

Titus 24-08-11a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning service here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It's the 11th of August, 2024.

We're going to continue and conclude our study in Paul's letter to Titus this morning. Then we'll be moving on to 2nd Timothy. Just knock out all three pastorals seriatim.

We're in chapter three, and we're going to be picking up at verse eight this morning. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, what a privilege it is to spend this time together, to be encouraged and lifted up, and to realize that even if distance separates us, your Holy Spirit unites us, our common cause, our common faith, our wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus, who even now is seated at your right hand, interceding on our behalf, pleading our cause, representing our justification, our vindication, and our positional status that gives us so much opportunity, so much potential.

We thank you for our challenges. We thank you for the things that test us and stress us and enable us to grow. We are grateful for your grace in measuring those things to us so carefully so that they are beneficial and not destructive in our lives.

We pray that this morning as we look at this portion of your word together, that it will be spiritual manna, that it will enable us and empower us, guide us, and in the capable hands of the Holy Spirit thoroughly equip us for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

This has been such an interesting study to me as complementary to First Timothy, where you have a young man appointed pastor in Ephesus, which is one kind of Greek culture, an urban setting with a veneer of respectability and yet characterized by hypocrisy and vanity and a lot of empty pursuit. Here in Crete, another young pastor has been put in charge, another Greek, in this case fully Greek. He doesn't have a Jewish mother.

And Crete is much more rough and tumble, more of a Wild West setting where this idea of a superficial hypocrisy does not prevail. Cretans are openly gluttonous and deceptive and evil beasts and so on. They really don't hide it.

And we have this sort of dichotomy in our own world. There are those who are superficially righteous and who endeavor to present themselves that way. Others are openly hedonistic and out for themselves and daring others to challenge them in their open flouting of convention, tradition, and more importantly, morality and ethics.

And because of the abuse of freedom, they're often very difficult to deal with. And so Titus has a different kind of challenge than Timothy faces in Ephesus, but the solution is the same. And I find it so interesting and applicable for us that regardless of

circumstance, in terms of the situation in society, in culture, in nationality, in location, the solution is the same, and it is the Word of God.

Preach the Word in season, out of season. We've seen this, for example, in 1 Timothy. We're going to see it again in 2 Timothy.

2 Timothy chapter 4 summarizes the theme of all three of these books. And we'll be seeing this in a few weeks. But just turn back a page from Titus to the end of 2 Timothy and look at chapter 4, because we have seen that it's not only the situation.

What kind of society have we got? What kind of politics have we got? What kind of challenges and circumstances do we have in terms of the world around us? But also, what kind of people? Where are we situated relationship wise and fellow believer wise? Are we a woman? Are we married? Are we a man? Are we single? Are we a slave? Are we a master? Are we an elder? Whatever personal situation we find ourselves in, which is the internal, the personal, as well as the external and the societal, political, social, cultural, whatever the situation, the answer is the same. The answer is the same. And this is like duct tape.

It's a universal fix-it. You can fix almost anything if you've got duct tape, and lacking that, and in other situations, baling wire. I can fix almost anything with a combination of those two items.

And that's what the Word of God is for us. Think of your three top concerns. Think of your three most pressing challenges or opportunities.

They can be positive. Think of exciting things and upcoming things, the birth of a child, an impending visit, a fortuitous happening of some kind. Whatever we face, whether it is personal or whether it is external, the answer is the same.

Look at 2 Timothy 4, first few verses. I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead. This is just as pertinent when you look at people that have passed away.

Study the Israelites in the Old Testament. Study the Israelites in captivity. Study the Israelites in the post captivity times.

Study the New Testament ethos and era and milieu in which Jesus and later the disciples and apostles operated. Living and the dead are going to be judged at His appearing and His kingdom. This is the terminus ad quem, as they say in Latin.

It's the end. It's the finish line. It's the goal line.

It's home plate. It's the buzzer at the end of the game. We engage in our effort.

We pursue our goals. We implement our values. We speak.

We act. Everything we do, we're breathing air, what we're doing this morning, what we're going to do this afternoon, all of it is driven by what's going to happen at His appearing and the inception of His kingdom. That should always be uppermost in our mind.

The most practical time for it is when we are in the grip of impending emotional impetus. Our feelings are getting the better of us, whether it's excitement and hilarity, ecstasies, whether it is depression, worry, and anxiety, whether it is anger, impatience, frustration, whether it is foreboding and anticipation of a dire future nationally, personally, whatever it may be, stop and think. If we can just take a beat and say, the Lord Jesus appearing and the inception of His kingdom is coming soon.

How does this situation look in the light of that fact? I charge you, thinking of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is going to judge at His appearing and kingdom, preach the word, be ready in season, be ready out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort with all patience, with all forbearance, put up with the opposition, put up with the negative feedback, put up with the pushback, put up with the unjust criticism, the maligning, the backbiting, the judging, the dismissive and unreceptive attitude that people may have, long-suffering and teaching. Preach the word with teaching. Preaching is exhortation.

Preaching is encouragement. Preaching is emphasizing the application side. Teaching, we learn stuff.

Preaching, this is what we ought to do with it. That's the left leg and the right leg of presenting the word of God as a pastor is both to explain it and make it clear and then turn the corner into application from our observation and interpretation, right? So think of a challenge, think of a circumstance, think of a situation that is a part of your personal experience right now. I've got some concern.

I've got a big opportunity. I'm not sure how I'm going to fulfill it. I'm extremely happy about something coming up.

I'm extremely concerned about something coming up. Here's a relationship that isn't what I wish it was. Think about that, hold that in your thoughts and look at these verses.

The answer to whatever that is, internal or external, personal or out in the world, is the word of God. People say, you're just a bibliolater, you think it's like a magical book and you can just chant some verses and you're, we know better than that. That is a false and very unkind caricature.

This is like people saying, oh, you Bible church people, you just sit, soak and sour. You're all intake and no application. Sorry, no.

If all we did was teaching, if all we did was academic pursuit of understanding and never thought about application, that could be true. I am sure that that pertains some places,

but you know, in our long experience together, some of us, we're pushing 30 years together in fellowship as a church. We always move into the preaching side, the application side, preach the word.

If all we were doing is learning, there would be no room for rebuking or exhorting, right? Do you rebuke somebody because they didn't grasp the concept? Do you just accuse them of inability? Not at all. Exhortation is, we can do this, let's do it and let's do it together. Let's do it united.

Let's do it in fellowship. This is why in Titus, as we flip the page back to chapter three, you see the exhortation to unity. All of these characteristics we've seen in the first two chapters of elders and what should characterize a fellowship, what their reputation should be in community isn't what they know.

They're not going down to the coffee shop and having a philosophical argument. This is living our lives. This is what we do every day.

We get up, we get ready, and we launch out and embark on whatever that day requires of us, whatever opportunities, whatever tasks, whatever requirements there are. And we can convert those things into capital, into something valuable at the appearing of the Lord Jesus when He judges what we have done with our stewardship of time, resources, and effort. What have we done with what we've got? Any unbeliever can do stuff and it perishes with the using.

We can do those very same things, even to a lesser extent. Think of the Pharisees dropping big bags of money into the temple treasury and think of the widow with the two mites. Who has done something that has eternal value, an eternal reflection of the glory of God and recognition of the worthiness of God to be worshiped and to be blessed and to be pleased with us? We are prone to measure by the world's standard.

Well, how much, how long, how great, how evident is something that we did? Can you imagine how many other days there were where that widow and other widows came and put small donations into the treasury for God's worship because they wanted to honor God with their substance? They wanted to be obedient to the law and to the tithe and so on. Jesus points out one lady on one day with one offering. Think what's going to happen at the judgment.

Every single person that has done anything great or small looking ahead to His appearing and His kingdom is going to be remembered. So, the thrust of these first two letters now that we've looked at, 1 Timothy and Titus, both of them have described people in different areas of Christian service and Christian fellowship. Some are men who are elders, others are wives or widows who are young or old.

Some have children, some don't. Some can wash the feet of the saints, others can't.

Everybody has an equal encouragement and exhortation to look ahead to the evaluation, to be ready, to be patient, to consider that everything counts.

We're not like unbelievers. We can't say, well, if there's no memory of it and no recognition of it, it's like it never happened. Every minute we invest, every hour we spend, every thing that we do as unto the Lord and not unto men is recorded.

It is in the books that will be opened when men are judged according to their works. Gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, and stubble. We have the power given to us by God to turn everything we do into gold and silver and precious stones.

What is the common property between those three? Have you ever thought about that? What's common to gold, silver, and precious stones? Gold is one color, silver is another. Precious stones can be all different kinds of colors. What's the one thing that they all have in common? None of them are dull.

They are all shiny, and they are reflectors of light. Gold, silver, and precious stones represents that which reflects the glory of God in a beautiful way, in an attractive way, in a valuable way. That which we do, if we do it with a great attitude, if we do it and it manifests and evidences the fruit of the Spirit, it counts.

It's valuable. Folding laundry, mowing a lawn, cleaning a house, sitting down and evaluating what comes across the media in the world and in the country, how we process that information, our response to the news or opinion, most of its opinion these days. It's very hard to find news.

You get a lot of opinion from all sides. It's really hard to find news, and sometimes you have to go to the most unlikely sources to find news. With the exception of things pertaining to Israel, one of the most objective sources of world news that you can find is Al Jazeera.

You will find more balanced coverage of what's going on in the world. You want to know what's going on in Turkey? You want to keep track of the president over there and where Satan's throne is? Al Jazeera, sometimes you can go to mainstream media, if you can get them off of their hobby horses and look at a storm that has come through or a situation in another country. They have some good extended reporting where they will go and track charitable efforts in other countries, and there are good things to be found.

But you have to make an effort instead of sitting down and vegging in front of just one channel. Even if you do that, if you just say, I don't want to be disturbed. I don't really need to know these other things.

I just want to hear somebody who shares my viewpoint, fine. But remember this. Our time spent on the intake of whatever's coming across the TV or the flat screen of our tablet or our phone, whatever we're reading, whatever we're listening to, we are being

evaluated on what we are doing, how we are doing it, why we are doing it, and what our response to it is.

You can think about issues or you can let someone just pipe pre-digested opinions into your soul. Which one is biblical? Allowing somebody on the outside to tell us what to think is not biblical. The foundation for our thinking is the Word of God.

This is why pastors are required not only to teach, not only to present the truth of what is in the Word, but to rebuke and to exhort and to preach about that truth to motivate all of us and to remind all of us how important it is to use the minas, the talents that are entrusted to us, whatever their quantity, in the Master's service. So even when you're watching the news, even when you're listening to somebody talk politics, even when you're listening to a political speech, it's one thing to say, I like this person's policies, or I dislike this person's track record, or I don't like this person's personality, and you hear an awful lot of personal criticism ad hominem against the person, even about things they can't change. Somebody's old, somebody's bald, somebody has a cackle for a laugh, somebody ties their ties too long.

You hear any number of things. I'm going to criticize this guy's or that guy's military service, this person or that person's personal qualities of any kind. And now think about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, His appearing and His kingdom.

Is that God-glorifying? Is that edifying? Is it constructive? Does it further me in my spiritual life to badmouth somebody because of some characteristic? I was thinking this morning about the animus and the either. Everyone is really deeply invested. I say everyone.

So many people are deeply invested in their political choices and in their political perspectives and in their opinions about various people at or near the top of the ticket. None of us have met these people. I haven't met either one of the Republican candidates.

I haven't met either one of the probable Democratic candidates. I haven't met governors and senators and others. Everything I know about them has been told to me by somebody.

Some people love this individual and other people hate them, hate the very thought of them. The very name is like an epithet. How did they arrive at these highly polarized positions? They were told things by others.

It's all third-hand and fourth-hand information. So much depends on who you listen to and what your confirmation bias is. Remember the conscience seared with a hot iron? Is our conscience qualified to sort through? Can we fairly listen to both sides and find the truth when both sides of the messaging are so polarized they prevaricate, they deceive,

they leave important things out, they exaggerate things and blow things up, take quotes out of context and accuse somebody of heinous characteristics? What is the message of these two books that we have now looked at? If you look at our passage this morning in Titus chapter 3 verse 8, this is a faithful saying and these things I want you to affirm constantly.

What is a faithful saying? Do you remember that in Timothy we saw that there are five of these faithful sayings that are given in these pastoral epistles? To be a faithful saying, it means that it is reliable. It's not just a formula. It's not a little jingle.

It means something. The first of these was in 1 Timothy 1.15. If you've forgotten them, you may have written them down months ago when we were in the first chapter of Timothy. But we saw these when we saw the first one.

We're going to briefly review them now that we're looking at the last one. So if you go back to 1 Timothy 1.15, Paul says, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. Everybody is a sinner.

The world is full of sinners. There is nobody that can't be faulted some way, somehow. But notice what Paul says.

The faithful saying is that Christ Jesus came into the world to deliver sinners. Do you want to focus on the sin and the sinner or do you want to focus on the deliverance and the deliverer? Any time negative bombast is being shoveled in our direction about somebody, the people shoveling it are just as guilty as the person they are defaming and reviling and criticizing. Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.

We are not here to be stone throwers. There's nothing wrong with having an opinion. There is nothing wrong with having reservations and disappointments and deciding that someone is really all wet when it comes to their approach or their policies.

I saw a fair criticism the other day. I read things that I disagree with because there's always a nugget somewhere that's useful and profitable. In one of these sources that I read, often with dismay and disappointment, there was a fair point made.

I'm anxious to try to be balanced myself. Here's a good point made from a generally bad source. People who look at a candidate, especially those on the Democrat side or the left-hand side, and immediately start flinging around the words socialist and socialism.

Do you know what socialism is? Have you ever read Das Kapital? Do you know what it says? We surveyed it in my college education. But if you're going to call someone a socialist, are you calling them a socialist because you heard somebody else call them a socialist? That's been bandied around in your circles and in people who share your point of view. Why would you call someone a socialist if you don't actually know what a

socialist is? You say, well, socialism, that means the government supports everybody.

Sorry, no. Read Das Kapital, Karl Marx, or at least get a summary of it and figure out what socialism is and what's wrong with it. I've read it.

I have recently reviewed it because these assertions are being made that people running for public high office are socialists. Well, are they? You can find a lot wrong with their policies, perhaps. You can find a lot wrong with policies on both sides and behaviors and so on.

But if you're going to call someone something, be sure you know what it is. If you're going to call somebody a Calvinist, do you know what Calvinism is? It's a lot more than just tulip. That's a handy summary of a few points.

But Calvinism is deep and wide, as is Reformed theology. And if you want to cast aspersions on Calvinism, you should know what it is. You should read Arthur Pink.

You should read the theologies that have been written by those with that point of view. So caution about rock throwing when we live in glass houses. But that is the first affirmation, that Jesus Christ has come to save sinners.

And Paul says, and when I think about sinners, I immediately think of myself. That's what we should do. If you get aggravated because you think somebody is really a rascal, they're messing up, they're leading us down a bad road, they're promulgating awful policies and procedures, they're advocating for things that are heinous.

Before we get too spun up and too high on our horse, Paul says, you know what's a faithful and worthy saying? Worthy and faithful means it's true and it's helpful for me personally and my spiritual life. Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I'm seeing some sinning going on here.

I'm seeing some advocacy of what I believe to be evil based on the word of God, but I can't change that. That's not my job and it's not my place. I need to look at myself because it is my job and I can change it in my own life.

So to the extent that I see sin and evil in the world, failure, shortcoming, bad practice, bad thinking, bad philosophy, bad approach. Okay, fine. Noted.

I'm aware. I can cast my votes accordingly. I can respond in conversations or respond to developments in the news.

There's nothing wrong with having an opinion, but if I cross the line into judging, maligning, backbiting, tearing someone down, I need to remember the first of the five faithful sayings. Jesus Christ came to deliver us from this stuff and the issue isn't what is the political future? The issue is what is the future when he comes to judge at his

appearing and his kingdom? I can't do anything more than cast a vote for most of this stuff in the world, but I can look at myself and there's all sorts of opportunities for change and a need for change and a need to implement and avail myself of the grace and the power of God. I can actually make a change.

People say, get out the vote. Your vote counts. Votes count in vast tankers full, vast swaths, oceans full of votes make a difference.

My individual vote is neither here nor there. If I get hit by a beer truck before election day, it's not going to change the outcome. But I'll tell you this, if I concentrate on the power of God, the word of God, the exhortation and the preaching of the word as a person and in my circumstances, and I let God renew me in my mind and change me and motivate me and cause me to be something that reflects his glory in my person and in my words and in my actions, that is an eternal change.

It's not just a tiny spit in the ocean in an election. This makes a difference in eternity, where I will be, what I will do, how useful I will be to serve, to glorify, to be a part of God's ongoing future work, to be a blessing and have proximity to the Lord Jesus Christ himself, to walk with him in white, to partake of the hidden manna, to be in those advanced Bible classes, to rule with him, to be a pillar in the temple and have his name written on us, to have the white stone, all of those wonderful overcomer blessings. I can do that right here, right now, where I sit, where I stand, whatever I am doing by way of effort and task management, every single thing I do can be an investment in eternity.

How is it that we don't remember this? How is it we don't implement this in our lives? Well, that's the purpose of these pastoral epistles is to charge pastors with preaching this very truth, these faithful sayings for all of our benefits so that we don't forget who we are and why we're here. What a great opportunity. Now, everything I do, even the suffering that I endure, the pain, the difficulties, the diminishment as we all get older, I can turn that cursing into blessing by God's grace and through God's power.

He is actually the one that does it. He will work all things together for good to those who love him, to those who remember that we are called according to his purpose, not earthly purposes, not political purposes, not social purposes, not keep the house in the yard up in the bank account fed enough to pay my bills purposes. All of those things are worthy and important, but I transform those into eternal value by the way I do them, the way I think about them, the constant reminder that the Lord Jesus is going to judge how I did my job and how I perform those tasks with what attitude and with what motivation was their faith, was their hope, was their love.

We think, oh, you know, that's church language. Those Christian virtues ought to characterize and permeate every single thing we do, both passively and actively watching the news and making the news. This is what it means to preach, to exhort, to encourage, to rebuke where we're sort of unconsciously failing because we're not

thinking, we're not remembering the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom.

We're not trying to build the kingdom now. We are trying to build us now to be useful and ready and fit for service in the kingdom that is going to come. You can't build a kingdom if you personally are completely unskilled and unequipped.

God is building us up. We are edified individually and as a body to be ready for the future kingdom. So you see sin in others.

You see sin in yourself. Jesus Christ is the solution. He came to deliver us.

And the first point of application is me. That's the first faithful saying. We'll pause here and take a break.

When we come back, we're going to review the other four real quick. We're going to finish chapter three of Titus and conclude our study.