

2Timothy 24-09-22b

We're ready now to pick up our study here in 2 Timothy chapter two. We have seen verse one, and hopefully the words now have a little more import, are more meaningful. My son, this is an appeal based on the personal relationship over many years that Paul and Timothy have developed in Christ.

They're not literally related, but he is Timothy's father in the faith as he is for so many. My son, be strong in, by, and with the grace that is in, by, and with Christ Jesus. The grace comes from God the Father.

The Lord Jesus is the expression. He is the intermediary. He is the one who personally delivers this grace.

It is in his example. It is in his words. It is in his manifest and visible ministry and both past and future that we look at in the word of God.

So Christ Jesus, Christ first, emphasize the divine source of this strength and grace. The things which you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. It often is the case in the body of Christ that when people have a spiritual gift, they will find themselves associated with others who have that same opportunity and that same special ability and sensitivity and those who have the opportunity to help, those who have an administration gift, those who have... In fact, you can take a look at the gifts and think about how often people with these gifts find themselves with others and can share in that realm what has helped them.

If they're evangelists, the things that have been helpful in evangelism. If they are pastors, things that have been useful. There's times when pastors get together and compare notes and share burdens and whatnot, talk about resources they've come across that have been helpful.

But any area of gifting, whether it has a name or not, but the named gifts in scripture, and we have these from Paul in four different places. They are in Romans 12, verses six through eight. They are in 1 Corinthians 12, two places in chapter 12.

Verses seven through 10 and verse 28. So you've got two distinct references to gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. And then finally Ephesians 4, 11.

You remember well Ephesians 4, this is where Paul turns the corner in the letter to the Laodiceans to application from the theology he's presented in the first three chapters. But you will, if you put these side by side, the gift of apostleship is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, 28 and in Ephesians 4, 11. God has appointed in the church apostles, he says to the Corinthians.

He gave apostles in Ephesians 4, 11. In all four of these allusions, you have prophecy,

prophecy. We always immediately associate future prediction with prophecy, but prophecy is to forth tell.

You think about the major and minor prophets in the Old Testament. Most of that material is similar to the apostolic witness in that it is a call to the people of God, to repentance, to faith, to obedience, calling out failure, apathy, indifference, self-centeredness, breach of the covenant with God. The apostolic call was similar to prophecy in that it is a confrontational gift.

There is a message from the Lord that people need to hear. It is likely not going to be well received. Remember in the Beatitudes, when Jesus says, "Blessed are you when you are persecuted for my name's sake for so also they persecuted," who? The prophets.

Your presence alone, just your existence in the room is enough to set some people off because they are so violently anti-Christ that they are anti-Christian. Your morality is an affront. Your standards are incorrect and insensitive.

And even without saying a word, just by living your life as unto the Lord, you can engage in a prophetic function. You can engage in a teaching function. Many of these are skills that we all have, like my aforementioned Marines.

They may not be our specialty, but in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit with the grace that is in Christ Jesus, we can do those things. Many a time, the motor pool and the mess tents have been emptied of the privates, first-class and lance corporals and junior corporals to rush to perimeter security. And they are fully able to do it.

It's not their primary job, but it is an essential skill that they all have. It's the same with us. You should be ready always to give an answer to anyone who asks you the reason for your hope.

It's not something you do every day. This is more for your pastors and your evangelists and those who are at the front lines of meeting the resistance in the world. But prophecy, this is in Romans 12.

It is in 1 Corinthians 12 twice, and it is in Ephesians 4.11. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, interestingly. Think about this. With the emphasis on evangelicalism and being an evangelist, and every believer should be giving the gospel all the time, and you're a bad Christian if you don't, the only place evangelist as a gift is mentioned is Ephesians 4.11. It is not in Romans 12, and it is not to be found anywhere in 1 Corinthians 12.

In the sense of what we consider a professional evangelist, a dedicated person who has the call to go and stand in the marketplace and proclaim the grace and the love of God in Christ Jesus. Evangelist, it's only in Ephesians 4.11. The discernment of spirits. This is one of the temporary gifts when there was a great deal of both angelic and demonic

activity in the first generation of the church before there was the word of God.

You have the Holy Spirit, which is one component of God's power coming into the life of believers, but without the word universally accessible, something had to fill in. And so there were supernatural communications, whether it's tongues, whether it is being given a prophetic message to deliver in the language of your group, whether it is a spiritual visitation. Is it the Holy Spirit or is it a dark spirit? Is it a demon? Is this person bringing a word from the Lord or is it masquerading this invisible person as an angel of light? So the ability to distinguish between spirits, that's only in 1 Corinthians 12, seven through 10.

So that capability is mentioned as many times as evangelist, once. A gift of wisdom, to utter wisdom. Again, without the wisdom available in the New Testament, gospels, epistles, and the revelation, people were given a unique insight.

This is akin to Jesus knowing what was in men's hearts or knowing that it was time to leave a particular location, even though there are still crowds coming and hundreds wanting to be healed, Jesus would have the wisdom to know that it was time to move on and take his disciples to a new location. How did he know that? Well, this is a kind of practical knowledge that is imparted through the Holy Spirit. And it was given to one or more individuals in a local church for guidance.

We shouldn't meet in the same place we did last Sunday or last Thursday. I have a word from the Lord that that location has been compromised. We need to go to the catacombs.

We need to go to a different house. We need to go to outside town for self-preservation and to avoid being arrested, to avoid conflict, to avoid an angry mob. And this was wisdom, practical guidance to further spiritual growth and the work of the Lord.

That is in 1 Corinthians 12, seven through 10. Teaching all four locations, Romans 12, six through eight, 1 Corinthians 12, seven through 10, 1 Corinthians 12, 28, and Ephesians 4, 11, all mention teaching. It is a rough guide, maybe not ultimately and finally persuasive, but I find it compelling that the things that are mentioned most often are probably most important.

And we have seen the emphasis on truth, the church being the pillar and ground of truth on having it faithfully communicated by pastors who will find other men who will be faithful to communicate it and will take their place generation by generation. Teaching, utterance of knowledge, teachers, shepherds and teachers, all four of those passages. There is a gift of exhortation, of encouragement, of motivating the troops.

It's only found in Romans 12. So motivational speaking for Christians, it's only once. Romans 12, six through eight.

Miracles, working of miracles is mentioned twice, 1 Corinthians 12, seven through 10,

and again in verse 28. So in Corinth, and remember, this is where there was a great need for clarification on the function of spiritual gifts in that chapter 12 through 14 section of that letter. So you have the working of miracles mentioned twice in Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 12.

Healing, likewise, in the same two places, the same two lists, gifts of healing. The gift of service or helping is mentioned both in Romans 12 and in 1 Corinthians 12, 28. As you listen to these, think about the occasional opportunity that we all have to be a part of this kind of work.

You say, well, wait a minute, those temporary gifts, that those are gone, right? Those have ceased, and so I wouldn't have any step back. One of the most beautiful and useful things we are learning in these pastoral epistles is that things are given as an example. And just because tongues have ceased and prophecy is no longer the means of bringing information, they are examples.

So remember all of the detailed instructions in 1 Corinthians about how to practice speaking in tongues in an assembly? We said, well, I can just chop that. I'll do like Jefferson and just cut that right out of my 1 Corinthians because we don't have tongues anymore. I can just gloss right over that.

That is all the same as if you look at what is written to men and you're a woman, or you look at what is written to women and you're a man, or you write what is written to widows and you're not a widow, or you see what is written to slaves and you're not a slave. And so that doesn't apply to me. Everything applies all the time.

The principles that guide speaking in tongues in the Corinthian assembly are the same principles that guide every gift. Sensitivity to those who are around is this just our one another group or has someone come in from the outside? Remember Paul says, if someone walks in from the outside and they hear you speaking something they don't understand, I would rather speak five words that that person can understand than a whole bunch of vocabulary laden Christian communication. If you walk into a church and you hear vocabulary that you have to have been read into and you have to have learned and written down in your notes and there are some websites for pastors that have a lexicon that explain what the terms mean because if you didn't learn them across dozens and dozens and dozens of lessons, you're not going to know.

There is a time to use shorthand. Have your eyes ever glazed over when you get in a room and there's two military men talking or military people and it's all acronyms or two ham radio operators start talking and it's all antennas and impedance and which layer of the atmosphere is reflecting what meter band and what happened last night. And the vocabulary is off-putting because you can't follow, you can't enter in, you can't grasp it.

That's what the New Testament tells us in 1 Corinthians via spiritual gifts that were

temporary in nature like tongues, the principles still apply in other areas. So read the tongues section very closely in Corinthians. Read these exhortations to Timothy and to Titus closely because they are here to guide, inform, instruct, rebuke and correct all of us.

You don't get an exemption. There is no free pass. Everything all the time.

It's life in the spiritual lane. It's everything all the time. Working of miracles, same thing.

Okay, so we're not going to raise the dead or the lame from congenital deformity are not going to stand up with perfect body parts, but the working of miracles is important. And when you read in 1 Corinthians 12, the principles that guide all of these gifts, it is an example. What does the working of a miracle in the supernatural first-generation church, what does it do? Think about its function.

A, suddenly the whole community is aware that God's presence and power are with this group. And it is an authentication that the words that are spoken there, the message that is being delivered, the focus on Jesus Christ as savior, and the word of God and the spirit of God as the essential components to live a life that pleases God and prepares us for time and eternity, attention is called to that. And it is given authentication.

This is really from God. Remember those who came to Jesus and said, no one could say what you say and do what you do if he were not from God. The man born blind in John nine, it hasn't been known since the beginning of time that a man could do such a thing.

He's obviously from God. Well, it doesn't have to be a supernatural miracle. Your peace, your stability, your joy in the face of difficulty is a miracle to the world.

People in the world say, are you on something? How can you possibly be going through this and not feel the way I would feel if I were in your shoes? Nefarious people often accuse good people of subversion and hidden motives because they know that's what they would do if they were in that position. Well, I would be taking advantage. I would be, and so you must be, and to see someone who's not, who is manifestly, obviously different because of the strengthening and the grace that is in Christ Jesus, it's a miracle.

So what do you do when someone is drawn by the presence of that miracle? Well, that's what the Corinthian letter in that section is dealing with. So tongues, interpretation of tongues, gifts of healing, but you have in Romans 12 and in 1 Corinthians 12, 28, two other gifts that are just mentioned in those two places. One is service or helps.

We talk about the gifts of helps. That's really sort of a heading for a number of different things. There are people that help in all kinds of ways and sometimes widely differing ways.

You can help with those who are in physical need. They need things that they can no

longer do themselves. You can help with presence, with fellowship, with prayer.

Helps is sort of a catch-all for a wide variety of things. Same thing with leadership or administration mentioned in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, 28. Leading or administration, there is a special enablement and gifting from God as a group grows in particular, as it takes on more challenges and has more opportunities, it needs to be organized.

It needs to have a system for delegation and responsibility and accountability and financial care and proper stewardship. And so these gifts are granted where they are needed. We've talked about tongues and the interpretation of tongues.

So if you find yourself in a group and you're necessarily using some language or referring to concepts that a new visitor can't understand, someone can interpret, someone can say either during or after the time of fellowship, well, here's what he was talking about. Oh, okay, that was just a shorthand, I didn't quite catch it. Interpretation of tongues, everything about that applies now.

There is a gift of giving mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, seven through 10. There is a gift of faith. And I think this is one of the temporary gifts.

It's mentioned along with tongues, healing and miracles. And there was the need to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might in the early days of robust persecution and Christians dying for refusing to recant or deny their faith and to encourage others to think about what to aim faith at. Here are the things we need to remember.

The doctrine of the resurrection, the doctrine that we're never tested above what we're able to bear. And again, without an existing New Testament, it is akin to prophecy, it is akin to wisdom, it is akin to teaching, but it was a special application of what do I do with those truths? And there were people, and I think there probably still are, who are gifted in turning the corner into application. Here is the truth, so what? It's a gift of faith and it is faith.

All of these gifts are designed to benefit others. It isn't, I've individually got faith that can move mountains and look at how my life is turning out so great and I'm gonna be blessed now and rewarded later. The gift of faith was designed to bless the group and to benefit the group.

All of these function in the presence of the one and others, particularly. So the gift of faith. And finally, there is a gift of mercy.

And I think this one still goes on. I think there are people that God uniquely enables and grants a sensitivity and a clarity of vision and a knowledge of how to express mercy. This is more than helps.

This is more than speaking the truth in love. Mercy is dealing with those who are reluctant to move in the direction of God because they are too occupied with their failure. They are too distracted by difficulties and they can't find the handle on the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And there are those who have the gift of mercy and they are able to connect individuals and groups with mercy. It isn't individual personal mercy. I'm just more merciful than anybody you know.

It is the ability to channel and to connect the mercy of God to people who are in particular need of that aspect. Remember we saw the greeting. Paul so often says grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what happened in this one? Verse two, grace, mercy, and peace. Timothy is in particular need of encouragement in the area not only of grace and peace, but mercy. And there were those who were and are gifted in that area.

So when you come to Paul talking to Timothy about his gift and about his opportunity, his is formal. He got the laying on of hands. The truth was delivered to him in the presence of many witnesses.

He was ordained as it were. Most of us don't get a formal group recognition and launch into the function of our gift. But when you look at Timothy, don't think I've got to do what Paul tells Timothy to do.

Think I need to be what Paul reminds Timothy to be through the enablement that is in Christ Jesus. We need to be, and our function will be like Timothy's function. It won't be the same function, but it will be enabled.

It will be blessed in the same way that Timothy's was. So these things you have heard, and notice Paul doesn't say pass these things that you have heard from me to every believer in Ephesus, so that they will be able to preach it to the world. If Paul the apostle wanted every single one of us to be an evangelical, an evangelist, and every single one of us to be a pastor and a teacher to other believers and to the world, why doesn't he tell Timothy to equip his congregation, every man, woman, and child in Ephesus in that group to do so? To whom is Timothy supposed to pass on these things that he has heard? To whom? What does it say? Look at it.

You've got to identify faithful men who have the ability to teach others. This is a very small subset of the Ephesian congregation. What does this mean for your gift? What does this mean for believers? Are we all to go forth and try to press the truth into society and into culture and into politics and onto our neighbors and extended people in our family? No.

That's the Holy Spirit's job. If the Lord Jesus is taking all those who come to him one by

one and he is healing them, your faith has made you whole, who would dare to come up and say, excuse me, Lord Jesus, could you get up and get off from what you're seated on? I'm gonna sit here and do that for you. It's the worst heresy, blasphemy, awfulest, most inconceivable thing you could think of that you would interrupt the Lord Jesus in the process of doing his work from God, right? That's what you do if you elbow the Holy Spirit aside and say, I will be the agent of ministering the truth to someone's heart.

I will be the agent of convicting of sin. That's the Holy Spirit's job. And to presume to take his place and do his job rather than waiting.

Now, we may be the agent by which he does it, but we have to be watching for him, the Holy Spirit to be at work and not to say, okay, you had me do this for you a time or two in the past. I struck the rock earlier. I'm gonna go strike this rock now.

Remember what happened when Moses stopped listening to the specific guidance of God? You struck that rock, don't strike this one. Speak to this one. Moses said, I've got this.

I know how to strike a rock. Water's gonna come out, it's gonna be great. Must we bring forth water for you from this rock? And what happens? You interpose yourself between the person and the grace which is in Christ Jesus.

The power that is in the Holy Spirit, the guidance and wisdom that is in the Word of God. And it's a subtle thing. It's tricky because we can be used of God.

We can be inspired and led by the Holy Spirit to do many wonderful things. Share the gospel, speak the truth and love, engage in helps, engage in administration, engage in connecting someone with God's mercy. Many of these functions, we're polymaths.

There's many things that we can do and often do well. But when, where, how, and for whom? That guidance comes from upstairs. And you don't do everything all the time.

That is not life in the spiritual lane, it's life in the fast lane. And that is the road that seems right, but the ends thereof are the ways of death. And you lose fruitfulness and you become an obstacle instead of an aid.

You become a master instead of a servant. We have to appeal to God. We need humility, we need prayer, we need to take a beat before we impulsively rush in where angels would literally fear to tread.

Watch and wait and remember that not every situation is the same. Not every rock is gonna crack at the blow of the rod. It's God's plan, it's God's timing.

God may be wanting to use someone else and by you constantly being present and entangling yourself in the affairs of this life, it is an impediment instead of service and

obedience. So look at this example. It applies to all of us all the time.

Timothy has to be careful to whom he commits this trust. There are times when you let someone into the inner circle and they're a wolf in sheep's clothing and they're gonna take and twist and distort and pervert. They're gonna get the exact wrong idea.

They're gonna betray confidences. They're gonna speak when they should not. They're gonna misuse information that you give them.

Many of us have had the situation of speaking something we thought was in confidence, especially when it involves a third party and suddenly it's on Facebook. I told you that in confidence. I assumed you would have the same sort of discretion and honoring the privacy of someone else that you wouldn't blab this to the world.

But no, Timothy has to be careful. You entrust this, the thing that you have heard, you entrust, you commit to faithful men. This means Timothy has to judge.

Timothy has to not judge in the forbidden sense, but he's got to evaluate. I'm not going to entrust this to just anyone. There is hidden manna reserved for some overcomers.

When the Lord Jesus returns, remember, white stone, new name, pillar in the temple, and walk with me in white, sit with me on my throne. My favorite, my great hope is that I can qualify for at least the crumbs that fall from the table of the hidden manna that the Lord Jesus is going to share, but not with everybody. To him who overcomes, I will grant to partake of the hidden manna.

Jesus doesn't just say everything to everybody all the time. How many times did he heal someone and say, tell no one, they're not ready? Think Jack Nicholson, you can't handle the truth. There are people who aren't ready.

Don't blow up their mind with something that you have spent a long time building a foundation under, and now you see something, and it converges, and God pulls a curtain to the side, and we see this wonderful vista. Not everyone is going to be able to understand it or appreciate it. It may have the exact opposite effect.

So in any area, and it goes beyond just speaking truth or revealing the word of God, that's Timothy's job, and he's got to be careful with whom, for whom, and to whom he does it. It's the same with all of us, all of our contacts. We need to be thoughtful.

We need to be careful. We need to be sensitive and prayerful. God will give us the words to speak.

God will impart to us the knowledge we need to function in our spiritual gift. It is to be a blessing to others. It is to be up-building.

Remember, edifying, the whole body edifies itself, being built up together in love. If you

can't connect love to it in some way, if beating someone down because you disagree with their politics can't be done in love, and probably can't, it probably shouldn't be done at all, but any gift, any contact we have with both one another's and neighbors and those who are outside and enemies, you could identify four distinct rings. They get fuzzier as you move outward.

The most important contact we have is one another. That's why there are over five dozen one another commands, and you have these scattering of commands about your neighbor, and you have one or two commands about your enemy, but the one another's dozens and dozens because that's our primary area of function. That's where the Holy Spirit enables and blesses our gifting and all of our words seasoned with salt.

So identify those for whom your function is going to be a benefit. Faithful men who will take what you commit to them and entrust to them, and they will be able to do what I'm asking you to do, and you can give them the same guidance I am giving you. Jesus said, as you go, make disciples, teach them the way I have taught you.

I have taught you how to approach Jews and Gentiles. I have taught you how to be careful. You have seen over three and a half years that I don't tell everybody everything all the time, and that there is a time to witness to who I am, and there are other times not to.

How many times, you think back on the miracles, how many times did Jesus silence the demons and not let them identify him as the Son of God? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. Jesus shuts him up. It's a truth.

It's a supernatural witness to truth, and Jesus zips shut the mouth of those demons, and he did it all day. They were constantly trying to impart truth, and it wasn't the right time. My time has not yet come.

That is not a truth for now. We have a different message, a different emphasis. We need to be sensitive, every one of us, in what we do every day and with whom we do it, that it's not always okay just because it's in my Bible.

It's not always okay just because I really would like to see this situation improve. We are servants of God, and we need to be led by the Spirit and sensitive to our instructions. That's what verse two tells us, and when you go to verse three, it makes perfect sense.

You therefore, it's gonna be hard, and you've got to share in the hard work of being faithful to God and being careful and Spirit-enabled and grace-empowered in what you do. It's hard. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ, there is a sense in which pastors and teachers are uniquely soldiers of Christ.

Think about this. Paul, in other cases, talks about body of Christ. There is the strong implication of the bride of Christ in Ephesians.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the church and gave himself for it. He's in the age of Israel, but he's looking ahead to the church. He's the only one that knows it, that the church is coming.

It's a mystery, and Jesus is going to reveal it to Paul after the resurrection, but he has the church in view. There's a gospel song, a bit more recent. I don't agree with everything in it, but there's a good thought in it that says, when he was on the cross, I was on his mind.

It's a little bit too personal and individual for my taste, but when he was on the cross, the church was on his mind. That's scripture. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

Well, those are corporate, but look at the soldier analogy here. Timothy, do these things, endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Think about our military.

How many, what percentage of our population is active duty military? How many Americans are soldiers, or sailors, or airmen, or Marines, or Coasties? It's a fraction, right? They have a specific job that benefits the rest of the population, but not everyone is a soldier in this sense. Now, we put on the full armor of God to engage in spiritual warfare. Are all of us engaged in spiritual warfare? Do all of us need the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, feet shod with the gospel of peace, helmet of deliverance, and so on, waist girded with truth? All of us need that.

All of us are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but principalities and powers, right? That's true of all of us. But enduring hardship as a good soldier, this is another specifically unique function of pastors and teachers, faithful men who will communicate. There is a kind of hardship that is associated with that.

It is emblematic. It is an example that applies. All of us have different kinds of hardship, but the soldier metaphor, remember, not everyone in the population is a soldier.

You endure hardship as a soldier on behalf of others so that they don't have to endure hardship. You are outward-looking in your service. You can't say, well, they're a soldier.

Let them put their own armor on, and swing their own sword, and launch their own spears, and every man for himself, we're all soldiers. No, there are those who are uniquely commissioned, uniquely enlisted in military service. And that is what Paul is appealing to here.

We'll see this in depth next time. We're gonna look at the soldier, the athlete, and the cultivator, the farmer next time. But if you wanna look ahead, and if you want to exercise the skill of gleaning these things as we would like to do for ourselves, remember, what's the pattern we have seen through 1 Timothy and Titus? Just because you're talking about widows doesn't mean the truth doesn't apply to everyone, but it is specific to widows.

If they're under 60 years of age, don't enroll them for full support. And if they are gonna be enrolled, they need to be fulfilling a function. Well, not everybody.

There are principles that guide that that don't specifically apply to everyone. Same thing here. When Paul tells Timothy, endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, he's not saying, well, everybody needs to endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

There are principles and there are exemplary truths in this Timothy example, in the same way that there are principles and exemplary truths in his function as a pastor. But you don't have to go be a pastor just because Paul tells Timothy to be one. And you don't endure hardship as a good soldier the way Timothy and the way the faithful men he's gonna entrust it to and all the ones down the road, it's gonna be unique.

And we need to distinguish between the specifics of the example and the general principles that are more universal and of which it is an example. This is what it means to be mature. You notice the difference between giving instructions to children and giving instructions to adults? Adults will understand a lot of what is unspoken and what is implied and what is assumed.

One mature person talking to another, you can say a few words and it just happens. There are those of you with whom I've done projects whether they're mechanical or automotive or constructional or all different kinds of things. And I love spending time with my brothers in fact and my brothers in Christ when we're doing something because we have enough experience.

Somebody's under there and they need something. And when they turn around, you've already got it in your hand handing it to them. You just know, it's you're in the groove, you're working as a team and a lot of what you do isn't even spoken.

You can be talking about something else and the right things are happening because you're mature, you're experienced. You can't do that with a child and you wanna kind of initiate them and you've got to say, no, it's a Phillips, not a flat blade. It's a claw hammer, not a sledgehammer.

It's a nail, not a screw. And you've got to be much more explicit. Paul here is expecting us to know that everyone is not a pastor, everyone is not an evangelist.

Certainly everyone is not an apostle and you've got to take from the principles and you've got to know the difference, the wisdom to know the difference. Paul prays that in one of his epistles, I pray that you will come to know ta deferenta. It's the same word in Greek, that you'll know the difference, that you'll understand the difference between the goodwill of God, the acceptable will of God and the perfect will of God.

Be sensitive and don't get so woodenly literal that well, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Well, that means me. This is what we'll see.

And we're gonna begin with the soldier, we're gonna move to the athlete and we're gonna finish with the farmer. And each one of these has universal principles for us, even as there are specific things that are only true of them. Athlete's not a soldier.

Farmer's not an athlete. They're different. But the reason we're given these three is to blast us out of rigid belief that everything applies all the time.

So this is a great interpretive skill, perceptive ability skill that we're developing as we go through this and we'll work on it a little more next time. But we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you that you have given to us your grace through Christ Jesus, that in it we can be strong, in it we can know how to fulfill our function, how we can operate in the specific assignment that you have given each one of us, whether it is our family, our work, our contacts with other human beings, our particular individual challenges, our identity in larger groups and with larger confederations.

We pray that as we reflect on these words of Paul to Timothy, that the Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts, help us to be mature in our approach, to be confident, to be humble as we are guided by your spirit through your word to that strength and that fruitfulness that pleases you and reflects the glory of the Lord Jesus. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.