

1Tim 23-12-17a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 17th of December, 2023. We are in 1 Timothy and we're concluding chapter two and moving into chapter three.

We have several fascinating things to look at this morning. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our study, on our fellowship, to bless his word to each of our hearts, and then we'll begin. Father, what a blessing and a privilege it is to spend time together, to be ministered to and blessed by the gifts that you've distributed in our midst.

We're thankful for each one, for the contribution they make and the upbuilding and encouragement that we enjoy as we spend this time together. We thank you for your word, for its accessibility, for its power, for its washing and cleansing effect on our souls. We so often fail, we err and come short.

We sin against you, we sin against each other and yet your marvelous cleansing grace is there. Your mercies are renewed every morning and you lift us up, you set us on our feet in Christ and give us so many wonderful opportunities and potentials. We pray this morning as we look at your word together that the Holy Spirit will make it live and breathe and create strength in our hearts and our souls, give us clarity of perception, give us the ability to see where these things apply in our own lives so that we can live in a way that pleases you, glorifies the Lord Jesus, prepares us for service and function now and in the ages to come.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. You'll remember that having addressed Timothy in chapter one, we looked at that extensively and stating the purpose of the commandment, love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. Then the priority in chapter two of what men should do in the church, beginning in prayer, recognizing that we're going to be a church of God and that the body of believers, the presence of believers is recognized and observed by those in the world.

And we should be aware of this. You can take anything to an extreme. There are those who believe that we should model, that we should sort of pose and create an artificial and conscious example for others.

That's not what this is talking about. At the same time, we're not blissfully unaware that we are being observed. There are things you do when you know you're not being observed that you do not do when you are being observed.

This is anything from adjusting your clothing, where it pinches to addressing things that might be trying to emerge from various parts of your face. We do these things when we hope we're not being observed. And with the ubiquitous presence of cameras and such, now there's no end of YouTube videos and such that are catching people unaware.

So security cameras and such, the ladies that decide they want to do something funny with a copier at the office and so on, and they're hoping nobody knows it was them. And so we are always aware when we're in the presence of others, and we try to manage appearance and other facets of our existence when people are around and when they're not. And Paul's exhortation here is that when we are recognizable to the outside world as believers, we should be aware that we represent God, we represent the Lord Jesus Christ, we represent the body of Christ on this earth, and not to be glib and unconcerned with what that impression is.

And so part of that is that the worship service should be accomplished decently and in good order. Any assembly of believers should be such, and men should lead. That's God's design.

It should be no more difficult than recognizing that God designated Levites to lead worship in the Old Testament. You got 12 other tribes in Israel, 13 total, as you well remember, since Joseph is a double tribe. 12 other tribes besides the Levites, no less, no more qualified than anyone else to perform sacrifices and observe the ritual requirements of the law.

But God said, these guys are going to do it. And even among the Levites, not just any old Levite, they need to be sons of Aaron. And even within the tribe, some could be priests, some could not.

And it seems arbitrary perhaps, but God says, when I tell you a thing, the authority behind it is your Lord God creator in heaven, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And we do what we do in Israel because of that. In the church, we do what we do because God, the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit communicate these things to us and tell us this is what is right, and this is what is wrong.

And it is their authority that prevails, not our sense of what is right and what is wrong. I could give you some examples of this, but they tend to distract when I use them. So we'll move on from here, noting that the role of men is given.

And this is first and foremost, the leading edge of this is the assembly of believers in Ephesus and the functions that are performed by others in the observation of others in these functions that are performed. And so Paul says, I desire, I exhort the supplications, prayers, and intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, kings and all who are in authority. We've been through this many times.

And that in verse eight, men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands. So those who lead worship should not be controversial. And this can be problematic when you say, well, but shouldn't we be prophetic? Shouldn't we speak up and call out evil and call out injustice and call out oppression and subversion and the malfeasance in the public square? This verse suggests not.

This verse suggests not. You've got many prominent evangelicals and others past and present who have felt it their duty to comment on political issues, on candidates, on Supreme Court decisions and so on. There is a remarkable absence of social commentary, political commentary, economic commentary, international commentary on the part of the Lord Jesus and his disciples, later the apostles and the authors of our New Testament scripture, you have to go to the Old Testament.

And this is why you find modern or postmodern Christians who want to do this sort of thing, who want to be a voice and so on. They have to appeal to the Old Testament and they don't call it being apostolic or being Christ-like, they call it being prophetic, being a prophet because they can go back and find Amos and Ezekiel and others who might be Hosea mentioning Israel's situation in the world with her neighbors. But if you look carefully, these are always metaphors.

This is parabolic or example, exemplar type of language. And take, for example, the book of Jonah and you have Nineveh and the people of Nineveh as the capital of Assyria. And you say, well, Jonah was sent to those people with a message, but the book of Jonah wasn't left with the people in Nineveh.

The book of Jonah and the example that God makes sending Jonah to this town of known non-God-fearing pagans is really addressed to Israel. I would submit that someone who wants to be prophetic today might talk about what's going on in the world, but not with the objective of prophesying to the world, but of supplying example and opportunity for interpretation and application among God's people. We see this, what conclusion do we draw? What should we avoid ourselves as we see these malfunctions happening in the world? And that we take to heart the scripture that says, all these were written for our instruction, our instruction.

It is not our calling. I find no mandate. I find no license in the New Testament scriptures for the church to go out and wag its finger at the world and say, this is a bad policy.

This is a wrong path. And as tempting as it might be to want to do that, there is a greater principle of the beam and the moat. And we have enough internal problems, both individually and as groups of Christians, that we should do the Romans chapter two idea.

You, oh man, you want to see these others doing wrong and not first looking at yourself who are doing the very same thing. And we need to concentrate on patient continuance in well-doing, seeking for glory, honor, and eternal life, rather than constantly focusing on these who suppress the truth and unrighteousness, hoping we are somehow going to, you know, people say, well, we're being salt and light. That's not the application of Jesus' use of those metaphors of being salt and light.

That is individual. And we are constantly called to individually live a peaceable and quiet life with godliness and reverence as in this passage. So it's a separate subject.

We're not going to do a deep dive, but there is a real movement today for social action, social justice, speak up for the oppressed, call out those who are oppressing the victims. There is this oppressor victim narrative, and you enter into personal righteousness by identifying the victim in a situation and demanding that the oppressor stop victimizing the victim and just by taking this stand, by mentioning in social media or in conversation, I am now righteous because I am standing up for the poor and the needy and the weak. Making posts on social media is not standing up for anyone.

Ask somebody in Gaza, if they have read your social media stream. We have a bursting radius. We have a sphere of effect in our personal lives, and we have our hands full managing that.

Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. These functions are in the sphere of personal relationships, not abstractions, but people are either consciously or unconsciously appealing to these abstractions and wrapping themselves in a robe of self-righteousness, virtue signaling, gathering in groups of mutual admiration. Well, we're all for this oppressed group or this sad case, and we're standing up for these victims and we're resisting those oppressors.

It's not in their personal sphere. They haven't resisted anyone. They haven't materially helped anyone.

They will appeal to Jesus, talking about the judgment on the sheep and goats. If you've done it for the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me. And what is it that they have done? When did we see you in prison and visit with you? When did we see you naked and clothe you? It doesn't say, when did we see your awful plight and post a bunch of aphorisms on social media.

It is personal contact, personal action, personal sacrifice to identify with someone who is socially unacceptable, to put clothes on those who need them, to feed those who are hungry, to visit those who are trapped in a situation from which way they can't escape. There's all kinds of prisons. You can be in prison by bad health.

You can be in prison by circumstances. You can be in prison by low economic status and to visit, to be present. Remember the Christmastime prophecies about God visiting his people, Israel.

And it doesn't mean he came over for a chat. It means he was present. He came into view.

He was alongside. That's visit in the biblical sense. So to visit those who are in a bad way in prison or any other situation, this is personal.

And the expression of opportunities, the exploiting of opportunities and the expression of

love and meeting of needs is personal and individual and you are present in so doing. So lifting up holy hands in prayer and supporting the government is what this says. Pray for kings, pray for those who are in authority.

And Paul was writing this in the days of Nero as we have seen. So then in like manner, the role of women. So we've seen the adorning themselves in modest apparel with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing.

So you have some flavors, some understandings within the larger realm of Christians that mean you should never braid your hair. It should always hang straight. You should never wear any jewelry or cosmetics.

You should wear extremely plain clothes and so on. I wanna take you to a parallel passage to perhaps understand this a little better. So turn with me to 1 Peter 3. Few pages to the right, 1 Peter 3. Peter is talking here to women as does Paul in our passage.

Wives, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they without a word may be won by the conduct of their wives when they observe your chaste conduct in or by fear. Notice accompanied is in italics, you can scratch it out. And this is the kind of fear that we have for God, not saying that the husband is God, but this is in the sphere of reverential respect of submission in the healthy sense.

We're not abjectly humiliating ourselves when we worship God, we appreciate his character. We appreciate what he does for us. And this isn't in fear of retribution and fear of being smacked around and fear of being yelled at.

This is the respect kind of fear, the acknowledgement that there is an assignment to be fulfilled in this sense, enlisted personnel fear officers. They should not be afraid of them and the officers shouldn't be acting in a way that makes people genuinely fearful for their career or their physical safety or whatever. But this is recognition of assigned role, recognition of proper function of duty.

I do my duty not because somebody who outranks me is such a great person and I really like them and I think they're just a cool human being. I do it because they have an assigned function and I have an assigned function. And whether I think they are doing their job well or poorly doesn't enter into it, doesn't enter into it.

We obey the orders of those over us because that's the assignment, that's the structure. That's what we entered into when we took our oath. There is an oath in marriage, there is an oath in military service, there is an oath in civilian service in government and so on.

Support and defend the constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Nobody talks a lot about those domestic enemies, but I've thought about it a lot. So Peter says, wives be submissive to your husbands.

They can be won over not by your persuasive arguments and your harsh carping criticisms, but by your chaste conduct. This is scripture and conversely, we're going to be talking about this in a minute. We like to say, oh, well, the wives have to submit and try to set a good example and the husbands just get to tromp all over them.

Not even close, but recognition of assignment. They will observe your chaste conduct that reflects respect, that reflects an understanding of assigned roles. Look at verse three.

Do not let your adornment be outward. Merely is not there. Do not let your adornment be outward.

Your appeal, your memorable example. When people wear a \$500,000 necklace to a party and other people see it, they say, oh, wow, that's quite the adornment. Someone wears a Versace dress or some fancy brand of shoes.

I think Versace makes clothes, don't they? Anyway, a fancy brand, Gucci and these kinds of things. People are impressed by who made a thing and how much it cost and that's adornment. Do not let your adornment be outward.

Adornment, arranging the hair, wearing gold or putting on apparel. Fine is not there, scratch it out. And notice, if you were not supposed to arrange your hair, if you are not supposed to wear gold, you would also not supposed to be wearing apparel.

This is a great point that I think H.A. Ironside made in his commentary that it is not saying you should not do these things. It should not be your adornment. It should not be the basis for your beauty and your memorable example is that you're a clothes horse or a runway model or that you really put on the exterior appearance in an effort to look good.

And this is quite prominent today. You look at the popular singers, the popular actors and actresses and it's all about appearance. It's all about what you wear or in some cases, what they don't wear when they're on stage.

And the hugely popular figures that everyone knows their names today have an image and it's always the same lipstick. It's always skimpy outfits and shapely figures that are emphasized and attention is called to them. And scripture says that shouldn't be what you lead with.

That shouldn't be what you are notable for. It doesn't mean you can't, as I say, look at these verses, arranging the hair, wearing gold, putting on clothes. So no arranging of hair, no wearing of gold and no clothes.

That's not the idea. It is that this should not be your adornment. This isn't what makes you pretty.

This isn't what makes you attractive. This isn't the impression that you leave with people. It should instead be the hidden person of the heart.

And isn't that interesting? That what should be memorable about you is not what people see, but the hidden person. Now, if people look at you, they can't see what is hidden, right? The hidden person they can't see. And yet that's what your adornment should be.

So this is talking about presence. It's talking about contact. It's talking about converse conversation, activities shared.

This is what you find out about someone over time. So it's not the initial impression. It is what you learn about someone as you get to know them.

The hidden person of the heart comes out over time, which is why it is unwise to meet somebody in Las Vegas and marry them the same night. I'm not saying your engagement has to be lengthy. I could never stand on that soapbox and preach, but you have to find the hidden person of the heart and that should be what attracts.

And that hidden person should be attractive. If we're hiding bile and vituperation and a judgmental, harsh, and critical spirit, that hidden person is not going to be an adornment. That's going to be ugliness.

We all have ugliness. We try to keep it tamped down. We try to get God's grace to eradicate it and eliminate it, but it's like the poor.

We're going to have it with us always in this world and in this life. We have to rely on God's grace and God's power to keep it in check, to keep it behind the bars of God's power and God's grace. And sin happens when it escapes.

But the hidden person of the heart should be that person that evidences and manifests the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. That's our goal. We don't always reach it.

We certainly know when we fall short of it, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But this is an encouragement to focus on our own rather than that of others. It is always easy.

This is what Christians are doing today. Look at the government in this country and look at the policy of that country and look at these people going to war against those people. And that's wrong.

And every minute that is spent analyzing world events and virtue signaling by standing up for the victims, neither the oppressor nor the victim hears a word you are saying. You can assemble in the streets by the thousands. They're busy.

They're either launching bombs or ducking them. They're either eating rations or doing

without. They don't know and they don't care about your strutting and fretting your hour on the stage with your embrace of self-righteousness that has nothing to do with the hidden person of the heart.

You say, well, but it's my empathy. It's my love that is coming out. No, it's not.

It's actually not. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked because if you think that by embracing a cause and by broadcasting opinions about world events and politics, you are achieving righteousness, you are not reading your Bible. We are all as an unclean thing.

All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We fade as a leaf. These issues fade as a leaf.

People will embrace one cause today, another cause tomorrow, another cause after that. It fades. The word of God lives and abides forever.

God's righteousness is eternal. The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. They do not change.

So we think that these passages, whether it is 1 Peter 3 or 1 Timothy 2 or Corinthians, the parallel passage we've looked at previously, that this is somehow talking about only women. You think about how applicable what God says and does regarding Israel in the Old Testament was just for Israel. We observe, we interpret, and we apply.

When this talks about men lifting up holy hands in prayer, being aware that this is a form of communication to those who are inside and those who are outside, being aware that it makes a difference how we act, how we act makes a difference. It shouldn't be taken casually. It is a form of communication.

Well, that's true for all of us. Are women not ever to pray? Well, of course they are to pray. Well, if women also pray and it's not just men, then how should a woman pray? Well, there aren't different rules for womanly prayer.

It's the same. So what is the posture of prayer? What is the attitude of prayer? What should the content of prayer be? If men are to pray for kings and those who are in authority over them, then how should women pray? We can observe, we can interpret, and we can apply. Women have a couple of extra layers of authority, right? In the church, there are elders who are men.

In the home, there is a husband who is an authority, assigned by God, good, bad, or otherwise. So can women read the instructions about men lifting up holy hands and praying for those in authority and make application themselves? Absolutely. Can men look at the instructions of women that their adornment and their modesty ought to be evident and that it is the inner person of the heart that ought to be persuasive and winning and attractive? Absolutely.

I can't dismiss that and say, well, that's for women. It applies to me, to us, to all of us, as much as it does for the initial addressee. That's the beauty of scripture.

We've looked at the first 10 chapters in Proverbs that are addressed to my son and to young men. Watch out for the crafty harlot. Watch out for the seductive, deceptive ways that will lead you down a bad path.

Is that only for young men? It's for all of us. God's instructions to Israel for all of us. So we don't get a pass.

We don't slip out the mental door while these verses are being read and interpreted. It, every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God is for us to live by. Every word, every word, all scripture is inspired by God and profitable for doctrine, all of it.

We say, well, but that's not addressed to me. These are pastoral epistles. These are for the pastors.

No, it's for all of us because God is unchanging. His principles, his standards, his expectations are the same. The sphere may change from Old Testament to new, from man to woman, from master to servant, from Jew to Greek.

The sphere of application may change, but the principles do not change. The expectations of God, the standards by which he judges us do not change. So it's a fascinating exercise to take these passages.

If you are a woman, read all of the conditions, the standards, the criteria for being an overseer that we're seeing as we move into chapter three. If a man desires the position of episkopos, episkopos, the one who oversees, he desires a good work. And this is on air, this is the gender man.

And you say, well, you know, I'm going to skip down and find where he's talking about women again. Pay attention. Men, pay attention.

Back up in verse nine and following. Pay attention. Nine and following applies to us men and three, one and following apply to you ladies.

It's the same principle in a different sphere. These are examples. This is Paul's whole idea in talking to Timothy about what is visible.

These are examples and a form of communication that are to express the common and unifying beliefs in the church. And the recognition of structure is paramount for everyone in the church. You think about the Roman centurion communicating with the Lord Jesus about his servant slash son.

And he said, you would think, well, the Jews would look at a centurion. He's the Roman government. He's the present and emphatic.

I can see him, I can hear him, part of the Roman government. So he's the top dog in these parts. What does the centurion say? I'm a man under authority and I have those who are under my authority.

I am in the chain. And I say to one, go, and he goes, to another, come, and he comes, but I am also a man under authority. I understand authority both above me and below me.

So those issues that apply to authority apply wherever we are in the chain. And we can profitably study the instructions given to others, not for the purpose of critiquing and judging them and saying, well, you know, scripture says you ought to be submissive and you're not submitting. If I recognize that there is a principle of submission in scripture, in an authority structure, where should I be turning my laser light gaze? On myself.

I too am someone who has authority and who is under authority. Instead of busying myself critiquing and finding fault with this one over here, scripture says, I need to work on myself. Isn't it interesting that we can't send the Holy Spirit to somebody else? When we did Ephesians chapter one, I pointed out, when Paul says, I pray that you Laodiceans may have a spirit, have the spirit of wisdom and understanding, he's not praying that they get the Holy Spirit.

Even an apostle can't send somebody else the Holy Spirit to fix them. We receive the Holy Spirit. So where is the prophet of ministry of the Holy Spirit as he gives us the word? He gives it to us and it works in us.

Our responsibility is for ourselves. We can certainly observe, we can perceive, we can draw conclusions about what is faithful and what is not in the outside sphere, but when it comes to fixing, all of the fixing is the hidden man of my heart, not the hidden man of your heart. And what does Peter say will help someone else get fixed? Your chaste conduct is a means that God can use to correct someone else.

Paul is saying here in Timothy, as a group and individually, our chaste conduct, our proper conduct, our humble conduct, our God-oriented, authority-recognizing, peaceable and quiet and reverent, good conscience and sincere faith. Our example is a communication and God can use that example when it is genuine. God can use that example.

He's not going to use our finger wagging. He's not going to use our criticism. He's not going to use our brow beating.

He's not going to use our maligning and gossiping and pernicious conversations against each other. That isn't what does it. Far more memorable and far more useful to God is our chaste conduct, where the adornment is not exterior.

It's not what we say. It's not how we wrap ourselves in whether it's physical glitter or

virtue signaling self-righteousness. You know, that's what I'm known for is I'm a big proponent of this policy or that group of people, those victims.

That's the same as braiding hair and putting on gold jewelry. It doesn't address and it doesn't fix the hidden person of the heart. So just as the Proverbs, it's so interesting that all scripture truly is God-breathed and all scripture is truly profitable for me, regardless of who God is talking to.

God sent Jonah to Nineveh, but it was a message for Israel. Paul is giving opportunities to women and opportunities to men in the public roles of worship and function within the assembly. But these examples benefit everyone, both inside and outside the church.

And it's important for us to remember that it is the hidden person of the heart that eventually becomes unhidden over time. And presence and contact, if we are truly going to be witnesses, if we are going to be a blessing to others, if our spiritual gift is going to confer benefit and blessing, we have to concentrate on fixing the inner person of the heart. And as we all know, that is a full-time, lifetime job.

None of us have got it licked. None of us have arrived. We are all a work in progress, but this is our concentration.

This is our goal. And this is why God puts his resources of his word and his spirit inside us, not in our hands to shoot like a bazooka at someone else. The hidden man of the heart hides the word of God in his heart and has the Holy Spirit indwelling and filling his heart, man or woman.

And that's where the work of God. God is at work outside of you to fix the world. Is that what it says? God is at work within you to will and to do for his good purpose.

If we remember the work is interior, we're in good shape. Well, when we come back from the break, we're going to look at something because we have a misdivided chapter division. We have a misdivided verse division.

We have a misdivided concept here that we need to fix. And it is going to open a wide door to a bright sunshiny day. We'll see that when we come back.