

1Tim 23-09-03a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We continue our journey through the letter that Paul wrote to Timothy. We're in chapter one, and this is such a critically important message because it defines us.

It tells us who we are, why we're here, and how to accomplish the why. How to accomplish the objective. Paul says some very important and central things as he talks to this young pastor, his son in the faith, and by looking at the guidance that is given to the pastor of the church, we find out what the church itself ought to be doing.

And that's helpful for us because we are the church and we would like to know what it is we should be doing, how we should do it, where does the power come from. It doesn't come from me, obviously, it doesn't come from ourselves. It has to come from God.

So the means by which we enter into the life of God, the power of God, the plan and purpose of God is all important and that is the subject of this letter. So it's extremely helpful, especially in these days when there are so many winds of doctrine blowing. Depending on how deeply you stick your toe into the water of current Christian and theological thinking, you find that we are in an ever-increasing minority.

You can savor that phrase in your spare time. It's an ever-increasing minority. It's like a deafening silence.

But we want to be sure that we are rooted and grounded in the Word of God, that we are doing what we are supposed to in the light of what has been revealed to us through the power of the Holy Spirit seeing its application. That is our goal. That is our task.

That is what we are going to undertake this morning as we continue in the first epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy and we are going to be looking at the specifics. I like to get down to where the rubber meets the road and thankfully that is exactly what the Apostle Paul wants Timothy to do so we are all like-minded in that endeavor. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship, on our study and we'll begin.

Father, we are so grateful that when the Lord Jesus left this earth to return to your presence and to sit as he does this very moment at your right hand that he did not leave us orphans. He has come to us through the truth of Scripture and the presence and power of your Holy Spirit. We are so grateful for those gifts.

We are thankful that we do not have to rely on ourselves. That would be a hopeless endeavor but by your grace and as an expression of your love we have the full-orbed power and presence that is necessary to make our lives worthwhile, to redeem the time, to invest in the present and in the eternal future. We pray that as we look together at your word this morning that the Holy Spirit will be our teacher, lead us and guide us, give

us insight and understanding, help us to remember what we see so that it does not just make sense to us as we look at it but will come to our minds and hearts in the days ahead.

We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen. It is so helpful when somebody tells you what their purpose is. If you've ever been in various kinds of sales meetings sometimes you pick up the phone because you think it's a local area code and maybe it's somebody you need to talk to and they begin by asking you how you are and how are you doing and being friendly and your red flags immediately go up, this is a sales call, somebody is going to try to big deal me into something.

I like it when they just get straight to the point. Hello, I sell siding, do you need some? Hello, we do air conditioning service, what's your temperature? Hello, we're new in the area, we're looking to sell real estate, there's some for sale in your area, are you interested? Just cut to the chase, get to the point, we're all busy, don't waste my time with frivolities and inanities and that's what Paul does in this letter. What is the purpose of this letter? He tells us and we have seen this in verse 5, the purpose of the commandment.

I'm writing to you Timothy to remind you of the apostolic charge which has come directly from God to me and you have a gift and a ministry that was recognized by the laying on of prophetic hands and so on. What is the goal of all of this? Why is Paul an apostle? Why is Timothy a pastor? Why is he in Ephesus? What is his job? The purpose of the commandment is love. Okay, great.

How do we get this love? If I don't happen to be a particularly loving person by nature, how do I get this love? Well, he tells us, it is from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. This is the individual expression. Turn over to chapter 3. What is the purpose of this letter? To develop, to sustain, to grow love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Look at verse 14 of chapter 3. These things I write to you, says Paul to Timothy, though I hope to come to you shortly, but if I am delayed, you can, for our purposes, skip this notation of where Paul is. He isn't going to be seeing us anytime soon. He is delayed.

The next time we'll see the apostle Paul is in glory. So that these things I write to you, so that, verse 15, you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. So, if we put these two statements of purpose together, what should we be getting out of this letter? When we look at it, when we read it, when we reflect on it, this is telling us how we ought to conduct ourselves.

Timothy, of course, is being told how he should conduct himself. This is a singular. You should conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the

pillar and ground of the truth.

We've already seen that the purpose of this instruction, how we ought to conduct ourselves, is in love and what the source of that love is. So this is the goal. And I think this is a great letter for us to study because, don't you want to know this? How ought I to conduct myself? Now, when you look at verse 15, how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God.

What is church in the modern imagination? Well, I drive to a church. They've got a parking lot and a sign and a front door and somebody to meet me so that I can go in and tune their piano. There are pews.

There's usually drums and bass guitar and some instruments. Many times there are boxes of Kleenex up and down the aisles when people get weepy. There is a sound system.

Now there are generally cameras and multimedia things. But the sign says, this is the church. This is the first church of this or the Claremore church of that or prior, fill in the blank here, church or whatever the community is.

I tune pianos across the entire Cherokee Nation, which is about nine counties and then some additional territory that's not even in the nation. It's a big area and there are hundreds and hundreds of churches. Large and small.

Gigantic and miniscule. Shape, size, description, emphasis, beliefs. Some the same, some widely different.

Is that what Paul is talking about? How we should conduct ourselves? How you should conduct yourself when you're at church? I think you sense that the answer to that is no. Why is the answer no? Well, what part of the week are you in church? Wednesday night and Sunday morning, maybe Sunday night. Many churches have gone to the format we have had for many years where it's a double session in the morning and extended to Sunday school and church.

Maybe a second service of church to accommodate everyone and then you don't have to drive back there at night. Especially when you've got a lot of rural constituents for whom it is a drive. Let's just drive once, meet twice and save on gas and time.

Makes perfect sense to me. There is no guidance on how often to meet or very little guidance at all in terms of structure and format for worship. When believers assemble together as we do this morning along with so many others.

That's not what this is talking about. You know that. But isn't it interesting the way Paul phrases this in verse 15.

These things I write to you, verse 14, so that, verse 15, you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God. So he hasn't given instructions on order of worship. How many times does the choir sing? When do you pass the plate? How many greeters, etc.

The sort of format we would think of. Well, when you're in church, how does it work? When do they play the instruments? When does somebody read scripture? Who prays and when? How long is the sermon? None of that is anywhere in this book. So it's not talking about the meeting.

And yet, look at the emphasis when he says, conduct yourself in the house of God, the oikos. Remember when we were looking at the word dispensation, the dispensation of the mystery, the oikonomia. And it's the law of the house, the stewardship, the way the household should run.

When you think about the oikos, the house, now we're getting to it. Most of us live in a house. Most of us have a household.

For many and most of us, there are multiple people in that house. And much of our day and our time and even our purposes and our priorities and our goals and our values are inextricably bound up with that household, that home. The other people to whom we look for cooperation and for communion.

There is a program I watch. I'm not recommending it. I'm just saying for whatever reason, when I want to turn off my brain and just get input, but I don't want to watch the news.

I don't want to have somebody tell me a story. There is such an emphasis on entertainment in terms of movies and series. And it's just somebody making up a story and telling it to you.

It has little to no ground in reality. It's made up conflict with made up challenges and made up obstacles. And a little of that is good.

We're all happy to be entertained from time to time. But what I enjoy is nonfiction. Most of the books on my shelves are nonfiction of some kind or other because I think we are here to grapple with reality.

And if we are not doing it personally, we can do it vicariously. We can see the situations that other people have faced. Biographies are great.

Stories of travel and interaction with other cultures. People who have been on some sort of real life adventure. What did they do right? What did they do wrong? Who did they trust? For that reason, I find not reality TV, which is such a misnomer, but representations of actual things that have happened or are happening.

There is a program I have recently been watching just before I fall asleep at night called I Survived. And it is the account. Usually there will be two, three or four people that they will interleave and give you progress through their story in a round robin fashion.

And it is so fascinating. Many things I could say about it. But for illustration here, they always ask people after the end of these extraordinary circumstances.

People caught in blizzards. A fellow last night, an avalanche, was snowboarding with two of his friends, his two best friends. They went ten miles into the middle of nowhere and were snowboarding in this bowl-shaped canyon to see who could get the highest on the edge.

You can't get to the top, but how high can you get? It is a competition. And they were having so much fun until the snow broke loose and there was an avalanche. And all three of them were buried in the snow.

These are the kinds of circumstances. People who are unexpectedly attacked, accosted, find someone in their home. Someone follows them into their place of business and with nefarious intent.

People high on drugs. People who are off their medications and are living in a fantasy world. One guy thought this other guy was Satan and he needed to destroy him.

And most of these people, you cannot find fault with their judgment, their decisions. You know, you always wonder, well, you're bar hopping, you get inebriated, you get tangled up with somebody you don't know. That's kind of your fault.

The vast majority of these stories, these are people that are just absolutely, totally normal. Doing normal things. Picked their community because it was safe.

Have double locks on their doors. Have a security system. They are absolutely average, normal people.

They are out doing normal things. And suddenly, in a moment, a guy has got his arm caught in a corn picker. And there's nobody around.

And he cannot extricate himself. He tries to jam the mechanism so that it doesn't eat him alive. And that causes it to catch on fire.

And he's in the midst of a field full of corn husks that instantly ignite. And he is now not only having his arm ripped off, but he's on fire. But here's the point.

When people are finished telling their story, they always ask at the end. You never hear the question. But the people conclude by saying, I survived because.

And you get the idea that they were asked. Why do you think you lived through this

incredible ordeal? You should have died. You were shot twice in the head and twice in the chest.

You're still here telling the story. How did you survive? Why did you survive? Inevitably, and often when they're giving an account of the point of extremis, in which they were sure they were going to die, they talk about what is in their mind. It is always uniformly, without exception, my family.

I had to live for my children. I had a six-month-old upstairs. And if I did not find a way to survive, this baby would grow up without a mother.

My family, my loved ones. I needed to live because I did not want my children to be orphaned. I didn't want my spouse to be widowed.

I thought of my siblings. I thought of my parents. I thought of my loved ones.

Always. They don't say, I had so much money in the bank that I haven't spent yet. I had so many business opportunities that I've not exploited yet.

I had so many craft ideas that I've not yet brought to fruition. There was one more song I wanted to write. One more painting I wanted to create.

It is always those connections to those around us that define the highest priority, the greatest goal. I want to be with those who love me and those whom I love. Always.

It's amazing. The widest possible spectrum of people end up on this program. All shapes, sizes, descriptions, and ages.

But that is the one thing they always have in common. The reason I belabor this point is that defines you and me as the church, the house of God. The oikos of God is the household.

How many times does Paul talk about the household of faith? The brethren. Brothers, I write to you. John, Peter.

It is the believer in community with fellow believers. This is our strongest and highest family bond as believers. Yes, we are in a human family.

And those ties are as strong as it gets in human experience. But as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the body of Christ, what is closer than the people in your household that are loved ones? Well, it's the parts of your own body. That's why if you love your neighbor as yourself, or husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own body.

Christ loved the church, which is his body. And this is the level of connection that we have as believers. So, isn't it interesting that people, when pressed to the point of life and death, whether they are in the moment or reflecting back on it, what is it that was in

my mind uppermost? Those who I love, those who love me.

What is the goal of this charge to Timothy? Love. Where does that love operate? In the house of God, which is the church of the living God. We take for granted that these phrases are in the Bible.

We've heard them so often that we don't always break them down. Why doesn't Paul just say, which is the church of Jesus Christ? He says, the house of God, which is the church, the ecclesia, the assembly of the living God. Why living God in this context? The life of the assembly is the life of God.

It isn't just any old assembly. You can get in a crowd for any number of reasons. It can be traffic.

It can be a sale at the big box store. It can be a concert. It can be an event.

It can be a presentation. It can be all sorts of circumstances where there is something of common interest or of common necessity. Fire drill.

You're in a big crowd. Everybody has the necessity to get out of the building and go stand in the street. Or a fire alarm, for real.

But the assembly of the living God dwelling in the house of God. This is immaterial. And this is the tie that binds.

The old, old hymn. Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts. That's the goal of this letter.

Is to remind us of that relationship and how to function. This says how you ought to conduct yourself in the environment of connection to fellow believers. Fellow members of the household.

The oikos of God. Isn't it something to think about this? We live in God's house. Spiritually.

Doesn't matter location. Doesn't matter economics or physicalities. You're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. We live in God's house. It is the fellowship, the assembly, the gathering of the living God.

That defines us ahead of everything. I would hope that if I am ever again pressed to the point of extremis and thinking I might not survive this. What are my thoughts? Are they of one or two people to whom I am related? Or is it the house of God? The loved ones that comprise the group to which I am connected by the living God.

In the present day there is this incredible emphasis on love. Love your enemies. Be

accepting.

Find the poor and hug on them. Find the oppressed. Find the marginalized.

There are certain words I would love to purge from the English language. Not for any reason other than they are so overworked and overused. And marginalized is one of them.

What do you mean by marginalized? Pushed out to the edge. The margin is the edge of the page. Well, are they beyond the margin? Are they just pushed to the edge? Is there something wrong with the edge? You always want to be in the middle.

You've always got to be the focus and the center. I find this word marginalized annoying. Find a better word.

And marginalized means you are a victim. It's automatically a victim word. Somebody pushed you to the margin.

And so it's somebody's fault. We've got to find somebody to blame. Who is pushing this person? Well, how do I know that the reason you're on the edge is because somebody pushed you there? Maybe you put yourself there.

Maybe you're lucky to even be at the margin. Maybe you could be clear off the page. You could be in the wastebasket.

At least you're up here on the table, on the page, at the margin. This marginalized thing just drives me nuts. Anyway, I digress.

The virtue today is tolerance. We've talked about this before. The more tolerant I am, the more virtuous I am.

And so to accept the unacceptable, to erase the lines between black and white and good and evil, between proper and improper, between this is something I should associate with, get behind, support, be a part of, and this is something from which I should separate myself and touch not that unclean thing. Oh, in the church age, there's no such thing as corrupt or defiled or perverse or willfully disobedient or victim of your own rejection of God and his values, bad choices made for selfish reasons. I'm just going to blind myself to all of that because now you're not in the middle of the group where apparently there is warmth and light, and sometimes the worst place you can be is in the middle of the group.

There are certain circumstances, certain situations I am glad to be on the edge or beyond. I don't want to be in that group. I don't want to be part of that movement or that thought process or that emphasis in life.

That set of goals and values and priorities is alien and foreign. Love not the world. Well,

I've got to know what the world is.

Love not the things that are in the world. What constitutes worldliness? That is something to not love, to marginalize myself from. But this emphasis on acceptance, on inclusivity, on indiscriminate quote-unquote love is unbiblical.

It is unbiblical. Where is the sphere in which we can practice selfless love, love that is sacrificial to self and beneficial to others? It is in God's house. It is with one another.

Brotherly love. Philadelphia. You've got to be a brother.

Is everybody in God's house? Is God's house the world? It can't be. It makes half the Bible contradictory. Love not the world, but the world is God's house, so love everybody.

It doesn't work. Those who are inside, those who are outside. Paul says this is how you should conduct yourself toward those who are outside.

Outside what? Outside the house. Outside the fellowship, the assembly, the elbow-rubbing of the living God. If we view ourselves first and foremost.

Now, here's the second thing related to that point. Why doesn't Paul say here in verse 15, Know how to conduct yourself in the house of believers, and the fellowship of the saints, the assembly of the saints. What is put where you might expect believers and saints? What word is there? Whose house is it? It's not my house, and it's not your house.

It's not our house. It's God's house. God's house.

Paul could have said anything here. If he was on the love train with the progressive, deconstruct, reconstruct, post-modern church. This would be the fellowship of the saints.

This would be the house of believers. It's God's house. We are related to each other because we are first related to God.

We love because He first loved us. It's the house of God. The post-modern church is utterly and completely forgetting this.

It's God's house. Have you ever heard the phrase, my house, my rules? My house, my rules. Do you think God doesn't feel the same way? My house, my rules.

This is the assembly, the ecclesia, the church of the living God. He's not an abstraction. He's not off somewhere.

But twice Paul says, it's the house of God. It's the assembly of God. You've got a whole branch of churches called assembly of God.

And they've got the right idea. It's not the assembly of saints. It's the assembly of God.

God's people. Related to each other because they are related to God. This is why a marine sees another marine, Semper Fi.

I don't even know the guy. How are we related? We are related to each other because we are first related to the Marine Corps. We were in Walmart over in Pryor and Patty saw a guy pass through.

I didn't see him. But he had a t-shirt on that said U.S. Naval Academy. And I thought, if I bump into this guy, we'll talk.

I don't talk to strangers at Walmart. But I would talk to him. Why? We are first related to something bigger than ourselves.

And that relates us to each other. You automatically have something in common. You automatically have ground for fellowship and conversation.

And potentially friendship. And who knows what else. So, this is the idea.

It is the house of God. And it is the assembly of the living God. So, what? Why does that matter? By whatever means we're related, we're related.

So, shouldn't we just concentrate on being nice to each other? Be kind one to another. What does that mean? Because it is God's house. Because Paul's emphasis here is on identity in God.

In his household. In his assembly. This is the first way we think of ourselves.

I don't think when I drive around and see somebody with USMC on their bumper. Well, let me just go honk my horn at that person. Let's pull off the road.

I want to see what's going on with them. How have you been doing since you left the Marine Corps? Everybody around here is out of the Marine Corps because there's no base nearby. So, you know they're a no longer active duty Marine.

But, hey, there's somebody who used to be a Marine. There's somebody who used to be a midshipman. Here's somebody who used to be this.

Or used to be that. Or two graduates of the same university. Oh, OSU.

OU. TU. University of Arkansas.

Whatever it might be. The first responsibility has to be in view. And as believers, we should not view ourselves as alumni first.

I went to a service academy. I was commissioned in a military service for a purpose. With a mission.

And that mission, during active duty days, defines me. That's my purpose. That's my definition.

This is what wakes me up in the morning and knocks me out at night. Is giving 110% to everything that is required of me to go above and beyond the call of duty. To do everything I can in service of that mission.

That's my definition. That's my purpose. That's the reason for which I was rescued from civilian hood and given training and a uniform and pay and rations.

Is to get this thing done. Are there fellow service members around me? Of course. Do we have fellowship and cooperation and communion and all kinds of interrelated activities? Of course.

But I didn't get into it for the camaraderie. And I am not there simply for camaraderie. We are gathered into a household and we are assembled by the living God with a purpose and a goal.

And that comes first. When I think of myself, that's the first thing that should come to my mind. Not, what can I do in the communion of saints today? Who can I love? Who can I benefit? Who can I bless? I'm going to go find somebody and speak the truth in love.

I'm going to find somebody and pop out a song, a hymn or a spiritual song. I'm going to find somebody and just bow heads and pray with them. I'm going to go out.

Are any of these things wrong? They are things we absolutely ought to do. They are wonderful, righteous, holy and good when they're grounded in faith and informed by the truth of God. But those are outcomes.

Those are expressions and outworkings of something that has to come first. And that first thing is, I'm in the house of God. We like to think of ourselves as in church right now.

When we pack up and split up and go our separate ways, you are still in the house of God. You wake up tonight at 2 a.m., you're in the house of God. You're in the middle of doing whatever you do on Mondays at 10.37 a.m. tomorrow.

You're in the house of God. You are in the assembly of the living God. But it's the God element that defines it and makes it what it is.

And anytime we start looking around and defining ourselves by our connections to each other, as great as those connections are, as wonderful and fulfilling and sources of blessing as they are, that does not define us. And as soon as you screw up and start saying, Well, I just like being comrades. I just like the interactions.

I like the conversations. I like the old Barbra Streisand thing that inevitably comes to my mind on this subject. I love the way he makes me feel.

Or Debbie Boone. It can't be wrong if it feels so right. This is the kind of subjectivity that deflects us, distracts us, and ultimately neutralizes us.

Because we are no longer looking to the head. The head of the household is God. The head of all things to the church is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God.

Who represents God. If you've seen me, you've seen the Father, Jesus says. But our source of self-esteem, a proper self-esteem, not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, our source of objectivity has to be God.

That's why in our passage on the preceding page, the purpose of the commandment is love that is grounded in what God does. And what God says. Not how other people perceive it.

Not how they respond to it. Not what they do because we modeled love. Or we disciplined in love.

Or we motivated and tried to get somebody to change their ways out of love. This pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith, all of this is sourced in, comes from, is powered by God. Not each other.

And that makes us little nuclear reactors. The reactor is a shell that is designed and equipped, but the power is from that fissionable material that is inside. That's where the power comes from.

The reactor is nothing. Produces nothing. Is useless.

Unless that supernaturally active power is within. So that's the understanding we need as we go through this first chapter. And Paul is talking about what is good and what is not.

We look to God, not to each other. Each other is wonderful, but each other is outcome. It is effect.

It is not cause. It isn't ground. And if you look at 315, conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God.

And how does that verse close? Which is the beautiful expression of love. Which is the wonderful charitable environment. It's the pillar and ground of the truth.

Truth. The de-emphasis. The explaining away.

The pushing away. The lack of attention to the truth. Is why the church rampant.

The vast swaths of people who claim to be Christians today are in trouble. They wanted to be the pillar and ground of fellowship. They wanted to be the pillar and ground of

smiles and hugs and joy and uplift and positivity and outreach.

And the pillar, the foundation, the ground is the truth. Without the truth, you're going to be doing all of these things in a wrong way for a wrong reason out of the wrong power with the wrong result. It does not glorify God.

It is not going to stand up at the judgment. As wonderful as it seems in human eyes, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. And we fade as a leaf.

And our iniquities like the wind blow us away. It is the pillar and ground of the truth. That's why we are grace and truth Bible church.

Always have been. Always will be. Pillar and ground of the truth.

Well, how does that work? There are some amazing things that Paul says here in chapter 1 that let us get a hold of this power. Get it inside us and get that reactor producing power that is useful in the world around us. We'll see that when we come back.