

1Tim 24-01-21a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 21st of January, 2024.

We're in first Timothy chapter three. We are right at the seam between verse seven and verse eight, likewise deacons. And this, as we have seen is a wonderful passage for each and every one of us.

These descriptions are designed to go well beyond simply staffing guidelines for a church. And these qualities and characteristics are exemplary. They are to be emulated by all of us in whatever circumstance we find ourselves.

And to the extent that there are parallels in terms of exerting authority or rendering service, these are checklists. These are standards by which we can measure ourselves, knowing that we will be measured and evaluated on the same criteria at the judgment. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study, and we'll move forward.

Father, it is a wonderful comfort and encouragement to know that our life is not lived in our own strength and by our own exertion, but is enabled and empowered by your grace through the Holy Spirit and through the illuminating and cleansing word. We're thankful to be able to spend this time together this morning, and we ask your blessing on us as we try to gain a better understanding and see how we can reach a better way of living by putting these things into practice, seeing them manifest and work themselves out in our daily lives, whether it is in relationships, in our fulfilling of responsibilities, and in our testimony before the world. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will superintend both the presentation and the reception of your word this morning so that all of us can grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We pray it in His name. Amen. So, we've seen these characteristics beginning in chapter 3, verse 1, actually the verse 2. The middle of verse 1 begins this chapter, if a man desires to be an overseer, he desires a good work.

All of us desire good work in whatever we're doing. We've seen these. Culminating down to in verses 6 and 7. And it's very interesting that Paul spends a lot of time in this letter talking about the devil, doesn't he? Remember in the first chapter, he was going to turn Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

And we have an oblique allusion in verse 13 and 14. Adam was formed first and then Eve. Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, who deceived her? It was the serpent manipulated by Satan himself.

And where is the deliverance? But now we have in successive verses references to the devil. And if we are inexperienced, if we're relatively new to the faith and have not had a

chance to experience growth and turn gnosis to epinosis, as we used to say, being puffed up with pride, a neophyte can fall into the same condemnation as the devil. The condemnation of the devil.

And then in verse 7, we closed last week. Moreover, he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Falling into reproach is the opposite of having a good testimony.

If you don't have a good testimony and you fall into reproach, this is reproach from the same quarter as where the good testimony should be held. And this is the reproach of the world. And this is interesting because I thought friendship with the world was enmity with God.

So how is this then something we should avoid, the reproach of the world? But it is not just reproach in the general sense. We were talking about this yesterday because people will make arguments and defend positions on various theological persuasions. We were looking at those who believe that the rapture and the second coming are all the same.

There's really no such thing as a rapture. It is just the Lord's appearing. And there are words that are used for that.

There's apocalypsis, there is parousia, and so on, and epiphaneia, epiphany. And the person who was defending the view that Jesus just comes once, we rise to meet him in the air, and then descend with him, and he stands on the Mount of Olives, said, you people that believe in the rapture have to change the language of the Bible because Jesus talks about his coming, and his appearing, and his revelation. Paul talks about Jesus' coming, and appearing, and revelation.

John in the Revelation talks about Jesus' coming, and appearing, and revelation. And you say, well, there's going to be an epiphaneia, and then there's going to be another epiphaneia, and there's going to be the coming, and then the coming, and there's going to be the appearing, and then the appearing, and there's going to be the revelation, and then the revelation. The Bible only uses those words in the singular, and so if you use the language of the Bible, you can't separate the return of the Lord into these phases.

And really working that argument very hard throughout his presentation, this was a two-hour debate, and the gentleman who was presenting the point of view of the pre-tribulation rapture never really addressed that argument, that based on language there should just be one. But think about this, reproach. And it says that having a good testimony is necessary to not fall into reproach from those who are outside.

Well, those who are outside, this is the reproach of the world. And there is good reproach and bad reproach if you will. And we know from Romans and other passages that talking about the Lord Jesus, the reproach of those who reproached you have fallen on me.

And this you can find in Romans 15, verse 3, Christ did not please himself, but suffered these reproaches. Hebrews 13, 12, Jesus that he might sanctify the people with his own blood suffered outside the gate and he suffered reproach. You remember the description of the crucifixion and people wagging their heads and mocking and deriding.

And then in the following verse, therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp bearing his reproach. But this is reproach for the name of Christ. And that is a different kind of reproach.

My point being that when you look at a concept like coming, well, is it the first coming in Bethlehem or the first coming at the triumphal entry or the first coming when Jesus begins to minister in Judea? Is it his second coming when he sets up the kingdom? Is it his coming for his bride, his church? And to simply say, well, when you see, they do the same thing with trumpet. When Paul says in first Corinthians that everyone will be transformed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. Well, there can only be one last trumpet because it's the last one.

So all the other trumpets and then there's the last one. And so this is the last of the seven trumpets of revelation. And this is the last trumpet that anybody will ever hear because then you're going into the millennial kingdom.

So it must be that church, when Paul is talking about transformation in a moment at the last trumpet, that this happens at the end of revelation, toward the end of the tribulation that we would go through it. Well, these things have to be taken in context. We've seen this before with the word all, does all mean all? Does the world mean the whole world or only certain the world of believers or the world of the elect or whatever? And this is why context is such an important consideration.

Anytime we're trying to gain understanding, context will tell us whether this is the last of all trumpets that were ever blown or is it the last of the trumpets that are detailed in revelation or is this the trumpet of the last day? And by association, it is the last hour. It is the last day. And so this is the last trumpet.

We have many clarion calls. We have many shofar alerts. The watchman on the wall, when an enemy was approaching, they would blow a trumpet.

Well, this is the last get ready command of this human life at which we are raised. And it doesn't have to be the same as the last trumpet of revelation or the last time they ever blow the shofar for the day of atonement. Remember they blow trumpets all the way up and you have the feast of trumpets.

And well, what is in view? So here reproach of the world is different than reproach for the sake of Christ. If we are being reproached because we are faithful and because we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and people reproach us and say, well, you're

unscientific, you're anti-intellectual, you are a ne'er-do-well of some kind. That's a different kind of reproach than reproach for bad character, reproach for being parasitic, reproach for taking advantage of tax exemption or reproach for hypocrisy and saying one thing and doing another and pretending to be concerned about the poor in the world and living like kings in personal life.

So there's reproach and then there is reproach. So scripture has quite a bit to say about the reproach that can come from those who are outside. And this is for character flaws.

And the church and therefore the gospel and the name of Christ has come into disfavor with people who say, well, you invite people to your church and then you pressure them to give, give, give. And why is there this giant vacuuming sound from the church wanting people to come and wanting them to put something into this institutional church instead of the church being a beacon and a lighthouse from which God's grace and service and concern emanate forth. The church ought to be a place where the presence and power of God shines forth, not a place where a need for money sucks in.

And many, many churches engage in a building program or whatever. And then it's pressure, pressure, pressure, give, give, give, commit, pledge, faith promise. And that is rightly reproached by the world to be dependent.

The church is dependent on others instead of being something on whom people can depend. The believers who are a part of that fellowship in particular. So this is an important point to note.

And so having a good testimony with those who are outside, you can see how this would put people off and be a stumbling block for the gospel. What is the consequence of this? Lest he fall into reproach. This is reproach not for good things, not for faith and not for obedience and not for the hope and love for which we should be known, but reproach for character flaws.

Lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. What is the snare of the devil? There is a lot to see here in the word of God because the word snare is used quite often. We're going to see this idea in chapter six, flip a page over to chapter six and look at verse 10.

The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Flip over another page or two to second Timothy chapter two, verse 26. People in humility should correct those who are in opposition if God perhaps will grant them repentance so that they may know the truth and may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil.

This snare of the devil is an example of what we like to call the, is it an objective or a subjective genitive? Which is a fancy way of saying, is this a snare operated by the devil or is it a snare that the devil fell into? When you say love of Christ, is this Christ's love for

us or is it our love for Christ? When you say this of that, what does it mean? So snare of the devil, is this the snare the devil fell into in pride when he gave the five eye wills or is he out there trying to ensnare? Well, this second letter to Timothy tells us, come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil having been taken captive by him for his will, to or for his will. And so this is a trap that the devil has laid. This is his ability to take hold of someone who is a believer and is in the church and they end up doing Satan's will instead of God's will.

And you can also see this in 1 Timothy chapter six, verse nine, back again to chapter six. Where those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare. Once again, you see money implicated.

You can be pierced through with many sorrows, whether it is the covetousness kind of greed, whether it is the desire just to have money in general, it is a snare. And this is the love of the world. Is it the world loving us or is it us loving the world? In that case, it's an objective genitive.

Love of the world is enmity with God. And so that which is in the world, desiring to be rich, desiring to have financial security, wanting possessions, you fall into both temptation, which is distraction, deflection, being led into sin. Jesus told the disciples when you pray, pray to the father, lead us not into temptation.

But if your heart's desire is for stuff, you fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful cravings, lusts, which drown men in destruction and loss, perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. And we read that verse 10 a moment ago.

You can think about Luke chapter 21. The Lord Jesus uses this imagery in talking about the end times. Luke 21, 35.

Take heed to yourselves in verse 24. Lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing drunkenness and the cares of this life. And that day comes on you unexpectedly.

That day comes on you unexpectedly for it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. What kind of snare? It is the kind of snare that the people described in verse 34 fall into, distracted. If your heart is weighed down with self-indulgence, self-gratification, and we say, well, I'm not a carouser.

I don't go out to wild parties and get regularly drunk and do all kinds of nefarious things. But remember, these are figures that are put for the attitudes and the priorities that they reflect. And you can carouse without going out and imbibing alcohol and taking other hallucinogenic substances.

I just saw this past week, the United States military is now actively researching whether hallucinogenic drugs and magic mushrooms are a useful treatment for PTSD, for

veterans, and for active duty people. Those who have been in combat stress and are still serving, but are diagnosed with PTSD, they're looking at prescribing magic mushrooms and other hallucinogenic substances to people actively serving as a treatment for post-traumatic stress. Post-traumatic stress is a real thing.

The question is, do you really think that removing someone from reality into the realm of hallucination is the way to treat it? But they think it is. And so there's an active program underway as we speak. For a believer, what is our coping mechanism for any kind of stress, any kind of harsh experience, loss, shock, extended periods of fatigue and high levels of stress? What is our go-to treatment? First and foremost, we look to our Father in heaven who knows what we need, food, clothing, and shelter.

Once again, these are representative for all our needs. My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory. I will take the grace of God and the forms in which He administers it to us with family support in the realm of believers, our brothers and sisters in Christ, those who gather around us with encouragement and presence and concern and prayer versus let me administer a chemical that will alter your brain to deal with this stress.

I am not diminishing or minimizing PTSD. I have seen it. I know what it's like.

But just because there's a legitimate problem doesn't mean you throw everything at it and see what sticks. And inducing hallucinations is not the answer to stress. I can tell you that from the Word of God.

We are to be sober-minded. We are to be vigilant. We are to be possessed of the attributes of the fruit of the Spirit.

And that doesn't, you know, in the ancient day, to be removed from reality is to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess. We are to be filled with the Spirit. And the question becomes, do we believe that God's grace and God's provision in the spiritual realm is sufficient to get us through even the toughest, harshest, most severe circumstances? Well, sorry, no.

Spiritual resources aren't enough. I need chemicals for these extreme cases. Then you have to ask yourself the question, well, is this particular chemical something that is a means of God's grace being administered? And how can you tell? Is it okay to take ibuprofen for a headache? That's a minor case.

Well, is it okay to take a hallucinogen to get over PTSD? That's at the other end of the spectrum. I like to think that, you know, palliatives and things that get us through pain are a good thing. I like to be numb when they're drilling on my teeth.

I like to be asleep when they're carving up, putting in plates and things. I think this is good. I'm not relying on my spiritual life to get me through surgery or through, you

know, tooth repair.

So where does it fall? It isn't the mechanism. It is the faith involved. It is to whom we are looking.

And the result is the result of this, that I can exercise my spiritual responsibilities and express my spiritual character. Character is what is in view in this section of Timothy. What is my character? Am I dependent on the world or am I dependent upon God and His grace and His provision? What form does that provision take? Well, what is the outcome? People who become dependent on painkillers have a problem.

We've got a giant, you know, Oxycontin and addiction problem where people become addicted to painkillers. It's one thing to use them to get through a tough time. It's something else to say, well, anytime my brow furrows, I'm going to take a pill.

So these are individual decisions that we make before the Lord. But in general, to be completely in a hallucination, how is that reflecting the glory of God? We can aid ourselves. There are medicines and they're great.

Paul is going to tell Timothy, take a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent afflictions. There is medicinal value in that substance. But is he to be given to wine? Is he to be addicted to much wine? As we're going to see in a parallel description, a little wine is good.

Dependence on it is not. A little painkiller is good. Dependence on it is not.

But every situation is different. There are people who are in chronic pain, pain that you can't get away from. It's not an episode.

It's a status. Well, what then? Everything goes back to judging the thoughts and intents of the heart. If I can reduce my pain so that it is not a distraction and I can exercise my spiritual life and function better, that's a good thing.

If this procedure, if this pattern, if this habit, if this use of something diminishes my spiritual life and I'm less interested in prayer, less interested in reflecting on the Word of God and applying it, less interested in cultivating the fruit of the Spirit by the power of God, if it becomes a substitute or a replacement for my spiritual life, that's a bad thing. So there is no one answer when it comes to taking advantage of various medicinal things that might be present in the world. But I can tell you that you cannot exercise your spiritual life when you're hallucinating on magic mushrooms.

You can't. So there will be some other answer that God will provide for a believer who desires to have a healthy, productive, meaningful spiritual life. I'm not going to be sent into unreality.

I will be given something that lets me connect with my spiritual resources more fully and more effectively. And that's an individual evaluation. We don't need to poke our noses into each other's lives and evaluate.

But we do have to assess ourselves and examine ourselves and ensure that we are in the faith. And if we are, great. I know people, I'm related to people who have a need for ongoing medication for various things.

And being on that medication enhances their ability to live their life as under the Lord and not under men. There are others where it is a substitute and it is a deflection. And eventually there is this problem of perception both inside and outside the church.

That, well, you're, and heaven help you if you go too far down that road. So these are questions that pertain. These have traction.

These have elements that we need to address in our own personal lives. And one of them is, one of the measures is what I am doing. If I say, well, I need a drink at the end of the day to relax.

And pretty soon that becomes two drinks and three drinks and five drinks. And pretty soon you're inebriated and you're sloppy and you're saying things you shouldn't say. And you are observable as someone who doesn't look like a healthy believer.

You look like somebody that is drunk with wine wherein is excess. Instead of a controlled and moderate and proper use of these things. So falling into reproach and the snare of the devil.

The devil uses our natural proclivity to self-indulgence and self-gratification. He will use it against us. Look at Eve in the garden.

That is the archetype. That's the prototype. She was convinced by the serpent that the fruit was good to look upon and desirable to make her wise.

That's the snare of the devil. And to be distracted is no longer to have a good testimony. Well, this brings us to verse eight, likewise deacons.

And we're going to see similar descriptions, similar, but not the same. And we're going to see why we have a repetition of some of these concepts and these characteristics for deacons and their wives beginning down in verse 11. So the deacons and the wives and then it returns to the deacons in verse 12 and 13.

So sandwiched in the middle of the deacon description in verse 11, we have the wives. Why is that? Well, we'll see it when we come back from the break. Your clue is the structural element that we saw on Wednesday night.

That will help looking at this particular section verses eight through 13. But let's pause

here and take our break.