

2Timothy 25-02-02b

Let's pick up our study. We're anchored in 2 Timothy chapter four, looking at this exhortation to preach the word and do it seasonably, unseasonably, with correction where necessary, rebuke where necessary, and so on. What is the purpose of that? We're not all called to be teachers and preachers and those who exhort, but we are all called to listen.

And that is the point of the pitching is that there be catching. So what should that entail? And there are many places in scripture you can go for this. Hebrews chapter 13, beginning at verse seven is one of them to remember those.

And when it talks about the hegemony, the ones who are in front, they are leading both by example and by teaching. That's the nature of what is, I don't think very well translated as rule, but they're offering the guidance. It's the strategy and the approach that is dictated by the word of God.

And follow their faith, consider the outcome of their conduct. This is always looking forward. This is a part of our hope is that we will receive that well done now good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord.

That's what we want. If we have three neurons to rub together spiritually, we want God to be pleased with us, to invite us into his presence and his future plans and procedures and activities and to be useful and productive and to basically have the Lord be glad that he saved us and to enter into that realm of love and function. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever in verse eight, do not be carried about.

The danger is that we choose poorly in terms of what we listen to. This begins with someone speaking, someone communicating, someone talking, someone allowing that they are giving the straight scoop. This is the truth.

This is the will of God. This is what the Bible teaches. This is what our Lord in heaven desires from us.

Well, somebody thinking that whether consciously or unconsciously might be misleading. There may be selfish ends. There may be selfish goals.

In many cases, you can follow the money or follow the influence or follow the fame that is associated. I think the early church model of small, relatively nameless groups that met in homes and gathered for fellowship and mutual encouragement and support, prayer and instruction in the word, speaking the truth to one another in love, the beauty of that model, which God initiated in the church is it doesn't provide opportunities for people to abuse position or assets or to be distracted by the kind of things that the world chases after in terms of, am I known? Am I a desired speaker at events? And am I popular on campuses? And are people buying my books or sending love gifts to get my resources? We've almost become

inured and taken for granted the kind of Christianity that prevails and has prevailed for many decades in the modern and postmodern world that isn't to be found in the Bible. The prominent Christian speakers and leaders were persecuted, imprisoned, and executed.

They weren't feted and found on New York Times bestseller lists and raking in remuneration and honorariums and living the high life and slapping each other on the back and so on. And inevitably in an environment where there are distractions, the message gets lost. And the purpose of preaching is not to make something of the preacher.

You don't follow the preacher, you follow their faith. Notice whose faith follow, not follow these guys, they've got it figured out. Follow their faith.

Follow the example of dedication and that forward look to the judgment. How is this day, how are my words, my attitudes, my actions, my treatment of my near at hand people, especially my fellow believers, looking at my spheres of love, how am I doing in the one and others? How am I doing in the neighbor love? How am I doing in those who are outside? And how am I doing with those who are actively coming after me and are spitefully using me? I prayerfully go to the Lord and ask for illumination, for wisdom. That's why we have the Holy Spirit so that he can bring to our hearts and minds the truth of God and shine a light on what we should do.

Not what is best in the eyes of people necessarily, not what seems right to me from any number of possibly cloudy motivations or perspectives, what would God have me do? Many times what God would have me do is similar to what he wanted his son, the Lord Jesus to do. And what he wanted the apostle Paul and Peter and John and others to do. It is a way of self-denial.

It is a way of sacrifice. It is a way that does not necessarily look like it's going to end well. We don't do it because of the outcome.

We do it because we are convinced that it is God's will. And we should look for that conviction. Look for the solid ground of scripture that tells us this is the will of my father in heaven.

This reflects the glory of the Lord Jesus. It's usually the harder way. It's usually the less popular way.

It is often a misunderstood way. It can be criticized. Look at the abuse that was heaped on the apostle Paul, who was God's own man, the greatest of the apostles, simultaneously being the chief of sinners in his own estimation.

But you look at the big three, you look at Peter and Paul and John, they all traveled a sacrificial way, a way that cost them. But it is a momentary light affliction that worked for them and works for us, an eternal weight of glory. We don't want to be people that wear a hair shirt for its own sake.

Asceticism isn't a virtue if it's just pain for its own sake, hardship for its own sake. Some people

have a perverse pleasure in suffering and in being seen to suffer, being looked at as a victim or a casualty. There is a part of human nature that that will hook into and draw the ugly out of us.

It is so essential that we are enabled and empowered by God's grace, his spirit and his word. That's why the preaching of the word is so essential. It has to be right.

It can't be wrong. And it can be wrong by omission. It can be wrong by exaggeration.

It can be wrong by distortion. You know, you pick it apart, you can't find any one thing that's wrong, but the sum total of it leads us down a road that the Lord did not intend. That isn't what he meant by Christian service or Christian worship or Christian love or Christian fellowship.

And we are nowhere more quickly and easily deceived than when we deceive ourselves. One of the first verses my mother ever taught me and we learned together out of the little memory verse pack was Jeremiah 17, nine. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? We're too close. We can't measure our own heart. We can't gauge whether our right meter is functioning correctly or not.

We need an outside check. We need an objective standard to apply that comes from God's word in the hands and in the presence of God's spirit, prayerfully, humbly applied and willing to dedicate ourselves to whatever the result of that analysis is. So again, in Hebrews 13, do not be carried about with various and foreign doctrines.

Strange doctrines. Notice their doctrines. Jesus excoriated the Pharisees for teaching as doctrines the traditions of men.

We like these traditions. They make us feel good. They have an appearance of righteousness and they become doctrines.

They vary, they depart. They are not in accord with the standard of truth found in God's word. They seem right, but they're not.

Various and strange. They're foreign to the heart of God. They're foreign to the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus and of the apostolic stewardship of the mysteries that we receive from Paul.

It is good that the heart be established by grace. Paul drives back to our heart. We have to start at the heart.

What are the thoughts and intents of the heart? That's what the word of God cuts into. The sharp sword dividing us under the soul and the spirit, the joints and the marrow. It is a critic.

It is a judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Our heart has to be bathed in the grace of God, cleansed by the blood of Christ, purged with hyssop, washed and made white. Through

confession of sin, through constant exposure to the washing of water by the word.

This is our task. We have jobs, we have relationships, we have tasks, we have opportunities, we have hobbies, we have pursuits. We have things that are fun, nothing wrong with capacity for life being fulfilled in activities that we pursue and enjoy by ourselves or with others.

It isn't a grim trudging road that God gives to us. The Lord Jesus laughed with his disciples. He had beautiful sunsets by the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

He enjoyed meals and companionship and fellowship just as we all do. Pleasant days, pleasant activities, personally fulfilling hobbies and so on are a gift from the Lord. It's a part of the blessing of our life.

Everything in its place, everything in accordance with our goals and values and priorities, nothing to excess, nothing that dominates or controls us. A little wine is good. Drunk with wine is excess.

If we're gonna be filled with something, be filled with the spirit. That is what should dominate, should lead, should guide. And those whose faith is similarly informed and strengthened and enabled and empowered by God's spirit and God's word, follow that faith.

It's a pattern. It isn't about the individual who has the faith. It is about the object of that faith.

The merit of faith is in the object. So avoid bad objects for faith, strange and varying doctrines. I've got a new take on this, that, and the other.

You've been down my long list of Christian distractions. This guy has a prayer in the Bible. Let's focus on that.

Here's a key. Here's a language. I've unlocked a new thing.

It's all about how to experience God or how to have a mantra or how to do this, that, and the other and they are innovations. There are solid time-proven examples of faith in interpreting the word, in following the word, and seeing the outcome of that faith, which is the genuine fruit of the spirit. There isn't strife.

There's not competition. There's not division. There's not fracture and friction.

There is love and joy and peace. The best way to know whether or not you have wandered into a varying or strange doctrine, where does it leave your soul? Do you come away refreshed as though you have been at the oasis of living water? You will know them by their fruits. What is the fruit? When you come away from fellowship with believers and an intense look at the word of God, do you come away strengthened in love and in joy? Does it enhance your peace, your patience? Do you find yourself more gentle and less apt to harshness and impatience and short-sightedness and mistreatment of others? Is being around you more of a blessing and less of a challenge? Gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, humility.

Do I find myself more objective about the world around me? Can I take setbacks and happenings that are in the news and so on more in stride? Have I got a better gyroscope in my soul and whatever bumps me, I'm stable. I'm not easily tripped. I'm not easily knocked off my feet.

I've got stability and I have self-control. I find that things that formerly irritated me, I can let them go. I'm not invested in that anymore.

I'm not full of angst. I don't feel pressured. I don't feel like I've got to change something.

This isn't good. Something's wrong. Something's out.

There are dark shadows emerging from this place and that place. Exposure to the word of God, cultivating the presence and the power of the spirit results in the fruit of the spirit. If that fruit is departing for any reason, and it may not necessarily be that there is no teaching.

It may be that it is time for a change of source. We learn and grow. My second grade teacher couldn't teach me algebra.

It's not her calling. She was a wonderful lady, but she taught at a level where she was gifted and effective. There are other teachers.

And as we progress and we grow, we find that here's someone that I, boy, when I listen to this, I come away loving my father in heaven, appreciating the Lord Jesus Christ, aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit in fresh and new ways. I feel like my slack sails have suddenly caught a fresh gust of wind and my boat is moving. I'm starting to lean over and get on the starboard tack here.

This is great. That's the fruit of the spirit. That's how you know.

And when he says, do not be carried about by strange winds of doctrine, how do you know if it's strange? We start losing the fruit of the spirit. And the preaching is all important. It is not the preacher.

Don't worry about hurting someone's feelings. If you've grown, you've learned as much as you can. I've had wonderful teachers.

I prize them. If there's a hallway that is a picture frame after picture frame of important and wonderful blessed teachers in my past, I can give you their names and tell you exactly what I learned from them. I'm not still listening to them.

I'm in a different place now. No harm, no foul. Jesus called 12 disciples and made 12 apostles, not just one.

The New Testament has got more than one author. Even the Lord Jesus himself is not the sole source of Christian teaching. Did you ever wonder about that? Why don't we just have a New

Testament of red ink? Here's the word from the Lord Jesus.

Let's all get behind it. Don't have to worry about I am of Apollos or I am of Cephas. It's all from Jesus.

So that ought to be a unifying gospel. Why do we have John and Peter and Paul? And you've got James and you've got the gospels written by four different authors. Why? We learn in different ways.

We are in different places. We ourselves, as we have seen earlier on, in the latter days, perilous times will come. We may not always have perilous times individually, and yet there are sequences, there are circumstances in our life, things come about and suddenly it's perilous for us.

And we need to be able to draw upon God's strength that has come through faithful communicators, plural. As you know, I do not hold with the, there's only one pastor for me. I think there's only one spouse for me.

I think there's only one set of kids for me. But when it comes to communication of the word of God, this is why Paul has told Timothy, as we've seen in 1 Timothy, find faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Men, not another man.

It's not an apostolic succession. It is so important to find sources of accurate, valid, helpful, meaningful, fruitful teaching of the word of God that hits you where you live and enables and empowers with God's grace. A heart that is bathed in God's grace.

Hebrews 13, nine, it is good that the heart be established by grace. It's not by any one teacher, although if you found a teacher and it's doing the job, praise God, stick with it as long as it works. God lets us know when we're in a good place, when we need to have somebody service a fresh meal.

It isn't about personalities. It isn't about feelings. It is about fruit.

Your heart established by grace, not with foods which have profited those who've been occupied with them. Foods here, this was the legalism. Go back and follow the dietary laws of Israel.

You'll be a better Christian. There was legalism and other things. Avoid meat offered to idols.

That's the key to spirituality. And it becomes about technique and about practice. Your practices will give you a better faith life.

What you do and don't do will lead to better spirituality instead of the other way around. Get your heart established by grace. The word of God and the spirit of God, your practice will take care of itself.

If you're doing something to excess, your heart will convict you and you will have the power of God to moderate it or cut it out entirely. The heart established by grace will dictate. Jesus said it, out of the heart proceeds what we say and what we do.

It isn't what you take in, in terms of foods. It isn't what you do in terms of practices. Oh, just mimic good behavior and you will become good.

Do things that are accepted as good in the sight of others and you'll be a good person. It is the heart established by grace. What establishes a heart in grace? It is the accurately preached word of God.

That's why we do it. What is our response? We should ensure that our heart is being established by grace. We have the responsibility to ensure that we are plugged into the truth of God's word.

That's why Timothy is exhorted to preach and to be faithful in the preaching. Hearers are exhorted to not be carried about with various and strange teaching. Don't tolerate those who preach another doctrine.

And again, if you do the Caruso, which is the imperative that Paul gives Timothy, preach, it's Caruso. The preaching itself is the Carugma. And you can do strong studies on those words.

It's fascinating. But I didn't wanna do a word study this morning. I wanna get at the heart of the message.

And what is it? When the word is preached and there is teaching, there has to be learning. And as long as we are learning, we know we're learning. We find new resources in our soul.

We find old challenges and old failures handled in new ways. You know what? I used to be worry all the time. I don't worry so much now.

Because you know what comes to my mind? I start going down that worry road, but we've learned some things in the word of God. And I've got new ammunition to fire into that attack, into that threat, into that discouragement. I am learning things in the word of God that fortify my soul, that bathe me in love and joy and peace and patience.

The Lord Jesus promised us peace, not like the world gives, his peace. And it comes through his word. It comes in the presence of his spirit.

It is good that the heart be established by grace, verse nine, not with practices. Just eat the right foods. This is the problem with, you know, thinking that good health can be achieved simply by diet.

Oh, don't eat those bad foods. Just eat the good foods. That is a wonderful thing in and of itself, but it's not the only thing we have to do to be healthy.

There's such a thing as exercise. Not everybody can eat any fruit or any vegetable. We look at

the results.

What is the fruit? What is the result in my life? Does it profit me if I am occupied with it? Foods do not profit those who are occupied with them. Any more than bodily exercise profits a little. Godliness profits in every way.

Where is the profit, the genuine spiritual advance, the strength, the peace that passes understanding? We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. Without going into great detail, we know what this means. You can't get there trying to manifest the works of the law, trying to follow the pattern and symbolic things that we're supposed to teach spiritual truths to Israel.

You can't mimic those behaviors and get there. You can learn about them and understand them, but worrying about foods, worrying about exercise, that isn't going to get it. It has to happen with the grace of God in the heart.

Turn with me to our second passage in this regard, which is 1 Thessalonians 5. We've seen this in Timothy. Perilous times will come. Concerning the times and seasons, brethren, 1 Thessalonians 5.1, you have no need that I should write to you.

You know the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night. This is where we start looking around us at the hockey stick of world events and think, the time has got to be short. What should I be doing to get ready for the return of the Lord? We should be disappointed if we look around and begin to suspect that the return of the Lord Jesus, his appearing and the rapture of the church is near at hand.

If we do anything different in that realization than we're already doing, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. Because the appearing of the Lord, it is infinitely more likely that that appearing is going to come with our last heartbeat and our last breath and our last spark on the electroencephalogram. Every believer that has ever lived up to this point has died short of the rapture.

If they were all living in the light of the rapture, they missed it, didn't they? Because the return of the Lord for them is at the point of their death. And it is for us, almost certainly. Regardless of how close it is, a lot of us may check out before it gets here.

So how are we living? And even if we knew the Lord Jesus was coming this Thursday, would we seriously do anything different than we're already doing? And if so, why? Why are we not already living every day and every moment as though we will soon be standing at the judgment? Why would I do anything different if I knew the Lord Jesus was coming at 5.53 this afternoon than I'm doing right now? Would I be somewhere else than in church endeavoring to understand his word better and apply it to my life more effectively to be a better field producing the fruit of the spirit, 30 fold, 60 fold, 100 fold? What would I do differently if I knew for certain this is the rapture generation and it's coming soon? We should be doing that

anyway, right? So when they say peace and safety, suddenly destruction comes upon them. Verse four, you brethren are not in darkness so that this day should overtake you as a thief. Think about the first people to hear this letter read to them in Thessalonica.

They've been dead 2000 years. But this truth was pertinent to them as it is for us. Don't let that day overtake you as a thief.

You're not in the night. You're not of the darkness to be overtaken and surprised, unprepared. The whole theme of this is, are you prepared? Are you prepared for the rapture to happen right now? Will you be prepared for it an hour from now, a day from now, a week from now, a year from now, or at the point that we close our eyes and sleep in Jesus? Are we prepared? Verse six, let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

Those who sleep, sleep at night. Those who get drunk are drunk at night. We are of the light.

So let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of what? Breastplate is defense. It protects the heart. It protects the chest.

Putting on the breastplate of faith and love. And as a helmet, the hope of salvation. You want your triad of Christian virtues in one verse? Here you go.

First Thessalonians 5, 8. Faith and love. Hope is your helmet. Hope keeps your head on, keeps your head straight, keeps you thinking.

God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us that whether we wake or sleep, whether it's rapture today or rapture 50 years from now, we will live together with him. Comfort each other, edify one another, just as you also are doing. We urge you, brethren, here's your passage.

You can put Hebrews 13, seven out in the margin beside this and vice versa. We add second Timothy four, one and following. We urge you brethren to recognize those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

This word over is real interesting. I'm not going to do Greek here, but the word over is, you know, histamine is to stand. When he says that day will not come except there comes first the standing away and it's apa plus histamine.

Apa is away and histamine is to stand. This is another histamine word, but it's pro. You know what pros means in Greek, right? Pros is face to face with.

This is not over. We've got a perfectly good word, hooper, hyper for over. This is not hyper is to me, those who stand above you or stand over you.

This is those who stand before you. This is back to your team captain idea. These are the ones who are at the front leading saying, this is the way walk in it.

Those whose faith follow just like Hebrews 13. So we urge you recognize those who are before you. A proper translation of this word is those who are in front of you.

They're before you. They're face to face with you. They're talking to you and admonish you.

And esteem them highly in love for their work's sake. Not for their personality, not for their any other subjective reason. For their work's sake.

What is their work? To stand before you and preach the word. Appreciate them when the work is good, appreciate the work. We had some granite countertops installed.

They did a beautiful job. I loved the granite and I loved how the installation helped to bring out the beauty of the granite and the seams were virtually invisible and it was such a great job. I didn't write down the names of the granite workmen.

I appreciated their work. And if I ever needed more work, I would go back to those guys and have them do it again. But I didn't take them out for lunch and delve into their life history or make an issue out of them.

They did good work. They did beautiful work. And you appreciate the work.

Nothing wrong with shaking hands with the guys and saying, hey, take a cold bottle of water on your way out. But appreciate them for the work's sake. That's the idea.

Be at peace among yourselves. If there's not weird doctrine, we should be united by a common understanding, a common appreciation of that work. What it imparts to us, it's the grace of God that comes to our hearts.

We exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted. This is getting to our response. How do we respond to this preached word in the hands of the Holy Spirit? If there's unruliness, there needs to be a calling out of that which deviates from the norm.

Look, you're bringing disharmony. This doesn't reflect what we have learned. You're in the group and you're being disruptive.

You're being divisive. You are sinning. You're being selfish.

You're being subjective, whatever it may be. The group is to call out misbehavior. This is more often not in our type of church fellowship, but in our homes, in our associations elsewhere.

If somebody starts pulling us down a bad road, pulling us in a direction of worry, pulling us in a direction of fear, pulling us in a direction of doing things for the wrong reasons or with the wrong priority, it needs to be called out on spiritual grounds. We can't do that, not because it doesn't make good human sense. It may make great human sense, but it is pulling us away from what we know to be true, from the word of God.

Warn those who are not paying attention to the guidance, not following the mission, not heading for the purpose. Warn those who are unruly. Comfort the faint-hearted, uphold the weak.

Be patient with all, even the unruly, be patient. Be patient with everybody. Fruit of the Spirit is a wonderful list.

Here are some additional characteristics we can measure ourselves with in terms of our response to the word of God. Am I able to not just look for comfort myself, but to offer comfort to others who are in a tough time, their heart's starting to give out a little bit, that heart that is bathed in God's grace? I can be a part of that grace. I can comfort the faint-hearted.

I can uphold the weak. Again, put a shoulder under the load. Be there when needed.

Be an encouragement. Spot them when they need a break. Be patient with everyone.

Impatience is the mark that something is wrong. Heaven help those of us for whom it's a besetting sin. Be patient with all.

See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, to anyone. This is all of your spheres of love, right out to the enemy. No evil for evil.

Always pursue what is good, both for yourselves and for all. This transcends the discernment we make about the spheres of love. Can it be reciprocated? Is this my neighbor? Is it just someone outside? Or is this active opposition? We know these well.

We've seen them throughout the past orals. Pursue what is good, both for ourselves. We have to look out for ourselves.

This is not good for me. This continued association is tearing down my spiritual life. This pursuit, this activity, this endeavor, this effort is bad for me.

Pursue what is good for ourselves. We have to monitor what we let in and identify what we need to keep out. Pursue what is good for ourselves and for all.

It has to be good for everyone. It can't only be good for me and not them. It can only be good for them and not me.

I cannot throw myself on a grenade and be destroyed and expect God to honor that. That is not the guidance. God will make a way that is good for all of us.

Rejoice always. What's the second fruit of the spirit right after love? Joy. Rejoice always.

Pray ceaselessly. Leaven every thought, every decision, every process with prayer. In everything, give thanks.

This is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. If you are in Christ Jesus, there will always be

something for which we can be thankful. Sometimes to dig ourselves out of a dark hole, that's what we have to do.

The old song, count your blessings, name them one by one. When you count your blessings, we return thanks for them. We express our gratitude to God for them.

Do not quench the spirit. Do not despise prophecies. This is not predictions.

Prophecies are exhortations from the word of God. This is forth telling. This is emphatic presentations of the word.

Don't react if you get a strong dose of the word. I, again, I could do a word study and I did on prophet 2.0 and it's Old Testament antecedents. You can't believe what a long article there is on this in the theological dictionary of the New Testament.

The thing is pages and pages and pages on this verb and it's locus of meaning. But when you boil it all down, it is the emphatic presentation of God's truth. It didn't really even talk about the future until late Christianity, but it's not just someone gently reminding, not just helpfully exhorting.

Prophecy is somebody standing there on their two feet and belting out the word of God right at you. This is the word of God bazooka. Don't resist it.

Don't despise it and don't turn away from it. There are times when we need the hammer of the word of God to smash us in pieces. Don't resist the smashing.

Sometimes it's a comfort, sometimes it's a hammer. Either way, it's all about the word of God. So do not despise strong doses of the word of God.

Test everything. Think your way through life. Hold fast to what is good.

What is good for you, what is good for all. And eschew evil, abstain from every form. There's some part of evil, get away from it, chop it off.

It's the hand, it's the eye, it's the foot. Better to enter into life without that thing than to have it drag you down. That's our response.

Couple of long lessons this morning. Sorry, I'm making up for lost time, but we've concluded our thought here. We're ready to move forward in 2 Timothy 4. Thank you for your patience and your endurance.

And we'll pick up here at this point. Next time, we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the gift of your word, for the presence and power of your spirit, without which we could not possibly handle the truth.

We pray that we can rightly divide the word of truth, that we can see its pertinence and

application in our own lives, that it will produce in us that fruit of the spirit that is the mark of your power at work, in our midst, individually and collectively. We thank you for our fellowship. We thank you for each one who joins with us in that fellowship, in prayer, in enthusiasm, in appreciation, in faith and hope and love.

We pray blessings for each and every one, both in challenge and in opportunity. We pray that in all things, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ will be glorified. We ask it in his name, amen.