

1Tim 24-01-14a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 14th of January, 2024.

And we continue this morning, our study in the Gospel of First Timothy. We're looking at these qualifications for leadership and service in the church, and recognizing that the reason these qualifications are given is not just that Paul wants to be sure that Timothy has well-ordered, well-run churches, but because these are example positions. They're visible people in the church to whom the rest of the church should look for how believers ought to live.

Therefore, these qualifications and descriptions are something that we want to measure ourselves against. Every one of us should look at these qualifications as a measure, as a way to tell where we are. If you're trying to lose weight, you step on the scale.

How am I doing? Am I decreasing or increasing those numbers? If I'm running for time, I time myself. And is my time on the three miles or on a sprint getting shorter or longer? These qualifications are so useful as an indicator, as a measure of where we are. So we're gonna continue looking at them this morning.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our time of study, and we'll begin. Father, we're thankful for another opportunity to spend this time together, to be encouraged and built up through fellowship and the contact we have with one another is such a wonderful expression of unity and enthusiasm to spend this time catching up and being able to pray for one another and work together as we sojourn through what remains to us of this life in anticipation of the return of your son, the Lord Jesus. We pray that through our study and our application of the things we're learning this morning, we can represent him properly and efficiently, effectively in the world, that your light of glory will shine through us and draw others to you through the Lord Jesus.

And we pray that as we look at this portion of your word together, the Holy Spirit will impress it on each of our hearts, help us to get it, to understand it and to see its pertinence and applicability in our daily walk before you. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Let's quickly read through this first portion of chapter three.

We've studied this in some detail, but it begins with the word, if. The faithful saying is the deliverance that comes through continuing in faith, love and holiness with self-control in whatever we undertake. The example, of course, being ladies who have the privilege and opportunity of bearing and raising children.

It is God's assigned responsibility that this be done by women. Doesn't mean a man can't do it. Doesn't mean that there are exceptions and non-standard circumstances, but the model is that the man earns the bread by the sweat of his brow.

And the woman, although child bearing and child raising can be at times painful, stressful, taxing, testing, it is the assigned function. And any assigned function, remembering, again, the key to understanding Timothy, first and second, and Titus, where we will eventually end up, is that these are examples. Overseers, quote unquote, bishops, deacons are the more visible people in the group.

And they are put in leadership and service positions, not only to accomplish those functions, but to be models, to be examples. Children in the church see not only their parents, but these godly individuals who are manifesting the fruit of the spirit in fulfilling their assigned role, whatever it may be. The overseers are in a leadership role.

The deacons are gonna be in a functional and service role. And all of us find ourselves in these same types of positions in different phases of our life, at different stages of our life. Like the Roman centurion, communicating with the Lord Jesus, I have soldiers under me.

I say to one, go, and he goes. To another, come, and he comes. But I am also a man under authority.

And there are times when we serve over those that have the rule over us. There are times when we exert the rule over others. And so these qualities, these characteristics are so important.

And not just, I wish I had these qualities, but how do I acquire them? How do I develop them and exercise them and grow them so that they become a part of the pattern of my life? And this, of course, can't be done in human strength. We will err and fall down and come short again and again if we try to just, by force of will and strength of resolution, try to be these things. We don't have the power in and of ourselves.

And it becomes very frustrating and depressing to want to be patient and fail, to want to be measured and have self-control and fail time and again. So seeing these, we want to not only understand what they mean, but know how to acquire, develop and improve our own expression of these traits of character day by day, week by week, month by month, because they apply to every single one of us, man, woman, young, old, under authority, expressing authority, they all count. So even these expressions that talk about a woman raising children, employers look after employees.

We look after younger family members or sometimes older family members for whom we have a stewardship. You can put it this way. We can ask ourselves the question, is there anything in our lives, think about your own personal circumstances at this moment, your relationships, your opportunities, your responsibilities, is there any of them that doesn't get better and improve and express and flesh out salvation by continuing in faith, love and holiness with self-control? Is there anything for which you don't need those and they don't really help? Obviously, women raising children in the home is not always standard.

There's a lot of people that may not have children or haven't even been married. I've known several people in my life that went the entirety well into their 60s and 70s and even 80s, never married. So this doesn't apply.

Do those individuals, do we as individuals, whatever our circumstance, need to focus on experiencing and leveraging and being blessed by our salvation through faith, love and holiness, sanctification, departing from that which is evil and clinging to that which is good and self-control. Remember, you box the compass here on the fruit of the spirit, because you have love, which is the first element in Paul's list, and you have self-control, which is the last element and everything in between. So as we look at these, we think, well, sure glad I'm not an elder.

I'm sure glad I'm not a pastor. I would have to try to develop all of these. Sorry, you're not off the hook.

Every single one of us needs every single one of these qualities, just depending on circumstance, different ones come to the front and come to the fore. So we saw this. If a man desires the position of an overseer, episkopos, episkopos, it's where the Episcopal church gets their name, he desires a good work.

And we all desire good work, don't we? If we're going to do something, let's do it well. Whatever you do, do it heartily as under the Lord, not under men, Philippians chapter three. So whatever you desire, what would you like to accomplish? Just stop and think for a moment.

We were talking Wednesday night about goals and values and priorities from Proverbs. Think about something right now, right this moment that you have as a goal. Some of us have been less than healthy or recovering in various ways from various things.

And we certainly have a goal to get restored, be stronger, be fully functional, get back to a hundred%. There are financial goals. There are task goals, things that need to be done.

I really want to get this done. So we want that not just to be work, not just to be something that gets accomplished, but as a believer, we want that to be a good work, good in God's sight. We want it to be good work.

We want it to be measured by God and counted as good. So desiring a good work, is there anybody listening to the sound of my voice that doesn't want their work to be evaluated and found to be truly good by God? So we have that as a desire for anything near a healthy believer. We don't want just to work, but we want it to be good work.

So these qualities are going to contribute to doing good work. If you agree that you want your work to count on eternity, to lay up treasure in heaven, to lay hold of righteousness by faith in the process, here's how to do it. To be an overseer doing good work, you are first of all, blameless.

This is so interesting because these qualities of blamelessness are found throughout scripture, especially in the New Testament. And this idea of blamelessness is going to come up again in 1 Timothy 5, verse seven, flip over a page to chapter five. These ladies who are widows are given instructions, which we'll see in detail a few weeks hence.

These things command, Paul tells Timothy, to these ladies, that they may be blameless. Very same word. So you can't say, well, I'm not a pastor.

I'm not an elder. This blameless thing doesn't really apply to me. Here are the widows who in one sense might be considered at the opposite end of the functionality scale.

The widows are not going to be teaching or supervising or developing and implementing policy. They're going to be serving. They're going to be helping their fellow ladies in the church, trusting God, continuing in supplications and prayers day and night, showing piety at home and so on.

Widows that have children and grandchildren, let them learn to show piety at home and so on. So the result is blamelessness. What does it mean to be blameworthy? Well, think about your negative behavior descriptions.

Those who gossip or malign or judge or who spread disunity and discontent, who are disruptive and divisive by their conversation, by their attitudes, that would be the opposite. And you would not be blameless to be found guilty of sins of the tongue or having a carping and critical attitude and so on. So blameless.

The next chapter, chapter six, verse 14, Paul tells Timothy himself, you need to keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing. So blameless isn't just an episode. It's not just, I did that particular thing and I'm not blameworthy in it, but blameless as a characteristic, as a description, until we are united with the Lord Jesus Christ at his appearing.

So this is without spot and blameless. What if we are blameworthy? Are we done? Are we out? How can we return to blamelessness if we fail? Well, this is one of our life skills as believers. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And where we had been worthy of blame, we can return to being blameless. This is Psalm 51, 1 John 1, 9, 1 John 1, 7 and so forth. So blameless, if you think about Luke chapter one, verse six, we've just come through the Christmas season.

And you remember that Luke begins with a detailed infancy narrative with the birth of Christ. And Luke's account begins with the description of Zachariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist. And it says in verse six of Luke chapter one, having named Zacharias of the division of Abijah, his wife is of the daughters of Aaron.

Her name is Elizabeth. They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Not only is this something to be cultivated because it's intrinsically good, but God can use us.

If we want to be meaningful, if we want to be a blessing to others, if we want to be an instrument in God's hand for spreading his goodness and his grace and his blessing, the reason these two elderly people become John the Baptist's parents is among other things, they are blameless. Blameless how? Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord to observe them and to keep them, we have to first know them. I was trying to put something together just last night and I thought, well, there's a missing part here.

I did not read the instructions. I didn't even carefully read the outside of the box of this heater that I purchased. And I searched the box three or four times.

I examined the parts that were in the box and tried to fit them together and became more and more confused, not realizing that this particular heater is designed for one of these little small green propane bottles. That was the missing piece. And as I finally examined it and realized that looks just like my little portable grill where you screw in, oh, it's the picture on the box.

It just looks like a cylinder, but it's a propane bottle. But I didn't know the instructions because I didn't read them. I'd never had this type of heater before.

I've had lanterns. I've got a Coleman lantern that works the very same way. It's got a base and got a top, but it's a light.

And this was a radiant heater. I just hadn't, I was unfamiliar. To be blameless and walk in the statutes and the ordinances of the Lord, the commandments, blameless, we have to know them, which is why we're here this morning.

It's why we come to Bible class a couple of times a week so that we can know the word of God. You can't be blameless if we don't not only know, but measure ourselves against these ordinances. I know the command, but have I stopped to think about whether I'm breaking it? I know the ordinance, but have I examined myself to see if I am actually walking according to it? So this description that we have in 1 Timothy chapter three, two and three, really, is so helpful because we can know the commandments and ordinances and then check ourselves, am I blameless or am I blame worthy? Got to go through that process, not just hear them.

James puts it in terms of looking in the mirror. You see that you're disarranged, but you don't do anything about it. You walk away from the mirror and straightway forget what you saw.

If you're looking in the mirror and you see something out of place, I was looking at

myself right before class and realized that I had a great big rooster tail on the back of my head. This little strand of hair, which frequently happens. Patty, every other week will say, you got that thing.

But if you don't look, you don't know. And next thing you find out, it's immortalized on video for all time. But looking and then doing something about what we see.

And this again has to be done in the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. I can't just resolve, I can't just decide. If you step on a scale and you see 10 or 15 more pounds than you want, you can't just step off and say, well, I really need to lose that weight, don't I? Take steps, change the way you eat, change the way you exercise, buy bigger clothes so it doesn't show, do something.

But we have to make a difference having heard, having observed, having seen the situation and for spiritual life and spiritual function, it is the Holy Spirit. How do I make sure the Holy Spirit has free reign and that His power is going to work? I've got to give Him something to, by way of a voice, content of the word of God, I have to think about it and bring it to the forefront of my mind so that He can impress it on my heart. And I have to clear away sin so that I can be responsive to His guidance and His leading.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord doesn't hear me. Who brings our prayers before the throne of grace? Remember in Romans, Paul says, our prayers, we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes. He takes our prayers and communicates them to God in words that cannot be uttered.

He puts them in the language of heaven, in terms that God, the Father, will respond to and answer and implement. But our prayer life, emphasized in chapter two here, is a Holy Spirit function. And we should be aware that our prayer isn't going to rise any higher than the popcorn on the ceiling without the Holy Spirit's ministry and being sensitive to His presence.

Then when God wants to communicate with us, the other half of that conversation, that is a function of the Spirit as well. And this is how change is wrought. This is how we lose the weight.

This is how we improve our time. Improve our performance in whatever we want to do. I cannot tell you how much better my piano playing has gotten over the last seven plus years, because I play many, many times a week in the course of testing a piano that I have just tuned.

And I have come to freshly understand why I was such a miserable pianist for so long. I didn't spend any time perfecting my fingering, perfecting my timing, perfecting. And people think I'm a great pianist.

I play very simple songs. They are not difficult, they are not complicated, but I play them

perfectly now. I can play for extended periods of time without making a single mistake because of practice.

People say, oh, I love to hear you play the piano. And I say, it's basically just, I get a lot of practice. This is how we perfect and become blameless is practice, practice, practice, measuring ourselves.

Did I play that wrongly? Did I hit between the cracks? Did I not fret that guitar without buzzing? Did I not get there quick enough? Did that note not sound? Did I not get the dishes clean when I washed them? Did I lose another sock in the laundry? Did I miss the corners when I swept? Anything that we do, we concentrate on doing, as it says at the end of chapter two, with love, with faithfulness, with self-control and measure ourselves. And when we see that the measure reveals less than great results, go to the source of power. Maybe I'm not spending enough time reviewing and thinking about what I've learned from the word of God.

Maybe I am not creating those conditions where God the Holy Spirit can exert his power to transform my heart and renew my mind. Romans 12, one and two. Blameless, the husband of one wife, we've seen this, one woman, man.

What does this really mean? People say, oh, can you be divorced and serve in the church? Totally misses the point. This is an example, right? So if a man desiring to do good work in the church in a leadership role, if he is a one woman, man, what does that say about him? When he makes a commitment, he keeps it. When he makes a pledge, he is as good as his word.

So forget the whole, what if you're divorced? What if you're widowed? You can't believe the dead seas of ink that have been spilled about this and in a lot of denominational churches and well, the deacons committee, I read some correspondence because Dr. Criswell received an inquiry more than once about, well, can a divorced man be on our board of elders? And Dr. Criswell said, I personally have no qualms about someone who before they were saved or if their wife leaves them or under certain conditions, where it doesn't indicate some sort of, it's not a symptom of kind of character flaw. Stuff happens. Life is not perfect.

People are not perfect. And he said, personally, I don't think scripture warrants prohibiting someone at a later stage in life from serving. But he said, I will tell you, and I saw this in three or four different letters that he wrote, our board has a different view and they never recommend a man with any kind of marital tribulation in his past.

He said, I don't agree with it, but for the sake of unity, I do not push the issue. They are the board, they have their policy. I let them do it.

I personally don't agree with it, but for the sake of unity in the church, I don't make an

issue. But it's a shame because it really misses the point. The point is what kind of character, all of these are character traits.

They're not episodes, they're not specific circumstances, they're character traits. What kind of a character trait is it for anybody that would be represented by this description of a one-woman man? I keep and honor commitments that I make. If I tell a woman that I will be with her in sickness and in health, in prosperity and in adversity, till death do us part, I will be faithful to you and you only as long as we both shall live, I keep that commitment.

That's a one-woman man. So anybody can be a quote, unquote, one-woman man. When I make a commitment, I keep it.

If I tell you I'm going to be there, I'll be there. If I say I will get a thing done, if I say I will send you payment by a certain time, if I take out a mortgage or a loan, I am religious about making sure I make those payments. When the Bible says, owe no man anything, it doesn't mean never take out a loan, it means never be delinquent, never be sloppy, never fail if you make a commitment to keep it.

Be a one-woman man. It's a character trait. If I say it, I'll do it.

And I hold myself to account. Have I made pledges and not kept them? Have I sort of superficially and carelessly said, oh yeah, sure, I'll take care of that, and then I don't. Whatever we have to do, make a list, pray, Lord, give me a good memory, help me to keep short accounts and to not make commitments that I can't keep.

This is back to self-control. Don't make a commitment hastily, superficially, carelessly. You see this all the time when people tell other people, it will be okay, oh, it's all gonna be fine.

And you can't guarantee that it's gonna be fine. You know, a tornado is coming and the children are upset and you say, it's gonna be fine, nothing bad is gonna happen. You don't know that, you can't keep that commitment.

And if you tell somebody it's all gonna be fine and it isn't, your integrity is shot. Don't say things that aren't true and don't commit to things you can't guarantee that you can do. This is self-control, this is discipline, this is bridling the tongue.

This is thinking before we speak and planning before we commit. Do I have the time? People have been recently asking me to fix things that they've got, which I am totally capable of fixing. I go to piano customers and they've got a broken stereo or a broken electronic keyboard or a damaged piano bench or a piece of furniture.

And there are all kinds of things that I can do. And I have been explaining to them recently, and they say, oh, you fixed this, can you fix that? And I say, you know, I am

capable of doing it, I can tell you how to do it, but I can't do it because I cannot commit the time. I am already committed up to my level of capacity.

And while I could, A, I can't, and B, there is probably someone better. Your broken piano bench, you can find a furniture repair guy, talk to an antique store that regularly employs people who can fix furniture and they can put this leg back on the bench, they can do it well, they do this kind of thing all the time, they probably have the parts on hand. I would have to take time to order things that I don't have.

I can, but I'm not going to. Just because we can doesn't mean we should. This is part of being blameless, this is part of being a one woman man.

Don't spread yourself thinner than you ought. And this applies to every single one of us. You wouldn't think that a woman would apply being the one woman man, but you do.

This is, don't think that you can be all things to all people. Don't fail to keep a primary commitment because it is gratifying or stimulating to go beyond that commitment and dally and dabble in things. This is poor use of time, poor stewardship.

I have committed to being a wife and mother, but I really love this hobby, or I really love this activity, or I really am enamored of some guy that's in the workplace or whatever. And first thing you know, commitments begin to get compromised. This is a no compromise commitment.

Can I measure myself? Young, old, male, female, can I measure myself and say, I do not compromise my commitments. I make them carefully. And when I make them, I keep them religiously.

That's a one woman man. Temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior. These don't need a lot of translation, but they do need a lot of application.

Can I go slowly through this list? Do I let my temper get out of hand? Do I say things I wish I could unsay, words come back? In the heat of the moment, I said and did things I should not have done. Am I a door slammer? Am I a shouter? Am I a hypercritical, judgmental, hypocritical person when under stress, when things don't go my way? So look at this list, every single one of us. It doesn't have to be only for pastors and it doesn't have to be only for men.

Am I temperate? Am I sober-minded? Not giddy, not easily distracted, not so wrapped up in entertainment or in something stimulating, something interesting. I just love watching. I want to binge watch something on television.

There are times, especially when you're sick, binge watching can take your mind off of your misery, but there are other times when we have actual responsibilities. We are accountable. There are important things that need doing.

We have made commitments as a one-woman man and we've got to be sober-minded to get them done. Of good behavior. This is good behavior as observable by the world.

You say, well, all things are lawful for us in the age of grace. All things are lawful, but not all things are edifying. Not all things are helpful.

Some things set a bad example for people who don't necessarily have strength that we have spent months and years developing and we can handle a thing that they can't. This is your whole meet offer to idols discussion. When Paul says, I will consider the weaker brother and even though I can do a thing, if it is going to cause him to stumble, I won't.

Well, this requires awareness. This requires thinking beyond ourselves and beyond what would please me and what would make me happy and what would make me feel good. What I would enjoy, I'm going to consider those around me.

This is good behavior. This is hospitality, hospitable. Sensitivity to the presence and the needs of others.

Hospitable, am I stepping outside myself and thinking about how my words and my behaviors are going to affect others? Boy, when you realize that you're guilty of insensitivity and inhospitable behavior, especially when it has been a pattern of life, there can be high motivation to not do that anymore, to wound those who are close to you, to bruise and stress and do injustice to loved ones. It's a hard history to think about. And all we can do is pick up where we are and do better.

To be hospitable, to be sensible, to realize that in our ingrown sense of self-righteous justice or injustice, we are sacrificing far more important things. Hospitable, able to teach. This means taking the time to explain in terms that others can understand.

All of us need to be able to communicate clearly, especially when it comes to spiritual things. Able to teach means able to communicate, able to get important information across. This means slow down, take your time, be sensitive to the listener.

There's someone I talk to on a daily basis that has reached an advanced stage of life and will tell me if I'm talking too fast. You're talking faster than I can listen. And to be sensitive, to choose my words carefully for someone who's hearing is largely gone, to speak slowly with familiar phrases and things that I typically say so that if a question is asked, I can answer it.

This is part of being able to teach, able to communicate. It's all about sensitivity to the listener. Well, this brings us now to verse three, not given to whine, and we'll review this and move forward into, we're gonna get all the way down into and beyond verse eight when we come back from the break.