

2Thessalonians 12-10-12b

We pick up our study in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, and we have come to the point where Paul says the Thessalonian believers should hold fast, stand fast and hold the traditions that they've been taught, whether by word or epistle, whether in person, and Paul referred back to this, he says, remember when I was with you I told you these things? This is now the second letter that he writes to them, so what he said when he was with them and what he has written in the epistle, these have apostolic authority, it is inspired teaching from God, and he says hold fast these traditions. These traditions supplant, supersede, replace, update, fulfill the old traditions of the law and the prophets. They're not out of harmony with them, but they complete them, they amplify them, they flesh them out, they give the last half of the story that was missing, it was only in prospect.

Hold fast these traditions. Well, what are these traditions? Since we weren't there when Paul presented them, and he hasn't really given a lot of it in either one of these letters, what are these traditions? Because this is really the point of going over the eschatology, this isn't a strategy to gain more listeners, let's have a prophecy thing and we'll get a bunch of people interested, let's raise the excitement level, let's talk about end times and antichrists, and that's not the reason Paul is doing it, he has a purpose. Why is this chapter here? Why is this section of this letter here? It is an encouragement to persevere, to hold fast to the faith, these traditions.

Well, what is the faith? What are these traditions? It's easier to say hold fast the traditions if I stopped right now and said, all right, everybody that's listening to the sound of my voice, go out and this coming week, hold fast the traditions, and when we meet next Friday, I want you to write down all of the traditions that you held fast. Well, you kind of have to stop and think for a minute, wouldn't you? What traditions? Hold fast what? It's very difficult to fulfill a command if you don't know what it means, and we can guess. I mean, y'all are not completely without light on this, but it'd be a lot easier if we just went over some of these traditions, don't you think? If we just looked at Scripture and said, here's the traditions he's talking about.

Well, thankfully, we've got a wonderful collection of Pauline tradition teaching in our Bible right there before you in your precious two hands. You have got a great listing of these traditions. You know why they're not in 2 Thessalonians? Why God the Holy Spirit did not inspire Paul to put them into this book? Because we've already got them elsewhere.

Multiple instances. We're just going to pick one, and for this, I'm going to go through Romans in this King James Bible, but anytime you think, where are the traditions? Think Romans 12 through 15. Many other passages you could go to, but if you want a good healthy collection of the traditions that we are supposed to hold fast, if you want to loop your Go Bible for a while, not that there aren't other great passages.

I know people that loop all over the place, and that's great, but this is a great place to loop. Start

at Romans chapter 12 and go through chapter 15. So turn with me to Romans chapter 12.

You remember the beginning of this. This is part of our memory verse selection. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God.

Now, when we talk about traditions, these aren't fables and stories. This is not the mythology of the faith. Hear me now.

When he says hold fast to traditions, this doesn't mean believe the myths. It means follow the commands. The traditions are the practical steps, the pragmatic imperatives.

This is what you do. The traditions are what you do. This isn't what you believe about creation.

Are you a yuck? Are you a young earth creationist? Are you an old earth creationist? Are you a gap theorist? It's not your eschatology. Are you pre-mid, post-mid, trib, a preterist, historicist? None of that. Traditions.

Hold fast to traditions. These are the imperatives. So what I did very quickly, might have missed a few, I just went through and circled on the pages of Romans 12 through 15 every imperative, and there are dozens of circles on every page.

These are their traditions. When you think about eschatology, the return of the Lord Jesus, thank God I'm not going through the tribulation, the antichrist is coming, mark of the beast, three and a half years, third of the earth burned up, fallen us, oh rocks, death come to me, save me, get me out of here, Armageddon, rivers of blood, high as the horses' bridles, all of that stuff. When you think about that, what does Paul say? Don't worry about that stuff.

Hold fast to traditions. It doesn't matter what kind of an ist you are when it comes to eschatology. What matters is what kind of a traditionalist are you? How many of these commands are we fulfilling in our daily life and what is our motivation for holding fast to these traditions? Jesus is coming back.

Jesus is coming for us. We want to reflect his glory. What's the last thing Paul said here? He called you by our gospel for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have been called. What's the purpose of our calling? Why did Jesus come and all the rest of it? Obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. How do you obtain the glory? It isn't by sitting here staring at the wall.

It isn't even by sitting here listening to the sound of my mellifluous tones. How do you obtain the glory? This is your calling. You're a Christian.

You're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. What is your calling? Obtain the glory of Christ. How do you obtain the glory of Christ? Hold fast to traditions.

What are the traditions? Start in Romans chapter 12. Paul says, I plead with you, I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you now, we're going to look at these actions. These are action words.

Many of them are in the imperative mood. Others of them are cohortative. They are exhortations.

They are encouragements. They are pleadings and requests and encouragements. What does it say? Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

Now, does this mean, well, I need a facelift. I need a nose job. I need a hair transplant.

I need a mole removal. I need wrinkle fixing. I need Botox.

Present your body. What does it mean, present your body? What is your body? Your body is your existence in this life. We are seen and we are known by what we do in the body.

This is the outworking of our faith, right? It's one thing to sit and think deep theological thoughts. It's one thing to sit immobile and have profound trust in the promises and principles and doctrines of God. That's not what he's talking about.

He doesn't say present your heart or present your mind. He says, present your body. What does that mean? Your behavior, our actions, our deeds, the impact we make, the things we move around during the day, the effect we have among people.

This is our body. Man looks on the outward appearance, right? The Lord's looking on the heart. He says, present your body, a living sacrifice.

This is your living day. Dedicate your day. The things that you do ought to be holy and acceptable to God, free of sin, free of contamination, free of a pattern that reflects evil.

Present your daily life is another way to paraphrase this. Your daily life, the small things. What is the look on your face when you respond? What is the attitude you reflect even in your body language when someone makes a request or someone makes an observation or something happens? Traffic is bad.

What does your body do? The news on the television is bad. What does your body do? Your mouth is part of your body. Your fist shaking in the air is a part of your body.

Your thumb on the remote is a part of your body. What do we do? Present your body a living sacrifice. I'm not going to do what pleases me.

Maybe venting pleases me, but it's not holy and acceptable to God. Maybe being arbitrary and critical and hypersensitive pleases me, but a sacrifice means I'm presenting this to God. I'm laying it on the altar before God.

Is it holy? Is it acceptable to Him? I don't think so. My selfish self-centered self-gratification and self-vindication and self-justification and self-centeredness and self-dash-anything-fill-in-the-blank is not a holy and acceptable sacrifice. Paul says, I plead with you, present everything you are and everything you do in the world of people, in the world of circumstances as a sacrifice to God.

Lay it on the altar. Think of it as being before God's face. Make sure it's holy and make sure it's acceptable.

This is your service. This is your reasonable priestly service. This is what you are here to do.

Dedicate every action to God. Lay it on the altar before the face of God and that lamb better not have a blemish. It better not have a flaw.

It better not be a contaminated sacrifice like God rejects and condemns over in the book of Malachi. Why are you bringing me these feeble, flawed, unacceptable offerings? You pollute my altar. You denigrate my sacrifice and through that you denigrate the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Present your body. So that's a tradition, a very emphatic one. Paul says, hold fast.

Don't forget about it. Don't get apathetic. Don't get indifferent.

Don't get distracted. Don't say, well, that sounds fine on a refrigerator magnet, but I've got a life to lead here. Dedicate.

Present yourself and do not be conformed to this world. How does the world live life? What do they do with their bodies? Self-gratification, pleasure, sensual pursuits. It's me, myself and I, the holy trinity of me.

That's the way it is. That's who I worship. That's who I live to please and serve.

He says, no, be not conformed to this world. Be transformed. These are imperatives.

Be not conformed. Be transformed. Wonderful prefixes there.

Do not be conformed, which means formed with. It's like conjoined, joined with. Be not conformed.

Don't be formed with the world. Don't adopt their forms. Don't enter into their forms.

Don't be measured by their forms. Don't pursue their forms. Be transformed above and beyond, out from those forms.

Be not conformed. Be transformed. This is a tradition.

Hold fast the tradition by the renewing of your mind. Mind has got to have a different track with a different train. Got to have a different formation with a different drummer.

Not according to the world. According to our word, our epistle, Paul says, we have taught you these traditions. Hold them fast.

The good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say through the grace given to me to every man among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. This is a tradition.

Don't get arrogant. Arrogance says I will measure. I will judge.

I will decide. I will control everything. I will measure everything around me by my standards.

He says don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. What is the original sin? Satan said I will ascend. I will be most high.

Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to. How highly, by the way, ought we to think of ourselves? What's an appropriate altitude for our thinking? Do we denigrate ourselves? Do we say I'm depraved. I'm hopeless, helpless and useless.

Aw shucks. All of grace, none of me. I'm going to lay here and wait for God to put an animating spirit in me that will rouse me up to do.

No, that's too low. We are blood bought. We are bought with the precious blood of Christ.

If you buy a thing with a precious price, what does that say about the thing? It's worth something. You have value and you have worth in Christ because of Christ, through Christ. We were worthless, but when God, this is kind of like some unknown artist.

Think about Picasso. Back when he first started painting, he was doing all of his weird three eyes and one leg. Have you ever seen Guernica, the painting Guernica? He's trying to talk about a bombing and there's all these triangular misshapen pieces.

When he first started doing that, he couldn't have gotten a sandwich for one of his paintings. People looked at it and said, that doesn't look like a painting. It looks like a collage and a bad one at that.

But people said, oh, I love this stuff. I'll give you \$10,000 for that painting. Somebody else said, \$10,000, I'll give you \$50,000.

Somebody else said, I'll give you \$100,000. It was probably in francs or something to begin with, but people started paying money for it and these became valuable. Why? I still look at Picasso and think, I wouldn't walk across the street and give you five bucks for that thing, except that I could turn around and sell it to somebody who thinks it's worth a fortune.

But why is it worth a fortune? Because people pay that kind of money for it. When we are bought

with the precious blood of Christ, that which was worthless becomes valuable because of the price that was paid. So don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but also don't think of yourself more lowly than you ought to think.

We need an accurate estimate. We are what we are in Christ, and when we look at Christ and see the price that was paid and what was done, we don't think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, because what do we have that we have not been given? It's all of grace. But we also don't denigrate ourselves and excuse ourselves and let ourselves off the hook because we're thinking too low.

It doesn't matter what I do. There are great saints and apostles and believers. Billy Graham and Franklin Graham and all these other great guys are doing the work of God.

Oh, lowly me. It's just a cheat. It's an excuse, thinking too low of ourselves.

We need to have an accurate evaluation. So that's a tradition. Think soberly according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Now, this is interesting to me. What is the measure of faith? Calvinists come in and say, see, God has given you a little measure of faith. He gave somebody a cup.

He gave somebody else a peck. He gave somebody else a bushel. He gave somebody else a truckload of faith.

What does this mean? Because this is part of the tradition. Think soberly according to the measure of faith. Well, if you've got the whole gamut of God's truth, and it is above and beyond anything that any one mortal could ever comprehend, we are going to function best as a group where one of us has got the tail, one of us has got the hind leg, one of us has got the trunk, and we communicate and we share the truth.

We speak the truth to one another in love and we say, you know, I think the plan of God is this trunk I've got ahold of up here. And the guy in the back says, hey, I've got to tell you, I've got a thing over here, and it's not a trunk, it's a tail. The guy says, well, I've got something that's not a trunk or a tail, and it's got a knee joint in it here.

I think it's a leg. And by speaking the truth to one another in love, the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts. And one guy was measured out to go grab the tail.

There are things that we can study together and understand from God's Word. We can go read wonderful books by erudite scholars that have captured a different portion. It's the measure of faith.

Nobody can contain God's truth. Nobody can touch the hem of the garment of God's truth. But we all get a measure.

And so people will be really good at understanding the gospel and communicating the gospel. There are those that will be really good in eschatology. There will be those that are really good in practical theology and practical application.

There are those that are going to get church polity, what it is and what it isn't. And we each get a measure. It's not how much belief you have.

It's the substance of faith. It is that which we place our faith in. And it's a measure, and it's measured out.

Peter had different truths because he had a different audience than Paul. Paul was the steward of the mystery of the church, and Peter learned it from Paul. It wasn't measured to Peter.

He wasn't the first pope, and he wasn't the guy that was the first to unlock the mystery, even though he was with the Lord Jesus. It was Paul. Paul says, to me it has been given to elucidate this.

That's the measure that was given to Paul. A different measure was given to Peter. He's the great connection to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's the great example of overcoming weakness to become strong in Christ. He's the great comforter and encourager to the diaspora. Paul never did the kind of encouragement to the scattered Jews that Peter did.

That was Peter's measure of faith. This is why Paul goes on to talk about gifts. We have many members in one body.

All members have not the same office. He doesn't say all members have not the same level of belief, does he? We've got different contributions we can make to the body. Some people are really good at hospitality.

Some people are really good at sponsoring fellowships. Some people are really good at stimulating thinking and creative connections in thinking about the Word of God and the things that we learn. There are people who are really great at prayer.

There are people who are great at listening. There are people that are good at distilling. You listen to me ramble on for 40 minutes and somebody walks out and says, well, you know, I think what he really said was, and they say it in 15 seconds, well, that's the whole Bible class in one sentence.

They just have that gift, that knack for distilling something into a memorable form. It's a contribution. Look at the context.

Think soberly. What does this mean? According to the measure of faith, kata, according to,

looking at, standing next to, and evaluating. So what does this mean? We need to think about the functions that we can serve in our fellowship.

He says think soberly according to the measure of faith. Think soberly in terms of function. Do you feel like you're making a contribution? If not, why not? You've got a measure of faith.

You're in the group for a reason. There are one another commands that pertain. So look for an opportunity.

What are you good at? Well, think about that and think soberly. Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. A guy that has a teaching gift, if he thinks his gift is any better than anybody else's, he's thinking of himself more highly than he ought to think.

Teaching gift is no better than any other gift. It's just more noisy. You have to put up with it longer than the other gifts.

But it's not any better. I'm not going to be any closer to Jesus in the resurrection because I study and teach than anybody else. In fact, I will probably be further away by failing to live up to the potential of the gift.

It has nothing to do with what the gift is. It's how faithful are you to the gift. What is the measure of faith that's been given to you? How faithful are you in it? Your function may not be as visible as mine.

I mean, this one, you're just hanging out in the wind and everybody will know if you screw it up. Others are not quite so visible. But look at what he says.

You've got to think soberly. This is a part of the tradition. Do you want to partake of the glory of Jesus Christ? Do you want to fulfill the calling? Do you want to be ready when he comes back? Do you want the hope to mean something? Do you want to accomplish the purpose of your life? Hold fast to tradition.

What is the tradition? Right here. Present your body a living sacrifice. Be not conformed to the world.

Be transformed. Look at the portion of faith that has been allotted to you, the measure that has been given to you. This is your contribution gift-wise.

It's specifically in the context of gift. It's not in the context of how much belief do you have. This is body, service, conformity to the world or transforming.

Your mind is renewed. Now you can serve efficiently and effectively. So think soberly.

Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Don't think your gift is special. It's a gift.

Thousands of people have this gift. You're just one of them. You just need to be faithful to what you've been given.

So think soberly. This is a practical tradition that we are commanded to hold fast, preserve, keep, be faithful to. We have many members in one body, not all the same office.

Being many, we're one body in Christ, everyone members of one another. One another. This is in the context of what we do for one another, do when we are around one another.

This is your gift. Well, we've got to speed up here a little bit. So having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, according to the proportion of faith.

Now look at me. I have not been called to be the pastor of a mega church. If I had been, I would need to be faithful to that calling.

That's not my calling. My calling is for a small group. I love my calling.

I wouldn't trade my calling with anybody, but my calling, I serve in proportion to my calling. What does that mean? I am not going to drop everything else that I do and be a full-time teacher for a group this size because it's proportional. The proportion of my week is in proportion to the need.

I can prepare a satisfactory Bible class in a portion of the week, and I can devote the rest of the time to my job, my family, my chores, my repairs, and so on, maintenance. I can do that. If I was called to a much larger group, which had much greater demands on my time, then I would have to act accordingly.

I would have to act proportionally. And this is true of anybody. So he says, having gifts differing according to the grace that is given, whatever it is, according to the proportion of faith, according to the proportion, according to the measure.

How do you see it? What is the nature of your individual calling? If you have an evangelism gift and you're in a foreign country where there's thousands of unchurched people, you've got to think big. You've got to think media. You've got to think radio.

You've got to think internet. If you've got an evangelism gift, but you're in a small context, then you think in proportion. Where are the opportunities that God has given me? How can I exercise my gift most effectively? Because trust me, I keep thinking about that poor John Hicks, dusty old preacher traveling West Texas for decades.

Hardly anybody ever got saved, but the one ten-year-old kid that he brought to Christ by faithfully preaching the gospel for his whole life was W.A. Criswell, who went on to shake the world and change an entire denomination. John Hicks was faithful in the proportion to which he was called. He wasn't called to be Billy Sunday.

He wasn't called to be Dwight Moody. He wasn't called to be anybody but John Hicks, and that's what he did. He was faithful to his calling.

God used him to do something that he could never have seen, didn't even see in his lifetime. But God used him because he was faithful in proportion to the faith that was given to him. The proportion that was assigned, he was faithful.

Let God work out the details of its impact. So look at verse 9. What is the tradition? Let us love without hypocrisy. Now this doesn't mean work up a gush.

This doesn't mean work up an emotional attachment. Let's stare deeply into each other's eyes or something. It has nothing to do with that.

Love without hypocrisy. Love is a policy. Love is a policy of sacrificial to self, beneficial to other.

It doesn't matter how you feel. In fact, we usually have to tamp down our feelings because they tend to go astray in one direction or the other. Love is sacrificial.

This may not be my favorite thing, but I'm going to do it because it's right. I'm going to do it because I love the Lord Jesus. I'm going to do it because this is an opportunity, and I'm not going to do it with a two-faced attitude.

I'm not going to smile here and smirk later. I'm not going to say kind things here and say mean things later. I am consistent.

What's inside me is what's outside me, without hypocrisy. Love without hypocrisy. That's a tall order.

You want to hold fast to a tradition? There's a great one, and it's an imperative. Love without hypocrisy. By the way, all of these traditions are the measures by which we will be judged.

We will stand at the judgment seat of Christ. Well, what was the quality of your love? Was it without hypocrisy or not? Were you a hypocrite? Did you smile and then backbite later? Did you smile and then gossip later? Did you praise in one group and criticize in another? Were you inconsistent, or did you love and your love was unhypocritical? Did you present yourself a living sacrifice? Was your sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, or did you cheat? Did you really worship something else and bring God the leftovers? This is the measure by which we will be judged. Be kindly affectioned one to another.

The one another here is the brethren, and we don't have a choice of bearing grudges and pulling out tomahawks when nobody's looking and throwing them at pictures of somebody. Be kindly affectioned. It's a command.

If there's a reason you can't be kindly affectioned, you better figure it out, because it's a

command. You do not have a choice. If there's a grudge, fix it.

Jesus explained how that's done. Be kindly affectioned toward one another with brotherly love in honor preferring one another. We honor each other.

We prefer each other. We think about each other. We find ways to lift up and be a comfort and an encouragement and a blessing to each other.

And we do that before we do it for somebody out in the community. Somebody in a church, if they're going down and ladling soup at the soup kitchen, but they don't give two hoots and a rain barrel for the people in their congregation, they're not honoring this teaching, this tradition. Prefer one another.

It's your local body of believers. It's the believers that you are with most. They get first claim on our efforts, on our attention, on our gifts, on our ministry, on whatever proportion of faith has been measured to us.

It goes to the near church first. It's a tradition. Hold it fast.

We'll be judged on it. Rejoice in hope. Be patient in tribulation.

Continue diligently in prayer. These are not optional. These are traditions.

Hold them fast. Distribute to the needy. Give hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you. Bless and curse not. You think you got the short end of the stick? Doesn't matter.

You still bless. You still prefer. You still love without hypocrisy.

Rejoice with them that rejoice. Weep with those who weep. Be of the same.

Notice all of the be, do, be, do. This is your body. This is your calling.

These are the traditions. Does Paul need to reiterate them in Second Thessalonians? No. We've got the book of Romans.

And no doubt he exhorted the Thessalonian believers with these very same traditions in person. Recompense to no man evil for evil. You think you got a bad turn? You think you got ill used? You do not have the option of being evil back.

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. Where possible, as much as it lies with you, to the extent that you have any say or any control, be at peace.

Live peaceably with all men. It's a tradition. It's a teaching.

It's an imperative. Hold it fast. You can go on.

I don't have time to go through the rest of these, but it's replete. I can hardly read the text for all the circles here in chapter 13. Look at the imperatives.

Look at the exhortations. Look at the traditions that have been delivered by word and by epistle. This is the manual for life.

This is how we present our bodies a living sacrifice. This is how we hold fast to traditions. Now, you and I have no excuse whatsoever.

When the Lord Jesus returns, after the man of lawlessness does his thing, after all is said and done, that's Israel. That's Millennium. The Lord Jesus will come back first, and we will go to the bema.

We will be at the judgment seat of Christ. Are we going to welcome and run toward the Lord Jesus, or are we going to be the Jews at Mount Sinai and run away with the earthquake and the noise and the smoke? The Bible says most Christians will be afraid. Most Christians will be ashamed.

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns, there's going to be a lot more foolish virgins that have to run go looking for oil than those who can enter into the banquet because their lamps are well supplied and lit. We want to be those gals. We want to be the virgins who thought ahead, who anticipated the coming of the groom, and were ready.

We want to be those good and faithful servants who anticipated the Master's coming and are found serving and being faithful when he comes. You can argue about the details of the coming. What happens first? What happens in what order? How do you parse the book of Revelation? How do you reconcile with Daniel and Isaiah? That's all fine.

There's nothing wrong with that. But in terms of practical judgment, God is not going to hand out an eschatology test at the judgment seat of Christ and say, did you get pre-meal, pre-trib right or not? What's he going to look at? Did you hold fast the traditions? Did you present yourself as sacrifice? Did you love one another? Did you exercise and fulfill your gift according to whatever measure was given to you? Maybe you weren't called to very much. Well, did you fulfill that or not? Were you just handed the one talent? What did you do with the one talent? You get just as big a reward for being faithful with the one as if you're given ten.

It's the proportion of faith. It's the measure of faith. Be faithful whatever it is that's dealt to you.

Some of us are consumed by a job and only have a little time for ministry. Others have a lot of time for ministry, a little time for job. Some of us have to split three ways between family, job, and ministry.

Whatever it may be, whatever the measure, were you faithful? Because you've got to be faithful in those other things as well. Be faithful to your family. Be faithful in your job.

Maybe the ministry portion is relatively small when it comes to the one another stuff because you've been dealt a measure in other areas besides the church. That's fine. That's great, but you've got to think soberly and be faithful.

You're still presenting your body, the entirety of yourself, holy and acceptable to God. Look at these things. Owe no man anything.

Render therefore what is due to all. Tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, tax to whom tax, honor to whom honor. Pay what you owe.

Owe no man anything. Don't be behind. It doesn't mean you can't take out something on credit.

It means if you're on payments, make the payments. Don't default. Don't miss.

Owe no man anything. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 14 of Romans 13.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Make no provision for the flesh. If you've got some weak area, well, don't make it easy to fail in that area.

Let him that is weak in the faith be received. Receive him. Look at 14.3. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him who eateth not judge him that eateth.

If you've got a doctrinal difference, if you have a difference in practical understanding of how to live out, don't separate and divide and judge on stuff like that. Grant to others the same freedom of conscience and freedom of interpretation that you would like to have yourself. Who are you to judge another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls.

One man esteems a day above another, another esteems every day alike. Let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind. God is far more interested in how faithful are you to your understanding than if your understanding is correct.

We want our understanding to be right, but he's mainly concerned with, are you being faithful to it? If there's a post-tribulational rapture guy over here, is God going to say, well, sorry, I'm disregarding everything else in your life because you got your eschatology wrong? No. He's going to look at, well, if that's what you believe, were you faithful? Did you live in that life? Interesting idea there. None of us lives to himself.

None of us dies to himself. Whether we live, we live to the Lord. Whether we die, we die to the Lord.

Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. It's between us and the Lord. Don't be

throwing rocks at somebody else.

We've got our hands full concentrating on between us and the Lord. Let's not judge one another anymore. Judge this, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

This is what we're going to be judged on, not what were the details of our belief, but did we injure other believers? I know and persuaded by the Lord Jesus, there's nothing unclean as far as foods, but to him that esteems something unclean, to him it is unclean, and he'll be judged on how faithful he was to his belief. The kingdom of God isn't eating and drinking. It's righteousness and peace in the Holy Spirit.

So look at the rest of these. These are the traditions Paul is talking about. This is the exhortation.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught. That is the basis for the doxology. Now, when you are dedicated to that obedience and that faithfulness, may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

Those good words and works are defined by the traditions. They are outlined. They are detailed in the traditions, and when you've got them and you're holding them fast and you dedicate your life to pursuing and upholding those, God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will comfort, will strengthen, and establish us in every good word and work.

And establish looks into the eternal future, looks to, through, and beyond all of that eschatology. So what a wonderful encouragement. It's a great thing to me that it's not nebulous.

It's not fuzzy. We're not walking out saying, well, I wonder what God wants me to do. I mean, how clear is this? How much more clear could it be made? Read those chapters.

Meditate on those chapters. Romans 12, 13, 14, first half of chapter 15. Watch for those exhortations and imperatives.

It could not be more clear. And that will be the clear and definite basis for our evaluation and our eternal future. Our options, our rewards, our inheritances, our service, our reflection of the glory of God hinges on these things.

This is our life. There is nothing else. This is it.

So it's as clear, I think, as God could possibly make it to our mortal minds. Well, let's close here in a word of prayer. We'll pick up in chapter three next week.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you that you, as our Heavenly Father, have not been vague. You've not been indefinite.

You have given us clear instruction. You've given us copious amounts of illustration and example. We thank you for your word.

We thank you for its preservation, for those men who have, in many cases, given their lives for it so that we could hold it in our own hands, read it for ourselves, be informed by its truth, be encouraged by its hope, and be enabled to live out our calling and to fulfill our calling through the presence of your Spirit and the powerful truth that it reveals. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will find us receptive, that he will continue to teach us and to encourage us and to prod us so that we can avail ourselves of this wonderful opportunity that is ours through Christ. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.