

1Tim 23-11-12a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday Morning Services at Grace & Truth Bible Church. It is the 12th of November, 2023. We're in the book of 1 Timothy, we're in chapter two.

We have seen Paul's primary exhortation to prayer for all men, the kings and those in authority, what the purpose of it is, and how the purpose of this prayer ties back to the purpose he established in chapter one, which is the goal of instruction, the goal of this instruction about prayer, that we can lead a peaceable and quiet life in godliness and reverence, in respectfulness. All of this goes back to love that is sourced in God's power. God's power gives us a pure heart, God's power gives us a good conscience, and God's power through the content of his living and powerful word provides us a genuine faith.

So this is the basement and the foundation and the ground floor of our Christian life, day by day, our Christian walk is to understand these truths. We're gonna move forward this morning to verse five and following, the mediatorship of the Lord Jesus and the substitutionary atonement and Paul's appointment. So verses five through seven will be our area of investigation this morning.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our study and we'll begin. Father, we are so grateful for another time of fellowship. We're grateful for the presence of each one that has taken time and respected the importance and the priority of fellowship and the study of your word, the ministry of your spirit, the opportunity to bless and be blessed by the function of the spiritual gifts that you have distributed to each one of us.

We thank you for your provision, your protection, your blessing, your superintending of all of the aspects of our lives, both in ways that we know and understand and in ways that we are unaware of and in some times and places we don't understand, but we place our faith in your character, in your love for us as our heavenly father, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished on our behalf that qualifies us to come boldly before your throne, to find grace to help in time of need. We do that this morning. We do lift up those who are in authority over us and those structures that you have ordained to make possible an orderly life where we can pursue our faith and our understanding, where we can seek to demonstrate your love as it is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We pray that our look at this passage in 1 Timothy this morning will be beneficial to each one here. May we find it returning to our minds in the hands of the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts and our actions and our words so that in all aspects of our lives, the Lord Jesus will be glorified. Light will shine that will draw others to you.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Our passage this morning, after what is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

This is God's overall desire. And this, when it says it is the will of God, it is the desire of God, this comes from fellow. And this is the kind of wish or will that has an emotional component.

It is a felt desire. It's not an abstraction. It isn't a policy.

This is this peaceable and orderly environment so that people can come to salvation and come to a knowledge of the truth. This is God's will. But what is good and acceptable in the sight of God is not always what takes place.

And this brings to mind the problem of theodicy or the presence of evil in the world. We've talked about this before. If there is an all-powerful God who is righteous and holy, why does he allow not just hardship or suffering, but heinous evil, terrible crimes, awful suffering? And the cry of the atheist is often, there can't be a God such as you worship based on the Bible, because if he were all-powerful, he would get rid of this evil and this suffering.

And the fact that he doesn't, if there were a God, I wouldn't wanna worship him anyway because he doesn't do something about this terrible problem. But there are reasons why what is good and acceptable in God's will is not always what takes place. And as soon as God chose to create and then did bring into existence free agents, both angelic and human, God had to immediately limit the perpetration of his perfect desires and will to allow those free agents to function.

If they could only function in accordance with God's will, that's not a free agent. That isn't free will. Well, it's free, but it's only free to do what pleases me.

That's not freedom. And when God established free agents, he necessarily drew a line between his own good and acceptable will and what these free agents might choose to do instead. And so now the question becomes, how far will God let that go? Will he allow mild disagreement? Will he allow a partial departure? Will he allow some stuff that just makes him wince but isn't grievous and it doesn't create great harm and destruction? How far will he let these free agents go before they are reigned in? And the Bible spends a great deal of its content illustrating what God does and does not allow.

And ultimately we come to the conclusion that it is necessary in God's plan and purpose to basically accomplish two things. First of all, by allowing alternative choices, allowing free agents to depart from God, to militate and rebel against God, to reject God and everything that pleases him, this demonstrates the consequences of that alternative because only in God is there life, is there healing, is there growth and positive productivity, positive righteousness, genuine love, and so on. We would not know to avoid departing from God in the eternal future if we didn't see its consequences in the present.

Would we be slightly disinclined to depart from God because we've seen some slightly disagreeable consequences in this life? Or if we see horrendous suffering, children massacred, starving, selfishness, greed, avarice, all of the horrible crimes that human beings commit against each other, the suffering that is caused both directly and indirectly by bad choices that are not in line with the will of God. When we see the awful and in many cases, permanent consequences of crime and war and disease and the other things that are a part of the imperfection of a fallen world and fallen natures and the activities of Satan and his fallen followers, the more egregious our observation shows these consequences to be, the more inoculated against ever wanting to see this happen again in the eternal future we will find ourselves. You can touch a warm or slightly hot stove or iron or surface and say, oh, that was unpleasant.

But if you come in severe contact, some of us have stumbled and placed our hand fully on and supported our weight on a hot stove, hot wood stove, for example. And when your entire hand blisters up, how careful are you about hot surfaces? The more grievous the consequences, the more industrious and committed we are to never letting that happen again. If you do something and you end up breaking a bone, if you do something and you have an awful consequence, you are paranoid about ever letting that happen again.

And this is part of what God is doing in letting evil play out, letting its consequences and its causes and conditions and successions and relations manifest themselves for both angels and humans. There are those who say, well, the cost of this, allowing this suffering just so God can work things together for good or so that God's glory can be manifest in a time of trial, the cost is too high. No one should have to suffer this harshly, this terribly.

Bereavement, disease, pain, things that are done in the criminal world and things that happen in warfare are too grievous. It's not enough that God somehow works it together for good. Well, if you're only looking at earthly life and short-term consequence, you say, well, how is God going to work rape or murder or the awfulness of cancer and other debilitating diseases, people losing their memories to Alzheimer's and these tragic, tragic things, looking around to see how God is somehow gonna work that together for good in the circumstantial world, this cost is way too high to say, well, somebody realized their need for the Lord Jesus and got saved.

The cost is too high. Couldn't God find another way than allowing these sinful and evil forces to work havoc and chaos? There's got to be a better way. The cost is too high.

From an earthly perspective, if you are looking for vindication and justification in this life only, as Paul says, you are of all men most miserable. If in this life only, we hope in Christ. If there is no resurrection, you remember this in 1 Corinthians, in the vicinity of chapter 15, there are some who say there is no resurrection and if there is no

resurrection, then Christ is not raised.

If Christ is not raised, you're yet in your sins and so on. It is in the eternal future that the vindication and the justification is to be found in God's allowing evil to run its course, however tragic, however violent, however painful the consequences are. It is not going to all get worked together for good in this life.

There are things that are tragic and they remain so. And it is a test of our faith. It is a test of our hope.

It is a test of our confidence in the character of God. I was thinking about what we looked at a week or two ago when Paul says, pray for those in authority. Let's look at the circumstances of the day.

Who is in authority in that day? Nero as Caesar, oppressive, brutal, cruel, Roman generals and battalion commanders and local authorities who could kill the Jews for minor infractions with the sword, who could perpetrate horrible miscarriages of justice. It'd be terribly unfair. And here's Paul saying, pray for them.

Well, another example is, remember when Paul says in Romans that our momentary light affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory. I was thinking about that in the last day or so, momentary light affliction. What do you know about the afflictions that Paul experienced? He gives a list of them.

He's had the 40 lashes minus one on three different occasions. He was imprisoned countless times. He was beaten.

He was stoned and left for dead at Lystra. He was shipwrecked. He was snake bit.

He was arrested and taken to Rome to escape the Jews who wanted to kill him. And Paul characterizes this by saying, our momentary light afflictions are working for us an eternal weight of glory. The Lord Jesus anticipated this when he said, do not lay up for yourself treasure on earth because there's evil on the earth.

Moth and rust corrupt, thieves break in and steal. Lay up treasure in heaven. All of this depends on the resurrection.

Are we just living for this life? Are we trying to arrange for the best circumstances and the best outcomes that we can in this short term? Nothing we do in the short term lasts. We can concentrate on health. We can work out.

Health will inevitably fail. Except for the rapture generation, everybody is going to deteriorate. Stuff is gonna go more and more wrong and ultimately it will kill us and we will die.

So this is why Paul is gonna say, and we'll encounter it as we go through these letters,

bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable exponentially more so because godliness reaches into the eternal future. The things that we build, the things that we try to preserve, the things that we try to arrange in this life. Another great Paul Simon lyric, everything put together falls apart.

That's one of his song titles. Can't even reproduce the song, but I love the title. Everything put together falls apart.

And if we have hope in this life only, that's misery. The eternal perspective is a gift from God. And to recognize that and to think about it as we redeem the time, redeeming our time because the days are evil by default is building into eternity.

So our prayers that Paul talks about here are for a peaceable and quiet life so that we can pursue godliness and reverence. We can build our spiritual resources and experience blessing and comfort and encouragement and growth in this life, always with a view toward what is coming in the next. And God desires that all men enter into this life, all men to be delivered out of this present evil age, out of this ephemeral, temporary, vaporous life into that which is eternal.

It's not the will of God that any should perish, but that all enter into this life. Do you notice the number of alls in this passage? You can take a pen and circle them. I exhort supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men in verse one.

Kings and all who are in authority, verse two, that we can live that life. This is good and acceptable on the side of God, our savior, who, verse four, desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, verse six, who gave himself a ransom for all.

The opportunity is universal, but those who claim that grace, who appropriate God's righteousness through Christ, who enter into a life that goes beyond the temporal into the eternal is not all. It's God's desire that all, everywhere, see and seize this opportunity, but that is God's ideal will. It isn't what actually happens because it is also God's will that free agents make their own choices and make their own decision.

And the two things that God is doing in history is, first of all, letting those free agents make their choice and, secondly, allowing that choice with its consequences to play out. Can you imagine the angels in the pre-fall heavenly civilization before Satan committed the five I wills, before he and a third of the angels were cast out of heaven? You could imagine a sort of heavenly Bible class, if you will, a heavenly dose of truth to the angels, God saying, you don't ever want to depart from my will, my purpose, my plan. There were things going on.

They were a civilization. They weren't paintings on a wall. They were active, free agents

accomplishing things.

God might've already been constructing universes and perpetrating things that we know nothing about. And God said, I want to tell you now, don't ever stray. Don't decide that you've got a better idea or a better plan.

That will have disastrous consequences. Well, those consequences are imaginary. You have to take God's word for it that that would be a bad deal.

And free agents convinced themselves, well, how bad could that be? I think actually that would be better. This is the essence of the argument in the garden from the serpent to Eve. God has prohibited you from doing this thing.

He hasn't really told you anything about the consequences. Here's what you can imagine the consequence to be. You will be like God, knowing good and evil.

God knows that this will be an improvement. This will be better than your current situation in the idyllic, ideal garden of Eden. You can improve on perfection if you eat this fruit.

You can improve on what God has arranged and ordained. You can make it better. Just eat this fruit.

This is the line of reasoning Satan gave himself and a third of the angels in the heavenly realms. Remember they used to have a commercial, Ford has a better idea. Little light bulb thing, Ford has a better idea.

Well, Satan had a better idea. Atheists have a better idea. And to let the consequences play out, gives us and the unfallen angels the advantage of not just hearing God say, don't do that, it will be bad, but experiential knowledge.

We don't just have the gnosis of it or the Aletheia truth of it. We have the epinosis. We have seen it.

We have experienced it. We have lived under it, been crushed by it, been wounded by it, helped to perpetrate it on others. Paul knows this as well as anyone.

He persecuted the body of Christ. He persecuted the church of God. He himself was a purveyor of evil.

He knows it from the inside out. And the grace of God that rescues us out of that evil that we embody, that we experience in the world and that we find attacking us from the minions of Satan and the plan and program of Satan, we know it all too well. And we have seen firsthand, we have lived and breathed the consequences.

We have epinosis of what evil is and what evil does. So when we are promoted, when we

are taken into the eternal realms, the unfallen angels and we who are not taken away at the great white throne judgment will enter into the kingdom of the Father fully inoculated. Can you imagine anyone in the eternal future saying, oh yeah, that back there in the old heavens and the old earth, that was a good deal.

Let's try some more of that. Not a chance. I'm never touching that stove again.

I've got the scars. I don't need fresh blisters. I don't need another experience of evil.

And we will be freely able to worship, freely able to serve free without restriction, without limitation, without God having to strap down our conscience or our chooser. We will freely choose because we have knowledge. And only those who are seeking God, who appreciate God, who love the outworking of God's love and God's grace and the self-sacrifice of God's son have freely chosen to be there and having chosen and having experienced the greatness of it would never choose to leave.

So that is one of the primary answers to the presence of evil and the reason that we can pray despite the fact that the government itself is evil and that it perpetrates crimes. We are looking for that shadow of the almighty of Psalm 91 in which we can dwell the secret place of the most high and we can escape the snare of the fowler and the perilous pestilence. They exist and they are there, but we are looking to God and we are placing our faith in His character and in His plan and in His purpose even when we are too small and too limited to understand it.

This is Job in the face of losing all of his earthly goods and then losing 10 children in one fell swoop. His wife says, look at the evil that has befallen you, curse God and die. What is Job's response? Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.

It is the essence of the Old Testament presentation of confidence in God's character. I'm sure the Israelites didn't all understand the prophetic nature of the sacrificial system. Why should I take the best animal out of the flock instead of the worst for sacrifice? Why should I observe these rituals and these feasts and follow these seemingly strange provisions of the law, wear certain kinds of clothes, only eat certain kinds of food? I don't understand it.

I see people outside of Israel doing things and it looks like fun. It looks like they're having a blast. They eat pork and they seem healthy and I can smell that bacon frying from across the border and boy, it seems like that would really be tasty.

I don't understand why there are limitations, why there are restrictions, why we suffer at the hands of foreigners. The Philistines come and take our fields and our flocks. I don't understand why God allows these evils, but those Israelites who in the Old Testament day had Job's attitude.

We have a song, I Know Whom I Have Believed based on Paul's claim. I know whom I

have believed and persuaded that he's able to keep that which I've committed. When you look at the verses of that song, there's many things we don't know and the author details them.

I know not when my Lord may come, at night or noonday fair. I don't know if I'll walk the veil with him in death or meet him in the air, but here's what I do know. And when our understanding of circumstances and the reasons for which things happen, why God allows it, how God could possibly work something together for good, our earthworm perspective can't parse it, can't figure it out, can't justify it or vindicate it.

Our confidence is in the character of God, in the revealed nature of our heavenly father. And I trust him when I don't necessarily know what's going on, but I know God's in charge and that's enough. He's got it, he's made promises, though he slay me, yet will I trust him.

That is our answer. This is the life that is offered. It is the desire of God that all men everywhere come to deliverance from evil and come to a knowledge of the truth.

The truth of God's grace, the truth of God's love, the truth of the eternal future compared to which this life, whatever suffering and however tragic and painful it may be is a momentary light affliction. What grace, what opportunity for us. It's God's desire that everyone enter into it because there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus.

Time and again, when Paul is talking about truths, he comes back to the Lord Jesus. That's the center, that's the focus. And the fact that he gave himself a ransom for all, this is a double emphasis on substitutionary atonement.

It's not just Lutron, the sacrifice, the sacrifice, but here, and remember when Jesus says over in Mark, the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many, a ransom, that's Lutron. Here, Paul tacks ante onto the front. Ante means instead of, not against, not against this atoning sacrifice, but it's an instead of sacrifice.

It's already a ransom, but this is an instead of ransom, a ransom that we don't have to pay or find a way to pay. Ante Lutron, it's an instead of ransom. And this idea that he gave himself a ransom for all, the gift has been given, the ransom has been paid.

Who is going to avail themselves of that prepayment? Imagine you see people getting married and they have an engagement period and they say, well, I'm registered at this store. And this is a department store that's got a lot of different things and we're registered there. And here are some things we would love to be given.

We could really use some bedding. We could really use some dishes. We could really use some appliances.

And they'll put it on a registry list. And so you can give intelligent gifts to someone who's about to get married. And so let's say you do that and you say, well, they've got a wonderful KitchenAid mixer here.

These things are several hundred dollars and this comes with attachments and all of that. I'll get them this KitchenAid mixer. And so you do that down at the store, but the couple never goes and claims it.

You paid for it. It's sitting there waiting for them. It's got their name on it.

It is paid for. It's a done deal. But they never bothered to go down and redeem it and claim it and bring it home.

That is the nature of ransom for all. God's desire is that all men everywhere come to salvation and it is available and it is prepaid, but you have to want it. You've got to claim it.

There are people that get appointed to service academies. It's a hard thing. You can get a nomination.

You can get several nominations, but to receive an appointment to a service academy is a very, very rare and difficult thing. They told us the first week I was at the school at Navy that for every one of us sitting in these seats, there were 10 equally qualified people who were not appointed and didn't come. Equally qualified.

They just filter and it gets down to some very fine details. 10 equally qualified could have easily been sitting where I sat and they weren't there. But what if you receive an appointment to the Naval Academy or to West Point or to Air Force or to the Coast Guard Academy and you don't go? No, I think I'll go to my local junior college or I've got other plans.

I've got other ideas. Not really keen on military service. I don't like the obligation and so on.

I've got the appointment. I'm not gonna go. The appointment for that person is just as valid, just as good as any other midshipman or cadet, but if you don't cash it in, you get no benefit.

You have no future with it. And that is exactly the nature of one died for all. He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

But you have to claim that payment. You've got to cash that ticket. You've got to lay hold of that righteousness by faith, lay hold of that mediatorship.

The Lord Jesus has negotiated the covenant. He has mediated and bridged the gulf between God and man. If you build a bridge across a great gulf fixed, suppose in the

parable of the rich man and Lazarus, instead of saying, you can't come over here and we can't come over there, suppose Abraham had said, well, you know, the Messiah is the bridge across this great gulf.

And look, look at this bridge being created across the great gulf fixed between the man in torments and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. Look, there's a bridge. And if Lazarus is on one side and the rich man is on the other and the rich man says, well, I don't want to cross a bridge.

I'm afraid of heights. I don't know that I want to be over on that other side. The bridge is just as real and just as available, but a free agent can choose not to cross that bridge.

It doesn't diminish the fact that the bridge is there. There is one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus. But the fact that he is the mediator doesn't mean he has successfully mediated the difficulty because there are people that do not want to be reconciled to God, aren't interested in his morals and his ethics and his standards and his plans and his purposes and his universe.

I've got a better idea. I would prefer to go my own way. And the fact that evil is in the world, I'd blame God for that.

If there were a God, it's his fault. He should have gotten rid of it. It's not the fault of people like me who are rebellious and rejecting of God.

That's where the fault lies. If there weren't people with the very attitude that you espouse and express, there wouldn't be these evils that you decry and blame God for. They are not God's fault.

They are the fault of free agents like you. And this is ever the way that people will accuse others of what they themselves are doing. You see this all around us in the modern day, especially in politics.

They will jump the gun and accuse someone else of doing the very thing they're doing. And atheists accuse God of creating and allowing evil in the world when it is they and those who share their view that are responsible. Well, this brings us now to verse seven, for which I was appointed a preacher.

There's much more we can say here. You can think about it on the break. The Lord Jesus, remember in John 3, 16, what does it say? Who is the giver in John 3, 16? He gave, who's the subject? For God so loved the world that he, God, gave his son, the Lord Jesus, and so on.

Who is the giver here? The man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself. Well, who gave that sacrifice on the cross? Was it the father or was it the son? The answer is yes. Did the father give him or did the son give him? Yes, the father gave him and the son gave him.

It was the will of the Lord Jesus to submit to the will of the father in Gethsemane, not my will, but thine be done. And the Lord Jesus gave himself. It wasn't his necessarily first choice, but it was the Lord Jesus' will that the will of the father be accomplished.

That was his highest priority. Though he slay me, yet will I trust him. That's our example of faith and patience and obedience.

And who for the joy that was set before him, the hope of future presence and glory with his father, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame. He didn't enjoy it. He despised the entire experience.

It was shameful. It was awful. The author and finisher of our faith.

He demonstrated it. He fulfilled it. The author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.

Where is he now? Seated at the right hand of the father, evermore. Never gonna suffer the indignities and the pain of the cross, bearing sin, momentary light affliction, eternal weight of glory. If we keep that perspective, if we pray this prayer and keep our eyes on Jesus, looking unto Jesus, follow him.

He said, if anyone comes after me, let him take up his cross and follow me. It's a momentary light affliction. It doesn't seem momentary or light from our perspective in this life.

But when we get to eternity, we will look back on it as such. What a benefit to have had the faith and the hope to enter into that eternal weight of glory. Let's pause here and take a break.