

2Timothy 25-01-12a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It is the 12th of January, 2025, and we are starting a new chapter this morning, sort of officially.

This is 2 Timothy chapter four, which begins, I charge you therefore. A lot of different ways you can take a charge, both metaphorically and literally, but this can also mean to testify, but here it does in fact mean to assign a mission, to point out a purpose, and it's going to be greatly emphasized by Paul to Timothy. We're going to look not only at Timothy's side of this commission, but also the expected response on those who are going to be at the other end of this pastoral ministry.

So we'll be departing from here to go to two other primary passages. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, we are so grateful as we review the preceding year and look forward to the coming one, as with our understanding from your word, we see your character, your love, and your grace expressed in things past, and it gives us confidence in your unchanging character and your manifest love for us through the Lord Jesus Christ that you will continue to guide us, to bless us, to challenge us, and to prepare us for service and function now and in the kingdom of your Son, followed by your own eternal kingdom, we pray that this morning as we look at your word that the Holy Spirit will minister these truths to our heart in a way that is transformational, that changes us, that illuminates places where we can repent to chart a different and better course in those things that we have yet to overcome in our nature or in the influences of the world and the oppression of our spiritual enemy.

We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified. We ask it in his name. Amen.

If you think about where we have been in second Timothy, especially the most recent chapter, chapter three has a great opening line. Know this in the last days, perilous times will come. And from the exhortations in that chapter, we've seen that the seeds have already been sown and the sprouts have already appeared of these problems.

He doesn't say, Timothy, I know you've got a wonderful time there in Ephesus. You've got a fantastic group of growing believers. They're cheerful.

They love each other. They're motivated. Everything is, is great.

There are already perilous times, but as the days progress, this isn't the dream that so many have had that we will build a better world. We will leave it better for our children than we found it ourselves. Mankind is growing upward.

We're getting better and better. I was musing about this with my daughter, who is 20 odd years younger than I am. And with all of our technology, with all of our scientific advancements, medical technologies and treatments, the seeming advances that we make in, in human understanding

and our efforts to manipulate the world around us for good.

As you view the overall state of society, it does not seem to be getting better. And this is depressing to those who thought that we could sort of manufacture the peaceable kingdom for ourselves. I will only give you one example.

This is one that comes to my mind because I am something of a firearms enthusiast. I was born into it. My father was a Marine and an expert rifleman and pistol shot.

I grew up knowing how to use firearms out here where they are often needed. If your pets or livestock are threatened by predators, you need to have a means of deterring them or neutralizing them. The same with copperheads and cottonmouth water moccasins and so on.

There are hazards and the simplest and kindest way to, to address those is to dispatch them expertly with a well-placed shot. But if you look at just this aspect, there are many others, probably better measures, but if you statistically plot and you can get the numbers off of Google and do this yourself, plot the firearms per capita in the United States of America in earlier years, in past a century or two, that would be an estimate. But everyone had a musket, everyone had a flintlock, everyone had a percussion rifle, percussion cap rifle up to around the time of the civil war, when we began to get cartridge ammunition and eventually moving from rim fire to center fire and we have had a proliferation.

It reminds me of so many other things. People rarely throw a Bible away and yet there are hundreds of thousands of them newly printed every year. So there is an increase in the total number of Bibles every single week.

Similarly with pianos, many more are manufactured than are let go to the landfill, same is true with firearms. There had never been more personal weapons on the planet than there are right now. And that number will go up in the coming days and weeks, far outstripping the population growth, we have always had a fair number of weapons per capita, but it isn't the number of weapons per person that determines the level of crime.

Pistols lay in their cases, rifles sit in their cases. They are by and large, almost 99.95% of the time, not in use. Even among enthusiasts and people that go to the range, but you look at society and what is the rate of firearm based crime? It is on a steep incline.

It is going up and up and up. Vehicular homicides are going up. Knife crimes are going up.

Bludgeoning someone with a heavy object is going up. Crime in general is going up and you can't lay it at the foot of we have too many guns. Let's collect a bunch of them.

Let's outlaw some of them. The problem is that as we have tried to improve society, not only with technology, but also with education, we will teach better thinking. We will try to change traditional Judeo-Christian values and make them better.

We will improve on the 10 commandments. We'll take them out of the schools and the courtrooms and we'll teach a superior ethic that is more inclusive and less troublesome to those who want to chart a different course and go a different way and embrace different priorities and goals and values. Let's be broad.

Let's be tolerant. Let's be inclusive. Let's be diverse.

Let's let everyone do their own thing. There are merits and the Bible teaches toleration. There are merits and the Bible teaches acceptance of diversity.

The Jews had a hard time accepting the diversity of the Christian faith when the gospel went to the Gentiles. However, in and of itself, diversity is not a virtue. In and of itself, inclusiveness is not a virtue.

But it has been embraced as such by human thinking that isn't scripturally grounded. As a result, human nature is less and less channeled into productive directions. It is less and less held in check by the threat of capital punishment or of imprisonment or of other penalties.

Children are less and less made aware that bad decisions have consequences. We used to artificially create this in the home with corporal punishment. You will get a paddling.

You will lose privileges. You will go to your room. And we artificially created consequences for bad behavior to teach this principle.

It's as old as the first few people on the planet. What did God say to Cain? If you do well, will you not be accepted? If not, sin lies crouching at the door and it has the desire to master you. If you do well, you will be accepted.

If you don't do well, sin will result. So our goal in life should be to do well. That is the charge here in Timothy.

It has been the charge in first Timothy and in Titus and now in second Timothy. Prominently so you find this in all scripture, which is profitable for doctrine and reproof and correction and instruction in righteousness. As we have just seen in verse 16 of chapter three.

Scripture teaches us what is right and what is wrong. Deferring to any other philosophy, concept, persuasion, notion, ethical approach results in greater sin. There is only one power on the planet that can suppress, contain, and put on the margins sin.

Keep it outside the home, keep it outside the marriage, keep it outside the personal thought life. And that is the word of God. The word of God is powerful.

It is powerful in life for living. It is the living word for living people. Nothing else has power over

sin, not good intentions, not better habits, not support groups, not medications, not any other humanly devised method of controlling sin.

Only God can break the power of sin. Remember the old hymn? He breaks the power of canceled sin. He sets the prisoner free.

That's the word of God. That is the power of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit. And in this age, we have both in infinite supply.

Why then is society declining? Because the proportion of believers who are living a biblical life is shrinking. It doesn't matter how many guns or knives, it doesn't matter how many cars, it doesn't matter how many blunt objects, human nature will find a way to express its evil roots, given any opportunity, if not for the word of God and the spirit of God, that is the only thing that holds sin at bay and in check. That is why Paul in chapter three has pointed out the perilous times that are coming, because as with the faithful in Israel, when the proportion dwindles, national judgment followed, and the judgment was a blessing.

Think about this. In 721 BC, God takes out the 10 northern tribes via the Assyrians. Why? Why are they judged? Why are they expelled from the land, taken into captivity, scattered, and never to reappear? The notion is the 10 lost tribes.

We don't know where they went. Why is that? Read the first 39 chapters of Isaiah for a detailed account of the sin, the evil, the rampant expressions of fallen nature that characterized the people of Israel prior to their judgment. In the same way that God sent the flood to cleanse the earth because the imagination of men's hearts was only evil all the day, the judgment of the flood was a blessing to the planet and a blessing to those who survived.

The judgment of the northern kingdom in 721 was a blessing to Israel because it eliminated the vast majority of hardened, hopeless, desperate, sin of the high hand, criminally behaving people that made up the nation. In the same way, unaffected, eventually by that example, the southern kingdom of Judah is going to go out beginning in 605 and then in 597 and then in 586 BC. God sent two warning waves of discipline from Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians before finally destroying the temple and hauling the people of Judah into captivity.

You think of Daniel and Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah and Ezekiel who were scooped up in that judgment, the nobility, the brightest and the faithful in the land. They were still caught up in that judgment. Why? People did not respond to the preached, pathetically communicated word of God.

God told them what he expected of them. What does the Lord require of you, oh man, but to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God, not with your ideas of what is right and wrong, with God. If God is going this direction, we need to go that direction.

It's pretty simple. If you don't, you're not with him anymore. Humility requires setting aside our ideas in favor of God's ideas.

There is no other way to walk with God. Humbly is the only way. Do justice, love mercy.

Do justice is our treatment of others. This is summed up in the golden rule. It's summed up in the second greatest command, love your neighbor.

Love mercy is internal. This is a quality of our heart. We love the fact that God is merciful to us and we desire to be like that forgiven servant and be merciful to those around us.

Mercy is a quality of the one loving. You remember this? We've reviewed it many times in recent months. The merit of faith is in the object.

The merit of love is in the subject. I have to become someone who is capable of love and love has limits. Love has conditions.

Love has levels. I do not love my enemy the way I love my wife or my husband or my child. There is an inner circle in the Christian brotherhood, the Christian family of reciprocity.

This is why we have 65 love one another or other one another commands in the new Testament over five dozen times. These are things we do with two and for one another. Be ye kind one to another tender hearted forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

That exhortation does not apply to those who are not yet forgiven, who are not yet able to reciprocate. There is a different kind of love. Scripture teaches this and it guards us.

It protects us. It makes visible the plan and purpose of God. It makes visible the standard of God.

It demonstrates the need for cleansing, for forgiveness, for empowerment and enablement by God's grace, God's word and God's spirit. It demonstrates the need to the extent that believers don't understand that and compromise those truths. The light is be farmed.

The path is not clear. And this is the reason Paul says in the last days, chapter three, verse one, second Timothy, perilous times will come for men will be instead of being Christlike instead of being doctrinally sound, correct, rebuked and instructed, men will love themselves. What does it mean to love ourselves? I like my way.

I like my approach. I like my expectation. I like my prediction of how this is going to turn out.

This will be good. So I'm going to be like Paul Anka or Frank Sinatra and I'll do it my way. Men will be lovers of themselves and we've been through this in detail, but there is a hard and simple choice.

We can either love God. We can love others at whatever level, whether it is one another, whether

it is love your neighbor, whether it is live at peace with those who are outside. That kind of love is simply preserving peace.

It doesn't partake of the qualities of neighbor love. Neighbor love does not partake of the full qualities of one another love and enemy love at the outermost sphere has its own qualities, its own conditions, its own rules. Pray for those who spitefully use you.

It doesn't say if your neighbor asks you for something, give him that and more for enemies. Enemies, we do good and we pray. Do good to those who hate you.

Pray for those who spitefully use you. That is not the same as the five dozen commands for one another's. It is not in the sphere of neighbor love and it is not in the sphere of simply living peaceably with those who are outside.

This is a special case and it has conditions. This is in the word of God. How many believers understand that love is not just sort of a broad fuzzy attitude of positivity toward others? The word of God is very specific and we've seen it perilous times when people are all of these things in verses two through five having a form of godliness but denying its power.

What is the power of godliness? Where is the power of godliness? How does the power of God godliness come into the life of a believer? Does it come by prayer? Many people would tell you, oh Lord, I just need some power here. I need the strength. That is not where the power of God comes into the life of believers.

You think, well, wait a minute, ask and it shall be given. Yes, but there are parameters on those requests. There are qualifications before those requests will be honored.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. So what's the point of asking if he's asking me? He's not listening. All scripture needs to bear witness on any given topic, not just the parts we like.

Ask what you will and it will be done for you. I can excerpt that from something Jesus said in Red Ink in the Gospels. Ask what you will, it will be done for you.

If I don't understand the word of God, if I am not instructed and corrected and rebuked, if I don't embrace the doctrinal teaching of the word of God, I will be frustrated. And many who have become frustrated because they did not bother to learn the word of God, leave the word of God, leave the family of God, leave the church of God, leave the faith of Christ because, well, it's not working. I rubbed the lamp and the genie didn't come out.

I was ready for wealth and riches and all of the things that I thought would make for a happy life. And I did this Christianity thing and it just didn't work for me. So I left.

Perilous times, form of godliness denying its power from such people turn away. Really? I thought

Christianity was embracing and accepting and loving and overlooking and merciful. And oh, well, that's OK.

Let me pat you on the shoulder. Let me bring you in and give you a cup of hot tea. Those who reject the power of godliness, who have a fake godliness, who have their own idea of what it is to be a Christian, are to be separated from.

This is a hard truth. How many Christians do you know that have identified those who are perpetrating a sham Christianity, a false Christianity based on human traditions and not the scriptures? How many Christians do you know that have turned away from such? Nobody wants to turn away. What if they're in your family, for heaven's sake? What if they are near in hand? What if they're a friend of long standing? You've known them since you were children.

But they have a form of godliness. They have a notion of what is righteous, what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad, what is fair and what is foul. And they are persuaded that is their practice, that is their conversation, that is their behavior.

That's how they live their life. And it disregards and tramples the truth of scripture. What are you as a believer endeavoring to be faithful and to be obedient? What are you to do when you encounter people who are faking Christianity, who have a personal notion of Christianity that doesn't match the scriptures? From such turn away.

Notice there are no conditions here. Turn away unless they're really nice or unless you've known them a long time or unless it will hurt their feelings or it's going to cause you a heartache. There is no condition on this.

Read the chapter. Read the book. Is there a condition on separating from those who are faithless? This is the apples in the barrel situation.

If you put a good apple next to a bad apple, the bad apple doesn't turn good. The rot will spread from the bad one to the good one. It doesn't work the other way.

You can't transfer personal righteousness to others by close contact. Bad company corrupts good morals. It befogs us.

It turns us about. We can't think clearly. We can't see clearly.

We can't make good personal decisions. And first thing you know, we have gone down a bad road. Any number of illustrations of this.

When we did Kings and Prophets, remember, we were just looking at this where God came to a prophet and he wanted to send a message to King Ahab that he was doing the wrong thing. So the prophet was told by the Lord, go to another prophet and say, strike me. Well, the other prophet didn't want to do it.

This word for strike means inflict a wound. Inflict a visible wound, not just, you know, punch me on the arm, slap me in the face. This is inflict a wound that requires bandages.

And the other prophet said, I'm not going to do that. The first guy said, look, this is from the Lord. Strike me.

And he refused. Well, God killed the disobedient prophet. So now the messaged prophet goes to the next guy in the school and says, strike me.

And so the guy struck him. He needed that wound so that he could be on the battlefield with a bandage, encounter the king and deliver God's message. Personal ideas of what's best and what is right have to be subordinate and submissive to the word and the will of God.

There's no point in being a believer if you can't and don't do it right. Why bother? You're going to be on the discipline side, not on the blessing side. You are going to cause problems to the very ones you are trying to bless.

This is why Timothy is going to hurt some people's feelings in the church at Ephesus, because he is going to follow Paul's charge here in chapter four, verse one. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. There is judgment coming.

This is no nice to do, wouldn't it be great if you could manage idea. There is going to be judgment for those who do not follow the charge. We think we're doing good and we're not.

We think we are benefiting others and we're not. And we will be judged. It doesn't benefit anyone to be disobedient, to think we've got a better idea than God.

He will judge the living and the dead by his appearing at or by, you can take it either way, and his kingdom. What do you need to do? Love the brethren, accept the outcasts, lift up the oppressed, better society, go door to door and see if you can get people to come to your church in Ephesus. Put up some banners, print some tracts.

What is it that is going to be at issue for Timothy with the function of his spiritual gift at the coming of the Lord Jesus? Preach the word. He doesn't say preach tradition. He doesn't say preach inclusiveness or gladness and hugs and support groups.

Preach the word. Otherwise, people will have a form of godliness that has no power. It deceives them and deceives others.

Our witness is detrimental if we do not live by the word. You will prevent the forward progress of the plan of God through disobedience. But wait, I'm not supposed to strike people.

I'm not supposed to take my son and put him on an altar at the top of the mountain and plunge

the sacrificial knife into him. That's not right. I can give scripture that it's not right for Abraham to take Isaac to the top of the mountain.

But if you know God and you know his word and you know his promises, Abraham was able to take Isaac to the altar. Why? He knew the promise of God in Isaac shall your seed be called. You're going to have descendants.

We talked about this last time. That promise is bankable. That promise enables Abraham to do what normal mortal people could seldom, if ever, do.

Same thing here. Preach the word. Be ready in season, out of season.

What does this entail? First of all, we see a difference here as we enter into chapter four. In chapter three, there is opposition, there is disobedience, there is faithlessness and perversity that is growing. It's present and it's increasing.

And in the latter days, it's going to become increasingly perilous. So what is Timothy to do? Follow the doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith and longsuffering, love and perseverance. You see this in verse 10.

Because you are abiding in the truth, you are carefully following. This will carry you through hardships, persecutions, afflictions, such as those that happened to Paul in verse 11. Out of them all, the Lord delivered me.

All who desire to live godly. Remember, form of godliness with no power. If you want genuine godliness, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

What kind of persecution? Is somebody going to come and take us to a dank prison cell at sword point as they did the apostle Paul? What is our persecution? It can be rejection and vilification by those who know us. Who think that we are merciless and hard-hearted and unsympathetic. How can we be that way? Even unbelievers have a kinder heart.

Persecution is rejection and opposition by those who disagree. It can be social, it can be political, it can be emotional. It can be relational.

You can be persecuted. This is the cause for depression for a lot of people because of misunderstanding and condemnation by those in their immediate periphery. What carries us through that? Read the context.

If you carefully follow doctrine, manner of life, purpose. Is my purpose to gain the approval of the people in my periphery? Or is my purpose to stand when Christ comes and judges the living and the dead at His appearing? Is it going to be worth it to be condemned at the judgment by the Lord Jesus and suffer the penalties for that through the entire eternal future because I wanted somebody to think well of me? Is it worth it? Why does Paul invoke the appearing of Jesus Christ

and the judgment of the living and the dead to follow? We need perspective. Momentary light afflictions.

Momentary rejections. In many ways you think about parents who disciplined us when we were children back in the days when parents did so. Most of us came from a generation where parents were willing to correct their children, to create penalties and consequences for bad behavior in small things so that when life happens as an adult you understand cause and effect and that self-control, self-discipline, doing what is right even when it isn't personally beneficial is in the long run best.

A child doesn't understand that. But if a child trusts their parents, respects their parents, understands that their parents are doing this as unto the Lord and that they are endeavoring to be good parents by biblical standards of good parents, foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child but the rod of correction will drive it far from him. Use a rod on my child? That's off-putting.

We need perspective. We need divine perspective. In the short term, what does Paul say in the New Testament? In the short term, no discipline seems pleasant.

But whom the Lord loves, he chastens, and he scourges every son whom he receives. Does God have sons he's not going to receive? Are there those who do not have the privilege of entering into the throne room by the new and living way? Yes. Why? They don't meet the conditions.

They aren't interested enough. They want to come into the throne room dirty, with a filled and leaking diaper, instead of bodies having been washed with pure water, hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. All of that is in the context.

Read Hebrews chapter 10. We approach cleansed, following God's conditions, His procedure for qualification to claim the of His presence and His ear when we pray. So we're going to see something about that in our second session.

But I charge you before God. Notice the word therefore. Therefore is the content of chapter 3. You have been abiding.

You are enabled and empowered. You know how godliness is made possible for inherently ungodly people. We don't have godliness in our nature.

We can't summon it up by force of will. It is the word of God and the Spirit of God that create the righteousness of God and give us the power to follow it. And without those two things, we can lose the influence of the Holy Spirit, not His presence, but His influence.

If we're more interested in justifying our sins than confessing them, if we are more interested in vindicating ourselves than in vindicating the word of God and the righteous standards of God, I want to be accepted. I want people to think well of me instead of, I know the Lord Jesus is coming and at His appearing and at the inception of His kingdom, I want to be approved. Be diligent to

show yourself approved unto God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed.

Why? You rightly divide the word of truth. You understand it. You absorb it.

Dedicate yourself to implementing it, living by it. It is the light on my path and when it shines over here, that's the way I'm walking. If it shines over here, that's the way I'm walking.

It is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119.11 Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. The only power to overcome sin and sinful misconceptions and sinful self-deceptions.

The heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Jeremiah 17.9 119.11 of Psalms. I hide your word in my heart so that I don't sin.

That's the power of godliness. Not a form of godliness that denies the power. Where is the preached word? Where is the rebuke and the correction and the hardship in modern preaching about inclusivity and big tent and let's overlook and don't make an issue of God's righteous standards.

Don't make an issue of acknowledging, recognizing, confessing sin and purging sin out of the camp. We're going to see what is in and what is outside the camp in our second session. Well, this is why the charge in chapter 4 verse 1 of 2nd Timothy is so intense.

This is not just for Timothy. This is his particular function, his particular role in the body of Christ to preach. But all of us are sermons.

Every single one of us are a testimony and a witness and a charge to those around us. Are we going to be those who have a form of godliness denying the power and faithful believers, obedient believers will have to turn away, separate, break fellowship. Sorry, see you in the eternal future after the judgment.

Maybe we're going to be separated by a great distance because I can't do what you're doing. I can't be what you are being because the word of God calls me with a charge and a charge to keep. I have and this is the charge.

Be faithful, be ready in season, out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and teaching. This goes hand in hand with 316. Scripture is profitable.

Doctrine, rebuke, correction, instruction. And this is the preacher's job to preach the word. And in preaching the word, there is going to be, whether it's a fit occasion or not, convincing, rebuking, exhorting with long suffering and teaching.

There are very important responsibilities on the receiving side of this preaching ministry that we're going to see in our second session when we come back from the break.

