

2Timothy 24-12-15a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 15th of December, 2024, 10 shopping days left.

We continue our study in 2 Timothy 3 and we are picking up this morning at verse 15, 15th day of the month, 15th verse of the chapter. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study and we'll begin. Father, we're grateful for this time where we can gather and be renewed and refreshed and restored through the study of your word.

We ask that God, the Holy Spirit will be present in a meaningful and effective way in each of our hearts to help us to understand, to remember, and to see the pertinence and applicability of the things that we see here this morning. We ask that in all things, the Lord Jesus will be glorified. We ask it in his name.

Amen. We begin this morning, as I said, at verse 15 of chapter 3. We have seen over and over again the contrast, both in the first letter to Timothy and in Titus and in this second and final letter of Paul, probably the last inspired piece of scripture to come from the heart and mind of Paul. The contrast between faithless and faithful leadership, true and false teaching, the importance of the word of God in contrast to the traditions of men, the ideas that people want to substitute for various reasons.

And it is insidious. It creeps under the defenses and the radar that are designed to protect us. And it takes diligence.

We have to be conscious and aware that our adversary, the devil, is roaming the earth seeking whom he may devour. And what is the nature of that carnage? What is the nature of that devouring? It is misleading, deceiving, and causing to stumble, causing to stray believers who are not careful enough about hewing to the truth. It is a good exercise.

One of the things that we enjoy here as a family is seeking out good teaching and yet holding that teaching up to the light of scripture and noting where it may be a little bit uncareful, a little bit loose, a little bit short on observation. We listened to a study yesterday on the first chapter of Hebrews, and in those first three verses, wonderful, earnest, sincere, and fun to listen to teacher, and made many good points. And appreciating those and taking nothing away from that, he still imported ideas and concepts and applications that are not in the passage.

Just in the first three verses, you remember that in many parts, in many ways, God in times past spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these latter days, he has spoken to us by a son. And Hebrews is the book that celebrates the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus.

And his role as a prophet, Moses was a prophet, the Lord Jesus is presented as a prophet. And so it is easy to note that the Lord Jesus has a threefold identity of prophet, priest, and king. Nothing wrong with that.

Is Jesus a prophet? Yes, he is. Is he the great high priest for us? Yes, he is. Is he a king? Yes, he is.

But what is the application particularly of that third role of kingship? And one has to be careful because in the same way that Justin Trudeau is a premier, he is a leader, he has a role as prime minister there in Canada. He is the prime minister to Canadians. He's not my prime minister.

He is a prime minister. I can celebrate his role, his functions, his accomplishments to the extent that there are some. But he's not my prime minister.

And it would be wrong to take that proper observation of his office and misapply it in my own case, that I should take what he says more seriously than I do on the basis of his prime ministerhood. And in the same way, the fact that the Lord Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed one, the son of David, what is he king of? He is king of Israel. He is not the king of the church.

And if you devolve and turn and begin to speak of applications in terms of King Jesus for believers in this age, it's sloppy observation. It's not rightly dividing the word of truth. And you think, well, that's not seriously evil.

And it isn't. But to the extent that you slip into misapprehension and therefore misapplication, once that happens, you can easily repeat that pattern in other areas where it may be more important. And to talk about kingdom work and kingdom people and King Jesus in this age, there is nowhere, and I mean nowhere, in the epistles of Paul, the epistles of Peter, the epistles of John, the epistle of James, we are never once encouraged to address or think of the Lord Jesus as king.

When is he king? Where is he king? It is in the age of Israel. It is in the millennial kingdom, which we will participate in, but it is not the fulfillment of promise to us. We will serve.

If we qualify, we can rule and reign with him. But it's important to carefully observe. And this is Paul's point here for Timothy.

And this is a study in contrast, and it's important to discern the difference, to observe that contrast. So our passage here in chapter two and chapter three, Paul is pointing out what it is like when a false teacher is holding forth and what the role of the genuine scripture and scriptural truth is. So we saw in chapter two, verses 14 through 18, if you just flip back a page, 14 through 18, this is, remind the people who are listening to you as pastor and teacher of these things, charge them before the Lord to note where there are these who are in opposition, who are teaching falsehood, but be careful about your contact, your approach, your difference.

Don't strive about words to no profit to the ruin of the hearers. You be diligent to present yourself. And you see that turn.

You can observe that someone is misapprehending, misapplying, misunderstanding, misrepresenting scriptural truth. But we are not to grab our lance and hop on our horse and go

down the road trying to tilt with them, to joust, to oppose and unseat them and correct them in a forceful and argumentative way. When we see that there are errors and misrepresentations, we are to be diligent to present ourselves.

Second Timothy 2.15, be diligent to present yourself approved to God. You be a worker who is not ashamed. We are so good at the moat removal task.

I see a speck in your eye. You're not seeing clearly. Let me help you when we may have lumber in our own eye.

So be diligent to present yourself, a worker who does not need to be ashamed. You rightly divide, rightly lay a straight course in the word of truth. Take those bricks of truth and lay them straight one directly on top of another.

It only takes a slight inelegancy. Ask anyone who works on homes, as some of you do, a little bit out of plum, a little bit out of level is only multiplied. If it starts out in your floor and now you're working on the ceiling that's eight feet up, that slight inelegancy is magnified.

Artillerymen understand this because a small difference in the angle of elevation or the angle of deflection on a howitzer by the time the round has traveled several kilometers is enormous. It's hundreds of meters of difference in where you wanted it to go and where it actually impacts. Small differences are multiplied over time and over distance.

And it is important to lay a straight course in the word of truth, rightly divide the word of truth. Be careful with each truth to coordinate it and compare it and align it with the other truths of scripture. This is our daily task as we turn the corner into application.

I can proof text, I can find a scripture that says, be ready always to give an answer. And well, I hear this person talking, I'm going to give them an answer. Well, have I really thought about that passage? It doesn't just say, give an answer to everyone.

I could extract that phrase. It says, give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason for your hope. So I have the opportunity to give an answer, but is this someone who is inquiring because they see a difference in my life and in my expectation and they are receptive? They genuinely want to know what makes my life different? What makes my attitude and my handling of circumstances different? And they say, how is it that you can be happy? Your circumstances would crush me if we changed places.

How are you navigating this difficulty, this setback, this ongoing suffering, this hardship? How do you do it? You have a joy and a peace that are just beyond my understanding. What is going on with you? Be ready to give an answer to that kind of question. But someone who says, how can you vote for that guy? How can you support that political view? That's not a license to unload, to give a rapid fire, let me tell you all the ways that you're wrong because of who you voted for and the policy that you support.

Rightly divide the word of truth. There is a contrast between what is right and what is helpful and what may be right, but by presentation and by bad timing isn't helpful. Timing is everything.

Ask any comedian. You can slaughter a funny story with bad timing, with poor delivery, and you can cause the word of God to be of no effect by bad timing. You're trying to speak the truth when God hasn't plowed the ground.

The Holy Spirit isn't speaking it into the heart of the recipient, and we can't push it. We can't insert it. We can't beat someone hard enough with it to change them.

It's the pearls before swine thing that the Lord talked about. So this contrast between the rightful and proper representation of God that you and I have as our mission. Another common misconception is that we are here to reproduce.

We're a pyramid organization. It's Amway, and our commission is the great commission. You're not successful if you haven't shared the gospel, if you haven't brought somebody to Christ, if you haven't discipled someone, if you haven't been a positive influence in the life of someone else by conscious action.

You're not spiritually healthy, and this is a misunderstanding. It often comes from a wonderful place in the heart and it is especially prevalent among those who are gifted with evangelism or gifted with this nature and presence of the Holy Spirit that sensitizes someone to need and can speak a truth like a word fitly spoken that will make a difference. But anyone who has a spiritual gift can very easily think, well, everybody ought to feel as I feel and do as I do and be gifted as I am gifted and measure the fruit of the Spirit in their life the way it is measured in my life, and to have kind of a lens in which that takes place can be unproductive.

Imagine what it would be like if I, as a pastor and teacher, thought everyone ought to be pastoring and teaching. You need to be studying the Word of God. You need to get some commentaries.

You need to get a Greek and Hebrew textbook and learn those languages, and you need to be getting in there and digging and exegeting and doing word studies. And what's the matter with you? It's so fascinating to me. If I didn't have to earn a living, that's all I would do is spend time excavating and reveling in the beauty of the treasure of the truth of God's Word.

Why don't you have that motivation? Why aren't you bent in that direction the way I am? Well, obviously, not everyone is a pastor or a teacher. But if you have the gift of evangelism in particular, and there are wonderfully gifted people that God has blessed with that gift, and it is wonderful that they are, under the influence and ministry of the Holy Spirit, able to speak that truth in a way that makes it easy for someone to respond, to understand, to place their faith in Jesus Christ, to come to the Father through Him, it's a wonderful thing. But it is equally a mistake for those who are fruitful and productive in the area of evangelism to decide that

everyone has got to be an evangelist, and that's the mission.

That's the great commission. It's not. In the not-too-distant future, we're going to do a little short special.

I do it every five or six years because it is probably the single biggest misunderstanding in the present-day church, is not understanding who we are and why we're here. And while there is no greater privilege than sharing the gospel and seeing someone come to faith and come to the Father through Christ, it's not our primary mission. Look at the exhortations over and over again, such as you find here.

You be diligent. You press, exert every effort to present yourself approved to God. And to say, well, but look at all of the people that I have influenced, or I have led to the Lord, or I have shared the gospel with.

You run the risk. It's not true in every case, but you run the risk of Cain bringing an offering before the Lord that he believes represents his acceptability and his fruitfulness on this earth, and God does not accept it because it isn't what God asked. Cain was angry when his sacrifice was not accepted by God.

Why? There was too much Cain and not enough recognition of the grace of God that is representative of sacrificial love. Abel brought the blood sacrifice where the lamb gives its life in order to make a way of approach to God through the shedding of blood. And as many arguments and rationalizations as we want to make that our life ought to be pleasing in God's sight, our efforts ought to be acceptable in his sight, and this ought to be a wonderful presentation.

And don't you see that I have come before you, and I want to show you what I did, and how hard I worked, and the weeding, and the cultivating, and scratching this food out of the dust of the ground, just like you told my father, Adam, that he would earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. And that's what I've done. And look, here's the fruit.

And the response is similar to what Jesus described, that we've revisited so many times, many will come to me in that day, Lord, Lord, look what I did in your name. And Jesus is going to look and he doesn't say, where are the people that you ministered to? Where are the people that you affected? He says, I never knew you. You and I are not connected as we should be.

I never knew you. You did not present yourself approved to God as an unashamed workman, because you have rightly stacked, rightly assembled, rightly arranged, and rightly handled the word of truth. You got bits and pieces and you built something of your own design.

You didn't follow the instructions. Any of you that have ever gotten one of these flat pack pieces of furniture, and if you don't have those Chinese instructions out in front of you, and if you do not follow every step exactly, you end up with something that's whopper jawed, that the drawers stick, the pieces don't meet, there's gaps, there's inelegancies, it winds up being a

mess. The instructions have to be followed precisely.

I don't look at the pieces and say, oh, I've done this so many times, I know how this goes together. I have done that and I have to disassemble it. When they're made of sawdust and glue, now you've got to get the Elmer's glue because you put a screw or a fastener in the wrong place, sawdust is leaking out.

Collect the sawdust, get the Elmer's, stick it back in, wait for it to dry, start over and follow the instructions to the letter. You have to do it in this sequence. You work on a car and you think you remember the steps of disassembly and you go to put it back together and once you've screwed down the nine screws that hold the intake manifold on and then you realize I forgot to reconnect a hose that's under there or a connector for one of the spark plugs that's hidden under there, now what do you have to do? You don't just go back and plug it in.

You've got to undo what you have done. You've got to undo the nine screws. Don't ask me how I know this.

You've got to undo the nine screws. You've got to remove that thing. You've got to go back in and follow the instructions to the letter.

Be diligent to present yourself approved unto God. And what is the area? Is it be diligent to present yourself a workman in the expression of love, in the accomplishment of tasks, in the exercise of your gift? Where is it that we are to be diligent and to present ourselves approved? It is the understanding and the application of the word of God. This is the foundation.

Everything else is built on that. The church and everyone in it represent the pillar and ground of the truth. So, Sean profane and idle babblings, they increase to ungodliness.

Instead of eusebeia, it is asebeia, that alpha privative we've seen over and over again in Greek. It isn't eu, which is good. It is a, which is missing.

These profane, what does profane mean? It means it's sourced on the earth. There is the divine and there is the profane. Profanity is earthly language in its root meaning.

Profane and idle, it is to no purpose. God can't use it because it isn't enabled and empowered by the spirit. It isn't a true representation of God's word and it is the arm of flesh that will fail us.

Cursed is the man who trusts in man, human tradition, human views. There is nothing more important than a right understanding and right reflection and right application of the word of God. There's nothing more important.

Life doesn't end there with hearing good teaching or assenting and affirming proper understanding of truth. It doesn't end there but you can't get anywhere if you don't start there. It has to be a reflection of divine truth or there is no power in it and it is going to be wood, hay

and stumble regardless of how good your intentions are.

If Cain had been a complete rascal, he would have blown off the sacrifice, right? He knew there was a God. He knew it was important to please God but he had his own ideas about how to do that. He brought the sacrifice.

But he didn't pay attention to the instructions. He had a better idea. So we saw this contrast between the diligent workmen and the profane and idle babblers.

Their message will spread like cancer. It's going to be popular because it's easier. It appeals to something in our fallen nature.

It hooks into us and it in some cases is sort of the hair shirt or self-flagellation. It's the hard thing. It feels awkward.

It feels uncomfortable. So well that must be God's will because it's hard and these people that climb the Scala Sancta and you know crawl a hundred and some odd steps up to a Catholic holy place. They get on their knees and by the time they get to the top in many cases their knees are bloody and their hands are blistered and they're tired and worn out and they feel like God will be pleased because look how hard I worked to get up here and it's a human idea of what pleases God.

This is a gift-giving season and you know what it's like to get the fruitcake when you hate fruitcake but someone who doesn't know you draws your name and a secret Santa or whatever and you end up with something that absolutely doesn't fit your expectation. It isn't something you need. You're already thinking how can I re-gift this.

I'll save it a year and I'll give it to somebody who might appreciate it. If I don't open it, it'll look like I bought it and it's new. But wonderful gift-giving is when you know the recipient and you are going to meet a desire or an appreciation.

I've been needing one of these. It was so thoughtful of you. You knew that.

You found this. Well think about the Lord God in heaven. He has told us what it is that pleases Him.

If you bring this, I'm going to love it. This is acceptable in my sight. You have been studious.

You've put in effort to present yourself as the gift. Be diligent to present yourself approved. Romans 12, 1 and 2. How many times have we quoted it? I beseech you therefore brethren, if you have any appreciation for the mercies of God, present yourself a living sacrifice.

Don't be a salad. Don't be a vegetable. Don't think you know what pleases God and here's some candied fruit that is preserved.

You could put it in a pyramid and let archaeologists dig it up and it will look just like it does

today. Be diligent to present yourself. This is the contrast.

False teachers, those who listen to false teachers, those who are seduced, swayed, deflected, distracted, are not considering what God requires. Shun profane and idle babblings. That was 1 Timothy.

We saw this. 1 Timothy 1, 3 through 20. I urged you to remain in Ephesus and charge the people not to teach other doctrines or to give heed to fables and endless genealogies which cause disputes rather than godly edification in the faith.

We can look at the response. If there is dispute rather than godly edification, there's two causes for that. Either we are speaking truth to someone who is not receptive and they are argumentative.

They want to dispute. They want to push back. They want to get into a conflagration.

Or we are not presenting the truth to someone who is looking for it and we are following the path of the false teachers. Paul says in our passage back in chapter 2 of 2 Timothy, do not engage in strife that is grievous and ruinous to the hearers. So if strife occurs, either we need to stop talking because it's an unreceptive audience, an unreceptive person, or we need to check and be sure that we ourselves are actually representing truth.

There's nothing more frustrating. And you all know this. All of us have been hungry for truth, have gone to a church, gone to a teacher, bought a book, gone somewhere to get teaching and been frustrated that that's not it.

We are like a newborn infant. Even a newborn knows the difference between its mother's milk and something else. And the baby will reject something that isn't part of its instinctive craving and instinctive need.

And we are the same. As we are trying to grow in grace and knowledge, if we get something that is a rock, a snake, or a scorpion, instead of the bread we're asking for, we know it. All three of those produce pain, not comfort and satisfaction.

It's a famous thing that parents are walking barefoot through the house and step on a Lego brick. That hurts. That's like the rock.

A snake, that's a representation of evil. The things bite. A scorpion, scorpions are known for their sting.

It's painful to be seeking something edifying, something building up, and be met with something that is the opposite. So those are the reasons. If there is argumentation, instead of saying, what's the matter with that person? How come they don't see what I see? It makes so much sense to me.

It matches my experience and my desires and my view of the world and all the rest of it. What's

the matter with you? No. If there is disagreement, if there is contention, if there is pushback, we need to stop and check ourselves.

Either I don't have a hold of the truth and I need to go back to the well of living water and find it for myself. Or if I am speaking truth and I'm getting pushback, I need to be quiet because I am creating strife and contention. And the Word of God says, don't do that.

When you're speaking truth to someone who is seeking, you're not going to get contention. You may get questions. You may get a discussion where someone says, you know, I've always understood that differently.

Can you elaborate? Can you show me that in the scriptures? But you can immediately detect when someone is receptive, they may have a wildly different view, but they're interested in what you have to say. They want to improve their own understanding if it needs it. And they are willing to improve our understanding if we need it.

But there is a mutual desire to draw closer to Christ and closer to the Father. And in so doing, we draw closer to each other. You sense it immediately.

This is a soul that loves God and loves knowing about Him and finding out more about the glory and the grace and the strength that are in Christ Jesus. And if that is not the case, I need to check myself. Be diligent to present myself.

Present myself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. What I do, I do as unto the Lord and not unto men. Not trying to dazzle them with what I've learned.

Not trying to change their path because I think they're on the wrong road. It's not my job. I have my hands full keeping myself on the narrow road, heading for the straight gate.

So, we saw this in 1 Timothy. You can put this in the margin next to our passage. 1 Timothy 1, 3-20.

Again, in 1 Timothy 4, 6-16. If you instruct the brethren in these things, we are belaboring this because there is no more central truth than this. This is as important as understanding the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross of redemption and reconciliation and propitiation.

His work is wasted if we cannot turn the corner into application to be who God wants us to be through the grace that is in Christ Jesus. His work on the cross becomes of no effect if it does not transform us by the renewing of our minds. It was work on His part that we've not accepted.

We've got a different idea. We're going to go our own way. It's tragic.

So, Paul tells Timothy in the first letter, 4, 6. If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ. Notice he doesn't say, if you instruct the brethren in these things, they are going to grow and respond, and they're going to come together, and they're

going to have great love fellowship feasts, and they're going to go out and evangelize the neighborhood, and they're going to turn the world upside down for Christ. If you're a good minister, you'll see all of these people changing.

What did he say? Remember, by extension, all of us, if we are faithful in the exercise of our gift, we will be good ministers of Jesus Christ. We will be good representatives. The measure is, are you properly and beautifully representing the Lord Jesus? You will be nourished in the words of faith.

Isn't it so interesting? If you instruct the brethren, Timothy, you will be a good minister. You will be nourished in the words of faith. You will be nourished in the good doctrine, which you have carefully followed.

If you do what you're supposed to do, you will be built up. You will be acceptable. That's the measure.

My life is meaningless. I'm not having an effect on others. We do what we're supposed to do, and the fruit is in us.

So important to understand. We are the measure. Be diligent to present yourself.

I beseech you by the mercies of God, present yourself a living sacrifice. If you instruct the brethren, you will be a good minister. If you fulfill your function, your work on your own heart, which is the only one where we have the choice, where we can make the real change, you will be a good minister, a good representative.

You will be nourished in the words of faith and the good doctrine, which you have carefully followed. Reject profane and old wives' fables. Don't let someone sell you a different version of Christian faith, of Christian accomplishment, some other expectation at the judgment seat.

It won't work. Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll pick up in 2 Timothy 3.15 and see what else Paul has to say to Timothy on this subject.