

1Tim 23-07-16a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 16th of July, 2023. We're in the book of 1 Timothy.

We have just started this great letter from the Apostle Paul to his son in the faith, Timothy. We'll be picking up this morning in verses three and four. We'll take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and then we'll begin.

Father, we are so grateful for the many ways that you express your love and your faithfulness toward us. We are completely unworthy. We have nothing to bring of our own, but we have all things in Christ.

We are accepted in the beloved. We share his sonship. We share his status as an heir.

We have become priests. We have an inheritance. We have meaning and purpose and definition in our lives, both now and in the ages to come.

We're grateful for all of those things. We're grateful that you convert this affliction with which we now suffer into an eternal weight of glory. We learn, we grow in grace and knowledge.

Our minds are transformed through the presence of your spirit and the power of your word. We pray this morning as we look at this portion of the scriptures that the Holy Spirit will impress it on our hearts, give us clarity of understanding, perception to see its truth in the world around us and its meaning for us personally by way of our motivation and our priorities that we can use the time as good stewards to be prepared for service and function in this life and the life to come. We pray it in Jesus name, amen.

I am excited to be in this letter to Timothy with you. It is so pertinent and so helpful. I have already enjoyed it greatly.

We have seen the greeting, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ and almost uniquely, he says by the commandment of God, our savior. And this is a declaration of apostolic authority. And that is important because we have challenges to that authority.

There are people who are teaching and saying things about the Christian faith, about the Lord Jesus Christ, about the gospel that are not from the Lord Jesus. They are not from apostles. And in order to try to get these across, people have to attack the understanding that has been expressed about the Lord Jesus and the source of that apostolic teaching.

So there are challenges to Paul's authority. Does this happen in the modern day? Are there attacks on the letters of Paul as not being authentic? Yes, there are. Are there attacks on the content? Well, it was cultural, it only had meaning at the time.

He's misogynistic, he should have been married and he would have been more sympathetic to women. He has an agenda to change the gospel according to Christ and make it the gospel according to Paul and Paul's emphasis and Paul's teaching differs from that of the Lord Jesus. We need to diminish Paul and we need to elevate Christ.

It reminds you of the first chapter of 1 Corinthians where people begin to divide up and say, well, I am of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I am of Cephas, the Peter, I am of Christ. And Paul says, you're getting your eyes off of Christ. What is important? So the first thing Paul does here is establish his apostolic authority, Paul and apostle of Jesus Christ, because of this use of the Greek preposition kata, kata, the gloss, the default translation is according to.

But it's very interesting the use of this because according to the command, and this word command is epitage, E-P-I-T-A-G-E, you don't really have to remember that except that, this is an authoritative command and this word was used for commands that came from a God or a king. And it rises to the level of a decree. This was used in Mark 1, verse 27, when the people see Jesus casting out demons and so the people are amazed and they question among themselves saying, what is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority, he commands epitage, even the demons, the unclean spirits, and they obey him.

It is used similarly in Luke chapter eight, verse three. It is used in secular Greek to refer to commands that were given by both people and gods. There are inscriptions that use this very phrase, kata epitage, according to the command or because of the command, and it would be translated by order of, when you would see these decrees, by order of King Henry, this is what's going to happen.

In the Septuagint, it is used five times and four of those are in the book of Esther. You remember how important the decrees of King Xerxes are in that book? Well, when they translated that from Hebrew into Greek, the decrees of Ahasuerus or Xerxes are referred to by this word. And then it's also used in Daniel three for a decree of Nebuchadnezzar.

But this is the strongest, most forceful term you can use. And when Paul says, I am an apostle by order of, according to the decree of God, there is no higher authority. There is no better bona fide than that.

And when Paul uses this word, he is talking about commands from God. So in, for example, Romans chapter 16, verse 26, by the prophetic scriptures, the gospel is made manifest and is made known to all nations according to the commandment, the epitage of the everlasting God. This gospel is preached and the purpose of it, the purpose of that decree, he gives in that same verse, 1626 of Romans, for obedience to the faith.

Not just acknowledging the truth or believing that it's true, but obedience. And obedience is the proof that our faith is not empty. This is James's point when he says, I

will show you my faith by my works.

And faith without works is dead, being fruitless. To sit there and believe a thing, but you do nothing in that light. You can believe that smoking kills you, but if you don't quit smoking, what good is that belief? You can acknowledge that you've got a plumbing leak, but if you don't call a plumber and get it fixed, what good is your acknowledgement that you really do have a serious problem? It ought to make a difference.

It should make a change. It should motivate us. It should move us to action.

And the kind of love that is expressed by the Greek verb *agapao*, the noun *agape*, which is active love. When God loved the world, he did something about it. He sent his son and so on.

So Romans 16, 26. In 1 Corinthians 7, 6, when Paul is giving instructions about comportment and relations between individuals in the church, he says, I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. You remember in that context, he's talking about whether or not husbands and wives should consent to marital relations or stay apart for a time.

Then he says to not deprive one another except with consent for a time that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, then come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of a lack of self-control. And there's a lot you can say, and we covered this when we did 1 Corinthians. The satanic inroads that can be made in our soul when we do not manifest the fruit of the spirit, that final one, self-control.

It's translated temperance in the King James. But when you look at it in more modern translations, faith, meekness, self-control, against such there is no law, that's self-control. If we do not cultivate self-control, if we do not practice self-control, there is an opening for satanic influence.

And that is mentioned here in 1 Corinthians 7, 5. Then he goes on in verse six, I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. I wish all men were even as I myself am, i.e. not having to worry about marriage relations and marriage responsibilities, but each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. And thankfully, most of us are gifted with the opportunity for sharing our life with a spouse and receiving innumerable and inordinate amounts of blessings therefrom.

But Paul, because of his apostolic focus and the unique assignment that he had, had the right to lead about a wife, but chose not to do so, so that he could devote himself more fully to that mission. And he says, my advice, which is not a commandment, is to be exceedingly cautious in your physical relationships, your marital relations, always in the context of what is best for your spiritual life. If you need to be apart for a time for fasting and prayer, do that, but don't do that for too long.

And the message we, if you remember, when we went through this a few years back, is that you can't cite your spiritual responsibilities at the sacrifice of your horizontal relationships. And if you're married, you have a God-given responsibility to your spouse. You have made a commitment, you have vows, and you have opportunities there, and you can't set them aside, guys, that say, well, I feel a call to the mission field, so I'm leaving my wife and four kids, and I'm going to Borneo, or whatever they call Borneo today.

Okay, that's not biblical. You can have short times of commitment. You might go on a mission trip for a few weeks and be apart from your spouse.

You can have spiritual priorities that require a separation for a short period. But he says, this is my advice. It's not a command, because everybody has to be accountable to the Lord Jesus, and through Him to God the Father, for their decisions.

In sorting out horizontal and vertical relationships. And what a wonderful thing that is, that we are not under law, but under grace. There's no, well, you may fast and pray for three and a half days, but after that, you must return to your spouse.

Paul says, this is not a decree. It's not by order of God. You've got to use maturity.

You've got to use discernment. That was our 1 Corinthians 7, verse six. You also have verse 25 in that same chapter, where he says, concerning virgins, I have no decree from the Lord, you know, daughters and families.

I don't have an order from the Lord. So I will give my judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy. And this again is His apostolic witness.

The Lord has made Him trustworthy as a witness. Our passage, 1 Timothy 1, 1, we'll find it in Titus 1, verse three. God has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the epitaph, the commandment.

And you find a similar usage of it in 2 Corinthians 8, verse eight. Paul says, I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. Paul is going to encourage Timothy and Titus to present their message with all authority.

You see this in Titus 2, verse 15. Speak these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority. What is that authority? What is the source? It's God's authority through the apostle Paul to those that have been entrusted with that truth.

Why is this important? Where do pastors function? Is there such a thing as a shepherd with no flock, as a pastor with no church? Pastors function in a group. Now, it may be a strangely organized and connected group. We are far-flung and yet connected, but the pastors and teachers are assigned a group.

It is a relatively small group. So if you start to have people who attend church and attempt to minister to thousands and hundreds of thousands by means of publication, social media, it is a time for caution. Why? In a group, there is personal knowledge.

There is accountability. Accountability is not a dirty word. It has just been abused.

But deacons in a church are accountable. Elders in a church are accountable and subject to being dismissed and removed by that group if they fail to meet the qualifications. If they are given to anger or much drink, or if they can't rule well their own households, Paul is going to tell Timothy and Titus, you've got to be careful about who labors in preaching and teaching.

They need to be qualified and they need to be held to that account by the group. Well, if you're groupless and you're publishing books and putting videos on YouTube, where is your accountability? There is none. Where is the personal knowledge so that you can account someone trustworthy? If you don't know someone, what is behind the talking face on a video? You don't know.

Where is the chain of custody for that truth? At best, you have to look at the content and go back to the scriptures, which have recorded the apostolic witness and the Lord Jesus witness, and search the scriptures to see if these things are so. Even the apostle, Paul, going to new places such as Berea, people searched the scriptures and checked his message against the prophetic witness. And in that day, the New Testament hadn't been written down, so what did they have by way of scriptures? It was the law and the prophets.

Does what Paul says align? Is it consistent with? Does it bear the fruit of God's word and God's spirit? And they prayerfully searched the scriptures to check and affirm that that message was so. That's what we all have to do. Does this idea, does this teaching, does this doctrine, does this gospel match the known, authenticated witness that God has given us in his word and through his spirit? If it doesn't match, it should not be heeded.

That's what Paul is going to move on to here in verses three and four. But he begins by establishing his own authority. Somebody could say, well, how do we know you're telling the truth? So Paul says it is by order of God himself.

And we're going to see that there is quite a lot of witness given to this in Corinthians, 2 Corinthians later on. Look at 2 Corinthians. If you flip over to chapter six, 2 Corinthians chapter six, this is in line with what we've been seeing recently about the importance of the apostolic witness and not just any old body saying, this is what the Sermon on the Mount means, or this is what Jesus meant in the gospel.

This is what you should and shouldn't take away from Paul. This part of the word of God is inspired and that is not. It is so important, the affirmation of the apostolic witness.

So look at chapter six of 2 Corinthians. We then as workers together also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. Now is the accepted time.

Now is the day of salvation. Verse four, in all things, we commend ourselves as ministers of God in much patience, tribulations, in needs, in distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labors, sleeplessness, fastings, by purity, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report as deceivers and yet true. What's he talking about here? He is attacked and so you've got to weigh the merits of the approval or the disapproval of the commendation or the reprobation as unknown and yet well-known.

People say, who is this Paul coming to our town and preaching this gospel? And yet to those who are seeking, he is well-known. How, what is the difference between the honor and the dishonor? Between the evil report and good report? Unknown and yet well-known, dying and behold we live, chastened and yet not killed. Well, this man seems to be a criminal.

He's arrested, he's been imprisoned. He's received the 40 stripes minus one five times. He's been beaten with rods three times.

He's been shipwrecked three times. He gives a litany of all of his sins and sufferings to these same individuals. And what is the point? How do you know that what you're hearing is true? How do you know that it is something you should lay hold of by faith, commit to, live by? How did that happen in the first century? How did people know that Paul was a legitimate apostle? What was the authentication of his identity and his message? There were miracles, sign miracles.

What were those indicating? What power did that reflect? That's the Holy Spirit, right? Paul wasn't a magician. When he was able to heal, when the shadow of Peter would fall on someone or napkins that he touched could be taken to sick people and they would get well, that's the power of the Holy Spirit, right? That same Holy Spirit authenticates the word today. How do you know that what you're hearing is true? There has never been such a wash of information, quote unquote.

One person's information is another person's disinformation. One person's passionate belief is another person's horrific, heretical untruth. People make arguments, they make claims, they deceive, they propound evidence.

And yet when you check into it, you discover, well, but that's really not true. That is twisted, that's distorted. They left something out.

I read an article yesterday about General Robert E. Lee and they said they were debunking the myth of the kindly general. And they said the kindly Robert E. Lee of

history is a complete fabrication. He wasn't kindly.

And then it went on to allege all kinds of rascality and guilt by association. Well, Lee was in command of an army that did this bad thing. One unit that went up here and did this thing.

And Lee was in command. Lee was nowhere near there. But all of these very deceitful arguments and twisted pieces of evidence to besmirch and foul Robert E. Lee because he was on the wrong side.

So in tiny print at the top of this article was the author's name. And so I looked him up and come to find out that he is left of Stalin and he comes from a heritage that feels victimized. And anyway, consider the source.

But this is someone that puts out a message. And I don't know the individual unless I go and research them and find out what they are like and where they're coming from and what acts they might have to grind and come to find out this is a very heavy ax and a very distorted and not well-balanced perspective. And so reading into every fact, the worst possible reading and no real substantial, and even quotations, quotes taken out of context where Lee was talking about the fact that he was against slavery and he thought it was a good thing that black people be freed.

But he said, you've got to do it carefully because if you just turn everyone loose, it's gonna create a horrific situation for them and everyone else. Well, he pieced little snippets out of this to make it sound like Lee was dehumanizing black people and so on. I say that to say this, the establishing of Paul's apostolic authority for us is in the message and the message for us is affirmed exactly the way it was in the first generations of the church.

And that is by the power and the witness of the Holy Spirit. Now, we don't necessarily see healings and miracles. I wouldn't say they don't happen.

I think they aren't necessary in the modern day, why? The miracle is in your life. The miracle is in my life. The peace of God that passes understanding, keeps our hearts and minds by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, creating in us and connecting us to the presence of the Lord Jesus and God the Father.

And by their fruits, ye shall know them. When I learn from the word of God, genuine divine truth, I find the fruit of the Spirit showing up in my life. I am supernaturally loving, supernaturally joyful, supernaturally peaceful, love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, humility, self-control.

What did Jesus say in John 15? I am the vine, you are the branches. Abide in me and you will bear fruit. He didn't say bear fruit and that fruit will somehow connect you back to me.

Our focus isn't on the fruit, our focus is on the vine. Abide in the vine. If you stay connected, if you encourage, promote, cultivate that connection to the vine, the fruit is going to form of itself because it's in your DNA.

Branches are built to bear fruit when they are connected to the vine, right? I don't have to strain, I don't have to try to practice or create my own effort. Whatever is not of faith is sin and my faith isn't directed at the fruit, my faith is directed at the vine and through the vine to God the Father himself and everything he has provided for us. So that's why the apostolic authority and the apostolic witness is so important.

What you have on the pages of your Bible is truth. What you find in the pages of a book at the Christian bookstore has to be measured against this. Maybe it's great, maybe it's not.

But if you are asking and seeking and knocking, you will have the same instinct that a suckling infant has, you know when you're getting nourishment, you know where to find it, you know how to find it, it's built in. And if you're hungry, you will be filled. If you are thirsting, you will be satisfied.

And it is so typical of the way God designs things that those who aren't really seeking don't really find. They settle for an approximation or a simulation or a counterfeit, some substitute. The ease with which we are deceived is almost scary.

Remember the passage that talks about Satan masquerading as an angel of light? That comes from 2 Corinthians chapter 11. If you're still in 2 Corinthians, turn over to that chapter. Paul is going to address here what he's talking to Timothy about.

Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly, and indeed you do bear with me. I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

But I fear lest somehow as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. It's simple. It's straightforward.

For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, notice only the apostolic preaching of Jesus is sound. If somebody recasts Jesus with a different face, a different emphasis, a different mission, a different purpose, a different kind of life with different priorities and different goals and different values, if you have a political Jesus, if you have a social warrior Jesus, that is someone bringing a different and not simple Christ. If he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received.

Now, what is that? If I've received the Holy Spirit, how could somebody possibly offer a different spirit? This is similar to the question I asked a few minutes ago. How does the spirit affirm that the messenger and the message are true and valid and from God? He

manifested his power, right? In the early days, with these apostolic visits of relatively short duration, you didn't have time to see the growth of the fruit by the power and presence of the spirit, so there were these healing miracles. What the apostle is doing for your body, the spirit and the word are gonna do for your soul.

This healing of affliction that you see physically manifested is going to happen spiritually. It is the spiritual healing and the spiritual building up and the spiritual fullness that is going to last and go into eternity. The body, all of those bodies that Jesus healed, all of the people that received healing at the hands of the apostles, they all eventually withered up and died, didn't they? Every leper, every lame person, every blind person, every deaf person, every demon-possessed person, Jesus touched them and healed them.

And you think, well, they ought to just live forever now, they've had the divine touch. It was a sign in the moment. Lazarus got raised back out from the tomb, but he died and went back into the tomb later.

It was a manifestation of the spirit, the healing that is permanent, the healing that lasts, the healing that confers a peace that passes understanding and transcends circumstances and causes and conditions and successions and relations in this earth. That's spirit. So if somebody is offering, teaching, presenting, or implementing and trying to get you to receive a different spirit, which you have not received, if the spirit confers inner peace, understanding, insight into truth, power for living, power for hope and faith and love, what would a different spirit do? Eat this fruit and you can have those things.

Bite this product of the tree. Let me tell you all of the advantages that it confers. You'll be like God, you'll be able to discern, you'll know what's right and what's wrong if you eat this fruit, instead of if you trust the commands and the presence and the power of your creator, God.

A different spirit, a different means by which you can live a fruitful and blessed life. Do this and thou shalt live. God has a do this and thou shalt live, which is follow his word, Old Testament and new.

It's a different spirit. There's a different way you're gonna get this done. You can get it done through mentoring and discipleship.

You can get it done by following this program, reading this book, listening to these tapes, following this influencer online, getting with other people. The support of a group will give you the power. That is a different spirit.

Social justice will vindicate your life. Be political, be socially active, go out and militate and crusade for this cause and that cause. Be heard, be known, march, protest, demonstrate, get involved in bringing about short-term change in the cultural world.

There's nothing wrong with hoping for change and supporting change when it is healthy and when it is right. It is the means, the spirit is the means by which these things are done. And if it is a false spirit, if it is a deceiving spirit, what is it? Well, Paul talks about it.

A different spirit which you've not received, verse four, or a different gospel which you have not accepted. I fear for you, Paul says, because you're liable to accept it. He says, I'm jealous for you.

I fear just as the serpent deceived Eve that you're gonna be deceived by smooth talk and flattering words and an appealing message and you may well put up with it. And then Paul talks about his apostolic authority and how he has acted. If you skip down, I do what I do in verse 12 and I will continue to do it that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are.

In other words, I want to elbow the real apostles out of the way and be your apostle. I wanna give you an authoritative message. I wanna tell you that pick your program, Spirit Controlled Temperament, Prayer of Jabez, Experiencing God, this program, that approach, follow this Bible study, listen to this individual, purpose-driven life, purpose-driven church, whatever it may be, this program comes to you as though it has apostolic authority.

And Paul says, there are these who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. Look at the success, look how our church has grown. Look at how we have impacted people.

With all that that implies. Such, verse 13, are false prophets, deceitful workers, false apostles, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

If you think this danger has subsided since the days of Paul, look around. Remember old Christopher Wren that designed the cathedral and his tombstone is on the floor. If you wanna see his monument, circumspect, look around.

If you wanna see the truth of what Paul says, it has not diminished, it has accelerated. It has exponentially increased. And this danger is all around us all the time.

24 seven, every place you look, everywhere you listen, it is everywhere. And Satan is hard at work using every tool in the box to try to deceive and deflect believers who are seeking to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. We wanna be that chaste virgin presented to Jesus.

Satan's got an entirely different agenda. Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. Notice, people want to be apostles and you can't be because apostles were appointed by the Lord Jesus himself, by name.

There are 12 and only 12. We've got the witness of about four of them in the scriptures. And that is our apostolic witness and there is no other.

If anyone comes to you preaching anything different than what the apostle Paul preaches, let him be accursed. Read Galatians. Well, this is the warning that Paul is delivering to his son in the faith, Timothy, as a pastor.

And he is going to tell him and Titus both, exhort, preach, warn, rebuke with all authority. What authority? The authority that comes from God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ to Paul and straight down to us. So how important is every word that proceeds from the mouth of God? How important is all God-breathed scripture for us? How much time should we spend studying scripture as opposed to reading Christian books, listening to Christian speakers, that especially when their message begins to deviate, stray and emphasize things that you don't find any emphasis on in scripture.

I saw somebody just this morning talking about that cultural Christianity depoliticizes Christian faith. And I thought, well, that's a good thing. Oh no, in their mind, this is a horrible thing.

Depoliticized Christianity is a bad thing, according to this source. And goes on to argue that we should be cultural and political. We should go out there and start trying to shake and move in a fallen world that is ruled by Satan.

And as soon as you start doing that without the presence and power of the spirit, you are doomed to failure. Cursed is a man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength as a heart who departs from the Lord. You're gonna be the bramble, not the tree planted by the water, bringing forth his fruit in his season.

Well, Paul is going to advance on this theme as we move through verses three and four after the break.