

Titus 24-07-14a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services here at Grace and Truth Bible Church, here being wherever you are. We are one of the more widely scattered church fellowships that there is, and I think that's something that God has provided for us so that we can enjoy fellowship and our mutual enthusiasm for the Word of God and the truth that is in it, that defines us, that motivates and enables and empowers us. And it is a privilege on these occasions where we get together to be blessed by the gifts that God has distributed in our midst.

And we will be continuing this morning our study, our new study in the book of Titus. We're picking up this morning again in chapter one. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, and we'll begin.

Father, what a privilege it is for us to come before your throne to represent ourselves in the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we receive these great opportunities and potentials and blessings. We thank you for him. We thank you for his faithful witness to the truth, representing and manifesting your love to us.

And the relationship that we enjoy through him with you is by far the most valuable and wonderful blessing we could imagine. We thank you for our eternal life. We thank you for the cleansing from sin, the distance that is placed between us and our past, our failures, our fallenness, and the true possession of eternal life that we enjoy.

We thank you for this passage of Scripture that is before us and the truth that it communicates to us. And we pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to understand it and see its application in our circumstances so that we can effectively represent the Lord Jesus as his body on this earth, that we can be those who reflect your glory and others who see it will be drawn to you by that light and through our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name.

Amen. So again, of the three pastoral epistles, you figure this is the instruction manual for what should be represented, what should be taught, what should be emphasized in churches. It is a distillation of truths that we find throughout Scripture, the New Testament Scriptures in particular, beginning with the Lord Jesus and extending through the apostolic witness that we find throughout the 27 books, but nowhere more pertinent and more clear than in these letters written to pastors about how to move a congregation forward in its cultural environment.

First Timothy, we saw the exhortations and the explanations and the emphasis that was placed for those living in Ephesus. Now we have Titus, who Paul has left behind in the island of Crete with a somewhat different cultural environment. We covered that in our introduction a week ago.

So Paul, a bond servant, we talked about the kinds of servant that are used as illustrations and as metaphors and as examples in the Scriptures. I had a really good question last time. I did not go into any depth about the kind of Old Testament slaves and servants that are found in the Bible, the people that were taken by conquest and the rules and regulations for their treatment, their continuing enslavement or their freedom, depending on circumstances.

And one of the more interesting examples of that is the pierced ear slave. And you have Scripture pertaining to that. I will mention that briefly just because we were talking about servants and that is an example.

But it is an example of being set free voluntarily or not. And so when you go back, if you want to turn back to Deuteronomy chapter 15, there are some conceptions and some misconceptions about this situation. The chapter begins looking at Hebrew slaves, those who are your brothers, so to speak.

So you have the jubilee year mentioned at the end of every seven years. You grant a release. This is the form of the release.

Creditors have lent anything and so on. And then in verse seven, talking about these opportunities of binding and loosing, if you will, whether it's financial debt or whatever else, Deuteronomy 15, seven, if there is among you a poor man of your brethren. And it's so interesting to think about our understanding of the circles of love, where we have the one and others who are our brothers and sisters in Christ, our fathers and mothers, our sons and daughters, our spiritual family.

There is a special set of obligations, of policies, of doctrines that apply, patterns of sound words, of wholesome words that apply to those who are in that inner circle that aren't applicable outside. They are reserved for those that stand in a particular relationship together. And that is foreshadowed, it is anticipated in the rules and regulations in the law of Moses for Israelites dealing with each other.

And it's different than those who are outside. So it's no small thing when it says, if there is among you a poor man of your brethren, the stock of Israel descended from the tribes. And we're going to be seeing some things about genealogies here shortly.

Poor man of your brethren within any of the gates in your land, which the Lord, your God is giving you. And remember Deuteronomy is given before they have taken the land. This is not the day of Joshua.

This is Moses and they're in the wilderness and the law is being set down by Moses prior to the entrance into the land. So it is looking ahead. The land your Lord, the Lord, your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother.

This is charity for brethren. You shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. Notice it says lend and not give.

This is a temporary embarrassment, a setback, a hardship that comes. Maybe there's a bereavement, maybe there's a business loss, maybe there is a calamity or disaster. And so you provide with an open hand to get someone through a difficult time.

The expectation is that person also having family integrity will endeavor to restore what is lent so that you owe no man anything, but this is lend not give. Lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart saying the seventh year, the year of release is at hand and your eye is evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing.

He cries out to the Lord against you and it becomes sin among you. In other words, I'm going to lend and he'll owe me, but this year or next year is the jubilee and the debt is going to be forgiven. He won't have time to repay me, so I don't want to give him something because I won't get it back.

That is an evil thought that you're looking for restitution and if that expectation is not forthcoming, you're not going to lend. This is an opportunity for faith and if the person does not restore within sufficient time, if they avail themselves of the law of jubilee, there's nothing that said that you had to refuse payment on a loan, but those who were in a hardship the year of jubilee would release them from that debt in terms of the legality, but the honorable thing would be to repay it anyway. But then it becomes a matter of neighbor love, brotherly love.

Are you going to restore what was lent to you because it's the right thing to do? You shall surely give, verse 10, give to him and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him because for this thing, the Lord your God will bless you in all your works and in all in which you put your hand. It's an opportunity for faith rather than relying on material restitution to trust the Lord. And of course this is the dominant factor in our love and our charity, our self-sacrifice, whatever form it may take is let the Lord provide.

Let the Lord in heaven look upon us with favor and his favor far outweighs any material restitution someone could obtain. The poor will never cease from the land. Remember Jesus saying, the poor you have with you always, me you don't always have.

It's scripture. The poor will never cease from your land. Therefore I command you saying you shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy in your land.

And this of course can be your brother. It can also be your neighbor. And there are different levels of charity, different kinds of expectation depending on what circle you find them in.

Now we come to verse 12 and this gets back to our study of servants of slaves. If your

brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman is very specific. He goes beyond just saying it's a brother.

This is a Hebrew. This is somebody who is descended from the 12 tribes, 13 tribes actually. If your brother, a Hebrew man or Hebrew woman is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year, you shall let him go free from you.

Notice how it is biblical to use the masculine pronoun to represent a man or a woman. You can cite this verse when people try to chastise you for using the wrong pronoun. This can be a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman.

You shall let him go free from you after six years. And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty handed. You see the theme running through this section of Deuteronomy is where are you looking for your security, your material security? Are you depending on legal contracts and restitution and repayment on interest, on obligation between people? Or are you looking to the Lord? Let him go free in the seventh year.

And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty handed. You shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor and from your wine press. From what the Lord has blessed you with, you shall give to him.

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you. Therefore, I command you this thing today. And if it happens that he says to you, I will not go away from you because he loves you and your house, since he prospers with you, then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his ear to the door and he shall be your servant forever.

Also your female servant, you shall do likewise. It shall not seem hard to you when you send him away free from you, for he has been worth a double hired servant in serving you six years. Then the Lord your God will bless you in all that you do." Notice the promise of God is the security, not the legalities, the formalities, the horizontal obligations that might have been incurred.

So this is a regulation dealing with slavery between brothers. Turn back to Exodus chapter 21. As long as we're on this subject, there is a parallel passage.

Exodus chapter 21. These are the judgments which you shall set before the people. If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years.

In the seventh, he shall go out free and pay nothing. You remember the exhortation in Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 2. You remember this is the second repetition of the law. This is the first instance.

If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself. If he comes in married, then his

wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife and she has born him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her masters and he shall go out by himself.

Interestingly, especially in the light of the parallel in Deuteronomy, there is the legal reservation. If the master has provided a family, the family still belongs to the master. So if he gives him a wife and she bears children, the wife and children remain with the master.

I would bet money that there's not a church in the United States of America that is preaching on this passage this morning besides us. It is so ingrained and embedded and impressed on everyone, slavery intrinsically evil. And you come to passages like this and you say, well, this can't be Bible.

This can't be true because it goes against my moral sensibilities. Slavery is not intrinsically evil. God doesn't say, well, prostitution bad.

So I'm going to give you regulations for prostitutes. Prostitution is forbidden. He doesn't say, well, homosexuality evil, but I'm just going to regulate homosexuality because we can't do without it.

We can't purge it out. If something is evil, God forbids it. God declares it an abomination.

There's a stoning penalty for it and it is not tolerated. This is not only tolerated, it is regulated. And there are protections in the law for both slaves and masters.

And there are policies that are in place by the Lord God in heaven. And no one, as I mentioned last time, you don't find the apostles saying, hi there, I'm Paul, God's prostitute. I'm God's thief.

I'm God's murderer. Things that are evil are not used metaphorically or otherwise as a good thing in scripture. But Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ and an apostle by the decree of God, Paul can call himself a slave.

He is in fact a slave to God because slavery is not intrinsically evil. It can certainly be an arena where a lot of evil is perpetrated, but so is marriage. So is a family.

You talk about spouse abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse within families, incest and so on. God condemns incest. He doesn't condemn families and God condemns maltreatment of anyone.

He doesn't condemn slavery. I'm not sticking my hand up and saying, let's bring it back and practice it. But there is practical slavery today.

There are people who are enslaved in their job and are at the mercy of their employer. And because they can't afford to lose their job, they can't get another job. If they do lose

it, they are put to all kinds of extraordinary hardship, burdensome effort and labor.

And it is effectively slavery. There is enslavement around the world. When you get into tribal and feudal societies, when you get into places around the world, it is effectively a slavery.

And there can be tremendous abuse within it. But there can also be wonderful provision and protection and security within slavery relationships. And this is what the word of God demands of those who are masters, Old Testament and new.

Slaves obey your masters. Masters, be kind to your slaves. This is an order from God in the New Testament, as well as in the Old.

This is one of those passages, verse three of Exodus 21. If the slave comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself. If he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him.

If he is married, when he becomes a slave, then that woman belongs to him and she goes back out with him. If the master provides him a wife and he wants to leave, then he leaves and the wife and any children stay behind. It's a regulation of the word of God.

If his master has given him a wife, she's born him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her masters and he shall go out by himself. But now we're back to the pierced ear. If the servant plainly says, I love my master, I love my wife, I love my children, I will not go out free.

Then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door or to the doorpost and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl and he shall serve him forever. Notice who makes the decision here about freedom or remaining a slave.

This is voluntary slavery and the master doesn't have a choice. If the slave says, I don't want to leave, I want to stay here with my wife and family. I don't have such an oppressive master that I want my freedom at any cost.

I want to stay. I love it here. The master doesn't have an option.

The slave dictates what happens. The slave says, I want to stay. The master is obligated to take him to the judges and say, this individual, you have to register this slave and say, he has voluntarily said, he's going to stay.

And the master is required to take him to the door and pierce his ear. And he stays there for the rest of his life. Another interesting use of the word forever, forever meaning, you know, as long as, as that's pertinent, the master could die, the slave could die, but it is a service forever.

Then you go on to, if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave and you think this is horrifying, this can't be in my Bible. Yes, it is. And this brings us to the emphasis of the

book of Titus.

And it serves as a useful illustration of how important it is to not rely on our own judgment, our own internal moral compass, exclusively for deciding what is right and what is wrong and passing judgment on God's word and God's truth instead of letting his word dictate what our conscience is going to say. And that is the emphasis in all of the pastorals. We saw this last time in verse one here, according to the faith of God's called, God's electoi, God's chosen and the acknowledgement of the truth, which accords with godliness.

God's truth accords with godliness. It's God's truth that defines it, not our ideas of what might be right and what might be wrong. And we can become emotional.

We can become sentimental. We can have cultural conditioning. We can have educational conditioning.

We can have social conditioning and everybody gets together and has an idea of what is right and what is wrong. And they impress it on everyone else. And it's the collective view.

It may or may not be God's view. The Pharisees, the Sanhedrin, the scribes, Pharisees, chief priests, elders, even the zealots and other individuals, the Sadducees, all had a collective idea of what was righteousness in the days of the Lord Jesus and in the days of the apostles. And they had gotten together and agreed.

And even those that were divided by party lines and by priorities and by how should we be related to the Romans had common agreement on what was right and who was blessed and who was favored by God. There was widespread agreement. And Jesus came and upset that table and turned over those baskets that were, in large cases, driven by prosperity, by recognition, by being esteemed and being held in awe and honor by the population.

And it was just wrong. And when Jesus started pointing out God's truth, he became wildly unpopular with the powers that were at the time. This is the emphasis.

This is why we get together for fellowship is to learn the truth. And many of us have recognized this in various ways and various forms for many years. And there has been in recent years a sort of repentance from the earlier days of churches that stressed isagogics and categories and exegesis.

People listen to strong Bible doctrine emphasis from pastors and teachers like Bob Thieme and Glenn Carnegie and the Cunninghams and others that are around. And people in some cases have been made to feel ashamed or to look back and say, oh, I was wrong in that. That is not the case.

None of us has the whole picture balanced and complete all the time. We learn and we grow. And we should appreciate those who in earlier times, in earlier phases of our life, emphasized the word of God.

It's a self-correcting error. If you do get unbalanced, you throw in too much vocabulary, you over systematize it, you inadvertently create a personality cult or whatever it might be. If you're in the word of God, this is why we are where we are today.

And maybe we've outgrown some of these earlier emphases or earlier impressions or earlier priorities, but the word of God grew us out and beyond. And those people were teaching the word of God and whatever else accompanied it, the word of God has matured us. The word of God has taught us and developed us and built in our souls a structure.

And we should look back with gratitude and with thankfulness on those who have stressed the word. All of us err and fall short again and again. Nobody gets it right all the time, but you can't go far wrong if you are in the word of God.

This is why we're a Bible church and not a denominational church. This is why the word of God is our creed and our doctrinal statement. Everything that's in our list of beliefs, I think that page may still be up.

It's basically just scriptures that are central to understanding basic core truths. And that is the emphasis. It is not how do we treat the world? How can we achieve social justice? How can we make a better environment? How can we love people into the kingdom or love them into a relationship with God? Loving someone into relationship with God is found exactly nowhere in the Bible.

You can search from the index to the maps, to the concordance, to the bent and torn cover of your Bible, inside and out. You never find love people into a relationship with God that they are not seeking, that they are not interested in. You're not going to win people with love.

Jesus never said go out when he sent out the 12 and sent out the 70. He didn't say go out and love them into compliance and love them into faith and love them into interest and love them into obedience. Love does not do that.

Love is available. God loves the world and salvation is available. But because God loves the world, God does not save the world.

God has provided propitiation for the sins of the whole world. But that does not save. That is the invitation.

That is God going more than halfway. But God doesn't come all the way. God doesn't just save people against their will.

He doesn't just save people against their will. He doesn't just save people against their will. And we have to understand love in the light of truth.

John 14, 6 doesn't say, I am the way, the truth, and the love. I am the love, the truth, and the life. The things that Jesus came to represent when he's before Pilate, he doesn't say, for this cause came I into the world and for this reason I was born, to bear witness to the love of God.

And what a prime opportunity to do so if that were the case. The emphasis is truth. And we decide based on truth.

We choose in the light of truth. The Holy Spirit convicts the world, not of God's love. And why not? If love is the answer, if all you need is love, if John Lennon is just as right as believers who are postmodern and progressive and think, you know, all you need is love.

Well, John went to heaven when he got shot. Right? If all you need is love, and he's all about love, well, then love is all you need. That's how that song closes.

That is not the biblical witness. Bear witness to the truth. Jesus said, I am the truth.

I am the way to the father. I am the truth. I am the life.

And you're not going to come to the father, but by me. And love doesn't enter into that in any way, shape, or form. When Jesus is talking to his disciples on the night before he's crucified.

That is why in the pastorals, you have an emphasis on caring for your own widows in first Timothy, as we saw in the inner circle who are bound together by both family love and spiritual family love. Families should take care of their own. And in the household of faith, if the family can't do it, the household, the spiritual family should do it.

But it is regulated and it is God's truth. It is not indiscriminate. It's not random.

It isn't unguided. Truth defines our priorities, our values, our goals. And we, you want to talk about some of the earlier teaching that some of us heard.

I remember I had an abbreviation in my notes, M-A-D-J-O-G. It looks like mad jog, like you're out for a very intensive run of some sort, but it was talking about adjustment to the justice of God. God doesn't change himself to meet us and our expectations.

We repent, we learn, and we conform ourselves to the image of the creator. We are conformed to the image of his son. Jesus doesn't change to be like us.

We are to change to be like him. And the only way we can do that is through the truth. Therefore, Paul doesn't get one sentence into this letter without talking about the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgement of the truth that accords with godliness.

Truth drives the train. Truth is the engine. Truth is the power.

As we prepare to go to the break, flip back to John chapter 8. Paul is emphasizing a truth that the Lord Jesus himself emphasized. The Pharisees in 8.13 say to Jesus, you bear witness of yourself. Your witness is not true.

Can you imagine someone standing in the presence of the Son of God, the Lord of glory, Jesus Christ, incarnate, and saying, you're a liar, and these people are believers. These Pharisees are going to see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sitting down in the kingdom, and many coming from the north, east, south, and west, and sitting down with them, and they themselves will be thrust out. They are believers, but they are going to see the millennial kingdom.

These believers tell the Lord of glory, you're a liar. This is one of the more scary passages in the Bible. I would have expected, you know, a giant thunder clap and some incinerated Pharisee ashes floating away on the breeze.

The Pharisees look Jesus in the face and say, you're a liar. Your testimony is not true. Jesus answered and said, even if I bear witness of myself, my witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going.

You do not know where I come from. You do not know where I am going. You don't know the truth.

You judge according to the flesh. I judge no one. Notice Jesus on this trip to the earth, the first advent, the incarnation is not here to judge.

It is his second advent where he will judge. And those who say there is no judgment because Jesus didn't judge when he came the first time, don't understand the second coming. Don't understand the suffering servant in the first instance and the coming king in the second.

When he comes back, he is going to do nothing but judge. He is going to sit on his glorious throne and gather the nations before him. And there will be sheep and there will be goats and there will be eternal fire into which people are sent.

Just because Jesus didn't do it the first time, people who don't understand this don't know the truth. It's the gentle Jesus. He's all love.

And to be like Jesus, we should do nothing but love and just find any old person, any old where and just love on them. And that's being like Jesus. It is ignorance of the truth, galactic, horrific ignorance of truth.

Jesus says, I'm not here to judge. If I do judge, my judgment is true. I'm not alone.

I am with the father who sent me. It's written in your law that the testimony of two men

is true. I am one who bears witness of myself.

The father who sent me bears witness of me. They said, where's your father? Jesus said, you know, neither me nor my father. If you had known me, you would have known my father also.

Knowledge. If you had true knowledge of the father, you would recognize the son. If you heard the truth of the son and recognize it as truth, you would know the father.

Jesus spoke this in the treasury, in the temple. No one laid hands on him. His hour had not yet come.

Jesus said to them, I'm going away. You will seek me. You will die in your sin.

Where I go, you cannot come. Will he kill himself? Because he says, where I go, you cannot come. He said, you are from beneath.

I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world.

Notice what happens when you are of the world. Jesus Christ can be standing right in front of you. You purport to know God and be a believer and be a religious leader at that.

And you can't see Jesus when he is standing in front of you in broad daylight. That's the danger of being of the world, having your perceptions, your judgments conditioned by the world and by those who are in the world and not being of the truth. Therefore, I said to you, you will die in your sins.

Again, these are believers who are going to die in their sins. And when the judgment comes and places and assignments are apportioned for the millennial kingdom, these who were first in their own eyes and in their own day will be last. The poor, the tax collectors, the sinners who came to Jesus and repented and recognized the truth and responded to the truth are going to be first.

And these people who thought they had it all figured out will be last. They will be over the horizon looking at the faint glow coming from the land and the Jerusalem of that day. Who are you? Jesus said, just what I've been saying to you from the beginning.

I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but he who sent me is true. And I speak to the world, those things which I heard from him. Notice what Jesus communicates is spoken.

It is truth that is communicated. It is spoken. It is heard.

It is considered. And then people either respond or react. They did not understand that he spoke to them of the father, religious leaders, scholars of the law, the best and brightest, those with college degrees, graduate degrees, postgraduate degrees in the

word of God don't understand truth about the father.

It's shocking. Verse 31, Jesus said to those Jews who believed him, if you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. Notice he didn't say, if you love one another, if you love the orphans, if you relieve the oppressed and take care of the widows, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

You will know the truth. If you are truly my disciple, you will be characterized first and foremost by truth. That truth includes policy, guidance, enablement, and empowerment for love, but you can't jump to the love and ignore the truth.

You'll do it wrong. You'll mess it up. It's like people who get married for all the wrong reasons.

You jump into a relationship and there's no foundation under it and it doesn't last. You cannot move directly to results without causes, without power from God, without growth, without those things that God brings into our souls by means of the truth. Cannot emphasize this enough.

And Paul cannot emphasize it enough in the pastoral epistles. And there's this constant ringing exhortation, focus on communication of the truth and refute those who are teaching falsehood. And in this day and in this age, we have nothing but falsehood.

It is almost impossible to find accurate biblical truth being taught because the church has been conditioned by the world. We can't afford that. Well, we're going to continue here in John 8 and then get back to Titus chapter 1, but we'll pause here and take our break.