

2Timothy 24-01-12b

We are looking at 2nd Timothy chapter 4 verse 1, where Paul turns the corner into the application proper in this letter to Timothy, having talked about the fact that there is opposition, the importance of reminding people of the truth. You go all the way back to chapter 2 verse 14, where there is both promise and a sober reminder in chapter 2 verses 11 through 13. It is a faithful saying.

If we share dying, we shall also share living. If we endure, we will share reigning. If we deny, he will deny us.

If we are faithless, he remains faithful. He cannot deny himself. You recall the widespread misunderstanding of that last verse.

In verse 13, people take that as a source of comfort. In verse 12, if we deny him, he will deny us. We think, well, he is just going to deny the maximum blessings.

We will just get the intermediate package or the basic package of blessings. We just won't get the super overcomer blessings. Maybe we won't be a pillar in the temple or something, but that isn't what it says at all.

If we deny him, he will deny us. The us is the brethren. This isn't us as human beings.

This is us as believers. There are believers, we've seen this many times in many passages, who are going to be in the darkness which is outside during the wedding feast put on by the king for his son and his son's bride, in which the five wise virgins enter and celebrate. But the foolish virgins, they are virgins just like the other five, but they are not allowed in.

The one who comes in without a wedding garment. You remember that story. The wedding garment was supplied by the people putting on the party.

In this case, the king is putting on the party for his son. There is a changing room full of wedding garments supplied by the king. But a man goes into the feast and is mingling, and he wasn't interested in putting on the king's garment.

He thought his own clothes would suffice. This is an expensive robe woven from the finest silks from the orient, and I've got bejewelment and decoration, and this is a fine robe that I've got on. And the king comes over and says, friend, where is the garment I supplied? And he has no answer, because he left it in the changing room and didn't think it was important to put it on.

He thought his standards were sufficient. His robes were good enough. What happens to him? He is bound hand and foot and cast out into the darkness which is outside.

And he is going to weep, and he is going to wail, and he is going to gnash his teeth. And guess what? He is not an unbeliever. The rest of the dead live not until the thousand years are

complete, and they are awakened for the great white throne judgment after the wedding feast, after the millennial kingdom, at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ on the throne of David.

This is a believer, and it ought to sober us, and it ought to warn us that a mistaken form of godliness that denies the power of the robe of righteousness that only God can supply, and that we have to humbly accept if we want to walk with him. Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God. That's an Old Testament passage, but it is an ever-present truth from Adam and Eve until now.

To be with God requires his righteousness. Why were Adam and Eve, who manifestly believed in God, expelled from the garden? They lost their clothing of light, and there had to be a temporary covering made by sacrificing an animal and taking its covering and making clothing of skins, fig leaves, completely inadequate. God sacrificed animals and took their skins and clothed Adam and Eve, but that clothing was insufficient to dwell in the presence of God.

It was so in the past, it will be so in the future, and our notions of what constitutes a celebratory wedding feast robe are inadequate. It has to be the robe supplied by the king. So, verse 14 of chapter 2 of 2 Timothy, remind them of these things.

Remember in verse 13, what are these things? Verse 12, if we deny him, he will deny us. Israel is pictured as entering the millennial kingdom by passing under the rod, and not all of the sheep enter. Many of them, the rod descends and nudges them aside and guides them away from the entrance to the millennial kingdom.

They do not qualify. They are not pure. They have not washed and made themselves white in the blood of the Lamb.

They will be disqualified. Jesus told the Pharisees, you are going to see people coming from all four corners of the compass to sit down in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and you yourselves thrust out. Not because they are unbelievers, they would not see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sitting down in the kingdom if they sleep in the dust of the earth until the great white throne.

These are men who, like Paul says, when I was a Pharisee sitting at the feet of Gamaliel hounding Christians because I thought they were reprobates and blasphemers, I had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Paul did what he did. Paul persecuted Christians as a Pharisee because he thought he was serving God.

He had his own idea of what pleased God, and these Christians are not it. They are a blight and a perversion and a pollution on Jewish faith. They must be eliminated.

I will be God's means of purging Israel of this horrific cult. And he hounded them into prison and worse. He was leaving Jerusalem headed for Damascus to track some down over there.

We will not just get them in our country. I will go international with my crusade. Damascus is not in Israel, is it? Damascus is Syria to this day.

Paul is leaving Israel to persecute people he thinks are disrupting godly faith because he's got his own idea of what is right, and he's got scripture to support it. Jesus has to confront him on the road out of Israel and say, stop. There is a part of your conscience that has been pricking you about this.

You've been kicking against the goads. My father in heaven has been trying to communicate with you through his word, and you have not been listening because you are willful. You stood and held the coats while they stoned Stephen, God's witness to death.

You stood there consenting, helping out the perpetrators. You didn't throw the rocks yourself. You didn't want to get your hands dirty.

You just helped those who did. You ran the hat check booth. And Paul grieved about that for the rest of his life, called himself the chief of sinners.

He said, the only reason I can even testify and do this job is I am an example of the manifold grace of God who can cleanse and use a sinner even such as me, but it has to be on God's terms. So, if we are faithless, chapter 2 verse 13 of our letter, he remains faithful. Now, if we deny him, he will deny us.

If we are faithless, he remains faithful. He cannot deny himself. If we are faithless, what happens? To walk with God, what do we have to be? Humble.

To be in God's presence, what do we have to be? Cleansed and purified. If we are faithless, are we cleansed, purified and humble? No. We are not qualified for God's presence.

We are not qualified for our prayers to be carried into the throne room. If we are faithless, he remains faithful. Faithful to what? The assumption always is, well, he'll remain faithful to me.

Even if I'm faithless, he loves me. I'm a wayward black sheep. I can do all kinds of wrong and it's not a big deal because he's going to remain faithful.

Sorry, no. God has stated his conditions. God has stated the opportunities and the grace that is available when we respond, when we repent, when we obey, when we are humble enough to change our minds and change our ways.

But if we are faithless and don't do that, he's going to be faithful. We've made a commitment to Christ. We've been like Israel at the foot of Sinai.

All that the Lord has said we will do and then we don't. We're faithless. What happened to Israel who pledged fealty and covenant relationship to God at Mount Sinai but then became faithless? What happened to them over the next 40 years? They all dropped in the wilderness except Caleb and Joshua.

Why? Because God was faithful to the covenant. And remember there's Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. There is blessing and cursing.

And when Israel was faithless, God remained faithful and he had promised them, I promise you that if you are faithless, you will not enter the land. They were faithless and they did not enter the land. Two men were faithful, Caleb and Joshua.

And God was faithful and they went into the land and lived for many years thereafter. If we are faithless, he's going to be faithful. You can take the promises of judgment to the bank because God cannot deny himself.

God has magnified his word above his name and he's not going to go back on it. And thank the Lord because when he promises us salvation and eternal life, he cannot deny that promise either. And however much we malfunction, if we are born again, we are in his family.

And even if we are living under the pig trough, we're still his son or his daughter. He cannot deny himself. But if we are faithless, he is going to be faithful to all of the things he has said about his dealings with the faithless.

And there is a denial of access. There is a denial of hearing prayers. There is a denial of blessing.

There is a denial of opportunity. There is a denial of future dwelling in the kingdom of the son or the kingdom of the father. You will be out on the horizon waiting for the creaky wooden wagon to come with the healing leaves of the tree of life.

Far from the city. Far from the lamb who is the light. Because God cannot deny himself.

He is going to be faithful. This is why in chapter 4, Paul says, Timothy, you have got to make believers aware of what the word of God says. It is vital.

It is essential. I charge you before God, before the angels, before the Lord Jesus Christ and the coming judgment and the coming kingdom. Remember when Jesus warned the Pharisees, be careful how you swear.

Don't swear by the altar or the gold on the altar, the temple or any of these things related to God, God or his throne. Let your yea be yea and your nay be nay. Paul here invokes the most powerful realities there are.

I charge you before God, God the father, God in heaven. And I charge you before the Lord Jesus Christ who is delegated the authority to judge by God himself. Remember Jesus said right before he left, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

Part of that authority is judgment. The father is not going to judge, the son is going to judge. Both the living and the dead, those who are alive unto the coming of the Lord and those who are asleep.

Whether it is at the judgment seat of Christ for believers or the great white throne for unbelievers. By the way, I was looking at that, something I don't know if I've ever registered before and we did Revelation chapter 20. When you look at the great white throne judgment, notice this judgment.

Who is judged at this judgment in 4.1 of 2 Timothy? Who is judged? You can say it out loud. Who are the recipients of this judgment? The living and the dead, right? The living and the dead. Go to Revelation 20 and read who is judged at the great white throne.

The dead. Only the dead are judged at the great white throne. The sea gives up the dead.

The grave gives up the dead. Death and Hades give up the dead that are in them and they stand and they are judged by what is written in the books. It doesn't say anywhere that living people have somehow survived the millennial kingdom and then go to the great white throne.

Everyone is dead at the great white throne. Everyone at the great white throne has to be raised from the dust. Why? All unbelievers are dead or are killed.

Any remaining unbelievers that survived the tribulation are slain at the coming of the Lord Jesus, Armageddon and so on. The millennial kingdom begins with all believers and with children who have not yet grown up to make their decision. How can you start the millennial kingdom with only believers and at the end have the believers in the holy city surrounded by unbelievers led by the devil himself? Children.

Where do those children come from? You know my thoughts on this. I think that those who have died before the ability to make a responsible decision about the Lord will come back. The Lord Jesus is pictured in the Old Testament as coming back.

His reward is with him and the lambs are in his arms. How can children play at the snake den and have no fear of wolves and bears in the millennial kingdom if there are no children? There has to be children and those children if they were Canaanite babies and slain by Joshua and all the horror and that can't be the scriptures. God would never tell his people to kill babies and yet he did.

And you say, well, I refuse to believe that's in the Bible. I'm going to come up with my Thomas Jefferson version of the Bible and Joshua killing the Canaanite babies is not in it. I refuse to believe that's God.

Well, that is not humbly walking with your God. And if you would study and think, I'm talking to these abstraction people out here and we read about them all the time. Elizabeth and I and Patty have read several books by people who discount the book of Joshua and say that's not scripture.

That was people improperly trying to figure God out and writing their thoughts about God down. Kind of like they do the book of Ecclesiastes. Well, this is Solomon and his human

thinking and his sinfulness.

Sorry, no. You're underestimating the word of God. Why did God send Israel in to slay these Canaanite babies, among others, who were destined to be sacrificed to Molech or to grow up in an insanely pagan, godless culture? Because, in my view, when they come back, instead of growing up in Canaan, in an idolatrous, child-sacrificing, perverse, child-molesting, child-enslaving, child-abusing culture, such as they were taken out of, in mercy, they weren't tortured by the Israelites.

They were quickly dispatched by the sword. They come back. They never had a chance.

That generation of Canaanites had a chance to believe in God, Allah, Rahab, the harlot and her family and others who heard of the God of Israel and responded in faith and became believers. These little babies would never get that chance. But they will, when they come back in the Millennial Kingdom as children.

Now, what environment are they going to grow up in? And if they make the same decision as their Canaanite parents did in the days of Joshua, what's going to happen? They will bide their time. They will chafe and abrade under the rod of iron. But they'll behave, most of them.

They'll get through, most of them, until God releases Satan out of the bottomless pit and he will draw these dissatisfied, God-rejecting people. It isn't a matter of disbelief. The demons believe and tremble.

That doesn't make them saved. These people believe, but like the demons, they reject. I want no part of this God.

I disagree with his standards of righteousness and I prefer to dismiss those and substitute my own. When the devil is released, why does God keep him in the bottomless pit instead of throwing him in the lake of fire at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom? Because he is going to be the catalyst. And he will activate these sleeper agents that have been slowly growing and abiding and chafing and quietly simmering in rebellion against God.

When he's released, they are going to flock to him. And there's going to be so many of them. This is the Gog Magog rebellion in Revelation.

And they will surround the camp of the saints and this is Satan's last stand. He is going to conquer the people of God and vindicate his right to have an alternate society that doesn't connect to God. And they will all be slain.

Fire will issue forth and every single one of them is going to be incinerated so that, in Revelation chapter 20, they have to be brought back from death and the grave and Hades and the sea to stand at the great white throne of judgment. And try to broker their unwilling obedience enforced by the rod of iron, those that are Millennial unbelievers. It will be insufficient.

Their name is not in the book of life. And they will be cast into the lake of fire along with the devil and his angels for whom it was originally prepared. Why did Satan rebel against God? Was God oppressing him, abusing him, inflicting hardship on him? What is the sin of Satan? I will raise my throne above the stars of God, the other angels.

I will be God to them. I will be like the Most High. I will dictate what is right and what is wrong myself.

Why is God's way the only way? Why can't my way be a good way and a right way? And human history is the demonstration of God giving over entire continents and populations of people for centuries and millennia to Satan, the God of this world, to try to operate in a godless way. They are ignorant. The times of ignorance that Paul talks about in Acts.

When he's at Mars Hill talking about the altar to the unknown God. And he said, in times past when men were worshipping gods of gold and silver and stone, God overlooked that ignorance. But now he calls, because they were an object lesson.

God knew they had no interest in him. He said, I'll go ahead and make them. I'll bring them into the world.

I hate to do it because they're just going to be destined for the lake of fire. But for Satan to prove his point, God made them. He said, I'll give you endless populations of people who think you're the greatest.

That your way is a better way. You show how you're going to have a beneficial, productive, righteous, just kingdom that isn't connected to the life and the power of God. And Satan has been trying from the day that Cain went to the land of Nod until now to architect a better society.

And there are people who are jumping on board that train and trying to build a better world. And we will build the peaceable kingdom ourselves. And it never works because it cannot apart from God.

Alienated from the life of God is a recipe for inherent and un-overcome-able evil. You can't get away from it. Well, I digress.

Timothy is charged with preaching the Word. It is alive. Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh that dwelt among us.

The Word of God is the power of God. It is the Son of God. It is the way to God.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Any version of Christianity that departs from Biblical truth, Old Testament and New, when Paul says, all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable, he's talking about the Old Testament Scriptures. That means Joshua slaying the Canaanites, God drowning the population of the earth except for eight souls.

That's the Word of God. And it is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction. Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, every part of the inspired Scripture is life-giving.

It is the way. It is the Word. And in the hands of the Holy Spirit, it transforms us and grants us eternal life.

This means that the presentation side, making the Word available, making it clear, making it pertinent, is the job of guys like Timothy and Titus. And we've seen this in the pastoral epistles. I charge you because of these truths.

Perilous times are coming. People are going to be led astray. They will be deceived.

They will move in ways that need correction and they don't get correction. Why? Because the witness and the testimony of the truth that is supposed to be embodied in believers isn't shining, isn't making an impact. It's been compromised.

It's been watered down. It's been ameliorated. It's been admixed with other things.

There's truth in there, but how many particles of fertilizer would put you off a meal or a beverage? How much contamination does it take before it doesn't matter how much good stuff is in there? You know, waiter, there's a fly in my soup. Well, you spoiled the soup. The whole bowl of soup goes out because of that corruption.

And for believers to corrupt any part of the Word of God in Word, in action, in behavior, neutralizes the Word as a witness to those who desperately need it in perilous times. So, I charge you, preach the Word, verse 2. Be ready, whether it seems like the right time or not, in season or out of season. This is going to entail a response.

If you go to the wilderness and shout at the rocks, you can be as faithful as you want to preach the Word on any and all occasions, and you can preach with conviction and with correction and with exhortation and with patience and with teaching. But, ideally, there will be response. There will be responsive people who will hear and heed.

We want to look at that real quickly. Turn with me forward, past Titus and Philemon to Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 13.

You can see toward the end of that chapter, he says in verse 7, Remember those who rule over you who have spoken the Word of God to you. Do you see the connection? Timothy is charged with being a faithful, persistent, and in season and out of season communicator. What should the recipients be and do? Remember those who rule over you.

And this is very interesting because it doesn't say what it looks like, it says. Remember those who have the rule over you. Remember here is a word that means to listen to.

This is to remember. You know the word mnemonic? I have a mnemonic that helps me

remember the steps for a thing or the order of a thing. There's a mnemonic for navigation aids.

There's a mnemonic for remembering the color code on transistors and resistors and things. Well, mnemonic comes from mnemonio. It starts with M-N.

The M is pretty much silent. So mnemonio. And this is where we get the word mnemonic.

It means remember. And this is to remember what they say. Not just remember their name or what they look like, but remember those.

And then it says who rule over you. And we get the word hegemony from this. This is hegeomi.

And a hegemony is these that have a government or an authority. But it means to look out for someone, to be of benefit, to take responsibility for someone. And in the New Testament, it is used for communicating with people.

And the authority is not in the communicator. It is in what is communicated. We don't do a thing because the pastor said it or even the prophet said it.

It would be a terrible thing in Israel in the Old Testament days if people said, well, we need to do that because Ezekiel said so or Haggai said so or Daniel said so. These men are communicators of what God entrusts to their care. And so remember those who are working for your benefit.

They are like shepherds. And to remember the shepherd isn't to celebrate the shepherd or to pay attention to his likeness or to heed his voice. He is performing actions that are beneficial to the sheep.

And you want to remember to follow the guidance. If the rod comes out to guide you away from a cliff edge, heed the rod. And so this is very impersonal.

It says, remember those who rule over you as though there's some sort of personal loyalty involved. But notice, what is the nature of this hegemony or function? They have been entrusted with leadership. And the best translation of hegeomai here is to lead.

Remember those who lead you like a shepherd. They're trying to take you to the green pastures. They're trying to put you next to the still waters.

So remember that that is their function and follow where they lead. Not because of who and what they are, but where they are taking you. The shepherd works for the owner of the sheep.

And he is working for the health, vitality and fruitfulness of the flock by ensuring that they are led in the right direction. So remember those who lead you. Please cross out rule over.

Leadership is an invitation to follow, not a mandate. The best leadership inspires people to follow, helps people understand why it is important to follow. It is not the swinging of a

hammer and the invocation of authority.

So pay attention to those who lead you is my translation of this phrase. What kind of leadership do they exert? They have spoken the word of God to you. How do they lead? They speak the word of God.

That's the nature. That's the implementation of the leadership. They speak the word of God and you follow because you're a follower of the word, not a follower of this particular leader.

Pay attention to those who lead you who have spoken the word of God to you. That's the reason to follow them. That's the nature of their leadership.

Whose faith follow. This is mimeo mai. You know, there is a mime, someone who imitates.

The word imitate itself comes from this mimeo. Whose faith imitate. This is not following leadership.

This is seeing an example of faithfulness and deciding to do the same. Any number of military awards and decorations say that this individual has acted in keeping with the highest traditions of the service and have set an example worthy of emulation. It doesn't make you an abject follower of someone who wins a silver star or a bronze star or a medal of honor.

But their example of dedication and selfless purpose to accomplish an objective is worthy of emulation. So whose faithfulness emulate. These leaders are faithful under hardship like Timothy.

They encounter opposition and contradiction and people who despise and mock and deride and undercut and try to sideline faithful communicators. But they are faithful anyway. And these leaders who are speaking the word of God to you, notice not just any old leaders.

These leaders who are speaking the word of truth, speaking the word of God to you, emulate their faithfulness, imitate their faithfulness, considering the outcome of such conduct. Cross out the word there. It isn't there.

You notice it's in italics. Why would you listen to someone who is speaking the word of truth? Why would you remember their leadership and why would you emulate their faithfulness? Because you consider the outcome of such conduct. Not just their conduct.

Well, how did it turn out for them? Well, look, Stephen got stoned to death and Paul got beheaded and Peter got crucified upside down. When I consider the end of their faithfulness, I don't much want to follow it. No, the consequences of such conduct.

The judgment that is coming is what Paul explicitly says in 2 Timothy 4.1. Consider the outcome. What's going to happen at the end? Not what is going to happen now. In the short term, there may be rejection, there may be hardship, there may be some aloneness, there may be misunderstanding.

People may speak of your good as evil and so on. You've got to look at the objective. Take the long view.

Consider the outcome of such conduct, both of the leaders and of yourself. The only way for that to be fulfilled in us is to heed the charge. Heed the warning.

Be correctable. Be persuadable. Recognize that it is the word of God that communicates to us what is right, what is wrong, what is true and what is false.

What is best and what is worst. Despite what human eyes and human hearts may think. Well, we'll close here in a word of prayer.

We'll pick up next Sunday at this point. We have another passage to cover along with Hebrews 13 and we'll see that next Sunday morning. Father, thank you for the gift of your word, the presence and power of your spirit to help us to understand it, to be convicted and rebuked, corrected and exhorted by it.

We pray that as we reflect, as we meditate, as we examine ourselves to see if we are truly in the faith, that the Holy Spirit will reveal to us where we can do better, where we can change our priorities, where we can more closely follow the example given to us in your word, exemplified by your son, the Lord Jesus. We pray these things in his name. Amen.