

The 'Take over' Zone

by Fred Tomlinson

This sermon delves into the importance of passing on the authentic Gospel message like a baton in a relay race, emphasizing the need for courage, understanding, and faithfulness. The Apostle Paul's final dispatch to Timothy highlights the critical nature of this transfer and the high stakes involved in preserving the true message of Christ. It calls for a deep commitment to God's calling and a readiness to hold onto and pass on the baton of faith without compromise.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:13, 2 Timothy 2:2, 2 Timothy 4:7, 1 Corinthians 9:24, Colossians 1:27, Romans 8:9, Acts 2:37, Philippians 2:20, Galatians 1:6, Acts 20:24, Isaiah 40:31

Topics: "Passing on the Gospel", "Faithfulness in Ministry"

Description

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Transcript

Well, if you have your Bibles with you, perhaps you'll turn with me to the second epistle of Paul to Timothy. For those of you who were here last week, you will know that we centered our thoughts around the first verse here. I did say that I would not willingly be returning again to the epistle.

I think I mentioned on that occasion, but in case I didn't, I'll say it again. I'm not planning to work all the way through the epistle at such a slow pace. I don't think I've got that much time, actually, to do that.

But we're looking again into the first chapter, and in many ways, my message will be another form of introduction to what the book contains. But let me read from verse 1 down through verse 5. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. To Timothy, my dearly beloved son, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

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, greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and in thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that is in thee also. Amen. The

Apostle Paul, as you will have noticed from your own reading of his epistles, takes full advantage of metaphors.

I can only conclude that he loved metaphors because he includes them in his writing, in his letters, in his epistles, and metaphors can be very, very useful. I suppose in my mind I'm thinking now of the responsibility to present and teach a whole body of information that the hearers are required to listen to and take in. But every now and again there's a graphic provided in the document which in one way or another helps to illustrate and perhaps prompts or triggers the imagination and understanding of the hearers.

It brings a shaft of light and helps with the understanding of the material itself. Paul does that over and over again. Having mentioned this again, perhaps when you're reading through his various epistles you'll observe this repeated time and again.

You will know as an illustration of this how he on several occasions makes reference to our lives and perhaps our ministry as well also as being very similar in certain respects to someone who is engaged in athletic activities. He says on one occasion that we need to train ourselves unto godliness and the word which is translated train there is the word from which we get our word gymnasium. He's talking about engaging ourselves fully and completely.

I once heard someone make a reference to, and I'm not sure how helpful this is, to sanctified sweat. But certainly the idea comes through pretty powerfully in many of the statements I find in the New Testament where there's encouragement to engage ourselves fully and completely to the particular activity which is before us at different occasions in the text and so on. But clearly Paul, I'm thinking of 1 Corinthians chapter 4 where you'll find the text I've just quoted.

I'm thinking of 1 Corinthians 9 and verse 24 where Paul on that occasion speaks about striving to obtain the prize. And right here, as a matter of fact, in the second chapter that your Bible's open to, you will see in verse 5 where he says, Yet he is not crowned except he strive lawfully. That introduces a couple of ideas that I'm not making mention of just now.

But clearly that particular metaphor he's using there is that of athletic activity. And he's saying that we're to engage in our Christian faith and in our Christian ministry in the same way as though we're an athlete who is straining to obtain the prize to fully accomplish that which God has put in our hearts and put before us and so on. And you'll also remember how, and perhaps I'll just read this to you, how that Paul in Acts chapter 20, it's a significant moment in his journeying, and he has called the elders of Ephesus to come together.

And in the course of what he's saying to them, we can see in verse, he's been told that there's trouble ahead for him. And then we reach verse 24 where he says, But none of these things, none of these things which I'm hearing about, which may happen to me, he said, But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. What he's saying here is regardless of whatever, his heart's commitment was strong and singular.

He was focused on this one end, that God having committed to him a course, he was intent on finishing it in a manner that would bring glory to God. And in chapter 4 of the epistle you've got your Bible open to, 2 Timothy 4, we find in verse 7, and of course we know that Paul is toward the end of his life at this point, he

says, I have finished the course, or my course, and so on. And so in these various ways we have this idea of the Christian life, the Christian journey, the Christian ministry as being in so many ways similar to an athletic engagement, an athletic activity.

With that in mind, I think I can say quite safely that I believe that when Paul is thinking of these things in this particular way and with this particular illustration, I believe he has in his own mind, I may be wrong, but I have it in my mind that he's referring to a particular kind of race. And that race would be what we would call today a relay race. I think that's what he has in mind, and I find frankly that it's impossible for me to read this epistle without sensing that he has this metaphor of a relay race foremost in his mind, or it's the backdrop against which he's sharing the things that he's saying here.

And you will know that typically in a relay race, there's a baton, which is carried commonly by four athletes, and the baton is changed from one to another. There are three events in the course of the four segments of the race where the baton is passed from one to another. And I think what I'd like to do for the rest of my time here is try to identify three very obvious features that the Apostle Paul is highlighting in this document.

And I think they tend to highlight in my mind what I'll refer to as the big idea, the main theme, the main factor which is in his mind as he writes this epistle. It's the feature of the baton, because first of all the baton is the central feature of the relay race. It's not merely that men or women will have a starting point and a finishing point and they'll race with all their energy they can muster from one point to the second.

But the idea is that the baton which is held by the first runner is still present at the end. It's the baton that's got to cross the finishing line, as it were, obviously in the hands of the final runner and so on. So I believe that thinking of this approach, this metaphor, excuse me for using the word one more time, when he speaks of the baton it speaks powerfully to my mind of the very gospel message itself.

Of the original, authentic gospel message, the message which was committed by God to Paul in that instance, but committed to the apostles in the very beginning. And we know that in Paul's day, we know this from his own writings, the gospel, this authentic word of God and from God was hugely rejected by the people who heard him preaching. It was referred to as being offensive.

It was anyone preaching it would, and I'm using some of his own words that are translated differently in our Bible in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, they considered anyone preaching this message was moronic. Because it was a scandalous message for reasons that we're not going to delve into this morning. But the fact is these were people who just didn't want to receive what was being preached.

They didn't want the message. Their hearts were closed to it completely. I can't help but think of today, the day, the moment in which we live, the particular circumstances are different in many ways to what was prevailing at the time as Paul travelled to the various areas preaching the gospel.

And I'm even narrowing the field. I'm thinking of the body which is referred to today as the Christian church. And I'm not for a moment suggesting that within the context of the Christian church, there are those who are offended by the gospel and they're calling it scandalous and so forth and so on.

And I'm not saying that. But what I am saying is that in ignorance they are guilty of modifying the message, manipulating the message. I'm not suggesting that it's being done with malicious intent or deliberately to damage or destroy what God has said.

Rather, I think it's done because of the times in which we live and ideas that are common that these times, because they're so different from earlier times, other times of the early church, the way it was preached and indeed some aspects of the message that was preached, shouldn't be presented in the same way today. It's not as appropriate. We need to take into account, so we're being told, that this is a different time and so the presentation needs to be different and modified accordingly.

So that the message which I think, broadly speaking, the evangelical Christians are believing and claiming is important, very important, but it's being modified to make it more acceptable. Indeed, I think perhaps in some cases it goes beyond merely making it acceptable and we want to make it appealing to this culture in which we find ourselves today. But as the result of this, perhaps unwittingly in many ways, but nevertheless, the reality is that in many cases the essential features of the authentic, original Christian gospel is being lost.

And I'm thinking, for an example, I'm thinking of the message of the cross, which is a very central feature of the apostolic preaching and there's a sense in which while it's still present today in the presentation, but it is, for the want of a different way of putting it, it's a more disinfected version of the cross. It's a more toned down version of the cross and as the result of it, this great truth is being stripped of its power to slay. The cross is an instrument of death.

It was for Christ and as it's preached and ministered today by the Holy Spirit, it is also today. And consequently, the presentation today tends not to have anywhere prominent in it the call to come and die, the call of the cross, the call to the cross is a call to come and die, to surrender ourselves entirely to God and die to our self-lives and so on. Or I could think of another illustration, something that we talked about only a week or two ago and that is the phrase which the prophet John the Baptist brought into focus in his teaching and then the Lord Jesus commenting in Acts chapter 1 on John the Baptist's ministry refers to it as being an authentic statement.

And that is the baptism in the Holy Spirit and while in many cases I think those who would profess to be evangelical Christians are completely ignorant of what that term is referencing and what it means and what it meant then and what it means in the sight of God today. In many cases, perhaps the main feature that is associated with that statement is something common in charismatic circles where it provides and in many cases there are those who claim it is the evidence of that experience and that is to speak in tongues. I'm not speaking against these things, I'm simply saying that that's where understanding concerning that statement is, it's either completely neglected and never talked about or it amounts to little more than some kind of ability to speak in tongues.

By these means, these are just two illustrations I've given to you, the authentic Christian gospel is being toned down and these sharp cutting edges are being ground down or removed completely to make the message more palatable and more easily received by people. But the bottom line is as a result of doing that, the gospel that they are presenting ceases to be the true gospel and Paul said that himself in Galatians chapter 1. Once we start to tamper with the message or alter its emphasis in any way, we destroy it and it ceases to be the gospel and Paul says in effect that it ends up being another gospel, it's something else, it's something other than what it was intended to be. We recognize again that of course the gospel is communicated by words, the words of the gospel, we have them here, we could find them very easily here, but we need to remind ourselves that this authentic gospel, this true baton that we're thinking about is not merely words, it's not words alone.

Words alone may feed the mind, but the gospel, the original gospel has been designed by God to meet spiritual needs that exist in the lives of men and women. We cherish, we cherish the words, we cherish the sacred book that we have here before us. A hymn writer said, beyond the sacred page we seek thee Lord.

Or we have Jesus that we can quote when he said, you search the scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life, but these are they that testify of me and you don't come to me, he's saying, that you might have life. There's a world of difference between these two positions, so the gospel contains words, the words are important, they're very important, they're sacred words as we find them in the scriptures, but we need something more, we need the Holy Spirit. The actual term or name, Holy Spirit, is common enough to us today, but it would be a very sad day if that name becomes little more than a charismatic cliché, or some kind of warm feeling, or the other myriad of ways in which some people claim they're experiencing the Holy Spirit, but let's remind ourselves that the Holy Spirit is God.

We're talking about Holy God, in particular the third person of the Trinity, without him we have nothing, without him we have nothing at all, that's how important the Holy Spirit is to us. Without him Christianity is merely a religion, Christianity is lifeless, without him breathing that clear, powerful, completely unvarnished truth, we have nothing. Without him there's no such thing as new birth in the experience of men and women, without him there's no conviction, without him there's no saving faith, without him there's no power from on high, without him there's no justification, without him there's no sanctification, without him there will be no glorification, without him, according to Paul, Romans chapter 8 verse 9, we're none of his, we're nowhere.

The Holy Spirit is crucial to us, when he speaks he plumbs into the depths, into the core of the hearts of men and women, no human man, no human woman has the ability to do that in the way that the Holy Spirit does. When he speaks he confronts us, he's not given to entertain us, sadly that takes me back where we were a few moments ago, where we're satisfied with a Christianised form of entertainment, but the Holy Spirit, he confronts us, he confronts man's sin and man's spiritual condition. He exposes man's true condition, he, the Holy Spirit, he cuts to the heart, he cuts to the quick, isn't this what we read in Acts chapter 2 and verse 37, that when the people heard Peter, and it wasn't just Peter's words, it was the Holy Spirit of God himself moving through his ministry as he spoke, when they heard, when they heard down in the depths of their hearts, it wasn't merely into their minds, it was into their minds, but it reached them at the core of their being, when they heard this, they were greatly distressed, and they said, men and brethren, what shall we do? These were devoutly religious people, but they'd been exposed and confronted by God, the Holy Spirit, if we've never really experienced this, we've never truly been subjected to the true ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit ministering in this way is not evidenced by loud shouting to present the message, we have other references that speak of the still small voice of God, God has his own unique way to inaudibly speak into the depths of men and women's hearts and arrest them. His presence and his ministry is not manifested merely by drama, it's not manifested and confirmed by some kind of slick presentation. When he ministers, it's not merely a lecture, it's not merely a teaching session, it's the quickened word of the life-giving word of God, ministered, maybe at times through a human voice, but beyond that, deeper yet than that, the Spirit of God is speaking.

And he brings life to bear upon the heart. Amen. The Apostle Paul speaking about this authentic baton, this Gospel of Jesus Christ, he said, I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto deliverance.

To everyone that believes, he opens prison doors. The Gospel opens prison doors for those whose hearts are receptive to this inward speaking. He sets captives free.

He liberates men and women from that inward sense of human guilt before a holy God. The Gospel has the power to terminate man's slavery to sin. He breaks the power of counsel sin.

He sets the prisoner free. Amen. And we love that great hymn of Wesley's that we sing when we're allowed to sing.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night. Thine eye, this is the ministry of the Holy Spirit, thine eye diffused a quickening ray. I woke the dungeon flamed with light.

This alone is the baton that I'm thinking of this morning. This is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Today we have maybe a lot of energy and many programs, but in many cases the baton, the true baton is lacking.

It's not been dropped deliberately. It's been refurbished. It's been tweaked a little, adapted, but it's no longer the product that God designed it to be.

Amen. Not only is there the baton in the relay race, but then there are the men themselves that are involved. Or women for that matter, of course.

The one man that is in full focus here as we read this epistle, of course, is the Apostle Paul himself. Let me remind you that he was a worshipper of the true God, but was willfully ignorant of the identity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Willfully ignorant.

A devout man believed he was doing the will of God. He was exposed in whatever measures. I can't be precise, but he was exposed to the message that was being preached and he deemed it to be false.

He saw men and women who were truly Christians that he was responsible for having them arrested and put to death. He saw their responses. We talked last week about his response to Stephen and what happened with him.

But in that sense, I think I could say that he's like many today. For Paul at that time, if I may use my own metaphor here, I'm thinking of his life as a vehicle. He'd set his course.

He had accelerated to high speed and he set the cruise control. And he was intent, he was set on pursuing his particular purpose and so on. With no thoughts of stopping, no thoughts of surrendering his life to the Christian gospel or to Jesus Christ.

In that way, I'm thinking like so many people today. Maybe people who are listening to me today and so on. Just highlighting this, I'm remembering, of course, I had a bit of experience of this in my own life years ago.

But in the police or in a traffic accident, we just call it a TA. In certain traffic accidents, it becomes necessary where it's been a serious accident to actually investigate the skid marks that are involved on the road. And we would actually be responsible to measure the skid marks of the offending vehicle, which would assist us to calculate the kind of speed that the vehicle was traveling in immediately before that accident.

Let me just, by using that illustration, say to you that so far as Saul of Tarsus was concerned, on the Damascus Road, there were no skid marks at all. He was brought by the living, real, authentic Lord Jesus Christ to an immediate stop. No skidding.

He was stopped dead in his tracks at that point. And this was an experience which, of course, would be the beginning of the great transformation of his life. We read that he was blinded there as he lay on the ground by the brightness of the glory of God.

He was shortly led to the city and to the house of Ananias. And there, as the result of ministry that took place there, according to and involving the Holy Spirit himself, first of all, his blinded eyes immediately were restored. He was able to see.

And I believe, as the result of the Holy Spirit invading his inner man, he began to see, he began to understand things that he had rejected out of hand prior to that moment. And he was really compelled, as the result of what he had experienced, to acknowledge that, in fact, and this is a massive thing, in fact, that the Jesus Christ that those early Christians were proclaiming was, in fact, the promised Messiah. In other words, that Jesus, this Jesus, this Jesus of Nazareth was, in fact, the promised Christ of God.

And I believe from that realisation, to use a more modern expression, the dots began to connect for him at that point. He began to grasp the fact that what had happened to him in his own experience was, in fact, an outworking of the mystery which had been hidden from the ages and from the generations of time. And he began to understand that what he was experiencing within his life was, in fact, the riches of the glory of that promise which he would write himself, which is Colossians chapter 1, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Amen. Multiple dots. He was familiar with the Scriptures.

I can't even begin to touch all of the areas that must have immediately started coming to life or lighting up to him as he saw how it was all connecting together. He would remember, of course, the words, he was wounded for our transgressions. And he would pause as he recited it again, whether in his mind or verbally, that was Jesus.

He. That was this Jesus. The Jesus he had met now on the Damascus road.

This Jesus that by his spirit was filling his own heart. He would read the rest of the text, he was crushed for my infirmities and by his scourging I am healed. He would come to the realization, this is the new covenant.

He'd read Ezekiel, he'd read Jeremiah. He would realize that God has credited, he would say, God has credited to me his holy righteousness. He would realize I am complete in him.

I'm quoting his own words in just a slightly amended manner, of course. He might even have sang what the psalmist sang, what we sang in our church when we were very young. He took me out of the pit and from the miry clay.

He set my feet on a rock establishing my way. He put a song in my mouth, my God to glorify and he'll take me someday to his home on high. Amen.

He would know now that the reason that he was conceived in his mother's womb was for the fulfilling of God's preordained purpose for his life. He would realize that he'd been chosen by the almighty God and

entrusted with this baton. With this truth, with this new covenant message, with this gospel of God as he would call it.

This was the baton that he carried and that God himself had placed in his hand. But now, this eminent spiritual athlete, this lion-hearted man of God is chained and is in a cold cell. Soon he will take his final walk.

Soon he will fight that last human battle. He knew that the time had come. That the baton must be transferred to another.

He had truly entered, what will be the title of this message, the takeover zone. That specific marked zone or area in the relay race. The baton must not be transferred early, must not be transferred late and at all costs the baton must not fall or you're disqualified.

And using this then as a metaphor of the greater things we're talking about now this morning. We can see that in God's sovereign will and in his unfolding purpose this was now the very specific period in this man's life. He'd entered the takeover zone at this point.

And he knows that there's another man, a younger man, a younger eminent runner himself, Timothy, who is waiting. And to this end, I believe, the apostle now engages in preparing what will turn out to be his final dispatch. I think it very well could have been the most difficult task that he, the apostle, would do.

He loved the Lord with all of his heart. He loved the truth that God had entrusted to him. He'd sought to walk faithfully before him and minister it faithfully wherever God opened doors for him to preach.

He loved Timothy as well, along with other names that I could mention. But he's writing to Timothy on this occasion. He loved Timothy.

And there's more that I could say about that, but we'll be digressing too far. Even as I say that he realized the time had come for him to pass on the baton. And even though I'm suggesting that when he writes here it is, in many ways, with an understanding it's his last dispatch.

But you know, hope burned brightly in the heart of this great man of God. And by the time we reach the end of the epistle, some chapters on, yes, we hear his closing words to Timothy. And he says, having said here, I long to see you.

We just read that this morning. But by the time we come to chapter 4 he says, Timothy, make haste and come to me. And try and come before winter.

And when you come, bring the cloak that I left and the books, especially the parchments, he says, bring them with you. So somewhere down in the depths of his heart there's still a hope that maybe God will allow him this privilege of meeting again in this world with Timothy. And so on.

But he's clearly prepared in his heart to accept that his period of running with the ministry at large has come to its conclusion at this point in time. Amen. And so he writes to Timothy.

And in a sense what he's doing, although he's established Timothy, he's taught him. Timothy has lived under his tutelage and they travelled on two of the missionary journeys together. They found each other at the beginning of the second one, but then by the time Paul left town he took Timothy with him.

You know that story. And this bond had been established between the two, certainly. In fact there's an expression that Paul uses writing to the Philippians 2 and 20.

And he refers to Timothy, he says, I have no one like-minded. Do you remember that passage? And the better translation of the original word is, I have no one so twin-souled. S-O-U-L-E-D.

S-O-U-L-E-D. There was a bond that was very deep and very real. He trusted this man with his life and here he's trusting him with the revelation of the baton, the revelation of the new covenant gospel, the new covenant message.

He's trusting and entrusting that to him. And in this letter I can find sentiment here at the beginning of the passage chapter in particular. But it's not merely a sentimental letter.

There's something far more than that and it has to do with the transferring of this responsibility completely over where he won't be running with Paul any longer but he'll be running alone. And Paul's writing to him some earnest things. We'll look into them in future days perhaps.

So he's very serious, he's intensely serious as he writes here. It's not just sentimental information. He's saying, Timothy, I've got some serious things to say to you.

It's as though he's saying, Timothy, at all costs this message must not become corrupted. They didn't have the scriptures as we have them here. And I believe also he's saying, Timothy, at all costs also you yourself must fully understand the message.

It's not merely that it's a message which is somehow separate from you. You must understand it by experiencing it ever more fully in your own heart. And he also says something else.

He says, Timothy, at all costs you must be courageous. I think if I'm not mistaken that Paul in his love and his affection for Timothy and in his sense of certainty that it was of God's choosing that Timothy should take hold of the baton. Nevertheless, I'm sure he recognised without a trace of boasting of himself that Timothy was a different personality, he was a different man, he wasn't a Paul in that sense.

There are people who like to say he was timid and so on. I think sometimes we're stretching things to try and make that point. But he wasn't a Paul.

I don't think that's an unfair statement to make. And so he writes to him, you must remain courageous. Paul knew that, he'd made reference to this in that presentation, in that talk or conversation or whatever it was you want to call it that he had with the elders in Ephesus.

He said, there are grievous wolves, is the Old King James translation. There are grievous wolves who will arise from within you. Within the church, trouble was ahead.

And also he was well aware of the savagery of the Emperor Nero and his intent. Perhaps he himself was in the prison at this time, on death row as it were, as the result of Nero's doing. And in that Timothy was about to start the journey, the second phase of the journey, without the Apostle Paul anywhere close to him.

It was so important that he should face up to these things. There were plenty of grounds to gender fear in the heart of Timothy. And so Paul writes to him.

And as a matter of fact, on no less than 25 times in these two epistles, 1st Timothy and 2nd Timothy, Paul is encouraging Timothy to be bold in one way or another. Be bold. It's as though Paul is saying, I know your nature, Timothy.

But you must understand that to be faithful with this baton that is now being entrusted to you, you must stand strong and you must be prepared for confrontation. Confrontation which will have a high cost attached to it. And so on.

I think what Paul was saying here is that perhaps above everything else, Timothy, just remind yourself or let me remind you that this ministry, this responsibility of carrying this baton was not your idea. You must remember, Timothy, it was not my idea either. This was of God, Timothy.

Remember this. Allow this to become the rock upon which you stand. This is of God.

He has chosen you. This is his word. He is now passing on the responsibility to you.

You have been chosen by God. He even says in this passage, he said, remember back in the early days, Timothy, remember your grandmother. I don't know that he ever met his grandmother.

He may or may not. But evidently his mother, Paul speaks as though he had met her. So I'm assuming he was alive.

She was alive, rather. But he's crediting his grandmother with being a faithful woman before God. And setting a tone and presenting an example to him.

And then he says, and your mother also. And so he's saying to him, can you see, Timothy, that this call of God on your life, we can trace it back a long way to the very beginning of your life. In actual fact, it goes before your birth.

It was ordained by God in eternity. But even in the details of your actual life, you can see how God ordained that your mother would be, your grandmother would be a godly woman. Your mother would be godly also.

And then can you see, Timothy, that even our meeting, that was ordained of God, that we should meet in Lystra those years ago. And that we should have this opportunity to work together, to run together, to minister together, and so on. All of these things have been engineered by a sovereign God.

And so you're not on your own. I may not be with you, but you will not be on your own at all. You have been being prepared for such a time as this.

And this is the conviction and confidence that must guard your life, Timothy, even when conflict is doing its worst. It's true to say that the most critical moment in the race really is the takeover zone. And there's a lot more that could be said than I'm even attempting to share this morning about this, what this takeover zone really is and so on.

But what we do know is that in that zone, running according to the rules, as Paul will say in Chapter 2, I mentioned this earlier, we have to do it at the right time in the right way, as ordained by God. But that baton must be held tightly. The first runner has held it tightly and run with it faithfully.

They've done their very best. And at this moment, then there's the exchange. Whatever you do, don't drop it.

Be ready in this short, brief moment to take hold of it. And under no circumstances drop it, of course. But so much was at stake here, that's the thing.

And I don't know that I can even begin to appreciate how much was at stake at this moment with what's going on here. Without this being done effectively, I don't want to try to say something that's not entirely true. But there's at least an element of truth in what I'm saying.

In the event that Timothy would drop the baton at that point, I want to say there would certainly be no sections of the Bible here. But more than that, the church that was being brought into existence, and ultimately the glory of God, so much depends on the baton being held and exchanged properly. This is God's work.

This is what God is doing. I must close my message this morning just now. And perhaps in the days ahead we'll look a little bit more into this, what I've called His final dispatch.

But you alone know what God may have said to you during this talk, even this morning. It's not for me to know how He's speaking to you, but let me encourage you, whoever you are, that if you are sensing that God has quickened something, He's focused in on some particular area of your life, or whatever it may be, if it's God speaking to your heart, let me encourage you with all I can muster, and say, grasp hold of that, as though you're grasping hold of the baton yourself. And obey whatever it is that God is saying to you.

Perhaps even immediately after I've finished talking, just pray and just settle this in your heart. It's as though you're saying, I will do this. And then of course it's our responsibility to continue on then before Him, for further clarity and further help and so on and so forth.

But there needs to be a moment when we sign the document, when we agree. Say, this is God speaking to me. I have heard your voice.

I am committing myself. I am surrendering myself to you. Never before.

Please lead me on from this moment. But from this moment, I am saying, Lord, I am yours. Without reservation.

God bless you. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/70iSUIUsqWM.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/fred-tomlinson/the-take-over-zone/>

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