

Education of the Lord's servant (2 Tim. 2)

Part 1

Speaker	Jeff Brett
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[00:00:00] Verse 5. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

Galatians chapter 4. Verse 19. Galatians 4. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you. And finally 2nd Corinthians chapter 10, just a page or two back. Verse 1. Now I, Paul, myself, beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent and bold toward you. But I beseech you that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold [00:01:01] against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Chapter 11, verse 28. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. I want to speak tonight, dear brethren, on the education of the Lord's servant. And I want you to realize that it's [00:02:06] an education that never stops. It goes on, I believe, until the Lord takes us out of the sphere of service. I believe the term, the Lord's servant, is something that is open to every one of us, but carries with it the dignity of the one with whom we serve, and of necessity, the responsibility of being his servant. And the scriptures make it perfectly clear that there are certain things that a servant of the Lord may not do, and there is a character that the Lord's servant should ever exhibit. I bring this subject before you, dear brethren, because I feel it [00:03:11] necessary to point out that the day in which we live is putting many of us in a position of exercise as before the Lord, where on one hand what is right according to God's Word is perfectly clear, but the wisdom and the grace to apply that truth to present circumstances is a matter of intense exercise. The reason for this is that whilst the Word of God lays before us that which is true, and must ever abide, and is the only standard by which we can conduct ourselves, it is perfectly [00:04:09] evident nonetheless that the characteristic of the day in which we live in, whether we take account of that which is outside, or that which is professedly true of those that confess Jesus as Lord, the sphere of profession, it is perfectly evident that when the Lord in his wisdom, in government, sees fit that his saints should reap what they have sown, it is not always clear, and it is not always easy to apply the letter of Scripture. Let me give you an illustration of what [00:05:06] I'm talking about, one that I have never heard anybody refer to from the platform. Hosea, in his day, was one of the few men of God, but he lived in a day when nationally the children of Israel had turned away from their true husband, and had gone a-whoring after other gods, and Hosea was told to marry a harlot. Have you ever considered for a moment the feelings and the exercise of a man of God, who in order that he might experience in his own spirit the feelings of Jehovah for [00:06:09] his people, was told to do something that he knew was wrong? It is

one thing to have a clear direction where you can spell out in actual words what has to be done. It's a different matter when the word of God has to be applied in a way that is relevant to the God's feelings about his people. I believe, dearly beloved brethren, that unless we approach any difficulty or any circumstance from the [00:07:01] starting point of the Lord's feelings about it, then I question whether we will ever rightly deal with those circumstances. So very often, when one comes against a problem, it is so easy to look at those problems and deal with them according to my feelings. One's exercise is that we should be more concerned with the Lord's feelings. I read to you an incident in the life of Samuel. One is always encouraged, you know, when you've got an exercise before the Lord, when in gathering together in a prayer meeting, or having the privilege of being a second speaker, having listened to the first, [00:08:03] to find references made to the very scriptures that you think the Lord has laid on your heart. It's very easy, you know, when you're asked to take a meeting, to take for granted that you've got a word. It's a very different matter to be the Lord's mouthpiece at any one given moment. Dear Robert this afternoon referred to Matthew 11, and our dear brother Frank in prayer upstairs referred to Samuel. The Lord is good. The days of Samuel, you know, were very difficult days. It was the kind of in-between bit, between the judges and the bringing in of God's anointed. But it was a very, very difficult day. The priesthood had failed. The lamp of God was going out. And the priesthood had been corrupted by two wicked men. [00:09:14] But God was there. But the true condition of Israel is brought before us at the beginning of the book of Samuel, under the picture of a barren woman. But a woman who sought Jehovah's face.

And when God answered her prayer, was used in a remarkable way, not only to provide the one who brought about recovery, but who in her prayer prophesied concerning the one who would execute judgment and justice, and who would be strengthened, the Lord's anointed, a king. Long before there was a king of Israel. [00:10:05] God always had in mind the king for his people. The man after his own heart. But before Israel could have, as a king, the man after God's own heart, they had to realise their own dreadful condition. So God gave them a king after their own heart. And that brought about tremendous exercise amongst those who were seeking to be true to Jehovah.

I made reference to Hosea. In the 12th chapter of Hosea, verse 13, he says concerning Saul, that God gave them a king in his anger, and he took him away in his wrath.

[00:11:01] And he was the only king of Israel that was anointed from a vial. All the rest were anointed from a horn. Horns speak of salvation. Vials speak of judgment. When God acceded to the request of Israel for a king, he was moving in a way to bring before them their true condition, in order that there might be repentance, and in order that the scene might be set for the bringing in of God's anointed. Brethren, in many ways, we pass through similar experiences and exercises.

They came to Samuel when he was old, and they said to him, Samuel, your sons don't walk in your ways. That was nasty, wasn't it? I wonder what Samuel felt when he heard those words.

[00:12:13] Bearing in mind that many years previous to that, he himself had been the one to whom the word of the Lord had come, concerning the evil of Eli's children, and the judgment that was going to be inflicted upon them, and the terrible circumstances that ensued just after that, when Israel lost the ark. God said to him, everybody that hears of this, his ears will ring.

But in the midst of those conditions, the prophet Samuel had to know what his demeanor was, and his rightful place of service.

[00:13:08] The thing that they said displeased Samuel. He knew it was wrong. Give us a king who will judge us and lead us out like the nations.

And Samuel got to the Lord about it, and the Lord told him what he was doing. He said, hearken to their voice. Give them a king.

But protest to them the manner of the king. And we read, did we not, the six times when Samuel had to tell them, he will take, he will take, he will take, he will take. Later on in this book, David writes an epitaph over the days of Saul. [00:14:01] He said we inquired not of the ark all the days of Saul. And so the Spirit of God builds up a picture of what was true of the days of Saul. Saul couldn't defeat the Philistines. He had a bit of excess with the Ammonites. But he never subdued the Philistines.

Only David could deal with the Philistines. The last enemy of God's old people, the Philistines.

Only David could deal with the Philistines. Saul couldn't. He wasn't man enough for it. He wasn't real enough.

But what about poor old Samuel? When the people came to him with that request, and he knew that this was a great evil, [00:15:06] and yet the Lord said to him, do it.

You know, if that had been you and I, the chances are we'd have shrugged our shoulders, threw our clothes round about us, and walked away and said I'm not having anything to do with that, it's wrong.

But Samuel didn't do that.

He stood for what was right. And he got to the Lord about what was happening. And he was the very man that anointed the king. A very difficult situation. He could have been branded by the people of Israel as being the biggest hypocrite in the midst of them. Samuel, you told us this was all wrong! [00:16:02] And yet you're the man who's anointed the king. See, it's not an easy thing to be the Lord's servant.

We read, did we not, how that Samuel protested to them, and how that when he presented the king to them, he asked them in that chapter, who have I defrauded, who have I oppressed, of whose hand have I taken a bribe? And they said none of us.

He exhorts them not to turn away from the Lord because of God's great kindness. They were his people and the Lord would not give them up. And then he says those words, but as for me, God forbid that I should cease to pray for the people, but I will teach you the good and the right way. [00:17:05] You see, dear brethren, what I'm trying to get at. Samuel was in a very difficult position.

Just like poor old Hosea, linked up with that which was defiling him. And yet, because they got to the Lord about it, and got to know the mind of God about it, got to know how God felt about it, God said to Samuel, Samuel, they haven't rejected you, they've rejected me.

But Samuel was led to feel what that rejection involved. And dear brethren, that is one of the things that the Lord's servant must always do in his service. He must learn to look at circumstances relative to the Lord's feelings. [00:18:02] Ere he can be at all useful in bringing about recovery or remedy or service in those circumstances. We read, did we not, also concerning John the Baptist. Here again

you see exhibited for us similar principles.

One of the most difficult things that the servant of the Lord has to contend with in his service is disappointment. When things do not turn out the way that we had prayed for, and that we had been in exercise about, that things almost seem as though they've gone in the opposite direction. Dear John the Baptist, how faithful he had been in his testimony. [00:19:06] Not only as to the person of Christ, but as to his own position. When they came to him and said, art thou the Christ? He said, I am not. He. Again they persisted, art thou he that should come? I am not. Art thou he? No.

He said he must increase, I must decrease.

And he found himself in prison.

A state of doubt crept into his mind. I suppose we're right in saying that. And he sent his disciples to the Lord with that question, art thou he should come or should we look for another? [00:20:07] Things had not turned out the way that John had anticipated.

And the Lord sent him a message back that only he would understand.

Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me.

He sealed his testimony with his life.

But what about that man John? What sort of person was he? The Lord Jesus defended, as it were, the character of John. When he asked that question, what went he out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

[00:21:02] Is that what you expected to see when you went out to John in the wilderness? A man that was influenced in his testimony by any little whim or fancy that came his way?

No. John was not a reed that was blown hither and thither, to quote Ephesians, by every word of doctrine, by every little thought. And again the Lord said, what went he out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? A man that was concerned by his own personal comfort or circumstances or companions?

No, John wasn't that sort of person. He was not a socialist.

[00:22:04] He wasn't a Tory either.

No, he was a man. We read of him, do we not? Girt about with a linen girdle.

In the wilderness, locusts and wild honey were his food. A lonely man.

But he was the man to whom the word of the Lord came to in the wilderness. A prepared servant. But a servant whose education went on right till the end. When he is here acclaimed by the Lord as being more than a prophet. But it cost him his life.

And in this chapter we are directed to the perfect servant. [00:23:01] We were reminded this afternoon

that it is at that time when the Lord Jesus, taking account of those cities wherein most of his mighty works had been done, and that they had not repented. The scripture says at that time he said, I thank thee.

O Father, for thus it seemed good in thy sight.

That's it, isn't it?

It's not what's right in my eyes. It's not what's right in my brethren's eyes. It's not a matter of my reputation or what people will think of me. It is what is right in the Lord's eyes and what is his will in the circumstances.

And the Lord Jesus recognised those. [00:24:03] He could at that moment have quoted the words of the Old Testament prophet who said, I have spent my strength for naught, I have laboured in vain. He could have said those words. And many there may be alive today who may say the same things, although I doubt whether any of us could say I have spent my strength. But there might be many of us who say I have laboured in vain if we look outwardly for results. But you see not only is the Lord doing his work, he is fashioning and fitting and conditioning his servants according to himself.

And so it is at the end of this wonderful chapter, the Lord Jesus closes with these words, [00:25:01] Come unto me.

And you will notice that I changed the authorised to what it should be. Learn from me.

Dear brethren, it's not enough to learn of him. That is good in fact.

And I don't want anybody to take me wrong or get offended. It is not sufficient to learn even of the scriptures.

We have to learn from the Lord.

I remember a dear brother once pointing out the difference of these little prepositions. You can learn of a person or of a thing by reading about it in a book. But to learn from a person, you've got to be in his company.

[00:26:09] It's not only brethren what we know and the doctrine and the truth, but it is having learned those things in his presence and having the wisdom and the ability in the power of the spirit to apply that truth at any given moment in a way that will bring about the Lord's mind and what the Lord is doing in those circumstances, even though he may be sorting us all out.

I closed with a few references to Paul.

It is astonishing that when you follow through this subject, you very often find that the character of the Lord's servant [00:27:03] has to be the very opposite to the character or the circumstances that are his sphere of service.

We started by reading those words of Paul to that young man Timothy, nearly the last words that Paul wrote, his closing message, warning Timothy that in the last days perilous times shall be. Some

of you may know that that word perilous could be translated fierce. It's only used once else in scripture, the description of the two demoniac men. I think that's Mark's gospel, isn't it?

It says of them, they were exceeding fierce. It's the same word. [00:28:04] Mr Vine translates it, times that are hard to bear.

Samuel found that, didn't he?

Hosea found that, didn't he?

John Baptist found that.

The Lord found that. Do we?

If you don't, the chances are you are not in the current of the Lord's mind. Those that are walking near to the Lord in this day will find these days difficult days.

Days fraught with problems and difficulties, exercises, perplexities, sorrows and divisions.

Difficult days.

[00:29:04] And it is over against those difficult fierce conditions that Paul says that the Lord's servant must not quarrel.

That's the word.

The Lord's servant must not quarrel.

But be meek, gentle, patient.

Relying not on his own ability, his not ability to crush or to submit others by force or outward ability.

But in meekness and in gentleness, looking to the Lord to bring about that repentance that only the Spirit of God can produce in those who may be at any one time opposing the truth. [00:30:03] And thus they will be rescued from their position of being ensnared by the devil. I rather think myself according to the will of God. I don't think the devil can take you or I into his snare when he likes. But it is terribly searching to have to confess that in the governmental ways of God he may see fit for any one of us because of our ways and our walk and our habits to deal with us in a very solemn way.

Perilous times.

The servant of the Lord in those conditions must not quarrel. He must be gentle, kind, meek, looking to the Lord to bring about repentance in the hearts of those that oppose [00:31:06] while he himself ministers the truth of God. We can do no more.

Think of Paul himself in writing to the Philippians. There was a problem at Philippi although he deals with it wonderfully graciously.

Although he does go as far as naming two persons. But in the midst of those circumstances where there was a bit of a problem there at Philippi he exhorts, Let your moderation be made known unto all men. The Lord is at your elbow. Which is a literal translation of what it means. It doesn't mean the Lord is soon coming. That isn't the meaning of the Lord is near. It literally means the Lord is right there. He is right at your elbow. So there is no need for you and I [00:32:02] so to speak to get out of our barrel about things. Paul admonishes.

Let your gentleness.

Let your yieldingness. We are not talking about giving up the truth. Oh no.

That isn't what he is referring to. We have to contend earnestly for the truth. That's a different word.

But in regard to our relationships with one another with all men Paul says here let your gentleness your reasonableness your moderation be made known unto all.

The Lord is near.

Think of what Paul had to contend with at Galatia. They were eating and devouring one another.

[00:33:03] He said I would travel again in birth for you that Christ might be formed in you.

See the contrast.

How beautifully Paul seeks to convey to those Galatians his feelings toward them to write their feelings toward him and to one another. He was prepared so to speak to start all over again. Go right back to the beginning.

If the end result would be that Christ was being formed in them.

Beloved brethren, what do we know about these things? Where do you and I stand in this matter?

[00:34:03] In order that Christ might be formed in you and in me are we prepared to lay ourselves out as Paul did.

He said I would travel again in birth for you that Christ might be formed in you.

Think of what was going on at Corinth. So much had to be condemned.

They were lordly.

They didn't come behind in any gift. They had astonishing ability at Corinth. They were very knowledgeable.

But he said I don't want to know anything about you. And when I came into your midst I knew nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And after there had been a measure of recovery at the end of that second letter listen to what he says. [00:35:03] He says I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

If you and I had attacked that problem knowing the sort of persons that they were at Corinth we would probably have concluded what is the good of addressing such persons in the meekness and gentleness of Christ. But that's looking at things from a human gauge.

Paul goes on to explain why he didn't.

He could have come amongst them, you know, with a rod. He had the authority as an apostle. But he says I don't want to come amongst you like that.

And he goes on to explain, he says, [00:36:02] the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. Not that they would have been carnal with Paul because he had the authority of an apostle.

He says the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They are not according to men. He says but they are mighty and they have the ability to pull down strongholds and every imagination that exalts itself against the knowledge of God with a view to bringing every thought into submission to the obedience of Christ.

How far Paul had gone.

Nearing the end of his life. Bearing in mind the sort of person that he was himself. He refers to himself in the first letter to Timothy as a violent, overbearing man. [00:37:03] He refers to a period in his life when he was exceeding mad. He was a monster.

He was.

But he became the bombshell of Jesus Christ.

He got a sight of a Christ in glory.

And he not only demolished the world he demolished Saul of Tarsus.

He came to that point where he said in effect for me to live is Christ.

At the end of his life they all turned away from him. There he was shut up in prison. Only Luke was with him.

[00:38:04] Outwardly a broken hearted man.

Only Luke is with me.

All in Asia have turned away from me.

Did he change?

No because we also read, did we not? I know you are going to tell me that I am getting my historical points muddled up but it doesn't matter. Writing also to those Corinthians in that chapter 11 he lists those things because of what they were.

He spoke of them because he was forced to speak of them. He says I will be a fool for Christ. And he reminds them of those things that he had suffered as being the Lord's servant.

And he finishes up by saying apart from all these things outwardly that come upon me [00:39:04] that which cometh upon me daily the burden, the care of the assemblies.

Didn't alter it.

Outwardly it all looked as though it had failed. But as far as Paul was concerned he remained constant in his care for the assemblies.

And you know he penned those words This light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far and exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look.

While we look.

That reasoning you know brethren doesn't work if you are looking down here or if you are looking round there or if you are looking in here. But if you are looking up there [00:40:01] while we look not on the things which are transient and passing but on the things which are eternal.

And thus he could say this light affliction Paul you are out of your mind. Yes he was out of his mind. He was in Christ. This light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

The education of the servant goes on. It's not easy beloved brethren. Anyone who takes up something from the Lord has to know the mind of the Lord in the circumstances and has to conduct himself as the master preaching and teaching the Lord's people [00:41:02] looking to the Lord to bring about that acknowledgement of the truth inwardly that only the Holy Spirit of God can bring about. The Lord give us grace to go on in this manner until the Lord should come.