

2Timothy 24-11-24a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 24th of November 2024. It is my parents' 70th wedding anniversary today, and they are momentarily separated from one another, but I am sure that that will not stop the observance.

And it was a happy day back in November of 1954 when they got together. Otherwise, you'd be listening to somebody else this morning, and several of us who are here wouldn't be here either. So it's always an occasion that accompanies Thanksgiving in our family, and we're very grateful to the Lord for his blessings that have stemmed from that long ago day.

We are going to continue this morning our study in the book of 2 Timothy. We're in chapter three. We are looking at the perilous times and noting the correspondence or the symmetry between the characteristics of the actual last days of this age and the latter days of our own lives.

As we grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior, we find that there is a miniature of this pattern of human history in our experience, and it is equally important to us at whatever stage or whatever age we find ourselves to be prepared in the same way that one would prepare for the last days. We're going to continue that study in a moment, but let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship, our study, our coming week, and then we'll begin. Father, we are grateful.

We are thankful, as we observe on a national basis this week, for your many blessings, the nation that you have granted us to live in and to have the freedom to worship as we see fit in the light of your word. We are grateful for your provision. We're grateful for your protection.

We are grateful for your oversight and the confidence we have that whatever may befall us, whether in the larger context of world events, national events, local events, or our own personal circumstances, you are our Heavenly Father. You love us. You provide for us.

You measure carefully the level of challenge as well as the level of blessing so that in neither extreme are we knocked off our feet, but having recourse to the grace that is in Christ Jesus, we have strength to meet the day, to address the circumstance and the challenge, and to do our best to represent the Lord Jesus on this earth until that day that he comes to take us to himself. We pray this morning as we look together at this portion of your word, that God the Holy Spirit will give us clarity, understanding, and remembrance of it, and the ability to see its pertinence and its applicability in the days ahead. We pray that in all things, the Lord Jesus will be glorified in us and through us, and we ask it in his name.

Amen. Our passage began, as you recall, in chapter three, know this in the last days, dangerous times, perilous times will come. Then we saw that the primary problem that underlies all of these descriptions is love that is either missing or misdirected.

So lovers of themselves, lovers of money, those who boast and are proud, those who are

insulters, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers without self-control, cruel or brutal, despisers of good, betrayers, traitors, headstrong, haughty, and once again, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying its power. And I never cease to be impressed with the juxtaposition of these descriptions to have all of these heinous characteristics, and yet to be maintaining a form of godliness. This is scary because the form of godliness is largely a self-deception.

They are lovers of themselves, and they are also deceivers of themselves. And to have a combination of disconnection from the truth and disconnection from the reality of our neediness and the intense dependence we have on the strength that is in Christ Jesus is something that is available and potentially common to us all. We are all made of the same clay.

We're all subject to self-deception, to telling ourselves a story that isn't true. And in this day where narrative is more important than fact, where what people want to believe, their aspirational hopes and dreams, and the notion that you can follow your heart and pursue your dream, and that's the key to success in life, is delusional. And yet you look around, and our society at large and so many individuals, even amongst our loved ones, have partaken of this falsehood, this deception.

And at best, believers are neutralized by it. At worst, we become enemies of the cross. We're alienated from the grace and the life of God.

We are a field that though the rain comes on it many times, we are fit only for burning and near to a curse, as it says in Hebrews. So, it goes on to say they have a form of godliness, but deny its power. There are three things to look at on a frequent basis in our own lives.

Just as we have the triumvirate, or the triad of Christian virtues, where is my faith? What am I trusting? What am I relying on for success, for the measure of the worth of my life? That is love. Is my love directed at myself? Lovers of self is the first in the list, or am I a lover of God, which is last in the list? And everything in between is symptomatic of failure in the latter love and failure in that former love, being lovers of ourselves. Love of self takes many forms, as you know, just as just by way of review.

But if we are wallowing in self-pity, if we are disappointed and judgmental of others, if we find fault constantly, this is symptomatic of love of self, because we believe that we deserve more than is right and proper. We are out to please ourselves. We are out to see that things go our way.

We want others to bend themselves to our plan, instead of being a lover of God and looking for the fulfillment of His plan and His purpose, the opportunity for Him to bless, to guide, to comfort, to accomplish in us and through us things that we may not even understand. But because we are looking outside of ourselves objectively, instead of looking at ourselves subjectively, this is the difference. This determines whether or not we ourselves partake of this list.

It's one thing to know that the world is headed this direction, that society is going to fulfill these, that there are people near and far who may fit various parts or all of this description. I can't do anything about that. I cannot do one thing to change what other people decide to think, decide to pursue, decide to love, decide to say, decide to be.

I can't change that. All I can do is work on myself, examine myself, see if I am in the faith. And to the extent that I am loving God and recognizing myself as called according to His purpose, Romans 8, 28 and 29, God will be able to work in me and through me.

And to the extent that I can have an effect, if I am a faithful teacher of the Word of God, for example, God can use His Word to be transformative and renewing in the hearts and minds of others. I am not doing it, but I can be the earthen vessel in which God conveys His power, His Word, His truth. And in the hands of His Holy Spirit, in the hearts of people who are receptive and who love Him, He can make things happen that are beyond our comprehension.

Each of us has a spiritual gift. It is only a blessing and it only functions. It only is woven into God's plan and becomes a blessing to others if we avoid the characteristics of this list and instead become people of God, as we see in the latter half of this chapter.

So, this form of godliness, but denying the power. If I want to know whether I have a sham godliness or a true godliness, all I have to do is look at what power is at work in my life. Where is the power of God? You know this formula.

It's like the two tubes that come in a package of epoxy. In epoxy, you have the resin and you have the hardener. Each of them is just smelly goop by itself, but when they're blended together, it becomes a wonderful tool to use to mend things, to improve things.

In the same way, the power of God comes into our lives when we have in pretty much equal measure the Word of God and the Spirit of God at work. We're not grieving the Spirit. We are not quenching the Spirit.

We are cultivating His presence and His ability to communicate the truth of Christ to us. So, if we fail, these characteristics begin to manifest, and we can't help it. The carnal mind doesn't understand the things of the Spirit.

They are spiritually discerned, and the moment we take our eyes off the ball, like in golf, we're either going to hook or we're going to slice. We're not going to be in the green. We're not going to be in the fairway.

We're not going to be anywhere near where we ought to be. So, watching for the budding and fruiting of these terrible things in our own life, if we catch ourselves, if we find ourselves having to confess things that are along this line, we need to look deeper. It's not a matter of, I said something unkind.

I need to stop saying that. I need to look at my focus. Do I love God, the first and greatest

commandment, and do I love one another, my neighbor, those who are outside, and my enemies, those four spheres for convenience of the expression of love toward those in the horizontal arena? What happens when we have a form of godliness but deny its power? We forget to check.

We forget to rely. We do not have the humility to assume that we may be in the wrong, and we need to have the Holy Spirit convict us of sin and righteousness and judgment. From such people turn away.

This, of course, is the key. We've seen this in preceding trips through this chapter, that the last days where these perilous times come, we think, well, in the traditional view, this is the future. This is just before the tribulation, just before the rapture, just before Jesus returns.

Society is going to be characterized in this way. But how long ago were these words written? Almost 2,000 years ago. 2,000 years, and I'm an English major, but if my math is right, I believe that's 20 centuries ago.

2,000 years ago, this was written, and how does this conclude? What does Paul say in verse 5? Timothy, from such people turn away. It's a present imperative. This exists in Paul's day.

It exists in Ephesus, in Timothy's congregation and in his town and in his periphery, and it already exists. This tells us that it has existed in every generation, in every situation, in every congregation, in every society, culture. These things are ever present.

They're not reserved to just before the culmination of this age. But in our latter days, I was thinking about this this week, how is this true in the sense of in the latter days, perilous times? The longer we are on this earth as believers, growing in grace and knowledge of the Savior, the sharper our spiritual senses are to discern what is evil and what is good, to see through deception, to be aware of things that slip by those who are blind because their senses have not been exercised. Remember in Hebrews chapter 5 and chapter 6, the end of chapter 5, and he says, at such time as you ought to be teachers, you're still babies.

You need milk and not solid food. You need your senses exercised to discern good and evil. And in the latter days of our spiritual growth, and this doesn't have to take long, it's certainly not immediate, but the more we exercise our spiritual senses, the more we are in the word, the more prayerful we are, the more aware we are of our own sins and we confess them and get them out of the way, the more we cultivate the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the more we enter into our latter days.

And these things we might have been unaware of suddenly become apparent and we discern them and we pick them up. And it's like a good mechanic. When you drive your car into the shop and he checks it out, if he's a brand new guy, there might be sounds or smells or situations that he wouldn't detect because he's inexperienced.

But in the latter days of being a mechanic, which basically means when you are experienced

and you've got time and grade, you've got some observational memories, what happens? You hear a thing and you say, you know that little knocking sound? You're losing oil. Those are your tappets. That's your valves and your valve guides are going to wear and warp and you're going to have a stuck valve and you're going to have bigger problems.

And it all begins with that little tapping noise. Your oil is low. Your oil light's not on, but I can tell by the sound of the engine.

And those of us who listen to engines can tell without having to pull the dipstick that the oil is low because you begin to hear the valves and it's the first sign. And of course, I'm talking about driving older cars where you lose oil, newer ones, maybe a different thing. But the point is in the latter days, as we grow in grace and knowledge, our senses are sharpened and we will discern these things and we will see through deceptions that formerly were opaque and fooled us.

And it will be perilous times because the more we see, the more we perceive, the more options we have of how to either react or respond. There's greater occasion to be judgmental if we see through a deception and realize that someone is an insulter or a boaster or proud or is exercising disobedience. The disobedience to parents, by the way, in verse two is symptomatic of rejection of authority.

And that's where we pick up this morning. As you look now in verse six, of this sort, these who are not growing in the positive direction, are not maturing, are not cultivating and expressing and becoming more manifold in the fruit of the spirit. They are trending in this direction.

And of this sort, these who are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying its power from such people turn away. Paul interrupts his description and he says, they exist now. And when you detect them, you have got to separate.

This can be difficult if it's someone in close proximity, somebody that's in the category of family or close friend or coworker or someone we have ostensible connections and contact with from such turn away. This is a judgment call. When does this behavior rise to the level that we need to turn away and separate? You can tell when it is a trip hazard.

If I find myself being tripped up, this contact leaves me depressed or discouraged. This contact diverts my mind from the positives and the hope and the exercise of faith and the practice of love that ought to characterize my life. I find myself being dragged down.

It's a scandalous, scandalizo. Scandal is how it comes into English, but it means something that snags your foot and trips you and potentially ensnares you. And when we find that every time we converse with this person, we come away fighting mental attitude sins, or we wind up realizing that we have committed sins of the tongue.

We've been imbroglioned into confederacy and being an accessory to sin because this person is soiling us with their thoughts and their words. And we, by trying to not participate, just are

leaving them to perpetrate even more. We're a captive audience from such turn away.

God resists the proud. He gives grace to the humble. If we associate with the proud, how can God give us grace? So from such turn away, turn away now, turn away and keep turning away.

A present imperative means do this and keep on doing it. Identify what trips us in the same way that a source of temptation, if some part of the internet or some part of social media or some part of what comes across on streaming television leaves us worried, angry, spiteful, vengeful, unhappy, disparaging, puts us in a foul mood and causes us to commit sins of the tongue and sins of the mind. We cut that off.

Jesus said, if your right hand offends, you cut it off. If your right eye offends, you pluck it out. It is better to remove those things and enter into life than try to keep them and lose your rewards, lose your opportunities, lose the fruit of your life, lose the fruit of the spirit.

It's a choice. If things are offending and that word offend is scandalize. If it trips you and snags you, cut it off.

This is not only practices, habits, behaviors, opportunities in our circumstantial realm, but it is relationships. And there are people that we are commanded in scripture to avoid. I wouldn't go so far as to use the word shun, but it's close.

We can be courteous. We can be polite. We shouldn't give off judgmental or vindictive vibrations.

But if someone invites, we politely decline. If someone wants to come in and begin the practice of these behaviors in our presence, we excuse ourselves. Remember that balancing this idea of avoiding and cutting off contact is to the extent that it is up to us live peaceably with all.

Pray for those who have authority. Pray for those who are in a bad way. Pray that God will grant repentance.

Remember, we saw this back in chapter two, verses 25 and 26. In humility, we can correct people who are in opposition. It should be done gently.

It should be done humbly. It should be done prayerfully, hoping that God can find a way to bring them to repentance. We don't want to cut off the avenue of return.

We don't want someone to say, well, you know, I'd kind of like to get my relationship with God back on track. I'd like to fellowship with the believers, but I can't go to that uppity, holier-than-thou person that's been snubbing me. It isn't a matter of doing this separation and turning away in a harsh, judgmental, mean, or off-putting manner.

It is up to us to separate in a loving way, separate for our own good and for the good of that person. We can't do any good by staying in their presence. Otherwise, we wouldn't be commanded to turn away.

You can't love them into repentance. You can't argue them into change of mind. You can't persuade them with words of human wisdom.

Our godly example, our dedication and faith, our love, even when someone, when you turn away from someone, what does that make them? They're pretty much an enemy in the spiritual realm, but we are to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us, pray for those who spitefully use us, and by extension are hating and spitefully using others. They are the people in this category. So, number one, I have to check myself and be sure I am not in this category.

Secondly, I have to check my periphery and ensure that I am not associating with anyone who is in this category from such turn away. Why? Look at the next verse. Of this sort are those who creep.

Creep has a connotation now that I wouldn't use to translate this Greek idea. This is to insinuate, to ambiguate, to show up in kind of an unexpected way. I didn't realize that you were going to get this far past my security.

To get an idea of this, think about telling someone something and you didn't say, please don't tell anyone or keep this to yourself or keep it under your hat, but you share a confidence with someone and you're assuming that it will go no farther. But the next thing you know, you're seeing it on social media or somebody else is coming to you and saying, I heard that X, Y, and Z. And you're thinking, why did that person feel free to share that confidence? I just thought they would know better. And what they have done is someone who is untrustworthy in keeping things to themselves has gotten further into your trust and confidence than they should have.

And if you had it to do over again, you would not let them into that intimate space. You wouldn't share something that you consider private because they can't be trusted to keep it. Well, this is the kind of surprise, unwelcome and unhappy surprise that these people accomplish.

Of this sort are those who creep into households. They insinuate themselves into a household. They are suddenly in the house and you were hoping to keep them at the door.

There used to be salesmen, Fuller Brush man, encyclopedias, aluminum siding, and people would go door to door. And they would almost literally put their foot in the door and they would come during the day when husbands were at work. Wives were taking care of small children who were preschool age.

And they didn't come in the evenings when the father is home because he's generally managing the budget. And he says, I don't need encyclopedias. I don't need a new set of dishes or whatever it is.

I don't need any more or any Amway products go away. But they would come during the day when someone they considered to be more impressionable and more persuadable and less

aware. So they would come in and find a busy mother who's feeding an infant and taking care of toddlers.

And she's distracted and he makes a persuasive argument. She commits buying the encyclopedias or the cutlery or the pots and pans or the soap products or the Mary Kay or the fill in the blank here. And first thing you know, you're on the hook for a debt.

And they have insinuated themselves. They have smiled and glad-handed. And there is a sales technique.

And you can read about this in books. And these are known techniques and they are taught in sales courses to establish a relationship that is friendly and then leverage this social contract. Well, I'm your friend and I'm a good person.

And therefore, you want to do something for me because I am nice and I've complimented you. I've worked my way under what should be a healthy defense. That's what these people do.

It's bait and switch. It's a way of gaining the confidence of people when there should be no confidence in such at all. Turn away.

Stop them at the door. Say thanks, but no thanks. Don't let them give you the sales pitch.

They come surreptitiously into households. Why does it say households? Why does it say they creep or they insinuate themselves into households? What is the protection of a household? What is its defense? What is its organizing principle? There is authority. I've quoted this recently, but there used to be, and still in many homes, there is a plaque on the wall that says, Christ is the head of this house.

Unseen guests at every meal, silent listener to every conversation and so on. And for believers, the authority extends from God, the father, through the Lord Jesus Christ. And the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ is expressed in the word of God, via the spirit of God.

This is how his word and his truth and his authority comes into our soul. And with that authority comes power. And in the household, what is the authority structure? It is the husband.

Sorry, women's liberation, postmodern society, woke people. But the Bible says, the man is the head of the house. The wife is submissive to the authority of her husband.

Ideally, he is under the submission to the authority of Christ. This is the ideal. When it's not ideal, steps may need to be taken.

But in the ideal, you are a help meet as a woman and the authority, and therefore the person accountable for how the household runs is the man. And the woman has authority on her head because of the angels. She respects that authority to the extent that she can do so as unto the Lord.

And hopefully that that is coextensive with her husband's relationship to God through Christ. Again, there are situations where you have to leave, you have to separate from a husband. Why? From such turn away.

And there are principles of the word of God that prevent us from taking any one of them to an extreme. Submission is a valid and necessary teaching of the word of God, but it is balanced by other teaching. Do not be unequally yoked with a faithless person.

Turn away from those who are in this category described in the first five verses. Turn away. You have no choice.

Get some distance. You can do it lovingly, endeavor to do it non-critically, non-judgmentally. And you understand the difference between discernment and judgment.

You can discern. You have to discern that someone is practicing these kinds of evil. Judging is when you decide you will punish them yourself.

And people will argue, well, isn't just separating from them a kind of punishment? No, it isn't. It is obedience to the word of God. If you do it without rancor, without verbal abuse, without shouting, and the kind of wrangling about words that was prohibited in the previous chapter, humbly, gently, but firmly.

And this is the key. These sort insinuate themselves into households. They subvert women who are persuadable.

It says gullible. This is sort of unnecessarily harsh, and it makes us misunderstand it. People who are in this previous category, false teachers in particular, will ambiguate themselves into the trust, into the persuadable zone of ladies, and will nudge aside or supplant or replace the rightful authority and guidance of the husband, which ought to be in turn the rightful authority and guidance of Christ himself.

And they nudge aside. They're disrupting the structure of the household. They can find older children in the household and use them to upset the apple cart of parental authority.

These can be teachers in a school, in junior high and high school, who plant subversive and ungodly ideas in the minds of kids in the classroom. And the kids come home, and now this has penetrated the household. And if the parents are distracted, busy, both of them working, not paying attention, you can lose your kids to the dark side because these guys have insinuated themselves, guys and gals now, into the household and have made captives.

They take hostages. They subvert and co-opt the rightful authority that comes from Christ through the husband, through the wife, to the children. And when it says gullible women, it just means they're not paying attention.

They're not watching and ensuring that they are submissive to the authority of the husband

and through that, the authority of Christ, and are instead listening to and being persuaded by bad apples. And loaded down with sins, one of the primary levers that people use is, you know, you're doing it wrong. Your child training is incorrect.

This submission to your husband is out of date and old-fashioned. And they will load people down with sins. You're not forgiven.

You're not cleansed. You're not on the right track. You're in the wrong.

And let me load you down with some sins. You're leading your children astray. You're a bad wife to your husband.

You're a bad woman in society. You're a bad influence on your friends. You're a problem.

And let me help you fix that. Let me give you my book. Let me teach you the techniques to be better at this and more effective at that and be an independent woman and take your place and co-equal and, you know, equal this and equal that and equal the other.

And no, no, no. Hath God not said, uh, you will not surely die. It's the devil's own lie.

And these persuadable women get loaded down with sins. You're doing it wrong. I will help you do it right.

And they substitute a human standard, a false standard, a deceptive standard of what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong for God's word and God's truth. And so they are loaded down with sins, led away by various desires. Eve was led away by the desire to be wise and they will plant the seeds of, don't you realize that staying at home, you're not a liberated woman.

You're missing out on the workplace and on accomplishment on self-satisfaction and led away by these implanted desires, appeals to the fallen nature, appeals to the very things that have entrapped them. Pride, a desire to please self loving self instead of loving God, putting self on the pedestal of most important, always learning. I've got new information.

I didn't know this before. Look at these statistics. Look at these facts.

Look at these wonderful scientific advancements. Look at what this course of action will do. I've learned something new.

Now I'm a liberated, independent person. And this can be men. Women are just an example.

It can happen to anyone, young, old man, woman, always learning, but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth because it is coming from a false source and it is deceit and falsehood. And you're learning information, but it's not truth. And you don't come to a knowledge that enables us not only to know the word of God, but to practice it and apply it to have it become epinosis as the Greek says, well, this is a problem.

And it is a problem for every single one of us, married, single, male, female, young, old, all of us. Don't worry about society. Don't worry about the latter days and eschatology and the coming of the antichrist and the rest of it.

This is for you. And this is for me. That's why it says right in the middle, we've got to identify this and turn away.

We turn away from these practices and attitudes ourselves, and we turn away from others who have fallen for it and are in its grip. Separate, identify and separate with all of the caveats, carefully, prayerfully, humbly, nonjudgmentally, to the extent that it is up to us, peaceably, work quietly with our own hands, pursue godliness. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

And that is number one, not a form of godliness that has no power, which is so much of Christianity today. Well, we're going to come to Janice and Jambres when we return from the break.