

Job 23:12 (James (Jim) Hyland) 209746

Pella Conference: 2003, The Importance of God's Word in Our Lives (23:12)

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In the meeting this afternoon with 303 when Israel by divine command, the pathless desert trod they found throughout the barren land. Assure resource in God 303 if someone could please start it. When is. Providing. Turn with me first of all this afternoon to Second Timothy. Second Timothy Chapter 3. Second Timothy, chapter 3 and verse 15. And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation. Through faith which is in Christ Jesus. And then I want to connect it with a verse in First Peter. First Peter chapter one. First Peter chapter one. And verse 23. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass, The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Just one more portion for now in Job chapter 23. Job chapter 23 and verse 12. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips. I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. Well, I had it on my heart this afternoon to take up really a very simple line of things, but a line of things that I trust brethren will encourage our hearts as to the importance of God's word in our lives. And I want to show how this applies to every aspect. Of our Christian lives, I don't know if we really realize how wonderful it is. To be able to sit here in quiet and peace this afternoon, each with the word of God in their hand. You know, it says in the days of Samuel that the word of the Lord was precious in those days. And there was number, open vision. You know, what makes something precious is its scarcity, its rarity. What makes it a diamond precious? Well, because of its its rarity, that's what makes a gem precious. And the more rare the gem, the more precious it is. And in the days of Samuel, there was no open vision. There was number revelation from God, as it were, and the Word of God was precious because of it. But you know, today the word of God is so prevalent, Bibles can be bought for such a little price. And yet do we really value God's Word? And so as I say, I want to show how the Word of God has a practical effect in every aspect of our lives. And I want to encourage us not only to value God's Word, but to read it every day of our lives. But, you know, whenever we take up a line of truth in the Word of God. It's always good to go back to the beginning. And what is the beginning in our Christian life? Well, the beginning is that time when we came to know the Lord Jesus as our Savior, we were singing about the children of Israel and it's interesting if we were to go back to Exodus. We would find that the children of Israel were under the ***** of Pharaoh and Egypt, a very graphic picture to us of Satan and this world. And God said he was going to deliver his people, and he did. But he told Moses to tell the children of Israel this month shall be unto you the beginning of months. That is, it was going to be a new beginning in the history of Israel. They were no longer going to be under the ***** of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. They were going to be redeemed and become a peculiar treasure to Jehovah. It was a new beginning for them. And that's why I read here in Second Timothy chapter 3. Because here we find that the Apostle Paul writing to Timothy reminds him of the importance of God's word and reminds him that it is the word of God that shows us the way of salvation. And doesn't it rejoice our hearts, brethren, to look back to that time? When we were made familiar with the way of salvation, Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from the time he was a child. We know that he had a God fearing grandmother and a godly mother. I wonder if we value that. Perhaps some of us here were not brought up in Christian homes, but many of us have been brought up in Christian homes. Some of you are being brought up in Christian homes. Oh value mothers and fathers who bring the word of God before us. And so we look back to that time when we came to know the way of salvation. Some here perhaps look back over many years. Other of us look back over a few years. But Timothy was reminded that it was the Holy Scriptures, the word of God, that had shown him the way of salvation. Because how else would we know God's plan of salvation? How else would we know how to be saved apart from the word of God? But it tells us in another place that the the way of righteousness is so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, may not earn. Therein we were singing with the boys and girls this morning. A little child of seven, or even 3 or 4 May enter into heaven through Christ the open door. And so it shows us the way of salvation. But it's more than that. It's through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

Because, you know, I'm afraid there are boys and girls and young people brought up in Christian homes who know the way of salvation. The Bible has been read at the table day in and day out. They've been brought to the meetings week in and week out, and yet they have never put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, if you ask them the way of salvation, they could probably quote some scriptures that they learned in Sunday school. They could tell you how to be saved, but it must be through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. And before we pass on, I might just say if there's someone here this afternoon and you don't know the Lord Jesus as your savior, oh, the way of blessing is open to you. You know, sometimes I have stood up and addressed large companies of people that I feel have never really heard a clear gospel message. Never really known from the word of God the way of salvation. And it is a real challenge and exercise to seek to, as simply as possible and in the power of the Spirit, present the gospel message. But, you know, I sometimes feel it's even more of a challenge when you stand up to preach the gospel to an audience that has heard it from the very days of their youth and perhaps has become hardened and indifferent to it. But then I read the verse in Peter, because this takes us a step further, because here we're told in Peter that it's not only the word of God that shows us the way of salvation, but it's the word of God applied in the power of the Spirit that God uses to impart divine life to us. And so every one of us here today who've been saved by the grace of God, it has been the result of in some way. Hearing or reading the word of God. Because it's the word of God that's living and powerful. Isn't it remarkable to think that there's a book in this world that is living, and this book, the Bible, is the only book that is living? You know every other book written by man. You will eventually be able to exhaust as deep and profound as that book may be after a number of readings. You can get to the bottom of it, but you'll never get to the bottom of a book that's living. That's why for all eternity, while it's true we will no longer know in part and prophecy in part, yet I believe we will have a fresh enjoyment of the precious things of Christ from this blessed book for all eternity. It's the only book that's living. And God takes this book in the power of the Spirit and uses it to impart divine life to us. And it's by the Word. It's the word of the Lord that endureth forever. And this is the word. By which the gospel is preached unto you. That's why we always, when the Gospels presented, encourage people to listen, because he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And it tells us that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But you know, this is only

the beginning. Just as we mentioned with Israel, when they were redeemed people on the banks of the Red Sea, it was a beginning, a new beginning for them. But it was only the beginning. The wilderness was before them. And we find that God then took care of them all through the wilderness. He fed them. He gave them water. He sheltered them from the sun with the pillar of cloud. He sheltered them He kept them safe at night with the pillar of fire. He led them step by step by step. And so we read here in Job. I have esteemed the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food. Because as we've been saying, when we get saved, we're born again. We get a new life, and that life is a perfect life. It's the very life of Christ. It's divine life, but it is a dependent life. That life needs food. If we're going to grow and be healthy, happy, fruitful Christians, the new life needs to be fed.

And God has provided food for that new life. When Israel was in the wilderness, he gave them the manna every day. Now I believe the thought in the wilderness is that there's nothing to sustain life for Israel. They were in a physical wilderness, there was nothing to sustain life. And God gave them the bread from heaven. But brethren, while we don't live in a physical wilderness, far from it we do live in a spiritual wilderness. There's nothing in this world today to feed the Newman all. There's plenty to feed our lusts. There's plenty to feed the flesh. Just seems like you can hardly stand at the checkout counter anymore without seeing something to feed the flesh, the billboards on the highways, something to feed our lusts. But what we need to do is satisfy our souls with the bread of heaven. And what is the bread of heaven? Well, the Lord Jesus leaves us in no doubt because. In John's Gospel, he tells us that the bread that comes down from heaven is the Lord Jesus himself, and we need to feed on Christ every day. Job said there was something more than eating three good meals a day. And I'm not saying good wholesome food isn't proper in our physical lives, but there's something even more important than that, and that is to feed on God's word. You know, I'm so careful to eat three good meals a day and something in between. But what about the spiritual? Are we feeding on Christ? When we were children, we used to sing a little hymn. Feed on God's Word in the morning, Feed on God's Word at noon, Feed on God's Word in the evening to keep your heart in tune. We don't have time to go back to the 16th of Exodus, but if we were to go back there, we have some instructions concerning the gathering of the manna, and we find that the children of Israel were to go out and gather it. Every day. The man that they needed today was not the manna they needed tomorrow. They needed fresh manna every day. And you know, we don't just eat a big meal on Lord's Day and expect it to last us the rest of the week. No, by tomorrow we'll be hungry again the afternoon. We're going to have something to eat again before the Gospel meeting if the Lord will. No, we don't expect one or two meals to suffice us for a whole week or for several days. And so we need to go out every morning and gather the manna. And why were they to go out in the morning? Well, I suggest that it's just this. If we satisfy our souls with the bread of heaven every morning, we're not going to be so vulnerable to those things that are offered to us on every hand. You've heard me say this before, but if I make sure my girls eat a good, healthy breakfast before they go off to school, they're not going to be so apartment at recess to want something that isn't good for them because. Their appetite has been satisfied with good wholesome food. And I want to encourage each of our hearts. We operate in a wicked, evil world, and lots offered to us dangled in front of us on every hand. But let's learn to satisfy our appetites before we go out into the world. And so they were together at each day. And it wasn't the amount they gathered that was important because it says some gathered more and some less. Now if you have time. In the morning, to read two or three chapters. Thank God for it. We need all of the word of God we can get, but some gathered more and some less. You say I don't always have time to read a whole chapter in the morning. I've got to get off to work early and I just don't have time to read a whole lot. But it wasn't what they gathered, the amount they gathered, that was important. It was what they did with it. Because you notice carefully they were to put it into their Omer, a certain measure. And they were to take it with them. And when they dipped into their Omer during the day it says he that gathered much had nothing over. That is again if you have time to read a lot, you'll never have anything over. You need all you can get. But then it says, and he that gathered little had no lack. That is, maybe you only have time to read just a few verses, but take it with you. And I suggest that taking it in your Omer and dipping into it during the day would bring before us the need for meditation. Because it's not enough just to read some scriptures in the morning and close your Bible and never consider what you've read. You know, it's not what we eat that does us any good, it's what we digest, and so we need to take it in. We need to meditate on it.

And David said in the 119th Psalm, oh how I love thy law. It is my meditation all the day. In fact, I went through the psalms of David one time and noted how many times David speaks of the importance of meditation. I can't remember how many times, but a number of times he speaks of the importance of meditation. Just stopping and dipping into your Omer and enjoying what you gleaned in the morning and you'll be surprised. God knew just what you needed for that day, and it takes discipline to do it. Maybe years ago a brother could walk behind the plow or work with his hands at the bench and have his Bible or think about scripture. But you can't run a computer like that. You can't drive down the freeway like that. I realized it takes everything we have. The minute we step out the door in the morning, it just absorbs our being to survive in the work a day world and the society in which we find ourselves. But I just want to encourage you to stop every once in a while. Just think about what you've read. Chew the cud. It was one of the characteristics of a clean animal under the Levitical order that they chewed the cud. And I believe, again, it speaks to us of the importance of meditation. But I said I want to apply this to every part of our lives, and I don't want to, in what I'm going to say now, take away in any way from what I have just said about the importance of every one of us gathering the manna. But I do want to say something. And again, I realize I've said this before, but I believe it is important. It's vital because it's important not just to gather the manna individually, but you know what? Usually when we see a picture, an artist's conception of the gathering of the manna, they usually depict the women gathering the manna. But if you notice in the 16th of Exodus carefully, it was not the women that gathered the manna. It says every man was to gather for himself and for his household. Than those that were in his tent. And I believe, brothers, what it brings before us is responsibility of the head of the home. The man had to get up early and go out and gather the manna up for himself and for his family. And I have the vivid memory of growing up in a Christian home. Where a father got up every morning and sat at the end of the breakfast table so that he could read some scriptures to his children and young people as they trickled out one by one to the breakfast table and hurried off to school. So we got older and went our different ways. Sometimes he had to sit there quite a while, but he sat there every morning. There was a man who gathered for himself and for his household, and he didn't always read us a lot. Maybe it was only two or three verses. Didn't even comment on it lots of times, but he gave us something from the word of God before we went out into this world. And so I want to encourage those of us who are heads of our homes take time. Maybe sometimes the morning isn't the best time, I realize that. But I just want to encourage you every day to take time, gather the family around. It doesn't have to be long. He that gathered little had no lack, Doesn't have to be great things, but just open the word of God. And feed a little of Christ to your family every day. It'll be a tremendous blessing in your household because, you know, whatever we read in this blessed book, the subject is always Christ. I'd like to just say a word about that for a moment before we pass on. Because, you know, whether it's the Old Testament or the New Testament, it's Christ. And that's what feeding on the manna speaks of. It speaks of feeding on Christ. The Lord Jesus said to feed on himself when he was here. How do we feed on Christ? We open this book and we read it, and I believe that we'll receive a blessing if we see Christ in every line.

Oh, it's many things about his person and work. But even in the Old Testament it's Christ. Because when the Lord Jesus ministered to the two on the way to Emmaus, it says, beginning at Moses and the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, that is the Old Testament, all the scriptures. The things concerning himself. It must have been a wonderful exposition of the person and work of Christ that they listen to as they walked along. Later on in that same chapter he even expounded to them from the Psalms the things concerning himself. I love too, when the Ethiopian eunuch was sitting in his chariot, reading the 53rd of Isaiah, and Philip the Evangelist, directed by the Spirit of God, climbs up into the chariot with that man.

The Ethiopian eunuch says to Philip, he says of whom speaketh the prophet of himself or of some other. And I love what it says there, beginning at the same scripture he preached unto him, Jesus, You know, it wouldn't have mattered where that man was reading in the Old Testament. The Evangelists could have begun at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus, because it all speaks of Christ. Oh, I can't overemphasize this enough. Let's learn to feed on God's word every day. Let's learn to open this blessed book, to read it, and to meditate on it. If when I see a Christian who has power and fruit in their lives, a Christian who's growing in their souls, oh, I say there's a Christian that's feeding on God's word. And so Job esteemed the words of his mouth more than his necessary food. And now let's turn over to the 119th Psalm. Psalm 119 and verse 9. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way by taking heed. Thereto, according to thy word with my whole heart have I sought thee. Oh, let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee? Well, we've spoken of how it's the word of God that shows us the way of salvation. We've seen, too, that it's the word of God applied in the power of the Spirit. That God uses to impart divine life to us. We've spoken at some length of how the word of God is then food, sustenance for our souls, for the divine life. But now I want to speak of it in connection with refreshment or cleansing. Here we find How shall a young man cleanse his way? You know we live, we operate in a world of defilement, and we become defiled by the things that we see. And the things that we hear as we operate in this world every day. And so we need the word of God for cleansing. It's the truth of feet washing that we speak so often about you. Remember in the 13th chapter of John the Lord Jesus, in preparation for his departure out of this world and leaving the disciples here in the world, He brings before them many things in what we often refer to. As the upper room ministry. And the very first thing he brings before them is the truth of feet washing because he was going to leave the disciples in a world of defilement and sin. But he says there is a way that communion can be maintained. There is a way where there can be refreshment and cleansing and it's to let him wash our feet. And again, how do we let him wash our feet? We must open this book and read it every day. It's the washing of water by the Word. And so the Lord impressed upon the disciples the fact that their feet were going to get dirty as they walked through this world. And I'm not talking about physical because it wasn't really physical feet washing that the Lord was bringing before them, but it was in a spiritual sense. I say that because in that chapter it says. What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. What does that verse mean? Well, what that verse really means is the Lord says, you know I'm washing your feet physically, but you're not going to understand the real significance of feet washing until the Spirit of God comes, and then you'll understand. You're not going to understand it now, but after the Spirit of God comes, you'll know what I'm saying, and you'll understand the need for feet washing. And so wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way by taking heed thereto? According to thy word, there was an elderly brother at home, my home assembly for many years. He's with the Lord now, but he used to tell us that when he came home from the office, he always needed a good wash And he wasn't talking about soap and water. He was talking about the washing of water by the word. I remember standing in line at a conference going in for the noon meal, and some were talking and one brother said, you know, I've got a memory like a sieve.

The other brothers said, well, that's why you need to keep the water running through it. We've often heard about the basket. The basket doesn't retain the water, but the water keeps the basket clean. The sieve doesn't hold the water, but the water keeps the sieve from becoming defiled. Oh brethren, we need the cleansing effect that the word of God has on our hearts. And then he says thy word. Have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee? I just want to say a word in connection with the heart. Because, you know, this book that we're speaking of, it was not merely written for our intellect. Oh, it's true. There needs to be a knowledge we are to grow in grace. And the knowledge we need a knowledge of this book. We need to be able to enumerate the fundamental doctrines of scripture. It'll keep us. It'll preserve us, but not in itself. We need to let this book sink down into our hearts. This book was really written for our hearts. I sometimes put it this way. What the entrance of the word is the conscience. Because the I'm sorry, the entrance of the word is the mind. Because, as I say, there must be a knowledge. The entrance is the mind, the channel is the conscience. Because the conscience must always be reached and the dwelling place is the heart. I'm going to repeat that because I think it's important. The entrance of the truth is the mind, the channel is the conscience, and the dwelling place is the heart. And when the truth enters in that way, then I believe it has a practical, purifying effect on our lives. It has a moral effect on our lives. Why is it so often I walk contrary to the word of God? Is it because I don't know the word of God? Well it might be, but not necessarily. Often it's because the truth of God hasn't affected my conscience and my heart. But when the truth of God dwells in the heart, then it keeps us Thy word. Have I hid not in my mind, but in my heart that I might not sin against thee? Just go over a little further in this Psalm to the 105th verse. Psalm 119 and verse 105. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Well, now we have something a little different. We have the word of God as life and instruction for our pathway here. Because, you know, after we get saved, there's a path of faith and service for each one of us. You know, there's a nice progression in the Psalms with David in the 27th Psalm. David said, teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path. I trust that's the desire of everyone, of our hearts here. No matter how young we are, if we know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, He has a path of faith and service for us, and he delights. When we have that desire to know what His will is, then we find in this chapter in this Psalm, he recognizes that it's the word of God that's going to show him the way of salvation. In fact, it's interesting this Psalm. It's the longest chapter in the Bible. The headings are the are the headings of the are the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. And in every verse I counted one time. In almost every verse I think there's one or two. But in almost every verse there's some mention of the word of God either called commandments or statutes or thy precepts or thy word or thy law, some reference to God's word. We might say we've got it all from A-Z. And where are we going to get all this instruction? Oh, we're going to get it from God's Word. It's God's word. Oh, they have their counselors at school. And those guidance counselors may be very helpful in connection with our courses and a vocation and so on, but they often just give the wisdom of this world. But we have one whose very name is Counselor, one who knows the end from the beginning. And then we come to the 143rd Psalm, and he says something a little further there. He says, I think it's the tenth verse. Teach me to do thy will. Not just teach me thy will or teach me thy way, but teach me to do thy will. Because, you know, sometimes we might have a real desire to know the Lord's mind. And then he shows us something and we hold back and say, now, Lord, I wouldn't mind if it wasn't something like that. Maybe we feel it's too great a step and so we hold back. But David said no. When you show me, he said, then give me the grace to walk in it, to take that step, whether it's a big step or whether it's a little step, just to take that step.

And to walk in obedience to it. And it says in all thy ways acknowledge him. And he shall direct thy paths. It tells us if any man desire to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, because he wants to show us. And brethren, how can we think we can go through life, and we don't need direction from our Maker. Oh, Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh to direct his footsteps. How can we think that we can choose our own way and that we really know what's best? He's the Potter. We're the clay. And isn't it a blessed thing just to follow his direction and let him do what he will in our lives? So he says, Thy word is a lamp unto my feet. That is, it shows us one step at a time. If you have a flashlight and you're about to start out and walk through a dark field on a dark night, you might look ahead and say, well, it's a mile or two I have to go, and this light only shines a few feet in front of me. Oh, what's the secret? You just hang on to that light and keep walking, and that light will be sufficient light to guide you to the other side of that field. You might start out to drive on a dark night, and you have several miles to drive. And you say, well, it's a pretty dark night. Well, what's the secret? Well, as long as the car keeps moving and the headlights are on, those headlights that only shine a few 100 feet at a time, those headlights are going to be sufficient to get you to your destination. And so His word is a lamp unto our feet. We need to read it every day. We need to seek to walk in obedience to it. Why is it so often I want to know the will of God in my life, and I don't. Well, you know, I've talked to young people. And I've heard young people say, had people, young people, say to me, you know, I'd like to know the mind of the Lord for me in my life, something. I want to know his will, some steps, some decision. But then you talk to them a while and you find out they're not reading God's word. We'll never know the mind of the Lord for us. We'll never know the path He has for us apart from reading His word. And I want to just say this, too, that it's not sporadic reading of the word of God that God uses to direct us. It's not enough when we're faced with some situation or decision to put the Bible on the table. And let it fall open and hope that our eyes are going to land on some scripture that God is going to use to direct us or answer our question. Now God is able to take care of us in our weakness. And I have heard stories, and perhaps you have two of people that have done that, and the Lord very graciously has come in for them. But I believe that really the way we're directed in our path of faith is when we orderly and consistently read the word of God. Open it each day. Read it consistently and orderly. And I know you've experienced this. Maybe you were just reading in the place where you were your daily reading was, and all of a sudden they're on the page is the answer to some problem, some question, some step you wanted to know what to do, and there it was. Maybe that verse never meant that to you before. Maybe it'll never mean that to anybody else. But there was the answer on the pages of God's Word. Oh, I say read it orderly and consistently. So thy word is a lamp unto my feet, but it's also a light unto my path that is, brethren, it's sufficient for the whole journey. And this word today, this Bible we hold in our hands, is sufficient light to guide us and direct us even in the year 2003. It says in Peter, it's the present truth, it's relevant for the day in which we live, and it shows us the end of the journey. It's a light unto our path. And you know they'll never be such a thing as saying the day is so dark that we don't have light for our pathway. If the day ever gets that dark, the Lord will take us out. But this book is sufficient to guide us right to the very end. We don't need anything, anything else. Now let's turn to Acts Chapter 2.

Acts chapter 2 and verse 42. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. Just hold your finger here. I want to read a verse in First Corinthians chapter 14. First Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 3. But he that prophesy speaketh unto men to edification. Exhortation and comfort. Well, we've spoken of the importance of God's word in our lives individually. We've even spoken of it in connection with the family circle and how important the word of God is there. But now I'd like to speak of it collectively, because here we find what characterized the early believers after the day of Pentecost, they continued steadfastly. Or if you notice Mr. Darby's translation. They persevered in these things. And these things are what we might say are the assembly meetings, the meeting ministry, breaking of bread and prayers. And I was particularly thinking of it here in connection with ministry. But I might just say this too in a general way before I comment as to what is particularly on my heart in reading this scripture. And that is that it's important, brother and I believe, to plan our lives around the assembly. Some of us were speaking of this this morning in connection with Acts 20 and how those believers in pro as when their obligations were over on the first day of the week, they wound through the streets of Troas with the third loft in mind and the thought of being able to break bread to remember the Lord Jesus on the first day of the week. They value that privilege, no doubt. And brethren, I believe as I say, we need to plan our lives. Yes, around the Lord, that's true. But around the assembly too, You know, I'm thankful that I grew up in a home where our lives were planned. Around the assembly, I believe I can honestly say before God, I never remember sitting at a dinner table on meeting night and there being a question raised as to whether we were going to meeting or not. It was just assumed that because it was Tuesday night prayer meeting or Thursday night reading meeting that after the dinner was over we would get ready. And we would go to the assembly meeting. Oh, there were times when through extenuating circumstances, some are all of the family were not able to be there. But you know, as I look back, I realized that I knew even at a young age, what was important to my parents. I knew that they value the assembly meetings and those times set aside to be in the presence of the Lord Jesus. What I fear today is. That we plan our lives and then try to work in the Assembly brethren. It doesn't work. And especially in the day in which we live, we're on this treadmill of society that's being cranked up faster and faster and faster. And the enemy doesn't want you to be with your brethren around the person of Christ on those occasions set aside in the assembly. Oh, let's learn to value the assembly meetings. I know it takes perseverance. They persevered in these things. I know sometimes it's easy to say, well, we're just too tired or there's too much pressure, but oh, how well you'll be repaid. Sometimes perhaps we feel well, we bring our children, and our children just fall asleep in the assembly meetings. Better that they were home in bed, I say. We're better for our children to fall asleep than in the quiet and order of the assembly. We're better for our children to fall asleep than in the presence of the Lord Jesus. When we're together collectively. And so they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine. That is, they had to receive the ministry orally in their day because they didn't have the completed word of God. And not only so, but probably very few of them could read certainly no PhDs in the assembly in those days. In fact, I believe that that's why Timothy later on was told to give attendance to reading, to exhortation to doctrine and neglect not the gift that was in him. That really was public reading of and ministry of the word of God. It was vital and necessary in the early church.

And brethren, as we've been saying, it's important to read the word of God for ourselves. But I believe, just as with the early brethren, it is important for us to be in the assembly when there are times set aside for ministry of God's Word. Because while the assembly doesn't teach, it's in the assembly we learn as taught by the Spirit of God. The assembly is to be the pillar and ground of the truth. And I would just suggest this too, that in the assembly, when the spirit of God is given liberty to minister the word, we get a balance, like perhaps we get nowhere else. I say that because there's there are many who will put a man up at the front and they'll get one aspect of the truth. They'll get part of the truth, but there's nobody to balance it. If he makes a mistake, ministers, things that are wrong, there's nobody to check it or correct it. But you know, when the Spirit of God is given liberty in the assembly, why there's a balance and a check. If I say something that's wrong, another by the Spirit of God can correct it. We're thankful for those who can bring out the doctrinal principles of Scripture. Others can make practical applications. Others can bring out the Old Testament types for us. And so we get that balance. And you know, it's like Ephraim. It

says Ephraim is a cake, not turned. You know, if you put a cake on the griddle and you don't turn it, it's going to get too well done on one side and not enough on the other. And I have noticed man is an extremist by nature. And I've noticed that those who do not avail themselves of ministry in the assembly are often like that. They get off on one side of the truth, they get off on a tangent of things, but they don't have that balance that we get when the spirit of God is given liberty in the assembly. But perhaps you say, well, you know, sometimes in the little home assembly there doesn't seem to be a lot of gift and not much explanation or real ministry. Oh, be careful, brethren. You know, one of the great sins of Israel in the wilderness was that they got to the point where they despised the simple manner that God gave them. And let's be careful that we don't despise the simple manner that God gives in the local assembly. Oh, it may be given in ever so feeble away. But the word of God hasn't changed. The Spirit of God is there and the Lord is there, and he can meet our need if we're really exercised. And so let's be careful that we don't despise the simple manner and that we avail ourselves of those times set aside for ministry. But then I read in First Corinthians 14, because again, in this chapter he takes up the collective side of things, what we have in First Corinthians 14. Is instruction as to ministry and prayer in the assembly, public ministry and public prayer. And he tells us here that ministry in the assembly is to be for the edification, exhortation and comfort of the Saints of God. Are encouragement. These three things ought to characterize everything that is said in the assembly and I believe, for those of us who take part in the assembly, whether it's locally or on a wider sphere. I believe it is good every time we open our mouths to consider this scripture. Is this for the edification or the exhortation or comfort of the brethren? That is what is to characterize ministry in the assembly. But it's interesting the order here. God doesn't list things haphazardly. There's always an order in the list that he gives. And we find here that the first thing is edification. Because I suggest that whatever other character Ministry takes, and we do need correction, we do need instruction, we do need admonishment and exhortation and so on. But whatever other character ministry might take on the overall character of everything we say, brother, is for the ought to be for the edification of the people of God. And I think it's a good test. Is this for the edification of the people of God? If it really isn't, I ought not to say it. And so it's for edification. That is, it's for building up, because that's what edification means and edit. You think of an edifice, a building, a structure, and how are the Saints going to be built up? How are we going to build ourselves up in our most holy faith? Again, we need the word of God in our private lives, but we need it in the assembly as well. Does this build up the Saints of God and brethren? Isn't that what we need? We don't need tearing down.

There's enough to tear down and discourage the people of God. What we need is building up. But then there is something else. He speaks of exhortation because, you know, we want to be faithful too, in ministering the word of God, and sometimes we need to be exhorted. Someone has said edification is building up, but exhortation is stirring up. And, you know, sometimes we do need to be stirred up. We get lethargic. We just get coasting along sometimes. And, you know, we don't like exhortation today. No, we like to, as they says in Isaiah's prophecy unto us, smooth things. Oh, we like to hear something that sounds nice, something that doesn't prick our conscience. But sometimes the conscience needs to be stirred. So we need exhortation, and we need comfort or encouragement. Don't we need encouragement in the day in which we live? There's so much to discourage, but we have the God of all comfort or the God of all encouragement. So if I could sum it up this way, edification is building up. Exhortation is stirring up and comforter. Encouragement is binding up, and we need those three things when we come together for ministry in the assembly. Well, we've spoken of the word of God in various aspects of our lives and its practical moral effect. But I would like to conclude our meeting this afternoon by reading one further portion as a warning. It's found in the Book of Jeremiah, chapter 13. Jeremiah, chapter 13 and verse 15. Hear ye and give ear. Be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before he caused darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains. While you look for light, he turneth it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride and mine eyes shall weep sore and rundown with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive. Well, as I say, I reread this at the end of the meeting as a warning, because you know there have been many true believers that I have known in my lifetime. Who had the word of God? They had its light and instruction, and they refused it. And you know, they're stumbling on the dark mountains today. They've come to situations in their lives that just seem insurmountable, and they're looking for light, but they're not finding it because they refuse the life of God's word. What a sad thing I can think of young people that I grew up with and they came up in Christian home like myself. They sat in the assembly meetings, but they turned their back on God's word. And Jeremiah says when you do that, there comes a point, All I can do is weep for you. As many young people, I weep for today, as many of my own generation, I weep for today. Oh, I want to beg you don't turn your back on God's word. There's children here this afternoon. There's young people I know we don't always value the word of God when we're younger. I know we don't always value being brought up in a Christian home. And a reading around the table once or twice a day. We don't always value being brought to the assembly meetings and parents that bring the word of God faithfully to bear on our consciences and on our hearts. But all I want to encourage you learn to evaluate it. It's a blessed privilege and walk in the light of God's word. If you don't, you'll find yourself stumbling on the dark mountains and you'll want light and you won't be able to find it. Well, I trust these scriptures we've looked at very quickly this afternoon. Will encourage our hearts rather than, as we said at the beginning of the meeting, we have a wonderful book in our hands. We have the living word of God, and it never changes. A lot of changes in this world today. But there's something that never changes. And you know, men have tried to eradicate this book from the earth. They've tried to burn it and get rid of it. You know they'll never do it because the originals in heaven forever. O Lord, Thy word is settled in.

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