

1Tim 24-06-05b

Let's pick up our study in 1 Timothy chapter 4. We've seen this next section already in some detail after 4.7, Reject profane and old wives' fables, exercise yourself toward godliness. The last part of our first session was a description of how we do that. Exercise ourselves toward godliness.

Bodily exercise profits a little. Faithful saying worthy of all acceptance. Paul says we're laboring and suffering reproach because we trust in the living God who is the savior of all men, especially those who believe.

Verse 11, these things command and teach. Emphasize. Now in verse 12, let no one despise your youth but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love.

Where it says in spirit, the better texts don't have that. I personally don't think it's there and it's scratched out in my Bible. In word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

And I think love and faith are connected for a reason there. I don't want to interrupt them in spirit. Until I come, verse 13, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

And there is a focus and an emphasis here. And once again, there is a pull and a persuasion and a desire in much of formal Christianity, Christians who get together at church and meet, for there to be a purpose of an emotional lift. I get an emotional lift every time we get together as a fellowship.

But that's not the reason we get together. We don't come looking for the praise and worship folks to waft us halfway to glory on emotion and repetition and abstract thoughts. There are things that are a means and things that are a result.

And it is the result of our shared enthusiasm for God's word. It is a result of our shared appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ that we are encouraged and we're blessed and we're lifted up and we're motivated by our shared fellowship. But any group of people could get together and say, let's have a feel-good club.

Our joy, our peace, and our shared enthusiasm are a result of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and the truth of God's word. And it always needs to be that way. There is cause and there is effect.

And if you jump to effect without the cause, it is always a train wreck. So notice what Paul says here. He doesn't say, till I come, concentrate on strengthening the bonds of your Philadelphia and your brotherly, sisterly love and focus on becoming more intimate and more in depth with one another and get into each other's business and confess your faults to one another and get together and emote and have a deep sense of abiding joy and so on.

That's not the means. Many times those things will come and they are a wonderful symptom of healthy fellowship. But they are not the means of healthy fellowship.

Paul focuses, as the Lord Jesus did, on the means. Until I come, give attention to what? Words of faith, sound doctrine. Give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Reading the word of God and the letters of Paul. Timothy has got a collection of Paul's letters. He's got a collection of Paul's words.

And he tells Timothy, read those words. And on the basis of those words, exhort. Point out the priorities.

Point out what is essential, what is vital, what is necessary, where the power of God will come through those words into the lives of believers. Doctrine. This is the foundation.

Everything else is built on the foundation. You can have the most beautiful cut glass windows in the world, but if you don't have a house to install them in, you're going to be walking around with a cut glass window looking funny. You've got to have a foundation.

You've got to have a building. You've got to have a place to put these things. Once you have built the house, you can have furniture inside.

You can have wonderful, beautiful things inside. You can't sit on a curb with your beautiful things. They have got to have a place to reside.

Even if we are going to be vessels of honor, fitted for every good use, we have to be in the household. We can't be on the store shelf somewhere. We can't be being carted off to a garage sale somewhere.

It's always fascinating to find the things that people buy in a garage sale and use for common purposes. I saw just in passing the other day, somebody had gotten this kind of neat looking bowl and got it at a garage sale for a dollar. They used it for chip and dip, had corn chips in it, and used it at family picnics and such.

It wasn't particularly stylish looking. It was kind of old. They stuck it in a cupboard for 15 or 20 years.

Somebody dragged it out. Somebody happened to catch sight of it and said, you ought to get that looked at. It turned out to be some fantastically \$250,000 Ming Dynasty something or other that they had been serving chips out of because they didn't know any better.

People find stuff in their attic and it turns out to be some long lost Civil War saber that's in super fine condition and there's only three in the world and so on. These things need to be in their proper place to be appreciated. They need to be identified and understood to be appreciated and not taking a wonderful truth and schlepping it aside for common

use.

This is why we have to be people of the book. We are, in fact, those who appreciate the scriptures and the word of God. But we are not, what do they call us, not bibliophiles but idolaters of the Bible.

But that's where the truth is. The apostle Paul, the Lord Jesus himself said, you've got to have my words if you're going to keep them. Give attention until I come.

Paul says, this is what you do until I get there. What are we going to do until the Lord Jesus comes? Paul came and brought the words of the Lord Jesus, brought the mysteries that were entrusted to him by Jesus himself that came directly from God the Father. Until the Lord Jesus comes, what should we give attention to? To reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Reading and doctrine, in the middle of them is exhortation, which is application. Reading is observation. Doctrine is observation.

Doctrine is observation. Doctrine is interpretation. And exhortation is application.

And application is put in the middle because it's the most important thing. If you read it and you understand it, but you don't follow the exhortation to put it into practice, what good is it? Do not neglect the gift that is in you, given to you by prophecy, laying on of hands of the eldership. How do we get our spiritual gifts now? This is in the early days.

There weren't scriptures that had lists of spiritual gifts and detailed explanations of how one another love works itself out for building up the body and that which every joint supplies and edification. And so there were prophetic laying on of hands episodes where God, through the Holy Spirit, supernaturally revealed this person has this gift and here's what you should do with it. That has passed along with speaking in tongues and other things that were temporary.

You don't need laying on of hands to activate your spiritual gift. But what should you do with your gift? It was revealed at the point that it was recognized and these prophetic hands were laid on Timothy. He was told, this is your function.

Do not neglect the gift that is in you. That the word of God will energize, that the Holy Spirit will activate and guide and use to bless others. Don't neglect it.

What is the requirement for your spiritual gift? Whatever name it may have, whatever it may accomplish, whatever kind of blessing it communicates and confers, what's necessary for your gift to work? How about a pure heart? So that you are someone the Holy Spirit can lead and guide and energize, right? What about a good conscience? So that you know when, where and how it is a good time to do what you know how to do. And that unique gift that God has given you. How about an unhyprocritical sincere faith

that informs and bridles? It is power under control.

It is exercised as much as it should be, but not too much. Your car's got an accelerator. You don't always put the pedal to the floor, do you? There's moderation.

There is wisdom. How much gas do I give it? When do I brake? How soon do I brake? When do I turn on my lights? When do I use my wipers? And I have facility and wisdom and experience in taking the incredible power of a gasoline engine vehicle and using it to good purpose. Taking people where they need to go.

Taking myself where I need to go. Our spiritual gift is like a wonderful automobile. We've got to use it properly so we don't hurt ourselves and others in it.

That it goes at the right speed at the right time. It stops when it should. It starts when it should.

It goes just as fast as it ought to. It's well maintained. That's Paul's exhortation.

Do not neglect it. What happens if you neglect maintenance on your car? Pretty soon you don't have a car. Reflect on these things, verse 15.

Meditate on these things. Give yourself entirely to them. Invest yourself.

Be defined by them. Soak yourself in them. So that your progress may be evident to all.

This word progress is a very special word. In Greek it is prokopto. P-R-O-K-O-P-T-O.

Kopto means to cut. To cut. Pro means in front of.

It's from pros, face to face with. What it actually means, this comes to mean progress, but this is, and it was used originally in Greek, this is progress that is achieved by cutting down the trees that are in front of you so that you can move. It was used of armies and of groups of people.

In order to move forward, they had to cut down what was stopping their forward movement. This is progress by seeing what is ahead and dealing with it so that you can move forward. Circumstances can be the trees in our path.

Got to cut them down. Can't cut the whole forest at once. Can't dynamite the thing.

What's closest? Cut those down. I move a little bit forward. Cut the next ones down.

Move a little bit forward. I'm building my road through this forest as I go. Prokopto.

So how can I make progress against that which would normally block? That which would halt? That which would divert, deflect, turn me aside? My straight road going through the narrow gate to life goes through this forest. If I'm going to make progress, I got to cut

these trees down. How? Meditate on these things.

Give yourself entirely to them so that your progress, your movement, your progress is through resistance will be manifest. This is Fonero'o. It's apparent.

It makes an appearance. People look at you and say, look at that. That person's making progress.

They are moving forward despite the difficulties. The difficulties have not deterred them, haven't stopped them in their tracks, haven't deflected them, haven't discouraged them, haven't depressed them, haven't neutralized them, haven't turned them aside to something else. It doesn't matter what you throw at this person.

They are moving onward and forward. Remember that? Onward, forward. Shout aloud Hosanna.

Christ is captain of the mighty throng. Meditate on these things and give yourself entirely to them. What things? Everything we've seen in chapter 4. Truth versus error.

Good conscience versus one that's seared and can't tell what's good and what's bad, what's true and what's false. Dedication to understand and believe the truth. The words of faith and good doctrine carefully followed.

To revisit 1 Timothy chapter 4 on a frequent basis and then examine ourselves and see if we are in fact in the faith. Are we making progress? Is our progress evident? This isn't just for Timothy. Notice how Paul says you should be a good example.

Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine, verse 16. Notice he doesn't take heed to yourself and express more and more love. Be more and more intimate.

Break down more and more personal barriers. Just let everything get emotional and gooey. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine.

Check the doctrine. Be sure that what you understand, what you believe and what you preach is in fact the truth. That it comports with scripture.

It comports with the apostolic message that comes from the Father through Jesus Christ through the apostles to us. That's our New Testament witness. Take heed to yourself.

Pay attention. Check. Do you have a pure heart? Do you need to do something to eliminate the effects of sin and the practice of sin so that the Holy Spirit can cleanse and purify? Washing of water by the word? Sound doctrine.

Meditate. And be a good example. Your progress ought to be evident to you and to others.

You ought to be getting better. You ought to have more control over your impatience or your temper or your tendency to say what you shouldn't say or talk about what you shouldn't talk about or have attitudes you shouldn't have. Worry when you shouldn't worry.

Fear when you shouldn't fear. Get deflected and distracted when you ought to be focused. There ought to be progress.

So, let's say I look at myself and say, boy, I don't know that I'm making any progress. How can I get progress? How can I start chopping down those trees? Where's the chainsaw? Where's the fuel? Where's my gloves? How can I cut those trees so that there is evident and apparent progress? It's right here in the passage. Till I come, give attention to reading.

Meditate on these things. Do not forget about your gift. It ought to be functional in an effective and controlled way.

Knowing when to do it and when not to. That requires a good conscience. That requires a pure heart and a sincere faith.

Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them. Keep on keeping on.

Don't give up. Don't give out. Don't give in.

Persevere. Improvise. Adapt.

Overcome. Find a way. Get the time.

If you're tired, pick a different time when you're not tired. Don't fall asleep in the middle of your reflection and your meditation. Don't fall asleep in the middle of your prayer.

Find a way. Find a time. Strive to maintain a good conscience.

Endeavor to keep the faith. To make this progress, you've got to be tree chopping. Be a doer of the word and not a hearer only.

It isn't a reflex. It's not like your autonomic nervous system. It doesn't happen like your digestion without your conscious interaction.

It takes conscious thought, conscious priorities, conscious effort. Do we want to be approved at the judgment? Bible class is a wonderful start, but it isn't the finish. Many of us have gone to churches that were Bible churches and had verse by verse teaching, original languages accessed and so on, but you look around at the chairs in that quote unquote sanctuary and people's Bibles and notebooks are laying on the folding chair.

When I come, I'm doing my spiritual life. When I leave, I'm back to real life. That's what

that symbolizes.

I have no idea what people actually thought. Maybe they had a whole separate set of Bibles at the house, but if you leave your notes there because it's more convenient than lugging it back and forth, are you not going to read the notes? Are you not going to review? Are you not going to pray over it? Are you not going to reflect and meditate on it? Go back and revisit. Where were we in the Word of God a week ago? Where were we in the Word of God two weeks ago? What have we covered up to this point? If you run out of ideas, just go back and look at the lesson listing on the Grace and Truth website.

Pull up Timothy. I have endeavored and invested time in putting something down by way of a description. I didn't used to do that.

Many of the older series, it's artillery to find something you want to know about a given verse. These, in recent studies, there is something there. If you see that title, if you see that passage of Scripture, what do I remember about that class? Let me flip to my Bible that I used in that class.

What did I learn? Am I living in the light of that? I'm not advertising our Bible classes as the greatest thing since sliced bread. If you want to use Streams in the Desert, or My Utmost for His Highest, or Guideposts, or Our Daily Bread, or whatever you want to use that gets you into the Word, go to a passage and then think about that passage. Get a daily devotional.

WKriswell.com has a daily devotional with a Scripture passage. Anything to get us into the Word, and thinking about it, and cycling it through. It cleanses.

It purifies. It energizes. It gives the Holy Spirit something to talk to us with.

Meditate on these things. It is a command of the Word of God. If we're not doing this on a regular basis, a minimum of once a day, preferably three times a day.

Do it when we pray. Evening, and morning, and at noon, I will pray and cry aloud, because that's how much I care. I care enough to appeal to my Father in Heaven.

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. There's my pure heart. I want a good conscience.

I want to be able to listen to the news, or see something pass across social media, and be able to render an accurate judgment about its truth, its importance, its relevance, how it fits into the wiles of the devil, and the doctrines of demons, or how it is an occasion for hope. Maybe there is yet time and space for the people of God to have

freedom to pursue a life of faith, a life of bearing the fruit of the Spirit, and shining the light of God, so that others will be drawn to the Father and glorify Him. It's why we're here.

We're not here to get stuff done. We're not here to just make it through another day. Ate some more meals, did some chores, there's another day in the tank.

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Convert the time. Invest it.

It's a talent. It's a mina. Turn it into something.

Why else are we here? What are we good for, if not to invest in eternal things? Lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven. It'll never disappear. Moths don't get it.

Thieves can't steal it. It doesn't rust or corrode. We are possessors of eternal life.

Wouldn't it be great to have an eternal dwelling and some eternal stuff to go with it? Nobody wants to move into a small hut that's got no furniture, no amenities, spigots for running water, and a banjo for illumination, and that's it. Who are we? Why are we here? Meditate on these things. I am endeavoring to do my job, which is the same as Timothy's job.

Be an example to believers. Each of us should be an example to fellow believers, because we're surrounded with them. They're in our family.

They're in our periphery. We rub elbows with them casually or more so. Are we an example? Paul says, be an example, and he's not just saying the pastor or the teacher needs to be an example.

Every single believer that has a spiritual gift should be an example so that their progress can be apparent, can be evident. I'm not the worry ward I used to be. I'm not the gossip I used to be.

I'm not the fill-in-your-blank here that I used to be. Not perfect, but I'm making progress by God's grace and in God's power because I am soaking myself in words of faith and sound doctrine. I am reflecting on it.

I want it to make a difference, and I am praying. The angels in heaven have me on a first-name basis. It's better than Norm when he goes to cheers, and everybody says, Norm.

Wouldn't it be great if when our prayers ascend to the third heaven and into the throne room, all of the angels say, there's fill-in-your-name here again, praying to the Father. It's like clockwork. Can't have a day on earth without getting several prayers from you-know-who.

Wouldn't it be great if you were such a prayer warrior, Gabriel knows your name, Michael knows your name, and all of the other Cherubim and Seraphim up there. God the Holy Spirit bringing those prayers into the throne room and translating them into divine language that can't be uttered by human speech because you are praying. I am praying.

We are praying. Praying for each other and praying for ourselves, for wisdom, for insight, for memory to be caught up short before I make my pattern sin one more time. Lord, draw me up short.

Give me a beat to remember who I am and why I am here. Give me the strength to do something different than what I typically do in these circumstances. Let me not fail like I typically fail.

By your grace, in your strength, according to your power, I want you and the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit to be at home in my heart. There's not very many believers that fall in that category. Let's be them.

Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them for in doing this you will save yourself and those who are in your periphery. In Timothy's case, those who hear you.

In your case and in my case, anybody that's in our periphery that is in a position to see our progress and to realize that there is a God in heaven and there is power on earth for forgiveness of sins, for advancing beyond sin, wading into the forest and chopping the trees down and making progress. That is 1 Timothy 4. That is our calling and never so more important than now because the Spirit expressly says in latter times believers are going to depart from the faith. There are swarms and hordes.

If you're worried about people coming over our southern border, I'll tell you what's worse. There are more believers departing from the faith now than there are non-citizens coming across the Rio Grande. That is the crisis.

That is the problem that needs solution. You think about it. That's what God's thinking about.

Well that concludes our chapter. Remember John chapter 8. Remember John chapter 14. Remember 1 Timothy 4. I would take us back to Titus chapter 2 but we're going to see it when we do Titus in the near future.

So we'll close here for tonight in a word of prayer. Father thank you for the wonderful opportunity we have to be distinguished in faith, to be set apart and sanctified by your grace and your power. We pray that as we reflect on these things, as we meditate on them, as we endeavor to cling to and heed sound words and sound teaching that God the Holy Spirit will find us ready and able to live in their light, to be motivated by them and to be those who will reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus in a way that glorifies him and

draws others in our periphery to you.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.