

2Timothy 24-10-27b

Let's resume our study now in 2 Timothy, and we're finding this very practical section on how to be effective representatives of God's truth. And in many ways, you can see examples of this even in our current day. It's hard to be awake and aware in this country in the run-up to the national election without seeing examples.

Suppose there is a candidate for president and the policies, the grasp of issues, the expression of what is a priority and what is most helpful and meaningful and necessary for the country can be expressed, but if the person expressing those makes an issue of themselves, pushes it too hard, excites rancor and division in the way that it is expressed, you wish that someone could find a better way of representing the actually good policies and priorities that they espouse without injecting their person, their personality, their presentation in such a way that it detracts. And it makes it hard for people to support the candidate, even though they agree with the candidate on the issues, because the candidate has made an issue of themselves. And I only bring that up not to be political, but I think it is a good example of how important it is for us to not make an issue of ourselves when we express the policies and the priorities and the truths of God's word in conversation and in the way we live our life, to not distract and to create strife and division and to ruin the hearers, not because there's a problem with what we say or what we represent, but how we say it, how we represent it.

Think about the description that we just saw before the break. Can you imagine if political candidates would not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God will grant them repentance. And I'm going to jump ahead a little bit because this idea in verse 25, coupled with what Paul says in verse 10 of this chapter, I endure all things for the sake of the elect.

As soon as you mentioned the word elect, you have an issue with reformed theology, with Calvinism, with predestination, with the whole idea of TULIP. You remember that acronym, T-U-L-I-P, total depravity, unconditional election, that having nothing to do with any individual person, God in his inscrutable sovereignty just chooses certain people to be saved, and then uses the limited atonement, the L in TULIP, to only apply the blood of Christ to those that he has sovereignly elected. And then to bring them into the fold, he uses the I in TULIP, which is irresistible grace, to push those that he has elected into the sheepfold.

And because he has done so, the P in TULIP, perseverance, because they have been divinely moved and divinely and irresistibly called, chosen, and saved, they will then persevere. Anyone who doesn't live an upwardly mobile spiritual life, anyone who's not progressing, must not really be saved, because the saints will persevere. God is at work in them to will and to do, and so you will be able to tell the elect, because as they are

irresistibly saved, they will pretty well irresistibly progress.

And that is based on a misunderstanding of several passages, and those who hold that position will come to places like 2 Timothy 2 to support it. So in humility and with gentleness, I would like to point out that this is a misunderstanding. We spent some time in the first session this morning looking at what we do in presenting truth and what God does in the hearts of those who hear it to make it as persuasive and as meaningful and as understandable as possible, and that it is not our job to persuade.

That's why you have verse 25. People say, well, notice he says here, we'll correct those who are in opposition if God perhaps will grant them repentance. It's up to God as to whether or not they will repent.

And if God doesn't grant them repentance, then they're not elect. Paul is not enduring all things for their sake. Paul only endures for the sake of the elect.

God only works with the elect. And if you're elect, God will grant you repentance. But repentance is a gift of God.

Therefore, salvation is a gift of God. Misunderstanding Ephesians 2, 8, and 9 that says the system whereby we are saved by grace through faith is not of ourselves. That opportunity of being saved by grace through faith is a gift of God.

And there's grammatical reasons for understanding it properly that way. But they'll come here and say, see, it's God that grants repentance. What do you think about this? It seems that just a plain reading would say, well, you offered the correction and God may or may not grant them change of mind.

If God doesn't grant it, they're gonna have a hardened heart. If God hardens their heart like he did Pharaoh, they won't repent. If God grants them repentance, they will.

I can understand why someone would take it this way out of its context. What are the three rules of biblical interpretation? The three foundations on which a right understanding of a passage of scripture are based. Context, context, and context.

What is the context that we saw this morning? Remind them of these things, charge them before the Lord, not to strive about words, to no profit. It will only ruin the hearers. You present yourself by bending every effort to be approved.

Bend every effort to present yourself formally before God as an approved workman who has no need to be ashamed. We don't need to be ashamed if we are gentle, if we are humble, if we are not arguing, if we're not pushing and pressing, we're not ruining the hearers, we're not striving to no profit. That is us being approved to God.

And why do we do that? Because we recognize that it is God's Holy Spirit who will wield

the sharp sword. You remember this from the first session. God's Holy Spirit does the persuading, the convicting, the illumining, the real spiritual arguing in the right time, in the right place, bringing these words of truth to mind in a meaningful and effective way so that the hearer of these truths can change their mind.

That's what Paul is getting at in verse 25, when he says, in humility, you speak the correction. You offer the truth that they disagree with, that they don't currently espouse or embrace. You correct their misunderstanding and let God do the persuading.

And this is a short way of saying, God's Holy Spirit can work with those who are asking, seeking, knocking, someone who is receptive, someone who is open, someone who hasn't hardened their own heart. God can bring them to the point of repentance in his time and in his way, because we have not gummed up the works. We haven't made an issue of ourselves.

We haven't made it impossible for someone to embrace the truth because that would be to give in to someone who wants to win an argument. And we are naturally resistant to being pushed by someone. I would rather be invited than being commanded.

I would rather agree with someone on my own than be browbeaten and pummeled and forced by people who are full of disdain and a superiority complex. Present the issue. Let me make up my own mind.

God may grant me a change of mind if wayward, fruitless, and arrogant believers will get out of the way and let God work. Let God use his own truth in his own way and in his own time. Which is the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

That's what it means for God, perhaps, to grant repentance. God will recognize, God will bring them to a point. And when they change their own mind, God will recognize that repentance.

God can bring them, can draw them. The Lord Jesus, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself. No one can come to me unless the Father draws him.

But it doesn't mean that everyone the Father draws comes. But let God do the drawing. Let God do the convicting.

Let God do the persuading on any issue. Social, political, moral, personal, spiritual. We express the truth with our best understanding.

The other great thing is if we do it in humility and with gentleness, what if we later on discover that we didn't really have it quite right? We learn, we grow, we improve our grasp in subsequent conversations because we haven't nailed ourselves to the mast of a particular understanding. We can say, I know sometime in the past we talked about this, but actually with additional study, I think I've got an even better grasp of it. Here's what

I've learned from the word of God.

Here's what I feel the Holy Spirit has impressed on my heart. And if you don't create an iron cage of position and viewpoint and opinion because you're doing it in humility and gentleness, if your own mind changes, we need to be teachable. We don't know everything.

We share our best understanding, but as we learn and grow and improve, hopefully we haven't painted ourselves into a corner and we can't tell someone that we've got a better understanding because we've already painted the walls with the blood of our opponents on an earlier understanding. So this is God's way. This is God's exhortation.

And I am belaboring it a bit here because Paul tells Timothy, this is your job. Remind them of these things, charge them, command them, exhort them, emphasize the need to avoid arguing. Arguing doesn't promote the truth.

The Holy Spirit promotes the truth. That's what we need to understand. Therefore in verse 16, shun the world's way of arguing.

Profane, profane means earthly, human. This is what any old body could do. You don't have to be a believer to talk this way, to live this way, to argue this way.

Shun it, treat it like something that smells bad and needs to be put in a plastic bag and taken out to the alley. Separate from it. Don't associate with it.

Touch not the unclean thing. Hate the garment spotted by the flesh. Shun the world's way of arguing.

If you find yourself debating just like any two talking heads on television, that is not God's way. Shun profane and idle babblings. The word for babblings here means it just kind of bubbles up.

It's like the chatter of little children. It's just conversation of the moment. It's a lot of silliness.

Babbling, they will increase to more ungodliness. When you go down that road, you get enmeshed in it. It's touching the tar baby.

You're just going to get more and more entangled in human, earthly, mundane, short-term issues. Think about that in contrast to the theme here. What did we start out talking about this morning? With considering the implications of resurrection.

What's more important? The resurrection forces us to recognize eternal value, redeeming the time. Do I want to just talk sports? Do I just want to talk current events? Do I just want to speculate about what is and isn't happening in some far off corner of the world? Or do I want to represent things that are an issue of eternal weight? Nothing

wrong with casual conversation, but to invest in it, to begin to argue about it, to get disgruntled, to lose your joy, to lose your peace and lose your patience. Remember the fruit of the spirit.

You can go down the list and see what gets lost as the heat in a conversation begins to rise. Love, I'm not loving you when I'm impatient with you and I'm disgusted with you and your embrace of this, that or the other. My joy evaporates.

I don't enjoy this attack that you're launching against me and I feel that I must defend and respond. Peace, I don't have peace. I'm going to think about this conversation for hours after it's over because I wish I had said.

You know, we always come back with a snappy reply too late to use it. I should have said, I should have pointed out, I should have quoted, I should have done, and we go back and we do forensic surgery on the corpse of a conversation. We do a autopsy on it and see, well, where could I have done better? How could we have saved the patient? There's no fruit, no purpose.

Love, joy, peace, patience, long suffering gets lost. We become very impatient in defending what we believe is a righteous point of view. So, shun profane and idle babblings.

They will only increase to more ungodliness. Look at this, you are allowing profane and idle babblings and by opposing it instead of shunning it, you are actually spreading it. You're making it worse by not getting away from it, by not disconnecting, by not separating.

Notice, he says, avoid, shun profane and idle babblings because if you don't, they will increase to more ungodliness and their message will spread like gangrene. You become an accessory after the fact, you make it worse, you skyline it, you give it an importance it wouldn't otherwise have by your opposition. People that release movies that aren't very good in quality, they will try to include something controversial because they want people to react and say, we're going to boycott this.

Everybody, and what are they doing? They're popularizing, they're bringing this movie out and making it notorious and more people know about it than any positive advertising campaign could have possibly achieved. And by sparking opposition, you raise the visibility of a thing instead of avoiding it, let it die of its own weight. Let it exist in an unvisited corner somewhere, don't grant it an importance it does not deserve.

Avoid idle babblings, profane talk, shun it, get away from it, don't cause it to increase. Hymenaeus and Philetus, they stray concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection has already passed. Notice what Paul says here.

Hymenaeus and Philetus are putting out a false teaching about the resurrection and we'll

talk about what the nature of it is here in just a moment. But interestingly, Timothy has the job of correct teaching. He's a pastor, he's the authority in the church when it comes to presenting the apostolic witness to the word of Christ, the word of the Lord, the word of God the Father, he is the designated messenger.

So is he to just allow this to go unaddressed? Not at all. How many times have we seen correct rebuke and instruct with all authority, but it's not, will he represent the truth, but how? Timothy counters, Timothy corrects, Timothy reminds people of the truth. He doesn't argue with Hymenaeus and Philetus.

He doesn't say, you know, we've got this false resurrection teaching. I'm gonna have a special night in Ephesus. We're gonna invite everyone down to the church.

I'm gonna put Hymenaeus and Philetus up here and we're going to debate. And I will cut the rug out from under their false arguments. The way to counter falsehood, untruth, profane and idle babblings is not to engage with it directly.

It is simply to present the truth. The truth will be effective for those who are of the truth, who love the truth, who recognize it, who embrace it. Just speak the truth.

You don't have to squash the falsehood. You can't anyway. If you try to squash it, it's just gonna squish out from under your foot and make things worse.

You find this out when you have an insect infestation. Those of us that have lived in humble circumstances have, you know, you can end up with roaches, especially in an apartment where you can keep your place spotless, but you share walls with, you know, four, six, eight, other individuals who don't. And so roaches are coming through and they're following the plumbing and they're coming through the cracks and they're coming out from behind the baseboards and the older the apartment complex, the worse it is.

So what is the best way to get rid of roaches? I, for a while, would sit on one side of the room on my couch, I would see roaches running up the wall and I perfected, you've seen people that throw axes. I could throw my tennis shoe in such a way that the heel would squash the roach. And I really perfected the rotation.

You know, you get one revolution and the heel hits them. And I could, but this doesn't solve the problem. In fact, it makes a mess.

If you've ever squashed roaches, that's an ugly thing to clean off of light colored painted walls. And as much fun as that was to, you know, get a little revenge on them, it really wasn't effective. It did nothing to stanch the flow.

You have to do things a different way and directly confronting and trying to argue people out of error is not the calling. You speak the truth. A servant of the Lord, verse 24, don't

quarrel.

Gently and humbly present the truth and let the truth be the fire. I love that verse in Jeremiah where God says, is not my word like a fire and like a hammer that breaks the rocks in pieces? But we don't wield the hammer in the same way that we don't wield the sword. The Holy Spirit swings that hammer.

The Holy Spirit directs and invokes that sword in exactly the right way, surgically, effectively. Not our job. So these say that the resurrection has already passed.

Here's an interesting idea. Is there a past resurrection? What does Paul say about this? Doesn't he say, if we have died with Christ, why should we any longer be subject to the elemental forces of the world? We died with Christ. We are raised with Christ.

This is pictured in baptism, dying to the old man. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away.

All things are become new. So have we, in fact, already died? And have we, in fact, already been raised in Christ in the spiritual sense? Yes. So you take someone like Hymenaeus and Philetus who take a genuine truth that there is a resurrection that is passed.

When we expressed our faith in Jesus Christ, we were identified with him in his death and we are identified with him in his resurrected life. And we are already living an eternal life. There is a past resurrection that already happened.

If you're a believer, you have been raised with Christ in that sense. But to say that that is the only resurrection and that there is not a future bodily resurrection and those two are related and they reflect truths and insights on each other, our being raised with Christ and being in him and sharing so many potentials, that will be fleshed out and will be expressed in much more material and concrete ways at our resurrection and regathering with him. But to misunderstand that will destroy the faith of some.

How would misunderstanding the resurrection destroy faith? That's what he says here in verse 18. They say the resurrection is already passed and they overthrow the faith of some. Let me ask you this.

When you think about your faith, your trust, your confidence, your belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, your claim on him as savior, as redeemer, as head of the body, does resurrection come to your mind? When you think about, somebody says, well, I'm a Christian, do you believe in Jesus? Are you saved? Do you think, of course I am because I believe in the resurrection. In other words, how could distorting, misrepresenting and perverting truth about the resurrection overthrow someone's faith? What could someone convince you of regarding resurrection that would overthrow your Christian faith? What would it be? I'll give you a clue. It's in these men's names.

Anytime scripture names somebody and you can go through the divine sovereignty that causes a Greek couple to look down at a newborn infant and decide to name them Hymenaeus or Philetus. Hymenaeus basically is a reference, the name to a wedding song. It's a celebration of love.

Philetus is a kiss. It's an expression of love. Philos, love, greet one another with a holy kiss.

Hymenaeus and Philetus, both of their names are connected with and imply the idea of love and the celebration of happy relationship in love. So if they are saying the resurrection has already passed and they are basically named as a hug and a kiss, a wedding song and an expression of affection. These are upbeat, positive expressions similar to you won't die if you eat the fruit.

That's a misunderstanding you have. Let me correct your understanding of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What you have been told will happen if you partake of this fruit isn't true.

Here's the real facts about this fruit. You will be like gods. This is a good thing.

The serpent convinced Eve to eat the fruit by affirming positivity. You will ascend, you will rise, you will be better than you are. This is desirable to make you wise.

This is good to look upon. And Eve bit on the argument before she bit on the fruit. That's what Hymenaeus and Philetus are doing.

And you look at the modern day where distorted and perverted ideas of what it is to be a Christian and what it is to be a believer that is on the narrow road headed for the straight gate. They are couched and they are presented in upbeat terms of music, wedding song, happiness, praise songs, and affection. Join our group.

We're a happy bunch. We don't condemn anyone. We're a big tent.

We're open to everyone. We don't condemn anyone. Look at Jesus who accepted the prostitutes and quote unquote, partied with sinners.

We're the joyful ones. We're the happy ones. We're the positive ones.

As we present to you this falsehood that devastates and overthrows actual faith. You cannot judge something based on who is presenting it. The content has to be judged on its fidelity to the word of God.

Does it express the word of God? Not how nice is the person saying it? How persuasive is the person? There's never been anybody more persuasive than the serpent coiled around the branches. Wonderfully persuasive. And with an upbeat message.

Let me give you a path to self-improvement. Let me help you become more than you are. Hymenaeus, Philetus, let's sing a wedding song.

Let's have a quick kiss on the lips. These guys are sweetness and light and they are overthrowing the faith of those who are persuaded by them. It is not the attributes of the messenger, good or bad.

You can learn wonderful truth from people that are kind of off-putting. And you can learn corrupting, perverting, overthrowing misconception and falsehood from people who are just the nicest ones you could ever hope to meet. They're fun to listen to.

They've got personality. They've got a sense of humor. They're self-deprecating.

They're aw shucks. They dress informally. They maintain an informal atmosphere and we're just all good people.

We're, you know, don't we have a joyful time and we're just happy in the Lord. And they are overthrowing the faith of some. Let's sit down for a beer.

Yeah, yeah, let's all have a beer. So we have to measure by what the Holy Spirit convicts us of and teaches us. So otherwise we'll stray concerning the truth.

But verse 19, the solid foundation of God stands having this seal. In the face of those that have strayed from the truth and are overthrowing faith of some, there is a solid foundation from God. Remember in Hebrews when it says that Abraham was dwelling in tents because he was looking for a city whose founder.

And if you look at that, it says a city with foundations whose builder and maker is God. It specifically says, I had to go back and look at this because I've misquoted it slightly. Abraham dwelt in tents because he was looking for a city with foundations whose maker and builder is God.

A city with foundations. You can have a foundation and not yet have the building. I could tell you a story about that.

Just a few miles from here, my grandpa had poured a foundation, but he never built the house on top of it. That's where I got my jukebox and some other things that were stored down in there in a few inches of rainwater. But a foundation doesn't exist as a permanent and final structure.

It is the promise of something that will be built on top. And eventually someone bought the property and they did build a beautiful home on that foundation. Abraham looked for a city with foundations whose maker and builder is God.

The foundation, the solid foundation of God has this seal. This word solid is very interesting. You can get a Strong's and look it up.

Remember in Hebrews when it says, at such time as you should be teachers, you have need that one teach you again, the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. You need milk and not solid food. The word solid food is this word.

Solid food is your solid foundation. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. He is the foundation.

And he said, I am the truth. I am the way, I am the life. I am the truth.

The foundation of God is solid and it is sealed. There is a sign. There is a permanent mark.

Seals have different purposes, but they were a legal protection. They established ownership of that which was built in relation to property. It's the owner's mark.

It's like the brand on cattle. It's like the sign over the gate at a ranch. This is mine.

So this solid foundation, when you look at what is being overthrown, the previous context is the faith of some is being overthrown by bad teaching about the resurrection, a false view. But the solid foundation of God has this seal. If you're not going to be overthrown, you say, well, how do I know? Somebody could be persuasive.

I could be misled. I could be deceived. Despite all of these warnings, let no one deceive you.

I'm worried that I might listen to the wrong teacher. I might draw the wrong conclusion. I might be led down a path by somebody with great swelling words and flowery oratory or some other means by which I end up like Eve and I am deceived and I do the wrong thing.

Paul says, there are these false teachers and the faith of some is overthrown, but you remember the foundation, your foundation. You are going to build on that foundation with gold and silver and precious stones, not wood, hay and stubble. You know where these passages are.

Men should be careful on how they build on that foundation, but the foundation is immovable. God put in the foundation. We build on the foundation and we can build in good ways or bad ways, but the foundation of God stands having this seal.

The Lord knows those who are his. You can see how the Calvinist would come in and say, see, God's going to sovereignly elect those that he knows are his. And then he's going to grant them repentance later down.

That's not what this says at all. The Lord knows those who are his. Remember in the context, who is it that we worry about? Are we going along with people because they are persuasive or are we endeavoring to present ourselves formally to God as approved

workmen? If my goal, if my heart desire is to be pleasing in God's sight and to be approved before him when I present myself as a workman, what does a workman do? Laying a straight course of bricks? Anybody can tell you, you don't just go out here on soft dirt and start laying bricks.

What do bricks get laid on? What are you going to do with the word of truth? You're going to lay it on the foundation. So to be an approved workman, worry about what God thinks. Endeavor and bend every effort to present yourself approved to God as you rightly handle, as you lay a course of bricks in the word of truth on the foundation that the Lord knows you belong to him.

You worry about what he thinks. You remember that he knows us. We're not going to be at the door and the Lord Jesus looking back saying, I never knew you.

The Lord knows us when we are faithful and obedient and we are asking and seeking and knocking. We will make mistakes. We will err and come short again and again, but the Lord knows our heart.

He knows that we love him. He knows that we want to present ourselves pleasing in his sight and that's the foundation. So as I endeavor to understand scripture rightly and apply it in my life, I know that God knows I belong to him.

God knows my heart and I am not ashamed to come before God and to tell him I make many mistakes. I fail, I need your grace. I need Psalm 51.

I need 1 John 1, 9 all the time. But at the same time, my failures are not overthrowing my faith. The arguments and the observations and the interpretations of other people are not overthrowing my faith.

I am laying my bricks on the solid foundation that God knows I belong to him. And whatever else may happen, if we suffer, if we encounter discouraging circumstances, if we are tested, if we are rocked by events in our world, go back to the foundation. God knows I belong to him and he knows that I want to present myself approved to him.

That's the foundation that my life is built on. And whatever these other slings and arrows of outrageous fortune may bring, I know that God knows I belong to him and he will never suffer the righteous to be moved. He is not going to let me be tested above what I'm able to bear.

He is not going to let the enemy prevail. He's not going to let me be deceived by persuasive swelling words and idle babbling and profane myths and all the rest of it. God knows I belong to him.

He is looking out for me. He is my father and whatever's happening in my life, I can take it, I can make it because I am on that solid foundation. My life is founded on the rock and

that rock is Christ.

And God knows that's where I am. That's the seal on the foundation. And because of that, what is my job? When I recognize that God knows me and I know that I belong to him, what's my part? Look at the second part of the seal.

Let everyone who names the name of the Lord, scratch out Christ. The text is, let everyone who names the name of the Lord. What's my part? Depart from iniquity.

Not just my personal iniquity, stop sinning, shun idle, profane talk. Depart from argumentation and strife and ruinous conversation. I need to depart from that which is iniquitous.

I'm on the foundation. I'm laying a course of bricks in the word of God on that foundation. And I'm gonna depart from anything that doesn't fit that description.

I'm gonna turn off my TV, if that's the problem. I'm going to abandon social media, if that's the problem. I am going to soak my heart and my soul in the word of God.

That's my solid foundation. And my hope of the resurrection, that by doing this in my life on a daily basis, has implications for the future resurrection that has not yet taken place. I have been raised in Christ spiritually.

I am going to be raised in Christ personally, physically, individually, and with the rest of the church and with all of my God-fearing loved ones. And we are going to be living in a genuine existential universe, the kingdom of the son, kingdom of the father, and my dedication to building on the foundation and departing from iniquity is fueled by the motivation of the hope of resurrection. If Christ is not raised, we're not gonna be raised.

We're yet in our sins. And we are of all men, most miserable, but Christ has been raised and we will be raised. Read 1 Corinthians 15.

If you get down in the dumps, sorrow, depression, discouragement, the affliction, it just starts being too much to bear. Read 1 Corinthians 15. Resurrection is central.

Those who preach against the resurrection are overthrowing people's faith who listen to them. Don't listen to it. Build on the solid foundation.

God knows we belong to him. And just like Abraham, Abraham died. He's been sleeping in the dust for century upon century, but he was waiting for a city with foundations whose maker and builder is God.

And we do the same. That's the importance of resurrection. Remember, Paul says I delivered to you as a first importance.

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that he was buried and that he

rose again the third day according to the scriptures. This is the gospel. There is no gospel apart from resurrection.

Anyone who screws it up is overthrowing faith for those who listen. Well, these are important truths and so practical. This gets us through our day.

This guides us in our conversations, in our priorities, in our interactions, in how we invest our time, what we stay away from. I'm not going to listen to all of this talking head argumentation about this, that, and the other. That doesn't contribute to my future in the resurrection.

Is anybody going to be rehashing the 2024 election in the kingdom of the sun? No. No. Whoever gets elected doesn't matter in the eternal perspective.

What matters is how am I living today? Am I building on the solid foundation or am I letting myself be deflected and distracted and worried about whether somebody thinks I know what I'm talking about or not in my beliefs? Shun it, separate from it, avoid it. It is fruitless. It leads to ungodliness.

It leads to ruin. Who wants ruin? I want to build. I don't want to ruin.

I want to advance. I don't want to retreat. That's the message here in 2 Timothy 2, where we will resume next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for the divine power that you have allocated in your word to us as we reflect on it, as in the hands of the Holy Spirit, we are built up and edified in it and through it, both individually and together as a group. We pray that as we consider the implications and the applications of these truths in our own personal lives, that God the Holy Spirit will give us clarity, give us wisdom and insight, that we can be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus and be thoroughly furnished for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.