

1Tim 23-08-13a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. After some gap of time, we are back in our Sunday morning study in the book of 1 Timothy. We're picking up this morning in the section verses three through seven.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship, on our study, on our group, on our receptivity to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and we will begin. Father, as we review the time in the recent past, we're grateful for your watch care, your grace, your provision, your guidance, your strength, and the present conditioning of our spirit through your word and the ministry of your Holy Spirit who leads us into truth, who enables us to live a life of meaning and purpose in the light of your word. We thank you for this opportunity to study your word together, and we ask for illumination, for understanding, and for perception in terms of our own personal application so that we can see clearly the path before us and turn neither to the right hand nor to the left, and as a result, live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to our savior.

We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Let's read our passage now in the epistle of 1 Timothy.

Paul has already given his greeting. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God, our savior, and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope. You notice that Paul begins here citing his apostleship rather than his servanthood.

Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, begins many of his letters. And this, as we saw, begins on a note of authority. And this authority is going to extend down to verse three.

As I urged you, as I commanded you, when I went into Macedonia, remain in Ephesus, that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine. This is a reference to the venue where Timothy is ministering as pastor. Paul gives a very explicit instruction here in terms of a command, and the thrust of a command is aimed toward bad teaching, false doctrine.

The efforts of some to pervert and distort the truth of God's word. The fact that this is in Ephesus is unique and very helpful to us because we have quite a bit of information about Ephesus. In Paul's travels, he founded this church in the second missionary journey.

And if you look at the sort of chronology of Paul's travels, you always have to go back and look at the map in the back of my Bible to find out where did Paul go on what journey and when was it? But there's quite a bit of Paul's ministry that occurs after the end of Acts. And the three missionary journeys are derived from the itinerary that Luke records there. But during the second missionary journey, Paul ends up in Ephesus.

Ephesus is quite a town. It was second largest in the Roman empire behind Rome itself. It was the capital and major city of Asia Minor in the West.

And Athenians initially colonized the city. It's near the mouth of the Kastor River. If you know where the island of Samos is, it's opposite that.

Very famous for possessing the temple of Diana or Artemis. And that temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Very large and important metropolis in its day.

It had a population in the first century BC just before our time of study of a quarter of a million people. And so it was the second largest city in the known world. Paul had been in Corinth for about a year and a half and then traveled to Ephesus.

This was for chronological purposes and was thought to be in the spring of the year, AD 52. In the middle, if you will, of Paul's years of ministry, he's gonna eventually be martyred in 66 or 67, but he's in Ephesus in the spring of 52 with Priscilla and Aquila. And this is of course, during that second missionary journey.

It's likely that he either starts or substantially encourages and enhances the beginning of the Christian church there, but he only stays for a short time. And in Acts chapter 18, verses 18 and following, it says, after Paul had remained there many days, he took leave of the brethren and sailed away to Syria with him, Priscilla and Aquila. Paul had shorn his head in Cenchrea because he had made a vow.

He came to Ephesus and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. And this is why we think there wasn't already an established church in Ephesus because Paul would go to a church if it existed. If there wasn't a church in a town, he would start at the synagogue and begin with the Jews, the resident Jews.

They asked him to remain with them for a longer time. He did not consent, but he took leave of them saying, I must by all means keep the feast that is coming at Jerusalem, but I will return again to you, God willing. And so this is his plan.

And in fact, in the third missionary journey, which is recorded in Acts 19, Paul does return to Ephesus and he's gonna live there for about three and a half years. And remember now, this is the church, this is the city where Paul is now writing this letter to Timothy. So you find in Acts 19 verses one through six that while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the upper parts and came to Ephesus and he found certain disciples.

He said, did you receive the Holy Spirit after you believed? They said, we have not even heard there is a Holy Spirit. He said to them, well, what were you baptized into? And they said, unto the baptism of John. Paul said, John truly baptized with a baptism with a view toward repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in him who was coming

after him, that is in Jesus the Christ.

After hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke with other languages and prophesied. That's the beginning of Acts 19.

And this is Paul returning to the region of Ephesus. And Paul is going to then spend three and a half years in Ephesus teaching and building up this group. So let me ask you this question.

Do they have a foundation of sound teaching? Knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, broad and deep apostolic witness and teaching? They do. Well, during this time, Paul sends Timothy into Macedonia. And we find this out reading through Acts and this is going to be the reverse now in Timothy where Timothy is staying in Ephesus and Paul is going to Macedonia.

Now this is after Paul is released from the house arrest that is recorded at the end of Acts and is a part of those post first Roman imprisonment travels. I say all of that to say this, you remember that after that three and a half years of investment in the Ephesians, Paul then gathers the offering and wants to go to Jerusalem. And this is Acts chapter 20.

Turn with me to Acts chapter 20. This is where we're gonna focus our attention for the moment. This is very important context for what Paul is going to tell Timothy here in this first chapter.

So you remember all through Acts chapter 19, Paul is in Ephesus. He stays there after baptizing John's disciples in verse 10 of chapter 19. This continued for two years where he's reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

All those who dwell in Asia hear the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, handkerchiefs, aprons that are brought from his body to the sick, diseases leave them, evil spirits go out of them. Verse 13 of Acts 19, some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, we exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.

And you remember the seven sons of Sceva, that's a very funny story. And the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevail. Verse 20, then there is the riot after Paul has been there now for close to three years.

Paul purposed in the spirit when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia to go to Jerusalem. After I've been there, I must also see Rome. So he sent into Macedonia, Timothy and Erastus.

He himself stayed in Asia for a time. So he's going to end up in Ephesus, this Western

part of Asia for another year to year and a half while Timothy and Erastus go into Macedonia. And there arises a great commotion.

You have Demetrius the silversmith and the riot and so on. And so then in chapter 20, after the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them and departed to go to Macedonia. He's now going to Macedonia to where he has already sent Timothy and Erastus.

When he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he comes to Greece, he stays three months. The Jews plot against him. He returns through Macedonia.

He goes to Troas. Remember, he's going to leave his cloak there, verse seven and following. He goes from Troas to Miletus.

And then in verse 17, this is where we pick up this morning. If you've been drifting along with me here and not really catching what's going on, just be aware that Paul has invested over three years, the same amount of time that the Lord Jesus invested in his earthly ministry in Galilee and Judea, and even Samaria and the Transjordan, those three and a half years of Jesus' ministry. That's how much time Paul has spent in Ephesus.

He has now left. He's traveling other places. He's gone back and forth through Macedonia a couple of times.

Now in verse 17, and remember, during this time, Paul gets this idea that he's going to take up a collection of money from the Gentiles and take it back to Jerusalem. He's going to meet up with James. And you remember that story.

You remember that when he gets there, he gets tangled up in the legalism and the law of Moses emphasis they have there. And so Paul has collected this money. He's got it with him.

And he wants to go to Jerusalem and present it. He doesn't just want to go to Jerusalem to preach. He wants to go to Jerusalem to take this offering, to vindicate his ministry, to brag on the Gentile converts to the mother church in Jerusalem.

So from Miletus, he sends to Ephesus, knows those people well. It's like a, almost like a college education. If you finished a little early, nearly four years, called for the elders of the church.

When they'd come to him, he said to them, you know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, many tears and trials happened to me, plotting in the Jews. I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you and taught you publicly and from house to house. Testifying to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward

our Lord Jesus Christ and see now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying the chains and tribulations await me." Remember Agabus takes Paul's belt, wraps it around his hands and his feet.

He sits in the floor with Paul's belt wrapped around him and says, this is what the Jews are gonna do to you if you go to Jerusalem. So, these things did not move me, verse 24, nor do I count my life dear to myself so that I may finish my race with joy and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. This is Paul's mission to testify to the grace of God.

Deed now I know that you all among whom I've gone preaching the kingdom of God will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you, I'm innocent of the blood of all men, I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. And he said plenty of time to do it.

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. For I know this, verse 29, after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves, men will rise up speaking perverse things.

Put next to that 1st Timothy chapter one, verse three, FF three and following. To draw away disciples after themselves, therefore watch, remember that for three years, I've not ceased to warn everyone night and day with tears. Night and day with tears.

So now brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace. Notice, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace. Up above, he said, I have declared the gospel of grace in verse 24.

The word of his grace is, is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I've coveted no one's silver, gold or apparel. You know that these hands have provided for my necessities and for those who are with me.

I have shown you in every way by laboring like this, that you must support the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who said it is more blessed to give than to receive. When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. They all wept freely, fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the word which he spake, that they would see his face no more.

The ironic thing about verse 38 and the words that he says earlier that you will see my face no more is Paul is wrong. He is gonna see them and they are gonna see his face some more because Paul is gonna return after the Roman imprisonment at the end of this book of Acts with Timothy. He is gonna leave Timothy behind and go on to

Macedonia.

There is a point here of application. Paul is speaking great truths, great encouragements. He is making good points to these Ephesian elders.

He is giving them a valid warning, which is going to come to pass, that savage wolves are gonna enter the flock and are gonna teach perverse things. All of that is true. At the same time, Paul is in the midst of, if you will turn with me to Acts chapter 21.

So after this exhortation to the Ephesian elders, they set sail and ran a straight course coming to Kos the following day to Rhodes and from there to Petara, finding a ship to Phoenicia, set sail, sighted Cyprus, went to Syria and there the ship was gonna unload her cargo. So now in Acts 21 verse four, finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the spirit not to go to Jerusalem.

It doesn't get any clearer than this. Acts 21 verse four, disciples tell Paul through the spirit not to go to Jerusalem. It isn't bonds and chains await you.

Oh, that's okay. The Holy spirit tells Paul, don't go to Jerusalem. When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way.

They all accompanied us, wives and children until we were out of the city, knelt down on the shore and prayed, took leave of one another, boarded the ship, returned home, traveled a bit farther. Verse eight, came to Caesarea, entered the house of Philip the evangelist who was one of the seven. Who are the seven? You remember? Go all the way back to Acts chapter four where the apostles need to devote themselves to prayer and to teaching.

And so the ministry is given to deacons. Who's the very first deacon that is named in Acts? There's a whole chapter about him in chapter seven. Stephen, right? Stephen, man full of faith, does great wonders and miracles through the power of the Holy spirit.

Who is the second of the seven to be named right after Stephen? It is Philip. This Philip. Philip the evangelist.

This is the Philip who evangelizes the Ethiopian eunuch. This Philip, Philip the evangelist. So they come to the house of Philip the evangelist here in Caesarea.

One of the seven and stayed with him. This man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. We stayed many days.

A certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his hands and feet and said, thus says the Holy spirit. So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hand of the Gentiles.

When we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. Paul answered, what do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. Now this is a wonderful, admirable sentiment, but stop and think.

What did Paul just tell the Ephesian elders his mission is? To declare the whole council of God, to communicate the gospel of the grace of God. It is not Paul's mission to go and die as a martyr in Jerusalem. He's not even the apostle to the Jews in Jerusalem.

God had 11 other apostles who could minister to the people in Judea and Jerusalem. And they have been active there. The Lord's half-brother James is there.

Peter and John were in Jerusalem, founded that church. That's their field of ministry. That's their assignment.

Jesus told them, you shall be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem and Judea, Samaria, until the end of the age. What is Paul's assignment? What did God tell Paul? What did the Lord Jesus Christ tell Paul his ministry would be? He is to go to the Gentile world. He can start with the Jews, nothing wrong with talking to Jews, starting in the synagogues, but he is the apostle to the Gentiles.

When he is still down in the Jewish regions, he says, since you do not deem yourselves worthy, we go to the Gentiles, which is what God told him he was gonna do. So he has this drive. He has this inner motivation to do something that is out of the will of God.

God, the Holy Spirit is giving him guidance and he's pushing it aside. He's rationalizing it away. And this blinds him to something.

Paul had decided in verse 16 of chapter 20 to sail past Ephesus. Ephesus is Paul's ministry area. You have a hard time finding anywhere else where Paul spent that much time, that much investment.

But look at verse 16 of chapter 20. Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. He's hurrying to go to Jerusalem.

He wants to be there in time for the feast. And so he bypasses Ephesus and just calls the elders to himself, says, I'm not gonna see you anymore. I'm telling you, I'm giving you this warning.

Vicious wolves are gonna attack the flock. What would be the best way to avoid vicious wolves attacking the flock? For Paul to return there and fight that battle. Would he succeed? He succeeded the first time.

He was in the school of Tyrannus for over two years disputing. He was in the synagogue

teaching. He was in house to house teaching.

He declared to them the whole counsel of God. These elders are numerous and strong when they come to visit him in Miletus. And they are tragically depressed and in tears that he says, I'm never gonna see you again.

They need him. They appreciate him. They listen to him.

That is a receptive group. He has been told and continues to be told by the Holy Spirit, don't go to Jerusalem. What does the, he's told first of all, at the beginning of chapter 20, don't go.

Flat out, chapter 21, flat told, don't go. Then when Agabus comes, I wonder about the four daughters of Philip who are unmarried girls and they are prophetesses. If they did any prophesying, what do you think they said? Why are they even mentioned? They must've been doing some prophesying and the Holy Spirit isn't gonna give two different messages.

You get the idea that there was probably discouragement about going to Jerusalem from these four girls. Then Agabus comes and Agabus's actions by saying this is what the Jews are going to do to the man who owns this belt. What does that connote? I mean, obviously Paul says, well, they'll lock me up.

I don't care if they lock me up. Think about this. This is a great example for our personal application.

When this symbolic Old Testament prophet type of ministry, this is what the Old Testament prophets did, right? They would cut their hair and throw it in the fire and burn it and bury girdles and build little cities and knock them down and do all kinds of object lesson things to get across a message to what kind of people. Why did God have to use object lesson prophets? Because they had stopped listening to the words of the prophets. Remember that? When we did Kings and Prophets, you remember how many times we had these play acting prophets who would go around making a remarkable sight of themselves? Why did God do that? What stage of Israel's spiritual decline produced that kind of communication from God? It's when they were no longer listening to the word.

God said, if you won't listen to my words, maybe you'll look at these visual parables. Jesus told the disbelieving Jews, if you don't believe my words, believe the works. They testify.

These play acting, these acting out, these manifestations, these warnings are at the lowest level. This is why we have great big picture books for little kids. If you can't read the words, maybe you'll get it through the pictures.

Look at what God has to do to try to communicate to the apostle Paul. He has sent word after word and Paul doesn't listen. So Agabus comes and wraps the belt around his hands and feet.

Paul, the pharisaically trained by one of the great Pharisees of all time, Gamaliel, does he not know that acting out prophecies are God's last resort to people who won't listen to his words? And what happens? How does Paul miss this? What is the message of Agabus? And what does Agabus say as he wraps his belt around his hands and feet? So important. What does he say? So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and they will deliver him into the hands. What is this little act out prophecy communicate? Who is at the center of it? It's the Jews in Jerusalem.

This is what the people are going to do to the man who owns this belt. It's not about Paul. Agabus doesn't even say his name and he doesn't address him in the second person.

He says, the man who owns this belt is going to be bound hand and foot and delivered by the Jews in Jerusalem to the Gentiles. Agabus prophecy is about the heart, the not only lack of receptivity, but the active rejection, hostility, and opposition. There is no fruitful potential.

There is no opportunity to win some of the Jews in Jerusalem if Paul goes. Agabus says, this is a totally unreceptive and hostile crowd. All they're going to do is tie you up and deliver you to the Gentiles.

You can't stay there. You can't minister. You're not going to be under house arrest in Jerusalem.

They're going to tie you up and give you to the Romans. Now, what happens when Paul gets there? Remember, James imbroglios him into the vows of these guys and paying for their sacrifices out of the offering money and the Jews riot against him. And Paul ends up being imprisoned in Jerusalem for two years.

He is sitting there doing nothing for two solid years. He could have spent those two years in Ephesus. He could have spent those two years in Macedonia.

He could have spent them anywhere in the field of his ministry, but he goes back to Jerusalem for the wrong reasons against the warnings. How does Paul miss this Agabus warning? Agabus says, let me depict for you the heart of the Jews that you're wanting to go see. Paul says, it's all about me.

I'm willing to be bound and to die. He thinks it's subjective. And the witness of the Holy Spirit, he takes subjectively.

Well, I don't care what happens to me. It's not about Paul. It's about the Jews and their

hardness of heart.

It is a picture of wasting your time on unreceptive people. You cannot invest your time where there is clear evidence of not just lack of interest, but hostility and opposition. That's the Agabus picture.

And Paul turns it to be about himself. Well, I don't care what happens to me. I'll jump on a grenade.

I'll, they can crucify me. They can stone me. I'm ready both to be bound and to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

And what a noble attitude to take, but he's missing the point. The point is not about him and his fate. It's about missing his mission, going to a place he's not supposed to go to.

He's been told specifically by the Holy Spirit over and over again, don't go. You're going to an unreceptive crowd and he goes anyway. Now this section of 1 Timothy and Paul's emphasis, both to the Ephesian elders and to Timothy who is in Ephesus is about the truth.

The truth can set us free. Jesus said, when we know it, when we understand it, when we listen to it and when we apply it, but truth can be mishandled. Truth can be misunderstood.

Truth can be misused. Truth can be blunted of its sharp sword force by our subjectivity, by our lack of humility, which is teachability. We have to know the truth and we have to be willing to accept the truth and to live in and by the truth.

The truth cannot override our chooser if we decide to choose against it. If we decide to deflect it, if we turn it aside, if we say, well, but I've got a personal agenda. I've got something I want to get done.

I just have this inner motivation. Do you think if Paul had gone to God in prayer and supplication, if he had been asking and seeking and knocking about this decision to go to Jerusalem after receiving warning after warning from the Holy Spirit and a direct command, don't go, I strongly suspect Paul has made up his mind and is unbothered by these appeals and by these communications. And this is so dangerous.

He misses the opportunity. He gives lip service to the Ephesian elders. They have to travel to him because he can't be bothered to go there.

He's afraid if he goes there, he'll stay. And he doesn't want to. So you all come to me at Miletus and I'll give you a great sermon, but I can't stay and I can't help.

I've got to go to Jerusalem. Holy Spirit says, don't go to Jerusalem. I've got to go.

This is tragic. That's one of the reasons Timothy is now in Ephesus and Paul is going on to Macedonia. He's just dropping him off and he's going to go on to Macedonia in later years after the end of Acts, after he's released from that first Roman imprisonment.

But Paul misses the center of God's will. God is still going to work things together for good, but it isn't the good that would have occurred had he been receptive. The antidote to this is humility and prayer.

Humility and prayer. Lord, show me the path that I may walk in it. Let your word be a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Let me hide your word in my heart that I might not sin against thee. To fail, to have the word, to preach the word, to be an apostle of the word of God and to be presenting that apostolic witness to Jesus Christ, what a privilege. But even the possessor and communicator of that truth makes a grievous mistake because of the other half, which is the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit enables us to have clarity and understanding and see the right applications in our personal circumstance. And Paul the apostle, for all of his wonderful achievements, grievously misses it here. It's right in the word of God.

It's little recognized and rarely remarked on. But how do you get around? Verse four, they told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. If he had heeded them, where would he have gone? Back to chapter 20, verse 16.

Paul had decided he would sail past Ephesus. Sail past this place of such great need. And he knows it's a need.

He spends the last half of chapter 20 telling them what a great need there is for bolstering the truth and sound teaching. And he says, well, you elders take it because I won't be there. I will see your face no more.

And he's wrong about that. Well, it is a very poignant and pertinent lesson for us to not only be those who delve into the word of God and try to understand it and remember it and pray it back to our father in heaven, but to listen to the other half of the conversation from the Holy Spirit. This is the way walk ye in it.

That may be true, but it does not pertain. That may be possible, but it's not best. Remember Romans 12 too, that you may come to know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

That's our goal. Let's pause here and take our break. When you come back, we're going to see what the result is of this missed opportunity in Ephesus.