have combated the good combat. Brothers and sisters, we who are the Lord's, we are involved in a great combat, a great battle. It's the battle of the ages.

It is the battle before God, and God's enemy, Satan, and we are involved. The enemy will try everything, try to entice us back to his rule. He used different tactics.

Sometimes he would try to attract us with the world, and other times he would try to attack us fearfully. We are all in a combat. It is the battle of the ages.

It is the battle before God, between God and Satan, and we are the target. Whether we will stand with God against the enemy, or whether we will surrender to the enemy and become an enemy of God, this is what our Christian life is. Brothers and sisters, we have that dimension in our life.

Do not think that we can live our own life as we wish, because we are not free. Either we are free by the Lord, or we will be slaves to God's enemy. You know, when you read Ephesians chapter 2, in the beginning, you will find that we think we are our own master.

We are doing things according to our own wishes, but this is only outwardly apparent to be. Actually, Ephesians 2 tells us, we are under the rule of the enemy of God in the air. We are following his way, his direction, but thank God, God in his mercy has delivered us.

So, we think, who is on the Lord's side? You cannot be neutral. You are either on the Lord's side, or you are in the enemy's side. Now, where are we now? Are we on the Lord's side? Do you think that being on the Lord's side, you will have an easy life? You will be carried on a sedan chair, and be carried to heaven.

Brothers and sisters, that's not true. If you are on the Lord's side, you will be the enemy's target. He will try every means, every persuasion, trying to entice you, trying to bring you back under his rule.

And if you are faithful to the Lord, you have a fight to fight. Brothers and sisters, the moment we are saved, we are saved from the domination of the enemy. We are saved by the Lord.

We belong to the Lord. But the moment you belong to the Lord, in the very moment, this is your side of the spiritual battle that has been going on for the ages. Nobody can be neutral.

You are either on the Lord's side, or you are in the enemy's side. And if you are in the Lord's side, the enemy will try every means to entice you, to attack you, to bring you back to his rule. Life is a battle, but thank God, Paul, he said, I have fought the good fight.

If you have read the life of Paul as recorded in the scripture, you will find that his life wasn't easy. He had to pass through many trials, but thank God, he was faithful to the Lord. He won the battle against the enemy.

So, before he died, he could declare, I have fought the good fight. You know, even before that, he would say, I will not say that I have been arrived. I have been completed.

He said, I am forgetting what is behind me and pressing on towards the goal. That's in the Philippines. But now in 2 Timothy, knowing that his martyrdom was near, he could declare, I have fought the good fight.

Dear brothers and sisters, may it be that every one of us here could say the same thing. And then you find that our life is composed of the second area. I have finished the race.

Mrs. Pen-Louis said, as soon as a person is saved, he is put on a race. We are going to be in an obstacle race. Along the way, there are many obstacles, but we are supposed to overcome, by the grace of God, all these obstacles and to finish our life.

And then Paul again said, I have kept the faith. That's towards God. He had been faithful to God.

He believed to the very last, until his martyrdom. So what a life this great Paul had lived. But our Lord Jesus did not come at his time.

So he has to pass on the torch of the testimony of Jesus. Thank God, Paul was such a person that he not only ran himself, but he also took around himself young people. We find how he surrounded himself with young people, such as Timothy.

Now I'm not going to speak on Timothy, because our dear brother Dana will speak on it, and our brother will do a much better job than I can. But we know that aside from Timothy, Paul took around himself other young people, such as Titus. I'm not sure where was Titus born, but the first time we find his name

mentioned was when Paul and Barnabas, they went to Jerusalem to settle this matter of the law, whether a Christian should be circumcised, whether a Christian should keep the law, just as the Jews.

In other words, to be a Christian, you have to be a Jew first, and then you can be a Christian. That was the issue at that time. So Paul and Barnabas, they went to Jerusalem to settle this question.

Why? Why did they go to Jerusalem? Because it came from Jerusalem. But when Paul went to Jerusalem, he said, I went there by revelation. He went there, but he took with him Titus.

Why? Because Titus was a Gentile, and he took Titus there to be a case whether a Gentile must first become a Jew before he can become a Christian, whether he should be circumcised and keep the law before he can believe in the Lord Jesus. He was to be a test case. Now remember, brothers and sisters, to go to Jerusalem to be a test case, it needs some gut.

If you have a temperament like Timothy, you know Timothy was a person who is timid, but not Titus. We find that the temperament of Titus, he had a strong temperament. In other words, he could stand all the conflicts and would never give in.

So that's the reason why Paul took Titus with him. Dear brothers and sisters, I often say, our temperament, what is our temperament? We are not born, not only born with a physical body, and a wonder of it is, of the millions and billions of people, no two bodies are exactly alike. God loves variety.

So brothers and sisters, do not try to imitate anybody. Only imitate the Lord Jesus. Because you are special.

If you have a timid temperament, now I say, our temperament is the shape of our soul. God not only made us with a physical body, and of the billions of people, no two persons are exactly alike. Sometimes we find twins.

We find it very hard to know which is which, who is who. But the parents always know. Because however they may be alike, they are an individual.

Dear brothers and sisters, whether your temperament is an introvert like Timothy, or whether your temperament is an extrovert like Titus, both are given by God. And both are beautiful, wonderful in God's sight. Do not try to change, but put your temperament in the hand of God, and he can use whatever temperament he has given to you.

So here you'll find Titus. He is a brave person. He is an extrovert.

And Paul took him to Jerusalem to be a test case. And when you look into the life of Titus, how Paul took him with him, how Paul trained him, how Paul sent him out and used him. You remember when Corinth had problems.

The first one he sent was not Titus. He first sent Timothy there. But Timothy couldn't solve that problem.

He was too timid. He was frightened by the conditions of the Corinthians. So Paul sent Titus there, trying to solve that problem.

You know the problem in Corinth was the most difficult problem. They were people who opposed Paul. They would not even listen to Paul.

Paul not only rode them, he went there himself. But he was rejected. So in this difficult situation, that Timothy couldn't help, Paul sent Titus.

And he agreed with Titus, they will meet together at Troyes. And you find when Paul arrived in Troyes, and find Titus was not there. Even though the Lord had opened the door of the gospel, he didn't have the heart to remain there.

He left until finally he met Titus in Macedonia. And Titus came back with a rosy report. How eventually those who opposed Paul, not all, but many, turned to the Lord.

How they repented. How they were thinking of Paul. In other words, Titus was successful in his task.

So dear brothers and sisters, thank God we have different temperaments. Do not try to be another person. Be yourself, but give yourself totally to the Lord.

And he's able to use it in his way. What Timothy couldn't do, Titus could, and vice versa. Everyone in the hand of God, of whatever temperament you may have, can be used by God.

And you know, Paul in his lifetime trained the second generation. Not only we find people like Timothy and Titus, we find another person like Epaphras. Now evidently when Paul was in Ephesus, he was there for three years, declaring the gospel.

And evidently this man Epaphras got saved. And after he was saved, he was zealous for the Lord. And the Lord used him to help, to raise up the churches around, in Colossae, in Hierapolis.

The Lord was using that person. But not because the Lord had used him. He became proud and independent.

You'll find that when he began to realize there were problems beyond his ability, and how he was sent by the brethren to Rome to see Paul. Not only to support him physically, but also to lay their problems before Paul. And that's where you find the letter to the Colossians.

So brothers and sisters, here's another illustration. Another young man used by God. And because he went to supply Paul, and also to report the problem to Paul, he got sick.

Sick almost to death, but he was faithful to the end. And you'll find in the Bible, he became a co-prisoner of Paul. This young man was faithful to the Lord.

So when Paul passed away, it doesn't mean the testimony is gone. You'll find that these young people that have been trained, they rose up and continue on with the testimony of Jesus. So dear brothers and sisters, we have a double problem here.

One problem is, we in this generation, should the Lord delay his return? Have we been faithful to the Lord? And not only ourselves, are we being used by God? When we see young people with hope, are we willing to spend time with them? Are we willing to share with them, and help them to grow up spiritually? Then when we are gone, they may receive the torch of the testimony of Jesus. This does not affect our hope that the Lord will come in our lifetime. Now, brothers and sisters, here you have two problems.

One problem is about ourselves. Have we been faithful to the Lord ourselves? The other problem is, have we been used of God to help train young people that they may continue on with the torch of the testimony

when we are gone, should the Lord tarry? So dear brothers and sisters, these two problems are upon us. Number one, are we faithful to the Lord? Number two, are we open to help the young people, to prepare them to receive the torch of the testimony? So may the Lord have mercy upon us.

Shall we pray? Dear Lord, how we praise and thank Thee, because Thy way is higher than our way. Thy thoughts are higher than our thoughts. We do not know what is in Thy mind, but we do know that Thou want to see Thy testimony being fulfilled.

We thank Thee for calling us to bear the testimony of Jesus. Lord, it is the prayer of our hearts that we may be considered by Thee as faithful. Lord, we want to declare by Thy grace that we have fought the good fight.

We have finished the race. We have kept the faith. But Lord, that is not enough.

We are thinking of our young people. Our hearts do go out to them that they will also be raised up by Thee that should our return delayed, that they will carry the torch of the testimony. So it is a prayer of our hearts this day.

Make us faithful and enable us to help the young people to go on, to go forward with the testimony. We ask in Thy precious name.

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