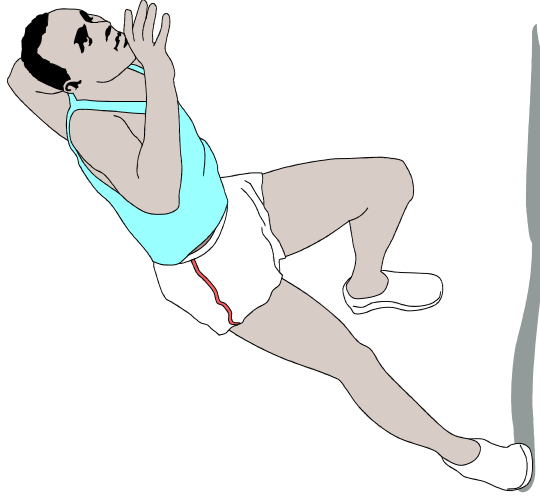


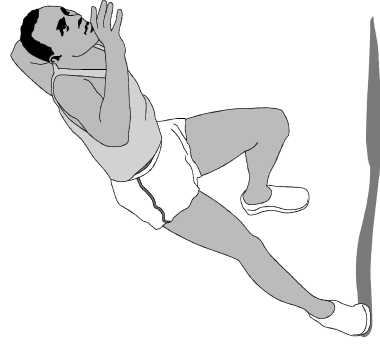
# *Passing the Baton*



All Scripture quotes are taken from the New King James Version,  
unless otherwise stated.

# *Passing the Baton*

by Brian Johnston



# 1. Moses to Joshua

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**The Summer Olympics of Athens 2004 is now just a memory. One particular memory I have is of how medals could be won and lost in the relay races depending on how expertly the baton was handed over each time. Faster teams proved vulnerable to teams who were nearly as fast, but who also transferred the baton more smoothly.**

I trust we're running in the Christian race. At times in our life we either have to pick up or pass on the baton of some particular responsibility. I'd like us to look together at four biblical examples which show us how well the transfer can be done.

Our first example is the transfer of leadership as it passed from Moses to Joshua. Moses led the Israelites out from the land of Egypt; Joshua, his successor, would be the one to lead them into the Promised Land. This was how God personally confirmed the news to Joshua:

*After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, 'Moses' assistant: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the*

of circumstances. *The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction." Then Moses set out with Joshua his assistant (Exodus 24:12,13) to later return with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands*

(Exodus 32:15-19). It seems Joshua had waited on the lower slopes of Mount Sinai while Moses had climbed higher to receive the ten commandments. This was the mountain that had been on fire, engulfed in smoke, and shaking violently as God addressed the people. Surely all this would have had a profound effect on Joshua, impressing on him the value and necessity of having God's Word.

But there were other times when Joshua experienced the nearness of the presence of God. For *Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away ... As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses ... The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young assistant Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent* (Exodus 33:7-11). This was the apprenticeship that Joshua served as Moses' 'young assistant'. What

would it have been like to eavesdrop on those intimate conversations between the man of God and his God? Moses was a man apart, of whom the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit had free course in his life (Numbers 11:17) so that God could speak to Moses *face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend* (Exodus 33:11). The life of a man led by the Spirit of God must have impressed Joshua. I'm sure the valley-floor, the mountain slope and being inside that tent played a big part in Joshua's learning curve. Then the time finally came when God called him to take over from Moses. The call came with a promise:

*"I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates - all the Hittite country - to the Great Sea on the west. No-one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you."* (Joshua 1:3-5 NIV)

God was making the promise that he was giving them the land, but they'd have to set foot upon it, conscious of his presence with them. Today, God has blessed Christians with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), but we need to lay hold of them and make them our own if we're

going to live in the conscious enjoyment of them here and now. Claiming the possession and experiencing the presence - as Joshua was to do - brings home to us our need of prayer. For it's by prayer we plead God's own promised blessings to us, as we pray according to his will.

The next thing God said to Joshua was:

*"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous..."*

*Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."* (Joshua 1:6-9 NIV)

Why did God repeat those encouraging words to Joshua, "Be strong and courageous"? Doesn't this show us that Joshua felt weak and inadequate for the task? And so he should! God uses the weak things of this world (1 Cor.1:27). He can't use us if we're full of ourselves. But when the Spirit of God brings us to a sense of our own emptiness and brokenness, that's when God can use us. 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit' says the LORD (Zech.4:6). We need to be able to say with the apostle Paul: 'Not that we are adequate in ourselves ... but our adequacy is from God' (2 Corinthians 3:5). Yes, God gives

strength to the weary, power to the faint, and to the one who lacks might He increases power (Isaiah 40:29). To be useful to God we need a proper sense of our own weakness and inadequacy – so that we see clearly our need of the Spirit's power, that we might *be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in [our] hearts through faith* (Ephesians 3:16,17). This is another lesson Joshua's experience can teach us.

Finally, the last part of God's commission to Joshua was:

*"Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you?"* (Joshua 1:7-9 NIV)

These words of the Lord to Joshua remind us very much of Psalm 1:1-3:

*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.*

*But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

*He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.* (NIV)

When we enjoy God's Word day by day, and allow it to influence our thinking and control our lives, then we'll live a life which God sees as righteous and He'll bless us; that's his promise. So the instruction to Joshua about living in the Word emphasizes to us our need of the Bible. In the Bible we find

guidance for all areas of our lives, and our faith is strengthened when we absorb its teaching as opposed to this world's perspective. Above all, it's there we read about the Lord Jesus and our hearts are drawn out in worship. And so the baton passed successfully from Moses to Joshua, and the way it was done reminds us of the unchanging requirement for prayer, the power of the Spirit, and Bible focus in the service of God.

## 2. Elijah to Elisha

The passing of the baton, as we saw in the Summer Olympics of 2004, may well make all the difference between gold and silver in the relay race. Some handovers are clumsy, while others are done in true textbook style. The Bible is our textbook as we study lessons from the handover in ministry from Elijah to Elisha, two of the great Old Testament prophets.

*When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal.* (2 Kings 2:1 NIV)

It seems clear Elijah knew his last day on earth had come, and the sons of the prophets knew it too, and so did Elisha. But it made no difference to their programme for the day. That in itself is a challenge for us: would it make much difference to the way we lived today if we knew this was to be our last day on earth? For these Old Testament prophets, there were certain places God wanted them to visit, beginning with Gilgal and ending up at the Jordan, and the journey is an instructive one for those who are followers of Christ, as I hope we'll see today. As we said, their journey was to start at Gilgal - just as that had been the starting place for the people of God when they first

entered the land under Joshua's leadership - which was what we thought about in the last chapter. Gilgal means 'rolling' and there the men were circumcised to roll away the reproach of Egypt. We, too, need to cut away from our lives all that appeals to the flesh, the flesh being our old fallen human nature. The apostle John tells us: *For the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life are not of the Father but of the world* (1 John 2:15). He was referring to worldly appetites, attractions and ambitions, wasn't he? The world has so much to offer that is attractive to our old sinful nature, the flesh, but the follower of the Lord Jesus must say, "No," to the world, just as Elisha refused to stay at Gilgal, even when:

*Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you."* (2 Kings 2:2 NIV)

Let's follow further the progress of Elisha the pilgrim as he continues to accompany his master Elijah: *So they went down to Bethel. The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?"*

*"Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "but do not speak of it."*

*Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho."*

*And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you."*

Why didn't Elisha want to stay at Bethel, for Bethel means 'the house of God'? God's house was not there any longer! It was now in Jerusalem, and at Bethel the evil king Jeroboam had set up a golden calf idol and encouraged people to worship there. It was all so contrary to God's desires and God called Jeroboam's act a great sin. Elisha did well to guard himself from it, just as we need to guard against any form of worship which is not in full agreement with God's Word. God's pattern for worship and service is set out so plainly in the New Testament scriptures and we should stick to it.

*... So they went to Jericho.*

*The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?" "Yes, I know," he replied, "but do not speak of it."*

*Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live,*

*I will not leave you."* (2 Kings 2:4-6 NIV)

They had now arrived at Jericho, the city of high walls, so challenging to faith. This had been one of Joshua's first tests. A New Testament verse tells us: *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down* (Hebrews 11). If we faithfully follow Christ we'll be brought into situations where our faith will be strongly challenged. Like Elisha as he was passing through Jericho, we, too, will have the opportunity to opt out. Nothing was further from Elisha's thoughts. If we have the same attitude, we'll join with the apostle Paul in saying: *We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ* (2 Corinthians 10:5).

*... So the two of them walked on. Fifty men of the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.*

*When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"*

"Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied. (2 Kings 2:6-9 NIV)

Jordan was the final place to which God sent Elisha and Elisha went with him. Obviously Elisha was very conscious of the great responsibility resting upon him and he knew he could only go forward by the enabling of the divine Spirit who had been so much in evidence in Elisha's life.

"You have asked a difficult thing," Elisha said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours - otherwise not."

As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elisha went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them apart. (2 Kings 2:10-12 NIV)

Elisha said it was a hard thing he'd asked for: the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit calls for a devotedness to God. There are conditions to be fulfilled and for Elisha the condition was if he was able to see Elisha as he was taken from him. And Elisha did! He allowed nothing to come between himself and Elisha, nothing that would obscure his vision of him.

What a lesson for those of us who follow the Lord Jesus. It makes us think first of all perhaps of the first Christian disciples to whom the Lord Jesus himself appeared in resurrection and said: *You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses ... And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight (Acts 1:8,9). When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind ... and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1,2,4).*

So once again it was a case of those who had their eyes trained on their ascending master who experienced the descending power. If our mind is set on things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (Col.3:1,2), then we can expect our lives and witness to be powerful in the Holy Spirit.

Well let's complete the story of Elisha's last walk with Elisha. The sequel is that Elisha ... *picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elisha and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. "Where now is the LORD, the God of Elisha?" he asked. When he*

*struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over. The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, "The spirit of Elisha is resting on Elisha." And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. (2 Kings 2:13-15 NIV)*

Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak which fell from him as he went. He knew it well. Hadn't it been on Elijah's shoulders when God confirmed his call to him, when the old prophet anointed him with oil? Elisha now picked it up and stood by the Jordan river. "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" he cried. He was now with Elisha and he

proved it by dividing the waters of Jordan to allow him to pass over. Are there not others waiting to see a demonstration of God's power in us? I know, and maybe you do too, friends who have passed through a sea of difficulties when God was with them according to his ancient promise, *when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you (Isaiah 43:2).*

So the baton or, in the Bible language, the cloak or mantle, passed from Elijah to Elisha. I pray that we've learnt some lessons in the passing.

## 3. David to Solomon

Of all the great farewell addresses that have ever been given, this must surely rank as one of the greatest. A farewell address usually signals the handover of responsibility from one person to another. In this chapter we'll be focusing upon King David's farewell address to his people as he prepared to hand over the reins of power to his son, Solomon.

First of all, David took a moment to reflect on his life before God. It was remarkable how he summed it up. He said: *"The LORD ... chose me ... He took pleasure in me ..."* (1 Chronicles 28:4). David could have listed his achievements, but instead he publicly acknowledged that all his fame and triumphs were down to the fact that God had taken pleasure in him when, as a boy, he had been lightly esteemed in his own family! It's quite staggering to think of the great God of eternity finding pleasure in an individual human life. But, if as believers on the Lord Jesus, we turn to the pages of the New Testament, we discover that God also takes pleasure in us! In Ephesians chapter 1 (:3-14), the apostle Paul writes:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual*

*pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.* (NAS)

There we have it: we, as believers, are God's prized possession; objects of his pleasure! It seems to me that overall we find there the will of God the Father; the work of God the Son; and the witness of God the Spirit all blending together to express his sovereign pleasure in us.

So, we can thank David for stimulating us to reflect with Paul on God's pleasure in each of us - which is all because of what we are in Christ through his grace.

We return to David as, in the hearing of all, he turns to address Solomon, his son and successor: *"Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be courageous and act"* (v.10).

Solomon had been chosen by God to build the temple that David himself had wanted to build for God at Jerusalem. David is not regretful here, but seems keen to impress on Solomon the great sense of privilege he should feel in being the one specially chosen as the builder of God's temple.

Relating this once again to our own situation as Christian believers, just as we were earlier thinking of how God's sovereign pleasure has resulted in us being

chosen, let's also pick up from the New Testament - that we, too, have been chosen to build a temple for God!

Going beyond the mere preparatory work David had done in providing the materials, the apostle Paul in the New Testament speaks of himself ... *as a wise master builder [he says] I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it.* (1 Corinthians 3:10 NAS)

He went on to say:

*If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are ... temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?* (1 Corinthians 3:14-16 NAS)

Paul had received the Lord's commands by a direct revelation. By means of his apostolic teaching ministry where he was teaching these same commands which he himself had received, he'd been laying the foundation of God's spiritual temple. This temple was made out of 'living stones' as his colleague, the apostle Peter put it (1 Peter 2:5). Those living stones were New Testament believers who were shaped to the mould of the apostles' teaching (as Romans

*blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will ...*

... that's the will of God the Father! - finding his sovereign good pleasure in those who believe in Christ. We go on to read more about Christ, for it's in Christ that ... *we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us ... In Him also we have obtained an inheritance.*

What a tremendous summary of the work of Christ through the cross: redemption through his blood; forgiveness; the riches of his grace providing us with an inheritance! It's all been made known to us through the Holy Spirit, and the apostle Paul moves on to include the third Person of the Godhead in his tribute, when he says:

*... after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a*

6:17 describes it). By carefully applying to themselves the Lord's commands, as taught by Paul and the other apostles, the early believers on the Lord Jesus were first built into God's temple themselves and then they played a part under God in seeing others built in with them as they in turn shared the new teaching with others. They were all built together into God's holy temple which was the aggregate of all the local churches of God. So they were builders and God still intends that we should be too! As much as David did on Solomon's behalf, we should find it a thrill that God has chosen us to build - and be built up as - his own spiritual temple on this earth!

David gave to his son Solomon the plan for the temple which was to be built, and referring to the temple plans in his speech, he said, "*All this ... the LORD made me understand in writing ... all the details of this pattern*" (11,19).

It's because God wants us to 'understand in writing' that he's given us the New Testament. In the New Testament writings God shares with us *the details of* [the] *pattern* for his spiritual temple today. That's why the apostle Paul could write:

*Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in*

*Christ Jesus.* (2 Timothy 1:13)

We've been thinking in this booklet of the runners in the relay race as they hand over the baton. The runner who's got the baton ready for passing on must always keep looking forward, eyes fixed on the closing distance to the hand stretched backwards to receive the baton. It reminds me here of the way David wasn't focused on looking back over his own life's achievements, but he was looking forward in anticipation to what Solomon his son would accomplish when that baton of responsibility was securely in his hand. This time, we're not thinking about how Solomon prepared himself to take over from David his father; but more remarkably, on how David prepared for his son Solomon's major work after he was gone.

The temple project had become the great passion of David's life. He talks about, *my delight in the house of my God* (1 Chronicles 29:3). He's still talking about it as

1 Chronicles 29 begins: *the work is great; for the temple is not for man, but for the LORD God* (1 Chronicles 29:1). That was the kind of perspective which also motivated the New Testament apostles as they spread the word about how the New Testament churches of God were *growing into a holy temple in the Lord ... a dwelling of God in the Spirit* (Ephesians 2:21,22)!

But it wasn't the scale of his own contribution about which David boasted, even though he mentions it in his speech; nor was it even in his capacity to give; no, his glorying was in the Lord whom he *blessed ... in the sight of the whole assembly ... "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the*

*glory and the victory and the majesty ..."* (1 Chronicles 29:10,11)

We, too, can give all the glory to God as we think about the great purpose he has for our lives - both now and for ever after in his presence!

## 4. Paul to Timothy

It was a blunder with the passing of the baton that cost the USA an Olympic medal in the 2004 Athens Games. Their form in earlier heats had made them look like clear gold medal contenders, but in the final Marion Jones, who ran the second leg, failed to pass the baton on to team-mate Lauryn Williams. Williams appeared to move off her mark too soon. Jones said miscommunication was the reason for the United States' failure.

Passing on the baton has been the theme in this booklet. We've thought of biblical 'handovers' from Moses to Joshua; from Elijah to Elisha; and from David to Solomon. I hope we've learnt from them in the process, lessons that will be helpful as we run the Christian race.

It was the apostle Paul in the New Testament who famously said, *I have finished the course* (2 Timothy 4:7). He had run his race well, and as he prepared to pass the baton on to a younger man, Timothy, there was no miscommunication, as we see from his frank and bold counsel to Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 4:

*Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those*

teaching that's to be found in God's Word. But here Paul uses it in an ethical sense. Our lives have got to model true Christianity.

The story is told of an army sergeant and a private on a training exercise in the Rockies when they encountered an angry grizzly bear. The sergeant ripped off his heavy boots and put on running shoes from his rucksack. "You'll never outrun the bear," the private said. "Don't have to, I only need to be able to outrun you," he replied! How could he ever inspire bravery in his men? That's not the calibre of Christian service or leadership. We follow a leader who gave His life for us: so we, too, need to be genuine in displaying the virtues we try to encourage in others. A Christian leads by example - by being a model who invites a following.

Next, Paul calls on Timothy to **recognize the Bible's authority**. Notice the order when he says, 'give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.' This referred to Timothy's public reading of Scripture, and it was to come first: before the encouraging and the teaching.

In the Bible we find a long tradition of the public reading of Scripture. In Nehemiah chapter 8 those Jews who'd returned to Jerusalem from the captivity in Babylon stood in front of the

Water Gate and there they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law. Then the Levites read distinctly from the book and gave the sense and helped them to understand the reading.

This was also Jewish synagogue practice as we glimpse in Acts chapter 13 when Paul on his first missionary journey arrives at (Psidian) Antioch. After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, he was asked if he'd any word of exhortation. Notice: reading then exhortation, just as Paul emphasized to Timothy.

As a matter of principle, reading precedes exhortation and doctrine. Any preacher or teacher must first identify his authority as being from God through the Bible, the Word of God. I mention that because there's a danger in Christian circles that God's Word is becoming devalued and robbed of the first place it ought to have. That's not the prescription Paul gives here for Timothy's spiritual development - and ours too.

The third piece of advice Paul passes on to Timothy is about **the need to develop his gift**.

He's told not to neglect the gift within him. That tells us quite a few things. It must first of all mean that we've each got a gift: a spiritual endowment from God which we may take as dating back to the time of our new birth. The

apostle Peter confirms this when he says, *each one has received a gift* (1 Peter 4:10). But surely, it also implies that there's benefit in recognizing our personal gift or gifts. Perhaps you believe you can still serve God perfectly well without having identified your particular gift from God. To a fair extent that's true - you can use it unconsciously - and in small churches, of necessity, you can sometimes serve in a capacity for which you don't feel specially qualified and God can come in to help in a special way in these circumstances. Yet the fact remains that if, like Timothy, we're called upon not to neglect our gift, we'll first have to recognize our own gift so that we can be careful not to neglect it! Will we not maximize our potential effectiveness under God and perhaps minimize our stress levels when we serve according to the gift we've been given?

Timothy seems to have been guided in relation to his gift by a prophetic message. Since we now have the completed Bible, the equivalent process today would be expected to operate in connection with God's Word. So I think one helpful guide to discerning which gift we have from God is by noticing how the Word of God affects us in our daily reading - how the Bible impacts us. What leaps out from its pages and grips

us? Is it a sermon structure or an illustration of the gospel or a message of encouragement to pass on? Or is our heart moved by examples of compassion and helpfulness in caring for others? These can give an indication to a maturing Christian as to the direction in which his or her gift lies.

Also, just as the church elders came to Timothy and had fellowship with him in this matter of affirming his gift, we can learn the value of being guided by mature counsel as to the use of our gift.

So far Paul has passed on key advice about setting a personal example, and about being up-front as to our Bible basis in all that we teach, as well as encouragement to use our gift for the Lord. Now we pick up his fourth point. He's keen that Timothy should **demonstrate progress**. He then refers back to these matters of lifestyle, authoritative teaching and expression of spiritual gift and says to Timothy that he's to make them his absorbing interest: he's to concentrate on making just these matters his business. In that way his progress will become evident. The athletes at the Games like to talk about 'focus'. I guess that's what Paul also has in mind here, as he talks about becoming absorbed in these things so that Timothy's spiritual progress would

become obvious. The word 'progress' is interesting, meaning literally 'to cut before'. It was used of tree-cutting parties which were sent in advance of the army to blaze a trail for their advance. It seems as if Paul's saying that the only way to go pioneering forward towards maturity in Christian things is by really getting down to do the things he's just been listing to Timothy. Christians are to be people who are going somewhere, progressing forwards towards maturity. How can anyone give credible leadership if they're personally stagnating in spiritual mediocrity?

So last of all we come to the fifth point which is about **guarding our consistency**.

Timothy was to pay attention to both himself and his teaching: himself first, then his teaching - in that order. This would ensure he'd

save his life in service. We quote again from the opening words of the Acts of the Apostles concerning the Lord Jesus who began both 'to do and to teach'. What we say will only be credible if it squares with our own practice. We must not be like the Pharisees against whom the Lord said, "Do what they say, but not what they do".

It's so fatally easy to become so busy in the Lord's work that we leave no time for the Lord Himself; to be so concerned for the welfare of others that we fail to keep a watchful eye on ourselves. We are to take heed to ourselves and to the flock (Acts 20:28) - which once again puts things in this same order. If we do these things by God's help, then we'll be able to run well and pass on the baton successfully by his grace.



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