

1Tim 24-05-30a

Good evening, fellow members of Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 29th of May, 2024. We're marching solidly through 1 Timothy.

We're in chapter four, and we are picking up at verse six. We have seen what it is to be sanctified by the word of God and prayer, the examples given, the importance of these useful steps in terms of maintaining our good conscience, our pure heart, and our genuine faith. We're gonna move forward now and see what makes Timothy a good minister, because what makes him effective and pleasing to God in the function of his gift is what makes all of us effective and pleasing in our walk, our exercise of spiritual gift and function.

It's not special or different for pastors or teachers. It is the same for all of us. And these characteristics, it is amazing.

When you start looking at the references in the New Testament to these qualities and how to cultivate them, how to acquire them and maintain them, it is really impressive and practical. I like it when the scripture tells me how to get a thing done, how God can accomplish it in me, and I'm not sitting there aspiring to spiritual fruitfulness and not really sure what I need to do to get it. And that's what we're gonna be looking at tonight.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, we are so grateful for the spiritual food that you provide for us and the witness and the presence and the power of your spirit to enable us to remember it, to understand it, to put it into practice so that our lives and our conversation and our example can reflect those things as they were first manifest in the Lord Jesus himself. We here as his representatives endeavor to be fit examples as members of his body to communicate and to represent what he came to communicate.

And we pray that as we reflect on these passages of scripture tonight, that they will be meaningful and helpful to each one of us in the path that you have laid before us, the opportunities that you present to us, the gifts that you have granted to us and the potential that we have to prepare ourselves for service and function, both now and in the future kingdoms that will soon come. We pray that in all things, the Lord Jesus will be glorified. We ask it in his name, amen.

Let's read our passage. I'm going to quickly read the preceding verses because we like to have our context well in mind. You remember that Paul tells Timothy and through Timothy, the people in the church, that there is going to be a departure from the faith in latter days.

People will start out in the faith. This isn't people that never did have a good grip on Christian understanding. These are not people that had some sort of amalgamated or

cult-like reference to Jesus, some weird kind of Judaism or Gnosticism.

These are people who started out well. Like Paul tells the Galatians, you were running well, who tripped you? It's literally what it says. You were running the race and someone tripped you.

How did that happen? They will depart from the faith. And how is it that this departure is accomplished? They give heed to doctrines that don't come from God. They're seductive.

They're deceptive. They allure, they appeal. They sound great.

And people who started well, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer and getting into the basic understandings of who we are in Christ, what redemption is, how confession of our sins works, to receive cleansing and forgiveness from God, to clear the decks for action, how to keep in step with the Spirit, to walk by means of the Spirit, and got off to a great start. Starting gun went off, bolted right out of the gate, doing wonderfully. And then someone created a distraction.

Someone deceptively communicated something that sounds like the Word of God, appeals to the flesh rather than the Spirit, and misled and misguided. And first thing you know, these people are no longer on the narrow road headed for the straight gate and don't even know it. The thing about deception is you don't know you're being deceived until it is too late.

And these deceivers are speaking lies in hypocrisy. This is a useful detail because if I want to check and see if what I'm hearing, whether it is at Grace and Truth Bible Church, or if it's in a book or on a podcast or a video or some other Christian resource, quote unquote, quote, how do I know if this thing is on the level? Well, he gives us the answer down in verse five, sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. Does it comport with the rest of the Word of God that I know? And if I have a question, have I prayed to God the Father requesting confirmation? I'm going to look in the Word of God to see if these things are so, and I'm going to ask my father in heaven, seated on the throne, if these things are so.

If I've got a question and I go to my father, I have confidence that he is not going to let me be fooled into thinking that a rock or a snake or a scorpion is my spiritual bread. So the Word of God and prayer and everything, even when you're pretty sure of the source, it could be something you hear in Bible class. It's here at Grace and Truth, but it doesn't sit quite right.

Did I misunderstand that? I'm going to need to make some changes and these could be hurtful. I could disrupt relationships. If I understood that right and I start putting that into practice, it's going to have repercussions.

Well, if you don't have peace, if you don't have confidence, go to the Word of God and

pray. If the teacher can provide any clarification, did I, you know, that old thing they used to distribute, I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant. Feel free to ask for confirmation that you heard what I intended, what I saw in the Word of God, but your first source of confirmation is the Father.

He's unassailably right and He has absolute love for you and for me. And if we go to Him with a question, He is going to provide the answer. You can bank that every moment of every day for the rest of your life and into the eternal future.

God will never suffer the righteous to be moved. You talk about going hungry or your seed begging bread, that's Old Testament. And those literal figures in the Old Testament often represent spiritual truths now.

You will not need to beg spiritual bread. You will not go hungry when you want your soul fed and nourished and strengthened for the task at hand and for the service and the opportunities that God provides. Go with complete and total confidence, relax, and watch and wait for the answer.

If you have fellow believers that you can speak the truth in love back and forth, if iron is gonna sharpen iron, so much the better. But we're going to see tonight that it is this Word, it is the idea of what is true and what is not true. This is why it is so important for our conscience to be healthy because what's our truth detector? How do you know you're hearing the truth? Your conscience.

How do I know if I'm doing well or doing poorly? It's my conscience. And we've spent several weeks studying how we can ensure that our conscience is enabled and empowered by God and is a true reference. And he is going to elaborate on that for Timothy.

So it is easy for people who aren't paying attention and who are assuming their conscience is working correctly to be deceived. And someone speaking lies in hypocrisy takes them down a bad road. Speaking lies in hypocrisy, broken conscience.

Their conscience is broken and people will listen to them and follow them and follow their teachings and follow their interpretations because their conscience is weak or broken. And we saw these examples talking about ways that you should relate to other people. Marriage is just an example.

This is a relationship, right? And you say, well, you shouldn't marry this kind of person or you shouldn't marry at all. Let me tell you how your relationship should be. Well, the area of relationships is broad.

Well, you should engage with people of other cultures and other faiths and you should interact and listen to them and be sensitive is a teaching. Let me offer you a thought as

coming from the current widespread and growing influence of progressive Christianity in our culture right now. If you ask someone from the progressive perspective, a very simple question, what are five ways I can make myself a better Christian? I wanna grow in grace.

I wanna be pleasing to God. How can I be a better Christian? What would the progressive perspective say? Number one, study the Bible. This is kind of what we did last time.

Are we good so far? Remember the experiencing God? If you just shorten these sentences, a lot of them are great. So number one is study the Bible, thumbs up or thumbs down? Thumbs up, critically. Study the Bible critically.

And you say, well, I certainly don't wanna study the Bible uncritically and just take every old thing, but here's what they mean by critically. Engage with the Bible critically. Engage with the Bible not just as a sacred text, but also as a historical and literary document.

Explore its cultural context, various interpretations throughout history and the nuances of its translations. This critical approach can help you understand the underlying messages and teachings of Christianity in a more comprehensive manner. What this means is be open to the notion that revelation is not actually prophecy.

Be open to the notion that the Old Testament isn't history, but more of a mythology. And that like fables and stories, it has a meaning that doesn't rely on it being literally true. That's what they mean by use the Bible critically.

Pick and choose what you are going to treat as truth. And so right away, someone, and there have been several as I've mentioned in recent weeks that are writing books about the revelation. So interesting because we're on the cusp of the fulfillment of the prophecies of the book of Revelation.

And as an aside, I saw an interesting theory. You remember when we were in Corinthians and Paul says, I knew a man upwards of 14 years ago who was caught up to the third heaven and heard things that are not allowed to be uttered. And whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know.

And the most common understanding is that Paul is talking about himself. He says, I would never boast of such things. If I'm gonna talk about myself, I'll only boast in my weaknesses.

But I knew a man upwards of 14 years ago. And the idea is that this is a conceit and that he's talking about himself, but he's putting it in the third person because to say that he had that experience would be to boast. And that is the most common interpretation.

I think it's fair. Another understanding, and we went through these in Corinthians, but I

heard a new one that I had not previously heard just today, and the guy made a fair case that it's the Apostle John. And this guy traced the travels of Paul and the intervals of time when he first came to faith in Christ and didn't immediately go to the apostles, but he went to Arabia and there's a space of years.

And then he comes back and then there's another space of years. And then when he goes to Galatia, evidently he met the Apostle John. And that, I believe it's 1 Corinthians 9, if memory serves, I didn't write it down, that the Apostle John is the man who was caught.

And he said, if such a one, I will boast. But I myself, and I bring that up because last time we talked about how Elaine Pagels in her Revelations book, she puts an S on it on purpose and then says, this is a perspective on the book of Revelation, but that she seems to think that John is throwing rocks at Paul as a false apostle and as someone who says it's okay to eat meat offered to idols. So this, if true, I don't need it, would be the opposite.

That actually they met and Paul says, I'll boast about him. I just won't boast about me. In any case, it is important to know the Word of God, but we need a level of confidence that doesn't depend on, well, let me get into the possibility that it meant one thing to one set of people and it means another thing to another set of people.

How do we assure ourselves that we are understanding the Bible properly? We certainly, the old acronym ICE for isagogics and categories and exegesis as an approach to scripture, it's helpful if we have women covering their heads and men uncovering their heads and shaving heads and so on to understand what these were in culture and in time and in context, but to let these observations change and warp the understanding of scripture is a danger. It's a hazard. So how do we know if we've gone too far with cultural and isagogical and categorical understandings or any other kind of information to help us interpret the text? If you wanted a theme for tonight's class, what do you do when there's a question? What do you do when you're not sure about something in spiritual life, in Christian faith, in biblical understanding, where do you go? What do you do? And the answer is three words, go to God.

If I have a question about the text, I'm churning on through and I'm wondering, well, is it this or is it that? Is this really, you know, Paul made a mistake when he told people it's okay to eat meat offered to idols and Jesus corrects that with John in Revelation chapter two and Paul claiming to be an apostle and Jesus is saying, you know, you've, and I think it's Revelation two, two, where he says, I commend you because you have not accepted those who are false apostles, claim to be apostles and are not. And, oh my goodness, is there a schism? Should we throw out the books of Paul? When I have questions about what's going on in the text, I stop and think what provision has God made to resolve these kinds of questions, to address these sorts of issues? That's why we have the Holy

Spirit. We are not dependent on the text alone.

This is Bart Ehrman's fatal, and I mean spiritually fatal mistake, is that we have to have a text that in and of itself is unquestionable, has no mistakes, no corruptions, no inadvertent lacunae, gaps or additions. And the fact that we have many different versions of the text and some of them say this and some of them say that, well, it's hopeless. You can't expect to have confidence in anything because look at all of these.

And now I'm gonna go critically and say that the apostles in the first century wanted to attribute to Jesus a divinity that he never claimed. And this was the milieu and there was divine emperor worship and the Christians in pitting themselves against Roman worship, had to have a divine person of their own. And so they raised the Lord Jesus who was just a wonderful rabbi and teacher into a divine being that he never intended or claimed to be.

That's studying the Bible critically and you go amok. How do I avoid this kind, this category of error? Go to God. I think people forget that God's really there.

Our heavenly father is sitting on his throne right now and the Lord Jesus is sitting at his right hand right now. And they both have sent us the Holy Spirit to indwell, to guide, to lead, to encourage. He's the paraclete.

He is the come alongside helper and he's really there. He's a person. He's not an abstraction.

He's not the light side of the force or something. He is a person. He connects us directly to the father.

He is the means by which our prayers go to our father and he is the means by which the father's answers come back to us. The example of the Lord Jesus, the intercession of the Lord Jesus, these are real things. They're not, you know, happy aphorisms to put on a refrigerator magnet or a car deodorizer or something.

And oh, isn't that a happy thought? It's real. And the reason we have those things is to get direct, effective guidance. God doesn't want us to be deceived.

He doesn't want us to be led astray by hypocritical liars. He wants us to know the truth. So if someone makes a suggestion about the text and it unsettles me, it takes my peace away.

And I think, well, have I been misled all this time and all these years? And maybe I'm one of these people that's been taken off the path. Go straight to the father. He will answer.

I can't tell you how many dozens and dozens and dozens of tough passages I've gone to. I read the commentaries. I go to other places in the word of God.

I'm scratching my head. I'm looking at it. I think, wow, I don't have confidence talking about this passage because I'm not sure what it says.

This is what I do. I go to the father and say, father, we're a group. We love your word.

We wanna understand it. We wanna be sure we're properly interpreting and applying it once we observe it. And I'm stumped.

I don't know what to think about this. Lead me into what I need to know and therefore to share about this portion of your word so that we can all grow in grace and knowledge of the savior, walk by faith and not by sight and do all the things that you have called us to do. Everybody's got a spiritual gift and the fuel for our gifts is your word and your spirit.

So give me the grace and the insight to know what's going on here and say what I need to say and not say what I don't need to say. And then I leave it. I pray one time and then I just keep doing my work.

I know the answer is gonna be somewhere in God's word. And it's amazing. I'll be doing something completely unrelated.

Be talking about a book or a concept with somebody else. And all of a sudden a passage comes up and the Holy Spirit just connects those things like the opposite poles of two magnets. It just clicks.

And I think, oh, and now there's clarity. Now there's simplicity. Now there's elegance and beauty.

Oh, this is a chiasm. What happens when I look at the other side of it? There's the answer. There's the beauty.

And God has done that so many times that I am no longer disturbed when the first three or four times I look at something, it doesn't make sense. This isn't unique for somebody that is doing the digging and the research and putting a Bible class together. This is your resource, your privilege.

You can do this as easily as I. You will get an answer just as certainly as I do. And why is that? Look at our passage, starting at verse six. If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ.

In what things? Everything that we've seen in the preceding three chapters, but every creation of God is good and nothing to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving. We can all go to the Father with thanksgiving, thanking him for the things that we do know with certainty. I am well and truly saved.

The Lord Jesus is my redeemer. He is the atonement. He is the propitiation for my sins.

I have an absolute certain conscious future with God and with the saints. I know that for a fact. Whatever else may happen on this earth, I know where I'm going.

I know who got me there and it is the love and the grace of God. And I thank him for that. I thank him for his word.

I thank him for the presence of the spirit. I thank him for fellowship of believers of like mind and shared enthusiasm. And I say, Lord, I feel like I need an answer.

I've got a circumstance. I've got a relationship problem. I've got a question.

I've got an issue. I've got a concern. I have a worry.

This is starting to kind of disturb my peace and distract me from recognizing opportunities to do what you want me to do. If you could provide me an answer to this or let me know that I don't need the answer right now and I should be focusing on something else, please shine that light on my path. In the example of the Lord Jesus, in the presence and power of the spirit, in the light of your word, grant me the peace that the Lord Jesus promised when he left.

Let me know what I need to do, how I need to think, how I can speak and act, what I can focus on. Lead me and guide me through your word and your spirit. I am leaving it in your hands.

I'm gonna rest on this until I hear from you. In Jesus' name, amen. And disinvest, let it go.

Watch and wait. God, the father in his time and in his way will answer every single time, every time. I have never not had an answer to that prayer ever.

The word of God in prayer, cash that promise in. If you instruct the brethren in these things, if you will, and this is what I am doing. We are brothers and sisters in Christ and I am telling you what Paul told Timothy to do.

We all can rest in the assurance of these things. And it will make us good ministers of Jesus Christ. You can substitute representative of Jesus Christ there.

We're his body and we will ably and fitly and properly and elegantly represent the Lord Jesus. Walking in faith, taking that promise of God to him and resting in it, that's faith. It cleanses us from all unrighteousness and enters us into righteousness.

Nourished, notice, not worried, nourished by fellowship, not nourished in the shared love and beatific happy thoughts that people want to share. What are we nourished by? What are we built up? If you've ever watched these survival shows, there's several different flavors and kinds of them on TV, but they drop people off in the middle of God forsaken nowhere and they give them a machete and a compass and say, go somewhere. And

they track them across the days and across the weeks.

The thing that gets them every time, the ones that don't survive and achieve success, food is what gets them. They're trying to fish and they can't catch them. They're trying to trap and they can't trap.

They're trying to find fruits and berries and whatnot and the season changes and those things gone. The frost comes and kills everything. The food is always what gets them.

And day by day, they're in a constant search for food because, and they're watching their fat reserves deplete and I need protein, I've got to have protein. And they'll eat anything they can find that's edible, that's got any protein at all. They'll find a heart of palm or whatever and just gnaw away at the inside of a tree.

Food, nourishment, we are no different spiritually. We need nourishment. And how do you think your week would go? I'm sure we'd all lose weight, but how much energy and how much effective work could we do if we only ate twice a week? Just do a thought experiment.

From now on, you're only gonna eat a meal when grace and truth is having Bible class. You can make yourself a sandwich. You can throw a Marie Callender into the microwave.

You can prepare a six course meal, but only on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings. That's the only time you can eat. How far do you think you would get and how long do you think you would last? Well, surprise, surprise, surprise, how far do we get and how long do we last when we don't feed ourselves spiritually every day? Don't have to listen to a Bible class, although that's a great start, but pull something up, get some truth circulating.

Notice, what is it that nourishes the soul in this verse? Nourished in the words of faith and the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. You're gonna get weak, you're gonna sicken, you're gonna make mistakes. People get wobbly and start hitting themselves in the hands with their machetes and tripping over things and having to get a medevac out of these survival shows.

They get weak and wobbly and their judgment goes and they get depressed and they get discouraged and they start thinking about the good old days when they were home and oh, I miss my kids and they forget all about the million dollars they would win to bless their kids with for months and years to come if they stick it out for another couple of weeks, but their judgment is off. Their conscience quits working and they can't figure out what's right and what's wrong, what's good and what's bad, what contributes to the goal. They get to feeling sorry for themselves.

Oh, my kids need me and of course they need you, but they can get along without you for a few weeks to accomplish the goal and they'll be so proud of you that you stuck it

out, but their perspective is warped and their conscience doesn't function right and they start telling themselves seductive falsehoods and they get hypochondriac and they begin to magnify and I don't feel good, I think I need to go home and you can watch them from the comfort of your armchair and see the objectivity leaving. And much of this happens because they are malnourished. Got to have nourishment, nourished by the world words of faith, nourished by the good doctrine.

All we have to do, it's already in the cabinet. You've got a pantry in your soul. All of you who are listening to the sound of my voice have got a vast pantry of good spiritual food.

You've heard it in the past, you have reviewed it, you've got it in your notes, you've got it in the margins of your Bible. You can think back when you look at a passage and say, I remember we studied this and got some insight into it. I know how to put one spiritual foot in front of the other.

I've learned this, I've practiced it across the years. Go to the pantry, get out some food, warm it up and nourish the spirit, nourish the soul. What are the signs of malnourishment? What are the signs? How do you feel when you're hungry? If you get busy and you skip a meal or two, how do you feel? Hands start shaking, get kind of a weird lightheaded feeling.

I need to sit down. I'm out of gas. And we literally are.

Paul uses these words for a reason under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit when he talks about nourishment. He's talking about the words of faith and the good doctrine that we know by experience is true. Reject bad food.

If you get the shakes and you run out of gas and you're lightheaded, don't reach for a Twinkie. Don't eat a poison mushroom. These, again, I love these survival shows.

I'm sorry, it's a weakness. I love, because I've had a little bit of training in this. I've been required to go out into the jungle and know where to get water and what is good and what's not, how to make a medicine out of certain kinds of leaves and jungle environment survival training.

Just, I've got the patch that says I've been there. And so it fascinates me to see people that have actually been put in this situation. And people get hungry and they say, well, this meat tastes a little funny, but I'm so hungry.

I think it'll be okay. And they eat it anyway. Or they find some berries and they say, oh, and they take them back and share them with others.

And they all eat it and they all get deathly ill. And the limited amount of fresh water that they have that they have to boil for 45 minutes to be sure that it's healthy. They puke it all back up and they've got to go get more.

And everybody feels too sick to gather the firewood and make the fire and get the kettle and boil the water and make enough for everybody to drink. And they're dehydrated because they're throwing up. And it's just a vicious cycle, a downward cycle because they didn't check their food to be sure that it's good.

And when there were signs that it wasn't good, they chose to ignore them because their judgment's poor, because their conscience is off, because they're malnourished. It's a vicious cycle. You go from bad to worse to worst.

Reject profane and old wives tales, old wives fables. Reject deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, lies that are spoken in hypocrisy. How can you reject them unless you've got a good conscience? How can you reject them if you don't have a healthy truth detector? How do you know it's a wives fable? How do you know it's profane? You've got to have an active functioning conscience.

You can't let yourself get weak. To quote my great grandmother, it's a great life if you don't weaken. Don't let yourself get in the place where a profane tale and a wives fable is gonna sneak under the fence and eat your chickens.

Stay strong, keep the full armor of God on, and daily nourish our souls with words of faith and good doctrine that we've carefully followed in the past. And we know it's solid. We know it works.

I know God cleanses me when I confess my sins. I know that it's based on the work of Jesus Christ. And my heart can be sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of Christ.

When do I apply the blood of Christ that sprinkles me and makes me clean? When I confess my sins. If I wanna restore my faulty conscience that's not telling me what's good and what's bad, I need to go identify sin in my life, confess it, have confidence that God has forgiven it and cleansed me. And the blood of Jesus Christ has sprinkled me from an evil conscience and given me a pure heart, a good conscience.

Now I can have a genuine faith. These things are true and they are real and they matter. We've all got jobs.

We've got tasks. We've got requirements. We all have relationships.

We have conversations. We get up in the morning and we are given a certain amount of sand in the hourglass that is gonna fall through. Do we redeem that time or does it escape us and that's another day shot and I can't get it back? This day today is largely over.

This 29th of May, 2024, it's never coming back. Whatever we did today, that's done. But Lord willing, we've got a day tomorrow.

What am I gonna do with that day? I've got a set amount of time. And if I don't take a portion of it and dedicate it to cycling the clean water of the word of God through my soul to strengthen me, to nourish me, to give me what I need to see, to speak and to walk in a way that pleases God. The great thing about the word of God is it doesn't take much.

They talk about these concentrated cleaners and there's a detergent commercial that's on right now and they show a big jug that you buy at the store, the family size. They say, do you realize that 85% of this is water? You're buying water. Get our concentrated cleaner and add the water in your washing machine.

It's so much better. A little bit of the word of God can sanctify hours, can sanctify so much work and so much conversation and so much thought life. Just remembering a few of our memory verses, just thinking back to what was one thing.

Can I remember one thing from Bible class last Sunday? I know we were in Timothy. What were we talking about? Just make the effort to remember one thing. That piece of the word of God that we covered has concentrated energy.

God the Holy Spirit will use it in fantastic ways. You don't have to be constantly spouting scripture and praying and distracting yourself with holiness all the time, but we have got to go to the well and get the water. How do we get through our physical day? You stop.

However many times you eat in a day and get some nourishment. In the strength of that meat, you go 40 minutes or 40 hours or 40 days and 40 nights. Remember, that's the picture.

Remember Elijah? He got the meals from God and in the strength of that, he went 40 days. The Lord Jesus was able to go 40 days in the wilderness. Spiritual nourishment is powerful.

It's concentrated, but it does no good if you don't get some. And feed ourselves, nourished up words of faith, sound doctrine, time-tested, epinosis. It's by experience that we know it.

Do a little of that. I like to do what Daniel did and what David did. Evening and morning and at noon, three times a day.

These are the traditional physical mealtimes. Why not make it a spiritual mealtime? Evening and morning and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud? He will hear my voice and I will hear his. Psalm 55, 17.

Well, that gets us half of one verse in our new portion of the passage. We'll pause there and take our break. When we come back, we'll move forward and see what else Paul has to say to Timothy that is pertinent and meaningful for us.

