

1Tim 24-01-28a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning service here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 28th of January, 2024. We're in 1 Timothy, moving to the conclusion of chapter 3 and the beginning of chapter 4. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and investigation of God's word and we'll begin.

Father, we're so grateful for another chance to spend time together around the spiritual table and enjoy the revelation that is contained in your word, the guidance that we need, the light to shine on our path. We pray that as we look at it together, the Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts, help us to see that it is pertinent and applicable and that it will enable us and empower us to live a supernatural life, a life that reflects your glory and prepares us for service and function now and in the ages to come. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. We've seen in recent weeks the qualifications for an elder and a deacon and sandwiched in the middle of this most recent section, we've looked at verses 8 through 13 of 1 Timothy 3 with the deacons, likewise, meaning similarly to the qualifications for elders in the preceding section, these men also are to be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. And we noted that that pure conscience goes all the way back to what we saw in chapter 1, verse 5, the purpose of the commandment, the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

And you could imagine that if Paul were to elaborate, he would say not only a good conscience here in verse 9, but the other elements as well, the pure heart and sincere faith. And he's going to return to that before we conclude this chapter. What does this really mean? In the visible assembly, when the group gets together, which is regular but not frequent, this wasn't a daily assembly, they met from time to time, they seem to have met regularly on the first day of the week and perhaps on other occasions, that the group is characterized by orderliness, by reverence, by stability and sobriety.

And what strikes us as we look at this, how should we conduct ourselves as the household of faith, as an assembly, as a church, is there's not an order of service. If you've ever been, spent much time in or around traditional churches and you get the bulletin, there's an order that will open with a prelude and a prayer, and then there will be announcements, there will be special music, there will be the sermon, there will be the aftermath, and it's all mapped out what's going to happen. And if you stop and think about this a little bit, isn't it interesting that Paul does not specify an order of worship? This doesn't look like a bulletin.

It isn't, here's the mechanism by which worship will be accomplished. Instead, here are the people and their defining characteristics that will accomplish whatever goes on in the

meeting. Those who are in an overseeing position, here's what kind of character they should have.

And isn't this really sort of emblematic of our whole life in the church age? Think back to Leviticus and what God specified for worship in Israel. How much time is devoted to the character of the priests? What do you think? The Levites? Does it say, and behold, the priest who performs the sacrifice will be a one-woman man, he will be godly, he will be sober, he will not be given too much wine, not greedy? It doesn't say any of that, does it? And yet the external worship, the form and the appearance, was designed for the same overall function, wasn't it? To reflect the glory of God, to communicate the truth of God, to be emblematic and unique in the ancient world. But in the church, in the age of grace, as we like to call it, the age of the Holy Spirit, the emblematic, visible manifestation of the group is not the formality.

Think in terms of formality about the specifications for the tabernacle and later for the temple. Do you have any such instructions for what a church should look like? What kind of building? How big? What should it be made of? Are there colors? Are there cherubim woven into the curtains? None of that. And the easiest way to really get the thrust and the impact in the is to contrast it with what God says about worship in the Old Testament.

Still, people are to come and worship God in the spirit of holiness. Our attitudes and the outcome in our own lives is the same, but the means by which formal worship or assembly of God's people is ordained is just radically different. And you get the idea that because these more visible individuals that deal with leadership and service are examples, that this is an example and a pattern for our life.

It is not by the works of the law that any flesh is going to be justified. And so we like to have a formula. We want instructions.

We want to put tab A into slot B and end up assembling what it is we need to move forward, to solve a problem, to accomplish a goal. But the New Testament in general and this section in particular seems to really emphasize that it is the development of our Christian character that equips us for every good work. It is becoming these things intrinsically and as a pattern that enables us for service and function.

Sometimes that service takes a leadership role. A lot of us being military, it is easy to fall back and looking at overseers and deacons on that analogy. You have officers and you have enlisted.

And yet anytime you hear that someone was in the military, that someone comes up and they don't say, thank you for your leadership. They always say, thank you for your service. It is called a military service.

It is so everything, whether you are in charge of some stuff or you are junior in the hierarchy of authority, it's all service. But that service has two different dimensions. Sometimes it is in the planning and the oversight and supervising the execution of things.

Other times you are the one wielding mechanical implements. You are driving. You are carrying ammunition.

You are cleaning weapons at the rifle range. You are doing what is fondly called the grunt work in the Marine Corps. But it is all service.

But some of it is in a supervisory capacity and others of it is in an execution capacity. So you don't see majors typically out there digging ditches and you don't find corporals or lance corporals in the planning sessions deciding how this two-week exercise is going to be conducted. Different phases of the same kind of service.

And that's kind of what we have here. And in no case can anybody be arrogant and say, well, look at me. I've got some gold on my collar.

So, you know, I'm really something. It's just a different kind of service. It's service with a different role.

And you're trained and equipped for that. And you need certain characteristics for it to do it well. That's what we have here.

But all of this is emblematic. Paul compares our Christian life to being a good soldier and putting on armor and being ready for both offense and defense. And the idea being that that is a picture of what all of us should look like in our life of faith, our life of hope, our life of love.

These can be analogies. And these sort of more visible or formal functions in a church assembly, in a group of believers are designed to do the same thing, to be an analogy, to be a parable, to be exemplary for all of us. And isn't it interesting that in this chapter, what we strive for is the development of personal character, personal spiritual strength, because that is how we solve problems in this age.

That is how we move forward and become involved in accomplishing God's will. God being at work among us to will and to do for his good purpose. The best way to be equipped is not to build a tabernacle to the exact specifications, not to make it look exactly like the blueprint.

It is to become people that God can use for these purposes. And so the accusation is made that those of us who emphasize studying the word of God, spending time in prayer, spending time in reflection and in examining ourselves, we're too ingrown. We need to be outward looking.

We need to be more involved in fixing the ills of society and trying to benefit those who are oppressed and the poor and those who have been unjustly treated and so on. But this passage and the others like it in the New Testament tell us, this is God's goal as well. It is not the will of God that any should perish.

It is not the will of God that any of us be subject to unjust oppression, unjust suffering, hardship, pain, loss, bereavement. God isn't up there saying, you know, I just love it when I see people suffering. But there is a means of remediating these problems.

There is a means for God's people to be used by him to put a shoulder under that load and to ease suffering and to bring peace and joy and constructive fellowship into harsh situations. And it's the strategy of the indirect approach. It's not by getting together and having a committee meeting and coming up with a plan and a policy and going out hammer and tongs, elbows and knees to try to change these things because it ends up being inhuman strength.

God's way is for us to develop spiritual character as it has been described in these 13 verses of 1 Timothy 3. These qualities are to be cultivated, are to be grown in us with the power of the word and the presence of the Holy Spirit to thoroughly equip us for every good work. Equipped people guided by God and enabled by God are going to accomplish God's purpose and in so doing reflect God's glory. As soon as we start trying to short circuit that plan and that ordained way of things in the church age, it becomes more and more human strength.

And as I have reviewed before and mentioned, I think it's a wonderful summary that as a quick analysis, anything an unbeliever can do is not the Christian way. It's not God's way. If unbelievers can form a committee, look at a problem, develop a plan, go out there and try to raise funding and recruit people and go out there and get at it.

And to the extent that those efforts succeed, you feed the poor, you clothe the homeless, you create some social justice. Who gets the glory and who gets the credit? Well, whoever organized and executed that effort. And it's not intrinsically evil to so do, but where is the eternal value? Where is the value in God's eyes? Famously, Al Capone did a lot of charitable work.

You have rife, unbelievers, secularist, atheist individuals and groups in our country who spend hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars on charity in society, donating to research on cancer and so on. You wouldn't say that that's bad, but there's a difference in not bad and intrinsically good, good that counts, good that shines at the judgment like gold and silver and precious stones, because it is in the service of our heavenly father, in the service of our creator God, enabled and empowered by what he supplies. So this is the difference.

And a lot of people are going to be shocked and surprised at the judgment and say, Lord,

Lord, in your name, did we not do many good works? Remember Jesus' words? They're going to come knocking on the door when the Lord is seated at the table, enjoying the fruits of victory and a banquet in the peaceable kingdom. And they're going to come and say, Lord, Lord, let me in. Why am I on the outside? And these I never heard of are on the inside.

I never knew you. They say, in your name, we did many good works. He says, depart from me, workers of iniquity.

And good becomes evil when it is done out of motives other than a desire to serve and please God, out of love for him and genuine divine love shed abroad in our hearts for one another. If it isn't in that, out of that motivation, there's always something wrong. There is a selfish element.

I am doing it to be seen by men like the Pharisees. I hold up the great big bag of money before I drop it into the treasury. I stand on the street corner and pray because I want people to view me as godly.

And we cannot escape the selfish, self-centered, self-glorifying motive. It's somewhere in there if it isn't at its core motivated by godliness. And that's our subject this morning.

As you look at our passage, we saw in the qualifications for deacons, they are likewise. They are similar to those for elders. So whether we are in a more visible leadership role or in more of a service and enlisted platoon, getting it done mode, it is likewise.

It is characterized by the qualities of Christian character that are produced by the word and the spirit. But notice in verse nine, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience, the mystery of the faith. And you say, why does the word mystery come up? Why couldn't it just say holding the faith with a good conscience? Being faithful, loving, and having a good conscience, just like verse nine of chapter one.

Where does mystery come into it? It doesn't even say mystery when it's talking about the leadership. You know, well, they're initiated into the secret plan. It's down here with the deacons, holding the mystery of the faith.

Mystery, as Paul uses the word, musterion, is a special term for the unique revelation of this age of the body of Christ of the church. Paul will talk about this as his gospel. He is the unique revelator of the mystery over and over again.

The mystery as was not formally revealed to God's holy apostles and prophets. Paul gets the mystery. What is the mystery? Well, it's what we're talking about here in our introductory time.

This is what is new, what is revealed as God's fresh plan and purpose for his people, those who are devoted to Christ and are identified with Christ. That's the mystery. It is

the church way of doing things, the church foundation of truth that undergirds what we think, how we evaluate, what our goals and values and priorities are.

It is this revealed new and living way in Christ. The Old Testament believers didn't operate in Christ. We do.

So, in the service function, and this is particularly important when we see ourselves under some divinely ordained authority, to view that assignment, to view that position, to view that function in terms of the mystery, holding the mystery of the faith. This is New Testament truth with a good conscience. And Paul says, I look at myself and I don't find any fault in myself.

That's not the final judgment, but I examine myself to see if I am in the faith. What kind of faith? Am I doing the externalities? Am I being legalistic? Am I being formalistic? Am I using some superficial, I'm standing on the street corner and praying, everybody, I'm setting a good example. I'm modeling godliness for the poor plebeians out here who don't know what it looks like.

Let me show you what it is to be godly. I'll stand here and close my eyes and fold my hands and be an example. This is a dangerous way of thinking.

I need to act this way so that others will know what it is to be godly. That is the road to destruction. Pride goeth before a fall and an elevated spirit.

I'm up here and I'll stand on the pedestal and show others how they should be as a motive for doing things is treacherous quicksand. Holding the mystery of the faith with a good conscience. Conscience is used to evaluate myself.

I don't apply my conscience to you. There are observations I can make. There are standards I can compare the behavior of others to and say, I don't believe that's right.

Being a hypocrite and being double-tongued and being double-minded and being unstable in all your ways, failing to rightly divide the word of truth and then beating others over the head with your mistaken interpretations. I can look at that, but I'm not applying my conscience. Holding the mystery of the faith, the church age way of doing things, which is not designed to be outward and reflective the way Levitical worship was in the Old Testament.

The mystery of the faith is what I use to measure myself, what I use to find where I am falling short and go to the strength and look to the word of God and the presence and power of the spirit of God to enable me to fix what is broken. That's my good conscience. My conscience is aimed at me.

This is how service is done. The modern, postmodern, progressive church, the Jesus follower movement, the sermon on the mount types are all about Old Testament means

of accomplishing what they believe to be good. And it does not emphasize personal spiritual growth.

It does not identify the source of God's provision of power. It does not emphasize intense marinating in the word of God, making progress in understanding it, in rightly dividing it, in comparing scripture with scripture, and in recognizing that as the fuel for the work of God. No, it is measured by, did I make an impact? Did I change the life of someone out here? That's not conscience.

Conscience looks inward, using the word of God and hearing what it says about the thoughts and intents of my own heart. The word of God is not profitable for social change, is it? The word of God is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness so that society will reflect the man of God may be complete. There is such an emphasis in the New Testament scriptures on make the believer thoroughly furnished, get the tool sharp.

I've been on a kick here watching survival type shows and living off the grid type of shows. And it was funny, I saw a great quote, and it's attributed to Anonymous. But this is a great quote, and I think it summarizes what Paul is getting at in this section of 1 Timothy.

Give me six hours to cut down a tree, and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe. We are God's axe. If you have ever used a dull axe, a dull blade, a dull implement of any kind for any purpose, if that implement, if that tool, if that weapon does not have a sharp edge, it multiplies, sometimes exponentially, the amount of work you have to do.

Give me six hours to cut down a tree, I'll spend the first four sharpening the axe. We are the axe. And God has given us this opportunity to hold the mystery of the faith with a good conscience.

That is what thoroughly equips us for every good work. And the great thing is, a sharp implement is wielded by a knowledgeable and wise workman. So we use the resources that are in our soul.

And the Word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword, is further preparing us, making us exactly what we need to be. And then God is at work in us to will and to do for His good purpose. And we may find ourselves in an assignment that we never thought for, never saw coming, never expected, never anticipated.

The plan of Sam never envisioned this circumstance, this assignment, and yet here I am. But it doesn't matter where I end up or where God decides to use me, if I am prepared, it is going to be divine work done in divine power reflecting divine glory. That's why this chapter is all about being thoroughly equipped, having developed along the way and in the past these qualities of single-mindedness, of devotion, of loyalty, of self-control, of

proven ability to do things in humility with a servant spirit and with an eye toward God's will and God's glory, not puffed up, not falling into the snare of the devil.

And you can't be a neophyte. And this tells us that God is pretty careful about involving fresh new believers in work that requires discernment and requires experience, requires the kind of self-control that can only be developed over time. And so we had verse 6 and 7, not a novice, because being puffed up with pride, and pride is always finding out what's wrong with the other guy.

And you can see this all over the interweb, all over blogs, all over what purports to be helpful Christian ministries. But so much of it is devoted to, well, these people are wrong, this rapture timing is wrong, this notion of dispensations is wrong, this understanding is wrong, here's where you fell short, here's where you missed it, here's where you didn't get it. That's not conscience, that's moat removal without addressing the beam.

How do I know they haven't addressed the beam? If they had addressed the beam in their own eye, they wouldn't be out trying to get the moat out of mind. Just got something in my eye yesterday. And if it's a big dark speck that somebody else can see, it's wonderful.

But did you ever notice that at most, if you've got something in your eye, there's one other person involved, usually your closest confidant, your spouse, or somebody in your immediate household, when you get something in your eye, because you don't trust a stranger around your ocular equipment. I don't want somebody I don't know poking around in my eye potentially scratching it or infecting it. And when we are trying to address something, it's usually best that I do it myself.

I can feel where it is, I can get in front of a mirror, I can work on it myself. And Jesus says, get the lumber out of your own eye. He doesn't say recruit a group to remove the two by four.

Jesus said, first you remove the lumber from your eye, then you will see clearly to help with moats. So that's why we have these characteristics here. And as you review chapter three, and I think it is great.

I've been reading this pretty much every day for several weeks now, and just looking at it and thinking, what do these qualities look like in a daily life? How do they work themselves out? Because these are character traits. He doesn't say someone who kneels down and prays three times a day, someone who gives generously to the offering, someone who goes and visits the widows and orphans and their afflictions, and everybody sees it. These are qualities of character.

They end up being visible. You know that there's an orderly household if you spend any time in it. Children are well behaved.

It's orderly. The yard doesn't look like a hurricane struck it. The interior of the household doesn't look like it's been started with a stick and not cleaned in three years.

It's, there is an order for someone to be qualified to be an example. And these are outward manifestations of the state of our soul. Doesn't mean if you've got a cluttered closet, you're a bad Christian.

But the example, the idea is that there is visible self-control. There is visible planning and purpose for those who are going to serve in an overseeing capacity. And these are exemplary for each one of us.

And this is why in the middle of verses eight through 13, we have, and notice in verse 11, likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. This is translated wives, but the word is woman. It's *gunica*.

This is where you get all of the gyna words, gynecology, gynecological, the GYN in front of those women, medical functions is from *gunay*, *gunica* and so on. That's what you have here. And notice there is in italics.

And what this really says is likewise, women, reverent, not slanderers, must be is also not there. And what this suggests to me, the reason it's translated wives is because of the next verse, let deacons be, when it says the husbands of one wife, this is a one *gunica* man, a one woman man, a not a womanizer, not a guy with a wandering eye, not somebody who seems to be flirty and makes women uncomfortable. The organized church in the modern day, as in days past, probably is fraught with scandals of people getting too intimate in the course of working in the church or going on trips with the youth group or whatever else.

And there's hanky panky going on. And I know personally pastors that have lost their position and lost their service and function, disqualified themselves by not being careful to be a one woman man and rationalizing and, well, I need to spend time with this woman, her self-esteem. She thinks she's ugly.

She thinks she's not lovable. Let me put an arm around her shoulder and try to comfort her and encourage her that she's a quality person and she is attractive. And she is, as I'm first thing, you know, lines have been crossed and it's hopeless.

This is a combination of self-discipline, of wisdom, of experience, and of dedication and remembering one's most important commitments and one's vows that are for a lifetime and not to even, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Don't even get close to it. Don't get to the edge of the hem of the garment for something that could lead to impropriety.

And in any area of temptation, the best way to beat it and the best way to never succumb to it is don't get anywhere near it. Think about teenagers on a date. Well, we'll

go park.

That's a horrible idea. You're inviting disaster. You're inviting unwed pregnancy.

Don't go park alone and you don't have to worry about, well, I'll let him put his hand on my shoulder. I'll let him kiss me, but I won't. I won't let him unbutton the top button or I'll stop here.

I'll stop there. Stop before you go. Stop before you get off by yourself where intimate things happen that aren't supposed to happen until after you're married.

Just remember Barney Fife, nip it, nip it, nip it in the bud. It is so much easier to say, no, we're not going to, in my day, we're not going to Claremore Lake and park in the dark, just far enough away from the other parked cars that nobody can hear the sound effects. Not going there.

If you don't go there, you don't have to fight off some teenage boy with raging hormones. You're just not in that position. Stay with people.

Spend time with each other's families. If you do go down the road and get married, these people are going to be in your life till death do us part, just like the spouse. So be wise, not a novice.

And these qualities and character traits, each and every one of them, all of us should have. But notice in verse 11, as we go to our break here, likewise, women, reverent, not slanderous, temperate. Put in the of this deacon function, what this tells us is that women are involved and can assist.

I don't think there's a formal office of deaconess here. I'm not sure any of these are formal offices, but they were assigned roles and women can perform works of service. Women can wash the feet of the saints.

Famously, you have Phoebe, who is a servant of the church at Cancria, I believe it is. And people have said, well, Phoebe was a deacon or Phoebe was an elder or Phoebe was an assistant pastor. Women, obviously, when you've got women in the church, women can be of service to other women.

You have older women teaching younger women and older widows ministering in the church, but women who serve in the church in any service capacity, volunteering, spending their time, doing it as unto the Lord, need to have these qualities. Why would you not want a slanderer? Why would you not want a gossipy woman involved in service? Well, she's going to know private details and have close fellowship with some of the people with whom she's working. And to be a tail bearer and to reveal what people don't want revealed is an awful quality.

And it's going to disrupt and divide and cause all kinds of hurt and dissension in the church. Women who are involved in service have to keep their own counsel. This doesn't mean that you can't spend time unburdening yourself with your spouse.

What it does mean is you are not a gossip. Husbands and wives sharing each other's burdens and giving each other counsel and speaking the truth to each other in love is not gossip. The two are one flesh and husbands and wives are one and ought to share and unburden.

And this is the place where you can have comfort and encouragement and let off some steam. That is not gossip. But here, slanderers, this is gossip.

This is maligning. This is going to a henpeck and telling tales out of school. And no woman who does that has any business being allowed to circulate in the church and gather those kinds of details under the pretext of ministry, but really just to be able to have a fresh piece of gossip.

Forbidden. But isn't this true for all of us? Men and women in whatever we're engaged with, church service formally or not, not to be a tail bearer, not to be a slanderer, but to be reverent and temperate, moderate, not given to extremes, highs of giddy ecstatic happiness and lows of abject depression. Temperate.

Tempered steel doesn't lose its edge. It bends, but it doesn't snap. Temperate.

Reliable. Faithful in all things. You can count on this person.

Reliable. Give them something to do. They'll get it done.

Turn them loose. Trust them because they are faithful in all things. Reliability is in view here.

True for all, but attached here to women who have the opportunity to serve and reflect God's glory. All of these character qualities are designed to reflect the glory of God and the actions that are performed by people who have these qualities and maintain this kind of character and develop it and have it empowered and enabled by the word of God and the spirit of God reflect the glory of God. If I'm reflecting the glory of God, do I care if it is leadership or service? Do I care if I am an officer or I'm enlisted, if I'm a great Marine? If people look and say, that guy is the classic Marine.

He exemplifies all of the highest ideals and the noblest qualities that you could ask for in military service. Do I care if it's enlisted or officer? I don't. To be a credit to the organization is what counts.

Well, transfer that to the spiritual realm. People who get hung up about, they won't let me lead. They won't let me teach.

I'm a woman and I can't stand behind the pulpit. You're missing the point. If you have the opportunity in any capacity of any gender with any assignment to reflect the glory of God, that's the goal.

That's the purpose. That's the priority. That's where the value is.

That's where the eternal weight of glory resides. That's how you lay up treasure for yourself in heaven. That's how you are prepared for service and function in the ages to come.

I don't care if I'm the pastor or if I'm the custodian mucking out the bathrooms. If I do all to the glory of God and I manifest and reflect these qualities, every single one of them for every single person, I am thoroughly equipped for every good work. I delight in God picking me up and using me as that sharp axe to cut down his trees and prepare his lumber to build his kingdom.

That's what I'm after. Let's pause here and take our break.