

2Timothy 24-10-20a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. By services, I include our fellowship, our intercession, our thanksgiving over answered prayers, our wonderful music ministry, and all of the things that go together to make our church a blessing to those who are able to come and those who catch us a bit later in time. We live in a wonderful age of technology where that is possible, and I think it is a provision from the Lord for the strange times in which we live.

This is the 20th of October, 2024. We continue our study in 2 Timothy 2, picking up in verse 14. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of worship and fellowship and study of God's word, and we'll begin.

Father, we are so grateful for your watch care, your provision, your distribution of both blessings and challenges to enhance our faith, to make real to us what we learn from the scriptures and in the hands of the Holy Spirit that which guides us, energizes us, and enables us to participate in your plan and purpose to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that in all things this morning He will be lifted up, that what we say and do will be pleasing in your sight, and that as we seek to discover truths from the pages of your word, that God the Holy Spirit will bless it to each heart in a way that is meaningful and helpful to us as we endeavor to live the life that represents the Lord Jesus on this earth, shines the reflected light of your glory so that others will be drawn to you and included in the forward movement of your plans and purposes for this age into the ages to come. Amen.

Let's read our passage. We're satisfied now, I think, that we understand the preceding saying that is the context for what we're about to look at this morning, which is the faithful saying, for if we shared dying, we shall also share living. I have to get my glasses on because I've scratched out so much and written so much.

For if we shared dying, we shall also share living. If we endure, we shall also share reigning. If we deny, He also will deny us.

If we are faithless, He remains faithful. He cannot deny Himself. So we can be denied by the Lord, but the Lord cannot deny Himself.

And what that tells us and what we concluded with last time is that it is incumbent upon us. It is important for us to pay attention day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute to whether or not we are being faithful. Because if we deny the faith, if we deny the opportunities, the provision, the blessings of divine enablement and supernatural power that God has placed at our disposal, if we deny all of that, we are essentially denying the Lord Jesus.

We have a better plan. Judas thought he had a better plan. Peter was more interested in

self-preservation in his moment of fear at the campfire outside the place where the Lord Jesus was being tried.

And these distractions and deflections and alternate realities that come to define our thinking are a denial. And we must be people of truth. To deny who we are and why we're here and what God has provided to us and for us is to deny.

And if we deny, He will deny us. And this is not just we will be denied before the Father. We are denied opportunities in the future kingdoms.

If we cannot be trusted with little things, small things, if we are not faithful in a few things, how can we be entrusted with more in that which is going to last infinitely longer than this momentary light affliction, this short temporal life? But we reveal ourselves. This is why we're here after salvation. God gives us opportunities to demonstrate our heart and demonstrate our dedication and faithfulness or lack thereof so that He knows who to weave into His future kingdoms, His future plans and purposes.

Those that can be relied upon in the small things can be relied upon in the large things. Jesus said, you have been faithful in a few things. I will make you ruler over many things.

And whether you look at the parable of the minas, the parable of the talents, whether you look at the unforgiving servant who is forgiven much but then can't turn around and forgive his underling fellow servant, these truths are consistent throughout Scripture. So if we deny, this is a poetic condensation of many truths. It is necessary for us to pay attention to who we are and why we're here.

This life is so distracting. The God of this world, the ruler of this world, likes nothing better than to get us caught up in the story. As I have used this illustration in the past, when you're watching a movie and it's a thriller, it's got tense moments, and you become so engrossed and invested in what's going on on the screen that when something startling happens, you jump.

When something foreboding appears, you're tense and fearful. And it is an investment in a well-told tale that causes reactions that are not any longer aware of the room, the house, the neighborhood, the security of your locked doors and your double windows, and you are living inside a narrative that doesn't match reality but causes responses and reactions. And you can have bad dreams afterward, and you can have insecurities that arise from seeing things depicted in a movie that you wouldn't otherwise have.

Satan loves for this life to be the movie that so engrosses us and draws us in that we lose sight of the spiritual realities that define us and that are going to determine our eternal future. And we have to step back. We have to remind ourselves it's only a movie.

This momentary light affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory, according to Paul in Romans, and to be balanced and be aware to watch and pray. All of this is tied up

in this faithful saying to endure and to not deny is at the center of this faithful saying. We have died with, and we are going to live with.

What is going to determine the nature of that future life? Whether we endure so that we will be qualified to serve and reign with Christ and reign in the kingdom of the Father, or whether we are going to deny. The choice is at the heart of this. Are you going to endure or deny? To deny is the opposite of enduring, persisting, keeping track of the important realities and priorities.

And if we are faithless, people get dazzled by enduring so that we can reign with Him. What will that be like? Will I have a throne? Will I have a palace? Will I have powers? Will I have opportunities and possessions and riches and glory and whatever those constitute in the eternal future? But the warning is the conclusion of this faithful saying. If we are faithless, He is going to remain faithful.

He will do what He says He would do. And if we deny Him before men, He will deny us before the Father. If we deny our opportunity, if we are slack and indifferent, if we take the one mina or the one talent and we do nothing with it, we bury it in the earth, we wrap it in a handkerchief and stick it in our pocket and try to return it to Him unused and unmultiplied, He will remain faithful.

And we will be what that most sobering of pictures tells us. When Jesus says, the table will be set and many will come and sit down in the kingdom with the Lord Jesus, a place of fellowship and privilege and intimacy and opportunity. And some will come to the door knocking and saying, Lord, Lord, why aren't you letting me in? I want to come to the table and enjoy the fruits and the blessings of the kingdom and the eternal future.

And Jesus will say, I do not know you. I don't know where you're from. Lord, Lord, in your name, did we not do these wonderful works? Depart from me, you workers of iniquity.

And the pictures are sobering because they are pictures of believers. You have to be a believer to be at the door and be denied. If we deny Him, He will deny us.

We will be denied entrance. We will be denied future opportunity because if we don't do it now, why would we do it then? It wouldn't be for the right motives anyway. So this is a very important lead into our passage this morning that begins in verse 14.

Remind them of these things. We have anticipated them, we have covered them, and we have reviewed them. These concepts that are distilled in such a wonderful fashion in this faithful saying, remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord, not to be distracted with arguments, striving about words to no profit.

Remember, Timothy is also charged with calling out error and correcting it and opposing it. So this is not a charge to never confront false teaching, to never confront that which is erroneous, that which is misleading, that which twists and distorts scripture. But as we

do so, it has to be with an eye on, is this profitable? Is there someone who is seeking truth and this correction is going to land in a receptive heart? It will produce thoughtfulness that can lead to repentance and change.

The Word of God is profitable, remember, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. This is coming up in the next chapter, just flip the page and look at 3.16. What is the difference between profit and no profit? Striving about words to no profit is our verse 2.14. Profit is defined in 3.16, all scripture given by inspiration of God, and it is profitable. How do you determine whether your conversation, your presentation of a better view based on your knowledge of scripture, how do you know whether you're striving to no profit or you're delivering a word from the Lord, you're speaking truth in love that is profitable? Well, is it going to help someone understand doctrine? Are you explaining that scripture supports a better and superior view? That in order to believe this false teaching, to embrace deceit and a faulty interpretation of scripture, you can't be doctrinally consistent.

You can't believe in the gentle Jesus and non condemnation of sinners. And I saw another thing, they talk about things that are cringe worthy, and this just makes one cringe. Well, Jesus partied with sinners.

This is something that should be spoken against. If you ever hear someone in your presence say, well, why should you be frowning at people who live a perverse lifestyle or who make evil choices and who embrace evil policies and politics and lifestyle choices? You're cool with that. You don't make any sort of noise that would indicate that that's not okay.

And the defense of that kind of behavior is, well, Jesus didn't condemn prostitutes or the woman caught in adultery. He didn't condemn and he didn't stand on street corners calling out immorality. Excuse me, but yes, he did.

Yes, he did. Have you read the woes to the Pharisees? And who is it he did not condemn? Prostitutes, tax collectors, and sinners who came to him looking for deliverance, looking for a better way and a better life, who weren't complacent, who weren't satisfied, who weren't okay with their sinful and evil way of life. And they came to him looking for a better way and a better life and a connection to the God of their fathers.

And when Jesus would heal or deliver, go your way and sin no more, he says to the woman taken in adultery. We've talked about the level of inspiration of that pericope, but there is a truth there. Don't persist in the pattern.

Jesus didn't tell prostitutes, tax collectors, and sinners, well, keep up the good work. As long as you love the Lord in heaven, I'm cool with your lifestyle. And we shouldn't either.

But only in cases where speaking the truth will be profitable. So is it profitable for

doctrine? Can you explain what you have been told the scripture says or the scripture supports is not accurate? Let me tell you based on my time of study and what we learn at our church and what we understand by means of the Holy Spirit, looking at the word of God, what people are telling you is doctrine is not. Here is the doctrine of the scriptures.

If there is a response, if there is an interest, well, if that's what the Bible says, I need to make a change. That's great. We can continue speaking the truth in love.

If people say, well, don't bother me with the facts, my mind's made up. Stop immediately striving about issues. Words is log away.

This is the plural of logos, and it means issues. Not just what does this word mean, but what is the issue? What does call out as sin or human good or evil? What does scripture identify as righteous and pleasing in God's sight? What is a part of faith and what is a part of denial and failure? This is doctrine. And if we present truth and explain it, Jesus would teach in towns and cities.

And when he detected a lack of interest, they were only there for the miracles. They wanted a freak show. They wanted a dazzlement.

He would leave and go elsewhere because the miracles were the means to an end to authenticate his identity as coming from the father so that people could respond to the authority of his message and to want the authentication without the message that is no profit. So profit is doctrine. It is reproof.

There's no point in studying scripture. There's no point in learning the word of God. There's no point in exposing ourselves to it if we are not going to be corrected by it.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, John says. We have sin. We have areas of weakness where areas of failure, areas of shortfall, areas of faithlessness, and sometimes even of denial and the word of God needs to find us correctable.

Profit is correction. I was doing things poorly. I am doing them better.

I was succumbing to temptation or to weak areas of my nature. Now I am strengthened. I have a better way of thinking.

The power of the Holy Spirit is leading me away from sin and into righteousness by faith. Correction. So if we are striving, if someone has a contention and it's a wrestling match, that's not receptive and they are not going to be corrected.

They're just going to look to a new argument to endeavor to silence or rebuke or otherwise oppose what is presented from scripture. The Pharisees spent hours coming

up with what they thought were scriptural arguments to debunk the Lord Jesus. They were not corrected.

They were not correctable. So there's no profit there. For reproof and correction.

To be convicted. The Holy Spirit uses the word of God for conviction. So you have doctrine.

Reproof. Reproof when it is accepted. You acknowledge, I didn't do that well.

I failed. I fell short. I was supposed to do a thing and I did not.

I was supposed to refrain from a thing and I did it anyway. And the reproof has to land to where there is acknowledgement. One of the hardest things in human nature is to look at a situation and say, I'm the one that messed that up.

When I look at circumstances and situations that result in conflict and hardship and hurt feelings and things that do not glorify God, I notice I seem to be the common denominator. I think I am the one that needs to change. I can't keep blaming and shaming others.

I need to look to myself. I need to be reprov'd so that I can be corrected. Doctrine.

Reproof. Correction. And if I'm going to move away from failure, if I'm going to live in the light of doctrine, then I need instruction in what is righteous.

It isn't enough to try to turn away from sin. I have to know how to practice what is righteous. And there's a little symmetry there.

Doctrine and instruction in righteousness are the outer shell. And in the middle, you have reproof and correction. And you cannot have either element without the other.

Doctrine without reproof and correction is not going to yield genuine instruction in righteousness. It will be self-righteousness. It will be religious righteousness.

It will be humanly devised righteousness. It has to begin and end with the power of God's truth in the hands of the Holy Spirit and at its heart we are reprov'd and we are corrected. This is prophet.

So, when you look at 2 Timothy 2, verse 14, Timothy is to remind the believers in his church of these things and charge them before the Lord. Not just encourage or exhort or preach at them, but call them into the presence of the Lord. This is to assemble the Israelites before the mountain with an awareness that God is invested in this in a serious way.

Charge them before the Lord. If you love the Lord, if you claim to serve the Lord, then

you need to pay attention to this exhortation and do not argue about issues when there is no prophet. It is one thing to present the truth, but if you get pushback, if you get opposition, if there is rancor, if there is bitterness, if it causes strife, stop.

It is not our calling and it is not our job to convict of sin or righteousness or judgment. That is the Holy Spirit. We can present the truth.

Watch and see if the person is responsive to the Holy Spirit's administration of the truth that we speak to that person's heart. And if they are not responsive, stop. They may be responsive later.

Many times, there is an initial defensive outbreak. There is a pushback and I do not want to hear any more, but the seed has been planted. Let the Holy Spirit work with that truth in His time and in His way with His perfect knowledge.

Do not push the issue. Do not strive about words to no prophet. There is a time to argue.

There is a time to correct and instruct, especially for pastors, which is Timothy's role, but this is an example for all of us. Be sensitive. One of the problems with various kinds of social maladjustment is an inability to put oneself in the other one's place, to understand and sympathize or empathize with how your words and your actions are being received by another person.

It is a problem and sometimes it is something that has to be addressed because it cannot be helped. There are ways that we try to get around that, but the best way is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can give us an empathy and an understanding that we do not have naturally.

In many cases, not in all, but in many cases, we can have a spiritual sensitivity that transcends a human inability to realize that what you heard is not what I meant. The way you take this is not how I meant it. So we have to watch.

We have to endeavor prayerfully, looking to the Holy Spirit for insight. He gives us the words that we need when we are in a confrontation. Jesus told his disciples, you will be hailed before kings and authorities.

Don't worry about what you're going to say. It will be given to you. And part of knowing what to say in a confrontational situation is knowing when to stop talking.

And this comes from observing the reaction or the response and being sensitive. We are so apt to just want to land our blows. I've got a great argument.

I've got a killer point. I can nail that coffin shut on your argument. And we're more interested in succeeding in an endeavor that makes us feel good instead of being a genuine benefit and speaking the truth in love to someone else.

Love is sacrificial to self. I don't need to win this argument. I want to plant seeds of truth that the Holy Spirit can use for reproof and correction and instruction.

So this is a difficult charge and we can't do it in our own strength. So what does this have as a concomitant truth? We have to prepare in advance. We have to pray before we meet with someone, before we visit with someone, before we encounter someone, especially if we have a history of past failure.

To pray, to drench ourselves in the Spirit and the Word and to constantly remind ourselves, I need to speak in love. I need to be looking for the benefit of the other person, not to demonstrate how much I know, not to trot out my killer argument, but to present God's truth in a way that is profitable as it is defined in Chapter 3. Because if we fail, instead of helping the hearers, we're going to ruin them. Do you really want to be an agent of ruin instead of someone who speaks the truth in love for profit? There is profit, there is gain, there is advance, there is benefit and blessing, or there is ruin and destruction and division, bitterness.

You pour gasoline on a fire instead of something that will turn away wrath like a soft answer. That brings us to verse 15, and you can see now the context of this very well-known verse. What is the context in which we are diligent, we bend every effort to present ourselves approved to God? It's the context of speaking to others and endeavoring not to be argumentative and divisive, but to be that which God can use to unite, to encourage, to bring closer together the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace, not strife, profit and growth, not division, not ruin.

Be diligent as you speak to others to be pleasing in God's sight. Bend every effort to demonstrate yourself, to show yourself, to present yourself formally. This is the awareness that God is watching.

The Lord Jesus is present. The Lord is at hand. What does He think? Have you ever been in a room? I know people who know me have been in the room with me when I am failing in this regard, and you can see someone going off the rails.

You've been in a room where there are several people, and someone is conversing, and two get into a debate or an argument, and you're one step away, and you say, oh, don't go down that, don't say it that way. You're making things worse. Don't you see that you're not advancing your cause, you're hurting it, but the person you're watching and listening to is caught up in the moment, and they're going for the kill.

The kill shot is coming up, and they're centering the crosshairs of their scope, and they're about to pull the trigger, and you are watching and listening and saying, oh, stop. Can I pull you aside? Can I distract you? Can I keep you? What Paul is saying here is, wouldn't it be great to be the person that pulls himself up short, because he's aware that it's not just someone else watching and cringing as you do this, it's God Himself. Be

diligent to show yourself, to present yourself to the God who is present in this conversation, and to be constantly aware that you represent Him, and He is standing there, and you are His spokesperson, and you want to be approved.

You want Him to nod His head and say, well done, good and faithful servant. That's the way to present it. That's the helpful approach.

That's when to stop. That's when to pull back and not press an issue, not cause ruin, not cause strife. The way to do this is by God's grace, via the Holy Spirit and the Word of God that we know, to constantly remind ourselves in conversations with others that God is present, and my goal here is not so much to convert, suppress, or silence the person I'm talking to.

I really want to present myself approved to the God who is present and watching. I want Him to be watching me and be proud of me, and to nod His head in affirmation as I engage in this conversation, or when I stop talking and I let the other person speak, and I don't contradict, I don't interrupt, I don't cut them off. You wonder how I can describe this so well? When you have an area of failure and you do the forensic after-action report on yourself, I can see clearly what should have been done differently on my part, and I can tell you that the key to success is not to become invested and living on an adrenaline rush or something in a conversation, but to be aware that God is watching.

I want to be approved in His sight, so slow down, take a breath, let the other person speak. You don't have to refute and correct every single thing that they say, let them talk. You watch interviewers on television, and they have a political candidate, for example, ask them a question, let them make their point.

When the interviewers start interrupting, and there's two or three of them, and they cut each other off, and pretty soon everyone is talking over each other, there is no profit in that. That is ruinous. The goal is profit.

The goal is being approved in God's sight. We have to remember this, and if we enter opportunities for conversation and interaction with others prayerfully, skillfully, and divesting ourselves of a personal interest in prevailing, and proving that we know better, and justifying ourselves, you know, you think I'm a lame brain because I watch a certain kind of news, and I hold a certain set of positions, and you think that you have a better way, and I want to defend myself. I want to show that I really do have a good foundation, and that's self-justification.

That's a bad motive for conversation. The proper motive for dealing with those who differ from us is profit. Profit for them, not profit for me, and being approved before God.

A worker, someone who has been assigned a task and sticks to it. There are many jobs where when you give someone a task, you don't want creativity, you don't want

imagination, I don't want you gilding the lily, going beyond the instructions. I want a worker who will do exactly what I asked.

I know what I want. I have given you the specifics. I've given you the parameters, the rules, the goal.

The goal of our instruction is love, not argument. The goal of our instruction is unity, and there is a time to speak, and there is a time to be silent. The Lord Jesus is the most wonderful of all examples of this.

There were times when He answered questions when He was on trial, even when He was preaching and teaching. Other times He opened not His mouth. The Holy Spirit will guide us if we listen to Him, if we ask the Father to give us that wisdom, and if we remember that the goal is not for us to prevail, for us to vindicate ourselves, for us to justify that we're not crazy, believing what we believe.

There needs to be profit. There needs to be doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction, and righteousness happening some way, somewhere, and that's what we're watching for. Do you see that I'm okay now? Do you see that I'm good, and I'm not a horrible person? Do you see that I'm not vacuous and uninformed? That self-justification will bite us every time.

So, be bending every effort to be approved in God's sight. A workman who does not need to be ashamed. You come away from a discussion and realize too late that you pressed too hard, you got too strident, you talked too loud, you cut them off too many times, you became enamored with the sound of your own voice, you had a killer point that said, boy, you really got that and just beat everybody over the head with it, and you look back and say, I am ashamed, and I am certainly ashamed before the Lord.

I want to be a workman who is not ashamed because I am handling correctly the word of truth. I want to give you a note because it's an excellent one from the New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, NTSK, one of my favorite resources, and they have a very excellent point here on 2 Timothy 2.15, rightly dividing the word of truth, and you've heard before, we've covered this many times, that it's really more along the lines of laying a straight course of bricks. Listen to what NTSK has to say, rightly dividing is the rendering of a single Greek word, ortho, tomo, it's only found here, orthos, you know, means straight like orthopedics, and tomo means to cut, tomo, cut.

Vine notes the word is from orthos, and temno, to cut, the meaning passed from the idea of cutting or dividing to the more general sense of rightly dealing with a thing. The reason he's saying this is people have used this to say that you ought to observe dispensations, you divide the word of God into the Old Testament, the New Testament, this only applies to Israel, this is only the church, and so on. This is where he's heading.

The meaning passed from the idea of cutting or dividing to the more general sense of dealing with a thing. What is intended here is not dividing Scripture from Scripture, but teaching Scripture accurately. Listen to this, the word occurs in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, in Proverbs 3, verse 6, you know this verse, trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not under your own understanding, that's verse 5, verse 6 is, in all your ways acknowledging him and he shall direct your paths.

Remember that? Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not unto your own understanding, in all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths. The word direct is orthotomeo. He will give you a straight path to walk.

He will deal with you in a helpful and beneficial way. It doesn't mean he's going to steer you down a particular road, it's orthotomeo. He will rightly divide your path.

You think, wait a minute, I don't want my path divided, but he will give us a path that is walkable and beneficial. It's also found in Proverbs 11, 5, the righteousness of the blameless will direct his way aright. We saw this when we did chapter 11 not long ago, the righteousness of the blameless will direct his way aright.

The word there when they translated the Hebrew into Greek, orthotomeo, the righteousness of the blameless will cause him to handle his way, will enable him to walk a straight path properly, but the wicked will fall by his own wickedness. So this is being productive and profitable to others with the word of truth as well as ourselves. When we speak this word, when we are dealing with others, see the context, how helpful it is to understand 2.15, all of the things we've understood in the past, benefit of the word of God as we think about it for ourselves.

But this is primarily as we are living the truth and speaking the truth to others in love to be approved unto God, workmen for him following his instructions and are not ashamed because we did it right, because we are handling the word of truth that he has given us to lay out, to present, to build something with, not to tear down with, and we're rightly handling the word of truth. It is a word of truth. What does scripture have to say about truth? That is what we will address when we resume after the break.