

1Tim 24-05-29a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning service here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're continuing our study this morning in 1 Timothy chapter 4. We're going to be looking this morning at verses 4 and 5, something that I thought was initially tangential to our study in Revelation has turned out to be a feature that ties directly to this passage. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study and we'll get started.

Father, we are so thankful for your grace, your watch care and blessing on us. We are in the Lord Jesus Christ and so greatly privileged and given so many wonderful opportunities and potentials in Him. We thank you for the passage that lies before us.

We ask your blessing on it as we study it together, that the Holy Spirit will bless it to each heart, help us to see its purpose and its relevance for our own lives and in all things. We pray that the Lord Jesus will be glorified in us and through us. We ask it in Jesus name.

Amen. Let's read our context here. The Spirit expressly says that in latter times, some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrine of demons.

Interesting thing about doctrine of demons is the demons don't show up and deliver it. It has intermediate agents in the same way that the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit don't personally and bodily deliver the truth of God's word. There are teachers, there are agents.

And so these doctrines are first adopted by someone else, these doctrines of demons and these deceptions. The spirits and demons are influencing believers in the church. And this is a sobering observation because to depart from the faith, you have to be in the faith.

And if you're going to listen to doctrines, they're going to generally come in the church. It doesn't say they will be seduced away by the pleasures of this world. You know, Demas has departed.

He's forsaken me. And as Paul says, this isn't paganism. It isn't the allure of the flesh.

This is something that happens in the church. And that's somewhat alarming because you have the notion of wolves in sheep's clothing or those who have themselves been deceived. And then in sincerity and in what they would consider to be good conscience, they are deceiving others.

And this is one of the reasons anyone who engages in the teaching of the word of God and the pastoral ministry is watchful when Paul says that those who are laboring in the word are worthy of double honor. And I think in those days there was a meaning for that that doesn't necessarily apply today in terms of support or making sure that those

people had enough time to do their job. They didn't have computers.

But there's also double discipline. There's on the positive side, you get blessing as the ox that isn't muzzled and gets to partake of some of the extra grain. But on the other hand, there is double discipline for those who are led astray and then lead others astray.

And that seems to be the case here. So one of the reasons both Timothy and Titus, the letters, emphasize the qualifications for leadership in the church and applying it specifically to pastors, as Paul is going to emphasize in this very context, is because without taking care, if the leadership is deceived, that is going to be doubly dangerous for the entire group. This is true in a lot of places, but no more so than in a family.

If the leadership in a family is led astray, if the husband is deceived and takes his wife or his wife and children in a bogus direction, he is also going to be doubly accountable because he hasn't just shot himself in the foot, but he has led others astray. And so the Spirit warns that in latter times, this is going to be one of the signal problems. We have always noticed in generation after generation, we have seen that there are leadership problems in a church or the church, capital C. You look at the string of grotesque popes that have led the Catholic church down through the early years of its formation and down through the dark ages and the middle ages and the heinous things that were done in the name of the church.

You have denominations, you have cults, you have all kinds of things where someone is believing that they are leading a church or others believe they are leading a church and it is in fact a deception. So this is the important question. This bears on what we've seen in our recent investigations of current technological and cultural trends, artificial intelligence, which I will say again, is as big, if not bigger than the computer, personal computer and the cell phone.

The impact that those two things made on life in general will be exceeded by what is already taking place and what is going to take place with the implementation of artificial intelligence in the same way that you don't have to be afraid of your PC, don't have to be afraid of the internet, don't have to be afraid of a cell phone, but you do have to understand, and I think everyone does, their potential problems and even dangers. If you're not careful with your PC, you can get infected with ransomware, have all of your files locked up, especially if you're a business or a healthcare organization, as has happened, to the tune of millions of dollars. And when they pay these ransom, they have no guarantee that they're actually going to get their files back.

And in many cases, they've only gotten a partial recovery even after having paid insane amounts of money to get the key. It's no skin off the hacker's nose if they get their files back or not. Once he gets his money, he's disappeared into the ether.

So as wonderful as computers are, there is scamming, there is virus infection, there is all

kinds of deception, all kinds of problems that can come through that. You begin to rely on it, you put all of your information in it, your work in it, and then your hard drive dies or worse, and there can be great problems if you don't know how to maintain and how to protect a PC. Same thing with your cell phone.

Privacy issues, people remotely turning the camera on on your laptop or on your tablet or on your phone, and all kinds of bad things happening. Inadvertently leaving the geographic tags on your photos and then sharing them online. And here's a cute young girl that's depicted in a picture, a nefarious type, figures out the coordinates and goes to her house or her apartment or whatever.

It's not real frequent, but it has happened. And there's stalking, there's people that figure out you say, oh look, I just redecorated my house, let me take you through. And there are pictures that show valuables.

Next thing you know, you've been robbed blind because you didn't take the exactly where all of this stuff is. And then unsurprisingly, you get robbed. And there's nothing wrong with taking pictures, nothing wrong with sharing them with friends, but you have to be careful.

You have to know the dangers and avoid them to be prudent. Prudence is a biblical value. And you have to know enough to understand where the weak points are, where security vulnerabilities are, and take steps.

And it's the same with artificial intelligence. It's a wonderful tool. It has amazing potential to summarize, to aggregate, to research, to investigate, to bring facts together, but you have to check them.

And there's a disclaimer at bottom of every chat GPT answer that says, this is artificial intelligence, double check this before you rely on it, before you treat it as fact. There are potential issues with it. The greater potential lies in what it is going to do to society.

You look at what social media has done as one example. So as we look at the church and we have this warning from the Holy Spirit that some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceptions and doctrines, they are deceptions and doctrines. They come from spirits.

They come from demons. This affirms the understanding that even believers are susceptible to demonic influence. I personally am convinced that believers cannot be demon possessed.

I don't think the sealing of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit allows for that. You can't have Christ and Belial. You can't have the spirit of God and the spirit from the fallen group.

However, if we sear our conscience, if we fail to maintain a good conscience and a healthy relationship with God, with the word of God and prayer to sanctify us, just as he sanctifies our food, we can be susceptible to influence. We believers can be and are deceived. And the thing about deception is you don't know that you're believing a lie at the time.

Nobody says, well, I know that's completely false, but I'm going to believe it anyway. We believe things because we consider them true. And it turns out when they are deceptions, they're not true.

So this is going to happen in the church. So it is a warning that should be taken seriously by every one of us. Think again about my computer example.

You can be careful. You cannot open attachments in your email when you're not real sure what it is. You don't click on blind links.

Someone says, oh, funny video. Click here. Never click a blind link.

Never click a link, even from someone you know, because there is spoofing and you will get emails especially. It's much more rare for it to be a text. But in email, it can be from someone you know.

And they say, I thought you would be interested in seeing this. And there's a link. Never click a blind link.

If you have not been in a correspondence with someone and you don't know that they are about to send you a link. If you get an email from someone you know, and they say, I thought you would find this interesting. That's too general.

If they say, here's a picture of Uncle Bob and Aunt Sally at the wedding last month. Okay. But a generically described link, never ever click it until you go and confirm with the sender.

Did you just send me something? It's a deception. And if you fall for the deception, no matter how careful you have been, you can be a seasoned IT professional and be fooled. And it only takes one false move, one moment of inattention, one careless click, and you can have an endless sea of troubles.

Constant diligence, constant vigilance in our spiritual life. Watch and pray. Let no one deceive you.

Means there are going to be people and spirits trying to deceive us all the time. Constant vigilance, constant prayer, constant resort to the indwelling spirit and our privileges as those who are in Christ. So I cannot emphasize too strongly.

The apostle Paul is emphasizing here that this warning from the spirit is here for a

reason. He wasn't just trying to think up something to write in a letter to Timothy. The spirit told Paul to tell Timothy and in so doing to tell us to watch out for deception in the church, in the fellowship, in the realm of believers.

Speaking lies and hypocrisy, their own conscience seared with a hot iron. This is how they got fooled. This is how they got deceived.

They did not make the effort that Paul talks about striving for a good conscience. This is reflecting, meditating, thinking about the word of God, cycling it through. It's such an interesting thing to me that when the salesman came and said, we want to tell you about a water filtering system that you can put in your home.

It will take out these minerals. And when you get this calcium buildup on your coffee pot and on your electric toothbrush and in your pipes and in your hot water tank and all of that, this is sediment that is coming from the water and is accruing in these places. When you get this filtered water and it is utterly lacking in those minerals, there is kind of an osmosis effect where it's the same as when you have a greasy skillet.

You put some water in it and then you put one drop of soap and the grease flees because they are so antithetical to each other. It's the principle of osmosis in cells. When something is more salty and something is less salty, let's say, then the less salty water is going to migrate toward the salt.

It tries to even it out, tries to evenly distribute it. And this is why things go in various directions through a permeable wall. Well, if you put very, very clean mineral-free water through pipes and appliances and things that have an accretion, the clean water starts taking that mineral deposit off and you can reverse to an extent these deposits by cycling clean water through.

And to me, it's a beautiful picture of what happens in our soul. We can accrue by watching the news and reading media. There is road dirt.

There's dust that gets on our feet just by moving through the world. And it sticks in the cracks and in the corners. And we get these little nagging concepts.

It can lead to doubts. It can lead to fears. It can lead to worry.

It can lead to harmful patterns of thought in our soul. But the clean deposit-free water of the word of God, as it circulates in our soul, it pulls that stuff out of the corners and the cracks, these little harmful deposits. It will reverse the process by which they got there and cleanse us.

And so when Paul concludes this section in verse five, sanctified by the word of God and prayer, this is the way to clean the world's dirt out of our soul and out of our heart and out of our mind. If you go too long without a bath, what happens? If you get all sweaty

and you don't clean up, what happens? If you wear your clothes too many days, what happens? If we get busy and get distracted and don't converse with our heavenly father through his word and prayer, these things will accrue and the result is not good. And it can ultimately lead to a seared conscience.

Searing a conscience, you can't just circulate the word of God in prayer and fix that. That's a burn. That's a destruction.

And I don't see a place in the word of God where you come back from a seared conscience. Your conscience can get polluted. Your conscience can get corrupted.

It can be defiled. That can be cleansed. Something that's dirty can be cleansed.

Something that is seared, if you burn a steak, there's no unburning it. If you've ever been cooking spaghetti sauce and you get distracted and the bottom of it cooks and turns black, there is a flavor that goes through all of that sauce. There's no reversing that.

You know somebody burned the sauce. Well, but it's not black up here in the top. The taste of that burn permeates the whole thing.

If you're cooking green vegetables and you burn them, there's no coming back from that. You can't fix that. It's one thing to spill something into something else and you pour it through a paper towel.

Your coffee grounds get into the pot, just pour it through a coffee filter or a paper towel. You can filter that out and cleanse it and it's good as new. Other things are not reversible.

And a seared conscience, in my observation of the word of God, there's no coming back from that. It is preventable. Just like burns to your skin are preventable.

If you're careful, if you watch when you're cooking, if you watch when you're working and something is hot, you don't touch it. But once you're burned, there is scar tissue and it will take a supernatural work of God to reverse that. Now, that is the background for our subject this morning.

Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry and to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. We've already seen that these are examples. These are issues that were present in Paul's day.

They are representative. Other issues can be put forward in the same way and do the same kind of damage to lead people astray, to deceive, to perpetrate and express hypocrisy. I want to concentrate specifically, we've talked about forbidding to marry, and

this can either be asceticism and what's wrong with you? Don't you know the Lord's coming back next week? Why would you commit to a marriage? It can also be forbidding to marry certain people.

Jews, you shouldn't marry outside your ancestry and your culture. You shouldn't marry someone of a different ethnicity. You shouldn't marry this person or that person.

So anything having to do with telling someone else about their personal choices rather than having it be dictated by their conscience in the light of the Word of God and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind is Paul's exhortation in another place. There are things that we do and don't do for conscience sake.

And if you understand that all things are lawful, then there are things you can do that others might object to. If you understand even better that all things are not edifying and that you can cause other believers to stumble, then there are things that you know are okay but you're not going to do for the sake of someone else's conscience. But to pass down a dictum to say, I forbid you, we'll excommunicate you if you do this or if you do that, without a biblical basis, it's not an essential, it isn't a teaching of the Word of God.

What does the Word of God give commands about once you reach your bat mitzvah or your bar mitzvah, you shall be married within two years or you shall be married within 10 years. Unless there is a moral component such as Paul talks about with regard to being unequally yoked, but that's a discretionary observation that the person makes for themselves. Paul doesn't say, we will not recognize the marriage of anyone that we think is unequally yoked, and we're going to forbid you to marry somebody because we think you're unequally yoked.

This is a personal exhortation. You don't yoke yourself to someone who's outside the faith. If you're trying to live in the faith, it's a sack race and if somebody's got their leg in the same bag as you and they're not running, how can you possibly advance? How can you possibly live a life that honors the Lord? But we're going to concentrate on the second one here, which is abstaining from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving.

Very interesting. You will recall that we have seen the exhortation in Corinthians by Paul regarding eating meat offered to idols. If you turn back to 1 Corinthians 9, you have Paul saying in verse 19, Though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more.

What is he talking about here? I will limit my freedom on my own behest. Why? Out of consideration for others. Now he goes on in the next chapter, 1 Corinthians 10, to say in verse 14, My beloved, flee from idolatry.

Would you say that all of the apostolic witness is united that idolatry is a bad thing and Christians should not worship idols? Right? There's unanimity in this. You cannot find any apostle, any apostolic teaching, any teaching of the Lord Jesus, anywhere in the New Testament, anywhere in the Old Testament that says, well, let's be flexible. If you want to worship a few idols, that's fine.

It always ends badly. And in verses 25 through 32 of chapter 10, we have the exhortation, eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience sake. The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness.

If any of those who believe and so on, we've covered this in detail about eating meat offered to idols. If it causes a problem for someone's conscience, don't do it. If nobody is at risk of stumbling, it's fine.

The earth is the Lord's. As he says in Timothy, God is the creator and everything he made is good. So Paul emphasizes liberty and the limitations on that liberty.

He gives himself as an example in chapter 9. And he gives this scenario in chapter 10, verse 29, conscience, I say, not your own, but that of the other. Why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? If I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for food over which I give thanks? Why am I evil spoken of for eating this meat that had been offered to idols? Someone is speaking evil of me. A very interesting thing has taken place in this regard.

And that relates to the Lord Jesus speaking to the seven churches in Revelation chapter 2 and Revelation chapter, actually two in two different places, to Thyatira and to Pergamum. So turn over to Revelation chapter 2, verse 20. There has been the allegation of contradiction here.

Paul says it's in some circumstances, it is okay to eat meat offered to idols as long as it does not cause your believer friends to stumble. Yet in Revelation, you have the Lord Jesus in chapter 2, verse 20, to the church in Thyatira, I have a few things against you because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols. Look up above in verse 14, in the letter to the church at Pergamos, I have a few things against you because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.

Both of these churches, Pergamos and Thyatira, are condemned because they have leadership. Notice he doesn't say you are doing this. He says you have those who hold the doctrine of Balaam and you have Jezebel.

And these are teaching. They are those who hold this doctrine. We have that same word

doctrine in 1 Timothy 4 context and in verse 20, teaching and seducing my servants to eat things sacrificed to idols.

So what's going on here? You have the thought by some that this is the author of revelation, whether it's John the Apostle or John the Revelator, a second generation Christian named John, indirectly accusing the apostle Paul of corrupting the teaching of Jesus. Because Paul says, you know, if you're careful, you can eat meat offered to idols. God made it and it's good.

And here you have twice affirmed that they should not. And that those who teach it are seducing and leading others astray. So is it okay to eat meat offered to idols? Jesus says here that it is something he holds against people in these two churches.

He associates it with Balaam, who caused Israel to sin, with Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidon, married to Ahab, sponsor of the whole Baal cult that Elijah confronts at Mount Carmel. So I say that to say this, in 1 Timothy 4, when Paul encourages Timothy to warn his congregation about those who forbid people to eat foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. Well, which is it? Is Paul right? And this is okay? Or is Jesus right, so to speak, in Revelation chapter 2, when he says, this is a part of this very thing Paul is describing, leading people astray, false doctrines, demonic doctrines.

This is why having a healthy conscience, a truth discriminator, is so important. And it is why Paul emphasizes that there is no need to abstain from these things because God created them to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. Believe and know the truth.

And that is the clue. And that is the key as we lay these passages side by side. And it is instructive for us.

What is the problem in Pergamum? What is the problem in Thyatira? Why would the Lord Jesus call out eating meat offered to idols in these towns? But Paul tells Timothy, don't let people put this stumbling block of legalistic abstention in front of your people. These things are created to be received with thanksgiving. It's beef.

Nobody should be able to argue if you put a nice roast or a piece of brisket in front of someone and they say, well, I can't eat that. The Lord Jesus says, don't eat meat offered to idols. Which is it? You remember also in Revelation, there is a warning against false apostles.

And some have seen this as another dig at Paul that he is claiming to be an apostle and he's really not. And this is one of the reasons that people think Paul in 1 Corinthians 9, 1 and 2, am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I

am to you. So Paul defends his apostleship.

And there are those who think that those who thought he was not an apostle include the author of Revelation. These are four defenses Paul makes of his apostleship. 2 Corinthians 11, 5 and 6. The first one was 1 Corinthians 9, 1 and 2. This is 2 Corinthians 11, 5 and 6. I do not think I am in the least inferior to those super apostles.

I may indeed be untrained as a speaker, but I do have knowledge. We've made this perfectly clear to you in every way. And he compares and contrasts himself with those that were considered to be super apostles in Corinth.

Galatians 1, 11 and 12. I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preach is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it.

Rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. And this is a defense of his apostleship. And again, in 2 Corinthians 12, a chapter later than the second point, 12, 11 and 12, Paul says, I made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it.

I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the super apostles, even though I am nothing. I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders, and miracles. So the acknowledgement that there were those who questioned or actually refused to accept Paul's apostleship might be reflected in these letters to the seven churches, is adopted by some Bible scholars.

What is the truth of it? Well, one thing we know for sure. We have the Word of God and the Spirit of God. This is what gives us a good conscience that enables us to discern truth from error, truth from falsehood, what is true from what is deceitful, the doctrines of God, the doctrines of the Lord Jesus, the doctrines that Paul communicates vis-a-vis the doctrines of demons and the doctrines of deceitful spirits.

This is a case in point. If you have any trouble understanding the issue here, there are modern equivalents. And when we come back from the break, we're going to make that comparison and we're going to use our good conscience, our pure heart and our sincere faith to come to a wonderful and helpful understanding of the relationship between these two passages.

So we'll look forward to that in the second session, but we'll pause here and take a break.