

2Timothy 25-02-02a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 2nd of February, 2025.

And we are picking up our study. It's been a bit intermittent in recent weeks, but we're in 2 Timothy chapter 4. And last time, which was week before last, we were looking at the exhortation to Timothy to preach the Word in season, out of season, to rebuke, exhort, and so on. And what is the effect? What is the intended response of that? What should we who listen to those who preach do with it? And so in that light, we were in Hebrews chapter 13.

And we will return there for a quick recap and wrap up, and then move to our 2nd passage that talks about the importance of what we do with what is preached. What is the purpose of it? There's no point in Timothy doing it if his audience doesn't catch the pass, so to speak. So that's our subject.

It is meaningful for us because we as believers, we recognize and have done for many years the importance of the Word. But if we wanted to check and be sure that our attention to the Word of God and to its teaching is having the intended effect, what is that intended effect? It's a good thing to know and a good thing to apply to ourselves and see if there are ways that we can improve or be more effective and diligent in that regard. That's where we are.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, we are grateful in inexpressible ways for Your grace, Your faithfulness, Your provision, the blessings that come to us through fellow believers who pray for us, who put a shoulder under our load and help to bear our burdens. We are grateful for each of those who are a part of our fellowship in particular, and those who by extension join us in endeavoring to understand Your Word better, to appreciate Your Son, the Lord Jesus, more fully, to exploit the presence and power of Your Spirit more effectively, and to live as those who represent the Lord Jesus and reflect Your glory in this earth at this time.

We pray that as we look at this portion of Your Word together, that God the Holy Spirit will help us to understand it, to see its pertinence in our own lives, our own situation, the circumstances, challenges, decisions that we face, so that what we do will be pleasing in Your sight, will be an honor and glory to the Lord Jesus, and will contribute to the accomplishment of Your unfolding plans and purposes, both now and in the ages to come. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's begin by reading our passage again in 2 Timothy, again to refresh our hearts and minds here. Paul, having given the first three chapters of exhortation and warning, makes it clear that there is an opposition, there is a conflict, there is a difference of approach and understanding in Christian circles. As early as the first century, as early as the first generation of Christian life and witness, it begins to fragment into understandings.

You could almost say this is the start of denominations, where our group is going to emphasize

and pursue this particular approach. We are going to understand it differently. You remember in Corinthians, we saw this in 1 Corinthians, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ.

You know, we're better than all y'all. We're going right back to the Lord. We have that in the current day with those who want to discount the apostolic witness, particularly that of Paul, and try to go back to the Christianity of Jesus, if you will, and appeal to the Sermon on the Mount and the red ink in the Gospels and make that the definition of Christianity.

We've talked about that many times, and you know the inherent flaw in that, which understanding God's changing plans and purposes that we call dispensations is so essential. Dispensationalism, by the way, be careful if you tell anybody that you are a dispensationalist or believe in dispensations or understand the Word of God through dispensations. It has become quite the pejorative, quite the criticism.

It is right out. People don't want to hear about dispensations. That's something Thomas Nelson Darby made up, Schofield flagged it, Billy Graham pushed it, but it's passe, it's old, it's gone, it was late, it wasn't right to begin with, and you're making a severe mistake looking at the Bible in terms of dispensations.

Everyone listening to the sound of my voice knows better. It doesn't have to have been understood fully in the first century to make sense now in the same way that things that were said in the Old Testament didn't fully land in the hearts and souls of Israelites like they do now with the additional revelation that has come through the New Testament. God's plan, and you learn this on day one of seminary or a good Bible school, is that there is an unfolding of revelation.

It's called the progress of revelation, and as human history moves forward, we build on earlier revelation, and we come to better understandings. And people who want to discount and dismiss a dispensational framework for understanding the Scripture do so claiming that it is a late innovation, that it wasn't understood by the early church fathers. If this ever becomes an issue, I would say don't waste time on it.

We see the value as we interpret the Scriptures for ourselves. But for those who want to enter into a debate, there have been very carefully researched responses to that argument that will quote early church fathers who very clearly state their understanding of a millennial kingdom that is literal and earthly, that in many cases there are things that God does differently and different dispensations, and we're not still under the law. If you even understand the lifting of the dietary restrictions that were placed on Israel, then you believe in some kind of a dispensation, because why are we not still under everything in the law? Of course, you've got your Adventists and others who try to say we actually are, but that gets tricky.

Are you going to put tassels on the corners of your clothing and not shave the corners of your beard? You cannot live as an ancient Israelite in the modern day. It is physically impossible,

though many might think they should. Dispensational understanding helps us to recognize that the preaching of the Lord Jesus was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

He explicitly stated this. I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. So immediately, if you want to go back and claim that I am of Christ and my Christianity is I'm a Jesus follower and we're a Jesus group and we do things according to Jesus and the Old Testament understandings were flawed.

These were people groping and grasping and not fully understanding, and that's why they killed the Canaanites and that's why they did the rituals. The Old Testament is the record of people who messed up. Well, once you open that door, you begin to adopt a similar attitude toward the apostle Paul.

He took the perfect Christianity of Jesus and messed it up, so we shouldn't listen to Paul. We can listen to some of Peter. We can listen to a little bit of John, but we'll pick and choose.

The Bible is inspired in spots and we're the ones who can tell you the spots. So it is critical to understand that the gospel preached, and we're going to look at that a little bit this morning, the gospel that is preached, the gospel that we believe that ensures our salvation and that takes us down the road of an effective and meaningful life. You and I want to live a life that pleases God.

There is no debate. There's no argument. That's what we want.

That's why we are believers. That's why we have Bibles and we come to church and we seek out the fellowship of others who share that desire. We love God for saving us.

We love the Lord Jesus as our Savior. We appreciate the gift of the Holy Spirit and access to the Word of God as never before in human history. There has never, ever been anything even distantly approaching the access we have to the Word of God today, and there's a reason for it because the time is short.

But we have an enthusiasm. We don't want to fritter our life away. The motto on the clock Patty and I received when we got married says, time is money.

Time is capital, and we are exhorted to redeem the time because the days are evil. Left to themselves, the time will be wasted. It is like federal spending.

It will go places it shouldn't and not do things that it should. That is the nature. That is the default for the time in our lives.

We wake up in the morning and like all human beings, saved or unsaved, committed to any other religion, people get up and would like to accomplish something meaningful in the day that is satisfying or gratifying, that makes them feel like they are living a worthwhile life. This is a common human aspiration. What we're going to see this morning is that desire is not

enough.

Unbeliever or believer, religious or atheistic or agnostic, the desire to have a good day, the desire to do a good thing, doesn't count at the judgment. You get no credit. There are specific things that stand at the judgment.

This is why when we come to 2 Timothy 4 and read our passage, Paul says, I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge the living and the dead. There is a worthwhile point made in your New Treasury of Scripture knowledge at this point that there are no places anywhere in Scripture where you see the believers and unbelievers raised at the same time. There are resurrections of the just and there are resurrections of the unjust, but there's no resurrection that involves both.

There's no resurrection where believers and unbelievers simultaneously are brought back. They are always separate. They are always segregated.

We talked last time about judging the living and the dead. This is not only those who might be alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord at one or more of his comings, but it speaks of those who have eternal life and those who don't. And there are separate judgments for each.

There is a judgment for the believers of the Old Testament. There is a judgment for the believers of the New Testament. Those are separate.

Old Testament saints don't show up at the judgment seat of Christ. They have their own separate judgment. It is characterized as passing under the rod, as standing before the Lord of glory, separating the sheep and the goats.

There are different judgments for different groups of people. But in terms of resurrections, you never have believers and unbelievers raising at the same time anywhere. It's a point well worth noting.

I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. You can see there's a text note there. Is it at or by? The more important thing is not which preposition is there as the fact that these two things are distinguished, his appearing and his kingdom.

Those who believe that there is no difference between the rapture and the second coming, that they are one in the same, miss the point that it is a phased coming that begins with his appearing and culminates with his kingdom. That's exactly what Paul is talking about here in my estimation, my understanding here, because he will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. There's more than one judgment.

There is a difference between his appearing and his kingdom. There's a difference between the beginning of his kingdom and the end of his kingdom. But it is a reminder, Paul brings this up at this point.

What's he getting ready to do? What's Paul's thought here? He's talking to a pastor and we're going to see that Paul recognizes that his life has been expended in the service of the Lord. He is coming to its end. He has run his race and he is, in a sense, passing the torch of responsibility and opportunity for preaching and exhorting and encouraging and giving to fellow believers what they need to be what God wants them to be and to do what God wants them to do.

Paul will not be around much longer to continue that work. He has invested himself in Timothy. Timothy has traveled with him and has observed how he does it, why he does it, the opposition that is inevitably aroused by that mission.

And so he is exhorting Timothy to continue the work and he is imparting to Timothy his motivation and his heart's desire that this essential work be accomplished. So if you want somebody to pick up where you left off, you're largely finishing, you're wanting to hand off to someone who's got more time, more energy, more tools, more wherewithal. What do you want to do? How can you best light the flame of motivation and diligence and dedication that you'd like to see? Paul does it with this introduction.

Think about the return of the Lord Jesus and his evaluation. The people who oppose you, they are going to be evaluated. Those who are with you, as you had been with me, Paul would say to Timothy, will be evaluated.

It's all about looking forward and endeavoring to be pleasing in God's sight. This has more to it than you might think, and we're going to see it as we move forward. So having given him this charge, having gotten his attention, here's the vision of the Lord Jesus returning.

He's appearing. He's establishing and ruling over his kingdom. There are judgments at the beginning, judgments at the end, judgment at the appearing, judging at the final wrapping up of all things.

What's the most important thing? Is it ministry? Is it intentions? Is it feelings? Is it I got some stuff done that I wanted to do? What's the most important thing in the light of the grand sweep of God's plan and purpose, culminating in the Lord Jesus Christ appearing, establishing, and running his kingdom, and moving everything forward into the days of the kingdom of the Father? What's the most important thing? Preach the word. And as soon as he says, preach the word, if you envision that, this is not John the Baptist voice echoing off the rocky cliffs by the Jordan. Preaching is designed to communicate.

There's very few things my dad used to say that I quibble with, but there's one that he used to say that I do understand differently. I don't agree. He would say, where there has been no learning, there has been no teaching.

I'm not sure where he picked up that morsel of observation. Where there has been no learning, the teaching didn't do any good. But I think all of us have presented something clearly and effectively, but it didn't get picked up by a child or a newer co-worker or a recruit or somebody

new to an endeavor.

And there can be teaching. The Lord Jesus was the perfect teacher, but you can see many examples of where there was not learning. Jesus would say to his own disciples, have you been with me so long and still you don't understand? So I disagree with that, but it does remind us that this is inevitably a two-part process.

If somebody is pitching in baseball, somebody needs to be catching. If you're going to throw a pass as a quarterback, there needs to be a receiver. It requires end-to-end activity.

Activity. There is an initiator and there is a receiver or responder. If you have a radio and you're going to transmit, you have to hope that it's not the search for extraterrestrial intelligence and you're just broadcasting radio into space with only a hope that there might be some alien spider-like life form out there that's going to read it, determine your location, and come and make a meal of the entire human race and feed us all to their larva.

People have such crazy aspirations about the benevolent. They basically want to find a heaven full of angels who know more and are going to be wonderful benefactors, but they don't want to get there via the Lord Jesus. It's a subject you can muse on at some length, but it's a two-part process.

If you send a radio transmission, you're expecting somebody on the other end to receive and perhaps respond. We talked about this last time. It's not just Roger, I've received it, but Roger Wilco, I received and I will comply.

But there is communication that has a desired purpose and a mission in terms of what it will accomplish. So when he says, preach the word, looking at the sweep of history, the scope of God's plan and purpose, we are here to learn. There is preaching taking place.

This is the word *keruso*, and *keruso* is used time and again. You can do a complete study of *keruso* and see its use throughout the scriptures for proclamation. Proclamation.

And the idea is to put it out there so that the second half can happen, that there is a response. We saw this in the first nine chapters of Proverbs, where there is instruction from parents. Lady Wisdom is pictured as standing at the head of the streets and offering wisdom.

Here are young people. Will they respond to that or are they going to be seduced by the crafty harlot and end up destroying themselves, wasting their opportunity and wasting their lives? There is a road I've chosen not to go down at this morning, but if you read Letters from a Skeptic by Dr. Gregory Boyd, there is a chapter where he is talking to his unbelieving father about the reason God would allow evil in the world. If there is a God, why are there starving children? Why do heinous atrocities take place? There is no divine intervention.

If God is able to stop evil then he is not a God worth worshipping. Greg Boyd makes an effective response to that. There is an inherent result of granting free will.

It's like if you create liquid water, you're inevitably creating the possibility that someone might drown. If you produce firearms with all of your intentions for training and safety and morality to only use them for good, use them to hunt, use them to defend yourself against others. But if you create a free will, a free will of freedom, it almost always inherently carries with it the possibility of abuse.

You have air travel. We used to be able to just walk into an airport, get on a plane. They didn't even use to scan luggage.

You could have a pistol in your carry-on. Nobody cared in the early days. They didn't search.

They didn't care. But because freedom of travel was abused and its lax security was used for perverse ends, now you get x-rayed and MRI-ed and there's magnets and all kinds of rules and regulations and it has gotten hugely more expensive to get on a plane and fly somewhere because the opportunity has been perverted and abused. Anytime you create something, there is the possibility of abuse.

There's a painkiller that does a good thing, take too many, now it's an abuse. Take a little wine for your stomach's sake, be not drunk with wine wherein is excess. There are an infinitude of examples, but it goes back to free will itself.

If God is going to grant free will to his creatures, it is, and Greg Boyd uses the example of giving his school-aged daughter a \$5 bill. If I give it to her as a gift, then it's hers to do with as she will. If I say, well, I'm giving you this \$5, but you can't spend it on candy and you can't spend it on, I'll tell you what you can and cannot spend it on, it isn't a gift anymore.

It's something else. Endeavoring to limit or control free will, it isn't free anymore. You end up with the current debate about artificial intelligence.

Now mankind is in the position of creating something. Well, are we going to give it free will or are we going to limit it and prevent it from going places we don't want it to go? Well, this is a robot. If you limit and constrict and constrain and prevent and you shackle, that's not freedom.

For will to truly be free, it has to be free to do things you don't agree with or it's a puppet. It's robotic. You have attached strings and you are constraining and limiting.

There are broad constraints in that I can't decide to jump off the planet and fly into space. There are laws of physics that provide broad barriers. We are limited to this planet and I find it amusing the more they study space and they want to travel to far off galaxies and can we find a wormhole.

God has prevented us from getting much further than the moon by the distance between planetary bodies and stars and galaxies and planetary systems. It's sort of a hard limit. You can't get past the speed of light.

Even if they could approach it, you'd have to have 20 or 30 generations of people and their great great great great great great great great great great grandkids might arrive at the nearest star that's got a planet to see if there's life on it. You get there and there's not and now they've got to spend all their time great great great great great great great great coming back to tell us, sorry, there's nothing there. But God has built in broad limits but within the environment, within the maze, within the experimental space, we have freedom.

This is driving us to a point. Why of all of the things in view of God's plan, the coming Lord Jesus, the judgments that are coming, why is the exhortation, preach the word? The word creates decision points. We decide what we are going to do with it.

If you turn forward to Hebrews chapter 13 where we saw last time the response in verse 7, remember those who are put before you, those who are there to lead, to provide guidance, rule over is pretty strong. This isn't, you know, you've got rulers and they're going to mandate and they're going to restrict and they're going to limit. This isn't what Paul is talking about at all.

They are put there for benefit. This is parents for children or mentors for those who are learning a new skill or a new craft. This is the one who will teach an apprentice.

It's not, this is a voluntary association. You don't have to go to church and be quote ruled over. You go there because you are hoping that someone who is further along can impart what they know and that's what this is.

It is a beneficial relationship of instruction, of leadership, of encouragement. It's positive. This is we're all on the same team.

A team can have a team captain. He's not ruling over the team. You could sort of say that, but that's not the intention.

The captain of the team has the best interest of the team and the goal that the team will prevail, that they'll accomplish their purpose, whether it's military or athletic or whatever. This rule over is very, has unfortunate connotations, but it says, remember them who have spoken the word of God to you. This is what Paul is telling Timothy.

You've got to speak the word of truth. Speak the word of God and those who are speaking the word of God to you are not using it as a club to achieve submission any more than a husband would try to do this in a marriage. A marriage is a team.

We're on the same side here. We're moving in the same direction. We're supporting and encouraging each other.

We're not at odds. We're not trying to dominate someone or create subservience or misery for someone. This is a positive endeavor.

So remember those who are at the front, who are endeavoring to be the point man,

endeavoring to get us down the road to the objective. Remember them. They're speaking the word of God to you and whose faith follow.

They are doing that because they believe in the word of God. I saw a quote from Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He was a Baptist pastor in the late 1800s, last half of the 19th century.

They were talking about a Unitarian minister who didn't believe in the divinity of Christ. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was praising and admiring this Unitarian minister in the same way that you see some of our political figures say, you know, I admire the president of Russia or I admire. It doesn't mean you agree with what they're doing or their objectives or anything, but there are aspects of what they do that are admirable.

And Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, I admire this guy. He's a Unitarian. And they said, how can you admire him when you don't believe what he believes? And Spurgeon said, I admire him because he believes it.

I don't admire him because of what I believe. I admire him because of his belief, his faith, his dedication, his persuasion. That's what I admire.

This is what he believes and he has thrown himself into it. Hook, line, sinker, boat, raincoat, hat, everything. He's all in.

And I admire his dedication to, I admire him because he believes it and believes it so persuasively. Dr. Criswell used to tell the story of a man who was sitting in a football crowd and the teams were on the field and he was a proponent of his particular college, of which he was an alumnus. And he started looking around in the crowd and it was a close game.

And he said, I'll bet you a hundred dollars that our team is going to win. Well, nobody would take him up on it. He said, I'll bet you \$500 that our team is going to win.

And nobody would take him up on it. I'll bet you a thousand dollars our team is going to win. And Dr. Criswell turned around and looked at him and he said, he said, fella, I'd love to have you in my church because you believe in your team and you're willing to put your money where your mouth is.

This is what Paul wants Timothy to encourage and to accomplish in his teaching ministry, in his preaching ministry, preach the word. Anytime you get the chance, we've got to be all in. And here's why.

Look again at Hebrews chapter 13, follow their faith, their dedication, people who are willing to stand in front and be the point man, people who are willing to go all in. You want to find those people and be one of them, move with that group, be encouraged by their faith and their fellowship, follow their faith, considering the outcome of their conduct. What is the outcome of their conduct? What did Paul start second Timothy chapter four with? I charge you by the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom, his judging of the living and the dead.

The outcome is going to be made known at the judgment. Never forget that we're being evaluated. Records are being kept.

There are scores in the grade book and there will come a time where it's not just pass or fail, but what opportunities, what privileges, what new aspects of God's plans and purposes will we be entitled to? What new ways can we reflect the glory of God in our appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ? It happens at the judgment every single day, the time that we expend, consider the outcome of their conduct. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. It almost seems like a non sequitur.

Why would you split off and say that? Because yesterday is the record of his incarnation. We didn't know Jesus Christ until he was born in Bethlehem, until he went to the temple, until he began his public ministry. He is the same yesterday, he is the same today, and he is the same forever.

The standards of accomplishment, not my will but thine be done, to be pleasing in the Father's sight, to follow not only everything that the Lord Jesus taught, which is wonderful, but everything that he committed to his apostles to teach, which is what we learned from Paul and Peter and John. You remember in 1 Timothy, we went back and saw the stewardship of the mysteries that was specifically given to Paul by Jesus Christ. And if you say, I love Jesus and I'm going to be a Jesus follower and we're going to be a Jesus community and do Jesus things, I apologize, that's the way these folks talk.

Everything has Jesus prefixed to it, as though that makes it better than any other kind of New Testament Christianity. We've gone back to Jesus and not listening to what Jesus said, what he taught, and who he commissioned to preach his name. I wish I had time to do the Caruso study.

I may give a few representative examples before we're done, but the purpose of it is what counts. And that's what we're going to look at here in Hebrews chapter 13. But in closing for this first session, it is not enough to be dedicated.

It is not enough to have a desire to do good things. The old aphorism is sound, that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. There are many altruistic efforts in the world.

You think, how could it be wrong to try to cure little kids of cancer? How could it be wrong to feed hungry families who have been displaced and are homeless? And how can it be wrong to do this particular thing that benefits other humans? In some way, how could it be wrong to patiently and diligently throw yourself into charitable work? God has to be giving some kind of credit for that. I'm a good person, and I'm doing a good thing. There's going to be some credit somewhere.

Any unbeliever can make that calculation and arrive at that conclusion, and it is not in the word of God. There is a way that seems right to a man, but it leads to death. There is good that is

stubble and hay and wood.

And it doesn't matter how beautiful the wood furniture is, the fire of judgment will incinerate it. It doesn't matter how artfully the straw was woven into baskets, how beautifully they did a job of carrying food or preserving goods or masking off areas that shouldn't be seen. You know, you can do a lot with straw.

It doesn't matter. There are qualities of goodness that partake of the divine, and any allegedly good thing that doesn't have that quality will be destroyed at the judgment of the living and the dead. And there are people who will be apoplectic, shocked, dismayed, raging, shaking fists at God, how dare you dismiss my good as having no value.

And this is going to be the weeping and the wailing and the gnashing of teeth. We do not want to be in that company. What is it that makes our response to the preaching of the word of God good and effective and pleasing in God's sight, something that will stand at the judgment? That's what we're going to look at when we come back from the break.