

1Tim 23-08-27a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 27th of August, 2023.

We're in the first epistle of Paul, the apostle to Timothy, and we're picking up this morning in verse eight of chapter one, first Timothy chapter one, verse eight, Paul has introduced the substance of his initial theme in this letter, which is the difference between good church and bad church, a good emphasis in our lives or a bad emphasis. And the ground upon which a good church or a good life is founded is teaching. If the teaching is bad, if the beliefs are bad, if the pursuit and the emphasis is bad, the result is going to be bad.

So he is contrasting, uh, fables and genealogies, uh, idle talk and so on with sound doctrine, and he is going to, as we continue this morning, bring up the law, the existing scriptures in that day, uh, in the same way that we say the Bible, they would say the law that is the, the written scriptures of that time. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our investigations this morning, and we'll begin. Father, it is such a wonderful comfort to know that it is not our strength or our power, uh, but your spirit that enables and, uh, makes possible our life in Christ and before you, we thank you that we are not, uh, dependent upon our, uh, human strength, which, uh, as the song says, the arm of flesh will fail us and we dare not trust it, but we have your power at our disposal.

And we're so grateful for that. We know it is because the Lord Jesus Christ came and died on the cross for us and enabled us to be entered into relationship with you, uh, through his atoning work, we pray that as we look together at this portion of your word, that the Holy spirit will find us ready and willing pupils and will impart it and imprint it on our hearts in a way that is meaningful and helpful to us as we endeavor to live the life that is pleasing in your sight and that reflects the glory of the Lord Jesus. We ask it in his name, amen.

Uh, Paul in verse three, after his introductory greeting, uh, says, I urged you, Timothy, uh, remain at your post, remain in your church as pastor and charge some that they teach no other doctrine. There was a subset of the people in the church that decided that they should teach that they should, uh, start imparting viewpoint and information and, uh, guidance for others in the church. Uh, there's always been questions in the, uh, church, particularly in the modern day, when you come out from under Catholicism, you look at Protestant churches and what kind of structure should there be, how much authority should it reside in a single pastor? Should there be elders, deacons, how many teachers, how many pastors, large churches have, you know, several pastors specializing in different things.

Is there such a thing as a senior pastor? Uh, can the pastor's wife be a minister and co-

pastor? And, uh, these questions, uh, are swirling even into the modern day. I just caught a headline of an article. I did not read that said the Southern Baptists have just purged a number of churches out of their fellowship for having women pastors.

Um, this is a, uh, source of division and contention, even in Baptist colleges and seminaries where, uh, well, can, can women attend seminary or Bible college? Uh, Oh yes, they can. Well, what can they take homiletics courses? Can they take courses on how to study and teach the Bible? Um, some people say, well, they can, we just don't send them to a church. And expect them to be ordained.

And we want to clarify that by giving them training in studying and teaching, we're not suggesting that they be ordained as pastors. Uh, but people say, well, it's a slippery slope and no, no hermeneutics and homiletics for women and, and, and just winds up being a source of division and contention, uh, because there is no unanimity of thought and understanding about scriptural guidance on this subject. So how is a church to be organized? Well, here's what it should not be.

And this is the theme of this early part of Paul's first letter to Timothy is scripture, much of it tells us what should not be. And that's what we're going to see as we get into verse eight and nine down here. But one thing that should not happen in any church that purports to and aspires to reflect the Lord Jesus Christ as a fellowship is there should not be argumentation and debate and dissension and variations in understanding.

I am all in favor of arriving at an understanding and it may be different than other people's understanding. And we are not always going to be right. Other people are not always going to be right.

So how do we sort out differences of understanding in the scripture? Paul says, let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. If you think something is wrong and you do it anyway, whatever is not of faith is sin. And if you go against your conscience, whether or not your conscience is actually reflecting scripture accurately, if you believe something is wrong and you do it anyway, you are violating your conscience and thereby sinning.

And there are things that are essential on which anyone who is a believer and in a fellowship of believers should agree. The Lord Jesus Christ is the son of God, the savior of the world. No one comes to the father but by him.

These are central, essential truths. Paul tells the Corinthians, I'm telling you, this is the gospel. Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.

He was buried. He was raised the third day according to the scriptures. That is the core of the gospel.

Not only that he's the son of God, not only that he is the savior and sin bearer on our behalf, but his resurrection is essential to the gospel. Anyone who thinks he was just a

good man and an enlightened teacher and a sympathetic soul, but he wasn't raised from the dead, that is not the gospel. Resurrection and future life in Christ with God is an essential of the gospel.

We, anybody that doesn't cotton to that is welcome to go be warm, be fed, but we don't consider them to be brothers and sisters in Christ because they're not. If you do not believe the core essential truths about the Lord Jesus, you are not saved, you are not a brother and sister in Christ, and the one and others do not apply to that category. We have a different means.

We are to live peaceably. We are not to persecute. We are not to, to feel free to do harm and injustice and wrong treatment just because someone is not of the faith, but they do not qualify for the positive.

This contrast between what is wrong and what is right, what is immoral and what is moral is central to our study this morning. There are things that we do not do, but by avoiding them, that doesn't necessarily constitute righteousness. So Paul urges Timothy that some who are currently teaching other doctrines, stop.

Teach no other doctrine. No other doctrine than that which comports with the apostolic witness. Peter, James, John, Paul, the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ appointed personally and called out by name by the Lord Jesus himself.

They are the ones who communicate truth. And teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies. These are alternate priorities, alternate ways of construing what is important.

And the result is disputes rather than godly edification. I didn't mention this earlier, and I'm sure you all know this, but I'm just going to do it in passing. But the word translated edification here is oikonomia.

We get the word economy from this. Oikos is the house and nomos is the rule or the law. Nomos.

When it says lawless in scripture, that's anomos, it's the alpha privative, the negative, lawless or without rules. And we have that in our context. But the oikonomia is often translated stewardship.

Paul will talk about this as a stewardship of the mysteries. And he makes a stark contrast between the stewardship of the church age teaching that he was uniquely entrusted with and these false teachings. To get a quick picture of this, turn over to Ephesians chapter three.

Now, Timothy is in Ephesus and we're going to the book of Ephesians, but you will recall when we did this book that it was an encyclical letter and it wasn't actually addressed

personally to the Ephesians. It is actually properly Laodiceans. It was sent to the church at Laodicea, but it was passed around.

There was a copy in Ephesus. It came to be called to the saints who are in Ephesus, but earliest manuscripts don't even say that. So we don't have to confuse this letter as being something that Timothy or Paul can refer back to in our passage.

But if you look at chapter three, Paul says, for this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, the dispensation of the grace of God, this is our word, oikonomia, so it is a stewardship, it is a, an, a trust, the dispensation of the grace of God, which was given to me for you. So this body of truth is what is in view in first Timothy chapter one. What is it to be a Christian? What is it to be church and a church age believer? This information is not to be found in the Sermon on the Mount.

It is not to be found in the teachings of the Lord Jesus, except by way of anticipation and general principle that applies to all of God's people, not to in any way, diminish or lessen the importance of Jesus teaching in general or the Sermon on the Mount in particular, but the specifics, the role of the Holy Spirit, do you notice that in Matthew five, six, and seven, I've mentioned this before, Jesus in delivering all of that material never mentions the Holy Spirit once and the Holy Spirit is definitional for us. Who is it that reveals the mystery of this age? It has been entrusted. It is a stewardship.

It is an oikonomia and that stewardship is something we must understand if we're going to successfully live and survive at the judgment. So for this reason, I, Paul, hopefully you have heard of the oikonomia, the dispensation translated in our passage, edification, these things lead to disputes and idle talk, these genealogies and fables and so on, and not godly stewardship, godly dispensation, a godly focus and emphasis on fulfilling the trust that has been given. Oikonomia, if you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which was given to me for you, how that by revelation, this is apocalypse, the name of the last book of the new Testament by revelation, he made known to me the mystery as I've briefly written already, by which when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.

Paul has written about this revelation that came to him, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men in other ages, not made known. It is made known in and through the apostle Paul. There's a great attack on Pauline authority and Paul's place in revelation and how we should live.

They say, well, some of his letters, he didn't really write them. And, you know, Paul had a burr under his saddle and some of his patriarchal Jewishness came out and you need to go back to Jesus, Paul messed up Jesus teaching, Paul changed Christianity and turned it into something that God, the father and the Lord Jesus never intended. And you really have to take Paul with a grain of salt and dismiss and explain away some of his

guidance.

If you take some of Paul away, you've got to take him all away in the same way that if you start parsing the Lord Jesus and saying some things, I don't think those got recorded right. That's not the Jesus. I believe when he says things about, you know, the goats going into everlasting fire and, you know, judgment that is coming.

And, well, I think that was somebody trying to help Jesus and wrote something he didn't actually say. It is all or nothing. When scripture says about itself that it is all God breathed and profitable, it's all or nothing.

There were some who were misusing the law. Paul could have said, well, you know, you shouldn't really take the law because Moses didn't fully understand and Joshua didn't fully understand and Samuel didn't fully understand. And these guys that said and, you know, sent people into battle and they didn't really understand God's will and God's way.

They didn't understand the way of love that Jesus would come and reveal. And so they messed it up. And so we can look at them as bad examples.

God named his son after Joshua who went in and slew the Canaanites, men, women, children, animals, burned their cities to the ground. That's who Jesus is named for. Yeshua, the son of none is the first Yeshua.

Yeshua, the son of God is the second. Would God name his own son after somebody that we're supposed to dismiss as erroneous and mistaken? I don't think so. The dispensation of the grace of God, as I've written, in other ages, it was not made known to the sons of men.

This is Ephesians 3, 5. It has now been revealed by the spirit to whom? It is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets. These are not the Old Testament prophets, your major and minor prophets. These are those who had the gift of prophecy in the church age, that first generation of the church.

These are the daughters of Philip. These are Agabus. These are others.

To whom God revealed his will in specific places at specific times because that which is complete had not yet come. The New Testament scriptures were not written and not available. And so these truths, these very same truths, the same truths that Paul teaches were revealed not only to and by Paul, but the prophets throughout the churches in these first decades of the church said exactly the same thing Paul says.

So when people say there's something wrong with Paul, they are also saying that every other prophet that said the same thing as Paul, of which there were many dozens, perhaps hundreds in the early days of the church, they all said exactly the same thing as Paul. How do I know this? What does Paul say here? Revealed by the spirit to his holy

apostles and prophets, the same Holy Spirit is speaking through Peter and John and Paul and all of these other prophets who in the absence of scripture were providing guidance about the role of the spirit, about the word of God, about good order in the churches, about not engaging in disputes and debates and fantasizing about fables and genealogies, but focusing on these central truths revealed to every church so that they had the word of God as well as the spirit of God to lead and to guide them until these written scriptures could be completed. If you ever hear somebody disparaging the apostle Paul and well, he kind of got it wrong, these are the same people who say that the Old Testament writers got it wrong, that they were the six men from Hindustan.

Do you remember that poem? Let me pull that up for you. I was going to read it to you the other day. It's a very pungent and memorable example.

This is a poem by John Godfrey Sachs, S-A-X-E, and it's based on a Hindu story that goes back many generations, many thousands of years probably in India. But John Godfrey Sachs heard this story and he turned it into a poem. You're familiar with it.

It was six men of Hindustan to learning much inclined who went to see the elephant, though all of them were blind. That each by observation might satisfy his mind. The first approached the elephant and happening to fall against his broad and sturdy side at once began to bawl.

God bless me, but the elephant is very like a wall. The second feeling of the tusk cried, ho, what have we here? So very round and smooth and sharp. To me, tis mighty clear.

This wonder of an elephant is very like a spear. The third approached the animal and happening to take the squirming trunk within his hands, thus boldly up he spake. I see, quoth he, the elephant is very like a snake.

The fourth reached out an eager hand and felt about the knee. What most this wondrous beast is like is mighty plain, quoth he, tis clear enough, the elephant is very like a tree. The fifth who chanced to touch the ear said, even the blindest man can tell what this resembles most.

Deny the fact who can, this marvel of an elephant is very like a fan. The sixth no sooner had begun about the beast to grope than seizing on the swinging tail that fell within his scope. I see, quoth he, the elephant is very like a rope.

And so these men of Industan disputed loud and long, each in his own opinion, exceeding stiff and strong, though each was partly in the right and all were in the wrong. The moral, which is also a part of the poem, so often theologic wars, the disputants, I wean, rail on in utter ignorance of what each other mean and prate about an elephant, not one of them has seen. Prate about an elephant, not one of them has seen.

And when you look at the political landscape today, you look at the theological

landscape today, you look at the divisions and disputes and debates and vicious attacks, vilification of people, there are people who are wildly attacking Billy Graham and Franklin Graham. And, uh, you can't believe the viciousness and the bile, uh, in some of these. And there is a failure to be balanced, to be careful, to focus on those things that unite and not those things that divide.

And to pay attention to scriptures, such as the one that says, judge not lest you be judged for with the judgment with which you judge others, you yourself will be judged. And those who vilify and disparage and attack and demean and, uh, just use awful attitudes and, uh, disparagement against people who by their own lights and, uh, by their understanding are seeking to fulfill their gift and to serve God, um, let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. If you think Mr. Graham did it wrong, well, then don't follow that example.

If you think someone's preaching is off the mark, well, if you're a preacher, make sure yours is as close to the mark as you can get it. If you feel like people are being misled, offer your understanding and let people make up their own mind. Uh, but the guidance here from Paul to Timothy is the teaching in a church should be up building.

It is a stewardship. It is a building up, uh, the oikonomia, the oikonomos was the steward in a household. He was the head butler, if you will.

He was the administrator of the household and he, uh, was tasked with ensuring the smooth running of that household, that, uh, servants did their jobs, that supplies were obtained, that they didn't run out of anything, that the meals were, uh, prepared and presented on time, that laundry was done, that, uh, the debts were settled and bills were paid. Um, it was a responsibility for the smooth and orderly running of a household. And the policies and the priorities that made for a smooth running house were the oikonomia.

The oikonomos was tasked with responsibility for that stewardship. And it is the same. So what do we do about, uh, differences of understanding? Somebody says it's a rope.

Somebody says it's a spear. Someone says it's a fan. Someone says it's a tree.

Our churches group together around common understanding and unity in the faith. I say, God bless people who are just as happy having a woman pastor as a man. They understand Paul's guidance on this differently.

And when he says, I will not suffer a woman to have authority over a man, they believe that that was cultural, that Paul was preaching into, uh, priestesses of, uh, pagan, uh, gods and goddesses. And that women running worship was something that, that Paul wanted to distinguish the church from and, and so on. If that's your understanding, y'all group together and be united and of one mind, of one heart, your fellowship should be characterized by love, by edification, by unity, and by building up.

If I cannot unify with your particular emphasis, your understanding, your focus, your, your beliefs about spiritual life and growth, then I should have a different group, I should be in a different group. Not only should each one of us be fully convinced in his own mind, but as groups, we should be convinced and unified. And so to participate in a group is to find a place where you can maintain the spirit of unity and the bond of peace.

We do not go into or stay in a group to divide it, to try to change it. To fit our understanding, our beliefs. There are people who will go into a church, uh, that is not Calvinist and they want to turn them all into Calvinists and they will start hammering on Romans chapter nine, and they will start talking about sovereignty and no free will and Tulip and the rest of it and split a church apart.

The pastor in a church may start taking a particular tack. He may come to a new understanding. He may decide that he needs to deconstruct and reconstruct his faith.

And he's going down a different road than that church has historically followed. People in the church have to make a choice and depending on the center of gravity in the church, if there is a difference of opinion and the church becomes two groups, then they need to be two groups. Those who want to follow the pastor should stick with that pastor and be unified and support him and listen to him and endeavor to live out their Christian faith in the light of the teaching that they believe reflects scripture, those who disagree.

If they are not a preponderance and they don't want to say pastor, you need to leave and take those with you. Uh, no harm, no foul, but most of us don't want to follow this road. So can you and yours peaceably and with no hard feelings, you know, just start your own group and do that.

Above all, we do not want to be divided. We do not want to dispute. We do not want to attack each other.

We don't want to take each other to court. There are very famous pastors in the Baptist world that are in court being sued by their church for rigging, uh, elder elections and stuffing ballot boxes so that they could maintain control in their church and they're in civil court. Can you not open Corinthians and hear Paul's shock and dismay that believers are taking each other to court before unbelievers, and that's exactly what's happening.

How can you have a Bible and do that? I, I don't get it. But if I was in that church and they start having a court battle, I would fold up my tent and leave and find a fellowship where I could be at peace and, uh, manifest, receive and express love toward my fellow believers with a spirit of unity, one Lord, one faith, one baptism of the Holy spirit, one God and father of us all unity is more important than doctrinal purity. That sounds almost heretical to say, but have you ever noticed that at the judgment seat of Christ, it's not a theology test.

The great commandment is not to rebuke, exhort, and instruct one another in the finer points of theology. It is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a genuine unhypocritical faith. I believe what I believe because that's what I understand scripture to teach.

I am asking and seeking and knocking. This is what the Holy spirit impresses upon my heart. I am humble.

I am teachable. I am willing to come to a new understanding. If you can show it to me, like the Bereans, I'm searching the scripture to see if these things are so, if you can make a case, I believe God, the Holy spirit will illuminate that and, and bring it to my heart and to my mind and show me how I can improve the genuineness of my faith.

I have a pure heart, a contrite spirit, a humble spirit, and my conscience, which is what is my moral sensitivity. If my conscience is offended, then I need to change groups, not split a group, not attack others within the group. I need to assemble with those believers who are like-minded with me.

Everybody's got to hoe their own row, but when we assemble, we need to be like-minded and that like-mindedness is more valuable. The peace of God that passes understanding, keeping our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, that is paramount. That is definitional.

If we are defined by attacking others and disparaging others and criticizing others and pointing out what we believe are their flaws and their faults and the mistakes they're making, that goes directly against what Paul is talking about. What is the *oikonomia*? What is the stewardship that Paul has been entrusted with? Look again at Ephesians chapter three. It was not made known in other ages, verse five, but it has been revealed by the spirit to his sanctified apostles and prophets.

When it says holy, that word's there for a reason. They are sanctified. They have not failed in their charge.

They haven't gone awry or astray. They are in the right. They are doing and fulfilling their commission.

What is it? Verse six, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, fellow inheritors. The Gentiles are together. This is a group.

It doesn't say that each Gentile is an heir, does it? It says the Gentiles, plural, are fellow heirs, fellow, fellowship in a group united with the same destiny, the same opportunities, the same gifts and blessings and inheritance that God is granting to others are coming to the Gentiles, a future with God, serving Him, reflecting His glory, seeing the full revelation of the glory of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Fellow heirs, notice, of the same body. The Gentiles aren't second-class citizens.

They're not an alternate form of saved people. Same body. Anybody who's ever been saved, the people of God, you look at Israel of the Old Testament, well, now there is one body.

Notice the emphasis on unity, fellow heirs, the same body, partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel. This doesn't mean there is no longer a national Israel. This means that beginning with the Holy Spirit age, beginning at Pentecost and beginning with the ministry of Paul the Apostle and Peter the Apostle, seeing the sheet let down, what God has sanctified, let no man call common.

Peter got the same revelation as Paul that the Gentiles are just as sanctified. Arise, Peter, kill and eat. What God has sanctified, let no man call common.

There is now no distinction. The Gentiles are fellow heirs of the same body. This is a new body.

This is not entered into Old Testament Israel, right? If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away. This is a new age.

It is a new and unique body. People who come to faith in this age are a gift of God the Father to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are a victory prize.

We are a bride and a companion. We are His body. Goes all the way back to Genesis.

Man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife. You can think of the father and mother as the Old Testament age and the origins and the foundation and the source. But when a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they too become one flesh, one body, body of Christ.

Partakers of His promise in Christ through the good news, through hearing and believing the gospel of which I became a minister. The same theme that Paul opens his letter to Timothy with by the command of God. I'm an apostle by the command of God.

I am the communicator. I became a minister according to the gift of grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. It is God's empowerment.

It is God's enablement. It is God's call and God's gift that makes Paul what he is. To me, who is less than the least of all saints, this grace was given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

And to make all see, verse nine, what is the fellowship, the koinonia of the mystery. From the beginning of the ages, it was hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ to the intent, verse 10, that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This is, those of you that remember long years ago, teaching about the angelic conflict, that

human history is a demonstration that angels learn.

Dr. Criswell's got a great sermon called What Angels Learn at Church. And they learn from women covering their heads and being submissive to their husbands. And I had a great conversation about women being submissive just yesterday with a great lady of my acquaintance.

And the idea that is now so prevalent and is being espoused and promoted in Christian churches, that marriage is an equal partnership and the woman is every bit the equal of the man and so on. Think about this. Let's take the idea that the church is the bride of Christ.

Do you want to make that argument, that the church is co-equal and co-authoritative with Jesus? Do you want to be a Catholic and have a pope who speaks ex cathedra with the same authority as scripture? Do you want the church to be on equal footing with Jesus Christ? Well, we're just as big as him. We're just as important as him. We're just as capable of making decisions and deciding policy and moving forward.

You're anti-scripture. You are going against the Bible for the sake of social comportment, being accepted in society that wants to believe. This is an undermining of humility, of understanding assignment.

Do you want to go to Old Testament Israel and you're from the tribe of Reuben and you say, I'm going to go offer sacrifices in the tabernacle or the temple. I'm going to go in there and say, I'm every bit as good as any Levite I ever saw. I'm better.

I'm better with a knife. I can slaughter a bull in half the time these guys take. They're hacks.

I'm co-equal. I am just as good, just as smart, just as capable as any Levite I ever saw. I'm going to go offer sacrifice.

It isn't about equality and creating a fable and a narrative. These fables are narratives. I'm going to create a narrative where it's demeaning to be left out of decisions.

Every Lance Corporal ought to be able to go to meetings at the Pentagon and give his input on strategy across the world and what wars we fight and how we fight them and how many troops we send and how many ships we employ. We need all the Lance Corporals. Let's just be a democracy.

Every Lance Corporal, come on up to the Pentagon. Let's have a group meeting and we'll decide how to fight this war, how to prosecute this endeavor. Because, hey, that's so wrong to say that officers can make decisions and junior enlisted can't.

What's the matter with you? What about the equality of all men? Haven't you read the

Declaration of Independence and so on? We can tell ourselves a story that justifies what we already want to do. Fables, genealogies. Look, I'm descended from, can't remember that guy's name, Charlemagne.

I'm descended from Charlemagne. So I'm going to go up to Washington, D.C. and tell them how the cow ate the cabbage and they better listen because my genealogy. Unity in the church, decide what you believe in the light of prayer and the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit and assemble with believers of like mind, be of one heart, one mind, not disputing, not debating, not endlessly arguing about the meaning of words and the rest of it.

This is what's wrong with today's church. If you think somebody else is wrong, well, don't do that. Let them be a counterexample, but to go and attack them and hold them up for scorn is unbiblical and is itself something that needs to be called out and avoided by believers who desire to be faithful and desire to please God, desire to shine at the judgment instead of being rebuked and sent into the darkness, which is outside.

There is no upside to a critical, harsh spirit. The church should be unified. If you can't unify with your current group, find one that you can.

I don't think we have that problem. I'm just, it's in the passage. So that's what we're covering.

And it's a good place to pause and take our break. When we come back, we're going to move forward because these who desire to be teachers of the law, now Paul is going to talk about, should we teach the law? Is there a proper or improper invocation of the law? And that pertains to us as well. So we'll see that when we come back.