

1Tim 23-11-26b

We are now returnified from our break. We have come forth and come back and ready to resume our study here in First Timothy chapter two. The essential thing to remember, the takeaways I'd like to say in corporate meetings is that it is God's opinion that counts.

And this works both ways, both in deciding what we are going to do because God says that it is good and acceptable in his sight and defending ourselves from the dismissive and derogatory views of others who have a different standard and measure us by their standard and find us weighed in the balance and found wanting, if you will. It's God's balance that counts. And we may be dismissed by the world, we may be looked down on, we may be disparaged, we may be attacked, we may be classified as an opponent and receive all kinds of accusations about anything from a lack of empathy to ignorance to don't you know that this side has perpetrated this level of injustice against that side and look at these numbers that we receive.

I hate to take sides in a thing, especially in Bible class, but I will just note that when people are citing how many casualties there have been, and they say these are official numbers from the government of Palestine, who is the government of Palestine? This is who you're trusting that these numbers are accurate? I mean, they don't want to believe that there's tunnels under the hospital without independent verification, but they accept these numbers without question and without investigation. And there's a double standard in terms of what is considered credible or incredible, why? Because the standard of measurement is does it fit my narrative? If something fits my narrative, I lend it credence. If something doesn't fit my narrative, I heap upon it scorn and suspicion and I will shoot the messenger, I'll do anything I can because I am sure that my narrative is right.

And so this is the grid, this is the filter by which everything is going to be measured. I am not trying to be political, I'm trying to say that we are all made of the same dust of the ground. And as soon as we notice others having this sort of obvious lack of objectivity, okay, fine, recognize it, take it into consideration.

But the primary lesson I learned from that is I can do the same thing. I might be doing the same thing. I need to turn around and focus my laser light gaze on myself, examine myself and see if I am in the faith.

And what does it mean to be in the faith? Am I measuring both myself and things around me by God's standard? What is it that is approved by God? What is our, some of us used to hear Bible classes that were introduced with the same verse every time. Study to show yourself approved unto God. Study in its old English sense.

In the modern day, we say be diligent, be careful, be dedicated, pay attention, be committed. Be committed, be diligent to show ourselves approved how? Unto God, a

workman measured by his standard that does not need to be ashamed. I'm not gonna let the world shame me.

The only shame I care about is if I am gonna be ashamed at his coming, if I'm gonna be ashamed at the judgment. There are things that we should do that we be not ashamed at his coming. So essential.

We can rest, we can be at peace with our priorities, with our goals, with our values, with our assessments, with our understandings of things internal and external if we are diligent to present ourselves approved unto God. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. That's what makes it right.

I can't believe you pray for Caesar. I worship Aphrodite and I don't even pray for Caesar. He's a rascal.

He's unpredictable. He assassinated my favorite governor. He has done away with people in his own family.

He's done this, he's done that. He's guilty of this. I know whole families, my neighbors, my good friends that have suffered under oppression of Roman rule.

You want me to pray for that guy? Yes, why? God says it's good and acceptable. God says it, I believe it, that's it. So this mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus, there is something very notable.

There's a widespread movement in what passes itself off as Christianity or what identifies itself as Christianity, I should say more charitably, that we should be Jesus followers. We should do what Jesus did. And he was nonjudgmental.

He welcomed everyone. He loved everyone. He fed everyone.

He healed everyone. This is your pop quiz question for the second session. What is wrong with that view? Do we see in the gospels, Jesus feeding thousands? Do we see him healing large numbers of people? Do we see him partaking of meals with people that were socially unacceptable and looked down upon and labeled as tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners by the religious leadership of the day? Is that true? Yes.

Was Jesus without qualification in those things? Yes or no? No. If you listen to the Jesus follower, Christianity is defined by the Sermon on the Mount types. It's everyone indiscriminately without reservation, mental reservation or purpose of evasion as the old oath says.

But is that true? Do you observe a distinction in those that Jesus healed, in those that Jesus spent time with in fellowship at meals, in those that he fed the 9,000 total that we have a record of him feeding? Was there a qualification? What would you say? When it

says Jesus healed all, what's the rest of that sentence? Jesus healed all who came to him. Could Jesus have gone to the pinnacle of the temple with Satan and said, I'm not gonna cast myself down, but I'll tell you what I will do while I'm here. Father in heaven, I want to pronounce healing on everyone in the nation.

And with a word, all lepers, all issues of blood, all the lame, all the blind, all the deaf, all the mute, all the demon-possessed could say, I don't understand it, I'm suddenly healed. Everyone around me that is afflicted is healed. There is not an affliction or disease anywhere within the borders of Israel.

Did Jesus have the power and the authority to do that? Yes or no? Yes, he did. Did Jesus do that? No, he did not. Whom did he heal? Those who came to him.

There are a few occasions where he will approach someone and say, do you want to be healed? And that provides an opportunity. Evidently, if Jesus walks to the pool of Bethesda, pool of Bethesda, the man trying to struggle to get down into the water doesn't see that Jesus is there as an opportunity, but once he is made aware, he says, absolutely. All I need is some help from someone.

I would love to be healed. If you're the guy, I'll do what you say. And he does.

Arise, take up your bed and walk. But there is some contact with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is some ascent, some approach.

There is some coming to Jesus. Not a big deal about motives. The guy let down through the roof.

Your faith has made you well. Those that Jesus ate meals with, he goes to the house of Simon, the Pharisee. Simon invited him.

Jesus didn't crash that party. He was invited. What were the motives? Who knows? Simon does not treat him as an honored guest, doesn't wash his feet.

This is the episode where the woman washes his feet with her tears and dries them with her hair. And Jesus says, Simon, you didn't do this, but this woman has. And yet you consider her a sinner, and the community considers you righteous, but she has come to me and she appreciates who I am.

You've invited me, and I'm willing to come and eat with you at the invitation. But there's a difference here in attitude. Those who are forgiven a little, because they don't think they're guilty of very much.

Those who are forgiven little, love little. Those who are forgiven much, love much, because they recognize the gift. They recognize the mediatorship between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus.

So there is a condition. The 5,000 came to the wilderness and stayed to hear Jesus teach, stayed overnight, ran themselves out of food, may have brought a snack, but they ate it. They say, oh, people brought food out of their pockets.

Really, after several days? They've already eaten what they had in their pockets. Same with the 4,000. They came and they stayed, and Jesus fed them.

Did Jesus feed the multitude that came out from the city in Samaria, the woman at the well? The whole city came out to meet him. Jesus didn't feed him. There's a whole group of people out there where the herd of swine were grazing and into whom Jesus allows the legion to transfer themselves.

Those people all came out. What did they say? Leave our region. We don't want you around here.

You're spooky. You're scary, and you're spoiling our livelihood. Rejection.

Did Jesus feed those guys? No. Did he heal any of them? No. There is a condition, and people want to gloss over that.

Why? It doesn't fit the narrative. My narrative is I want to go along to get along with the world, and the world says that conditionless charity and conditionless contribution is good. That is not God's standard, and we must be measured by God's standard.

There is a time to help the stranger in the ditch like the good Samaritan does, but you will notice that there were many Jews who would literally rather die than be helped by a Samaritan. The man in the ditch allowed himself to be the recipient of that ministry, allowed himself to be carried on the Samaritan's donkey to the nearest inn, allowed himself to be handled and helped by the Samaritan whom Jews uniformly despise so much that they wouldn't even travel through their country. They would take the long way around to just not even touch or see or share the same ground with a Samaritan, but when the guy's in the ditch and the Samaritan brings help, he accepts it.

Jesus comes to the man at the pool, and the man accepts it. It is so little. Our positive response to God can be so minuscule, and that's all it takes because it is all of grace.

It is all of God. It is God's power. It is God's plan.

It is God's purpose. It is God's desire that all men everywhere be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, and the slightest pretext of positivity, of willingness, of acceptance, of faith is a good enough excuse, and God will pour grace in that direction. If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, God's power, the mustard seed doesn't do anything.

It is the power of God that turns that into a blossoming tree. So then we have already

seen this in verses six and seven, the revelation of this wider and greater gospel that transcends the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus and his disciples communicated to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This is a mystery not previously revealed, and the more you look at that, and the more you see Paul using first-person possessive pronouns according to my gospel, the gospel that was committed to my trust, my stewardship, this is a mystery never before revealed, and I have been commissioned to reveal it.

Not even John and Peter reveal this mystery. It is Paul, and if you wanna talk about Christianity being Pauline, that's not an accusation. That is God's will and desire, and people who don't want it to be of Paul are gonna have to answer to God because this is God's will and desire that all men everywhere be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, and that was never revealed until Paul.

It's incipient, it's predicted, all nations will be blessed. There are vague allusions and anticipations, but the fullness of the revelation is given to Paul, and only to Paul. Peter preaching in Acts 2 and 3, look at what he says.

House of Israel, you people that crucified the Lord Jesus, God has made him Lord and Messiah to you. Turn. He doesn't say the things that Paul says about substitutionary atonement.

He says there is remission of sins. This is the greater sacrifice, but it's still in an Israelite context, and Peter becomes transitional with the vision of the sheet let down. Arise, Peter, kill, and eat.

What God has sanctified, let no man call common, and Peter, like John the Baptist, is gonna be a herald of the change in dispensation, the widening of the message of the gospel, the widening of the target, all men everywhere. So that brings us now to verse eight. I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere.

And notice that this is a resumption of the exhortation at verse one. Why? He's gonna talk about men and women in this section. He is talking to Timothy, the pastor of a church.

So this group is composed of men and women. And this is really something. And we'll see more about this in a moment.

But the condition here is, I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands. Tertullian, one of the early church fathers, if you read his comment on this attitude of prayer, this posture of prayer, said that this depicted the attitude of Jesus on the cross. It's an anticipation of that standing in the presence of God and being acceptable in his sight.

But they prayed standing with their hands outstretched and their palms upward. Significant when you think about the Lord Jesus and where the nail prints are. And when

he intercedes for us, if he were to adopt that Jewish posture of prayer, what would God the Father see when the Lord Jesus intercedes on our behalf? Look at the marks.

Look at what makes these that you have given me acceptable in your sight. It's really a potent symbol. You go to Isaiah chapter one, verse 15.

You remember the first 39 chapters of Isaiah are condemnation and explication of every way that the people of God fall short. And you can't even get past the 15th verse. Isaiah 1, 15 says, when you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you.

Spreading out their hands in prayer. What a scary thought. You come to God, the Lord our God is one Lord.

You're going to pray to him. You stretch out your hands to him. I will hide my eyes from you.

Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Doubly scary. Am I praying to God and he does not hear? There are obstacles to successful prayer.

There are obstacles to God hearing and answering our prayers. And one of them is here in 1, 15 of Isaiah. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you.

Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. I will not see. And I will not hear.

Why? Your hands are full of blood. Your hands are full of blood. You are guilty.

Now, what kind of blood is this? This isn't the blood of sacrificial animals. What would blood represent? A heinous crime against your fellow men. If you live in Israel, your fellow men are your fellow Israelites.

This is harm done to your brothers. This is sin committed against your immediate family, against your kinsmen, according to the flesh in Israel. This is not you've perpetrated too many wars against the Philistines or against the Syrians or against the other foes of whatever the contemporary day is.

Your hands are full of blood. You have criminally harmed your fellow believers, your fellow Israelites. So these hands must be holy hands.

Now, in the Old Testament, you've got a couple of different words for holiness, and they are translated in the Septuagint as different Greek words. Kadosh is the word for holy in the Old Testament, but the word here in our passage in Greek is hosios, H-O-S-I-O-S, hosios. And hosios is never used to translate kadosh.

This is not holy in the sense of sanctified like a priest. This is the kind of holiness that is acceptable. This is acceptable behavior.

Hosios, let me read you something from the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament about this word translated holy. It is not translatable. It is those things which are a part of duty, what is expected.

The Latin word is sanctus, so sanctified, but not so much in the sight of God. It doesn't partake of whether the sanctioning force or the sanctifying force is divine, natural, or customary. Is it divine precept, natural law, ancient custom? That is not what makes this holy.

I'm doing it because it's customary. That's not what makes it holy. I'm doing it because God says I can.

That's not the motivation. Hosios is more than traditional or legal or opportunistic or forced, according to this article. Its content is what is right and good from the standpoint of morality and religion.

It is holy custom. And what this boils down to is when you start finding it used in the Bible, it is used of prayer, even by the Greeks, that prayer should be offered in this mode. But it is used to translate passages such as Psalm 149, one, praise the Lord, sing to the Lord a new song, and his praise in the assembly of the Hosios.

It doesn't mean that they are sanctified and that they've offered the sacrifices and done the purification rituals. It means they are there for the right reasons. They are motivated by love for God and respect for his precepts.

In essence, what this means is you should not be disrespectful or not respectable when you come, either in God's sight or in man's sight. The people who are praying to God should be identifiable as being proper, as being acceptable. It really has more of the idea of proper.

Obviously, if your hands are full of blood, as Isaiah 115, that's not proper to come before God when you have unconfessed sin. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. That's not Hosios.

That is not holy hands. If we have not forgiven others, we ourselves will not be forgiven. If we have not deemed others to be acceptable in our sight, we ourselves will not be accepted.

And this comes with some conditions. But you get the idea here. You can't just come running into God's throne room with a leaky diaper and spew out some requests and expect them to be honored.

These should be proper hands, acceptable hands. So it has the idea of being sacrificial, having an attitude of humility, and yet confidence and boldness based on being in Christ. That's what makes us acceptable.

That's what makes it proper for us to come boldly to the throne of grace for help in time of need. Come to the throne for grace to help in time of need. So that's holy hands.

The men pray everywhere. Everywhere translates three Greek words. It means in every place, *tapas*, in every place.

Now, these places are places of congregation. This is where the *ecclesia*, the assembly is going to be visible. And whether they're being observed from the outside or being observed from the inside, if a man is going to stand up and pray, this is public prayer.

And that's why it talks about holy hands. If you're going into your closet and praying privately, that's a different thing. This is visible and observable prayer, public prayer, prayer in the assembly.

And these hands are lifted up and others see these hands and it should not be a distraction. Somebody shouldn't say, what business does that individual have standing up in this assembly and representing us before the throne of God? And there is anger that this man is somehow authoritative or representative in the group. And when he begins to pray to God, people aren't thinking about coming before the throne of grace and being in God's presence.

They're listening to this man and finding fault, right? The holy hands tie directly to the next phrase here, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. This isn't the man praying. He's not praying in anger.

He's not praying in doubt, although those would not be proper hands, would they? Coming to the God, to the Lord in anger, trying to pray an imprecatory prayer and get somebody clobbered by divine wrath. Where is this *dialogismos*? This is dialogue. This is dispute.

This is argumentation. This man has to be able to stand up and have a reputation and have a lifestyle and have a presentation of his own life that doesn't spark anger and debate and argument on the part of others. This goes to organization in the church.

This is written to Timothy. And Paul says, I desire therefore. Why doesn't it say God desires? Paul has just established his credibility as a preacher, an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

So his message on this score is boots on the ground. I have been in your group. I have seen abuses and unholy hands.

I've seen anger and disputation in the groups. And then somebody is going to stand up and pray. And it's just going to create more division and more strife, more *dialogismos*, more orgy, more wrath and anger.

That is not the purpose of prayer. Prayer should not be divisive. It shouldn't spark anger and disputation.

So are you going to incorporate political opinions into your prayer? Or are you going to pray for those who are in authority without anger, without disputation, either on the part of the prayer or those who are chiming in with a representative prayer? Anger and debate and dispute and disagreement can't be a part of prayer, especially not public prayer. And if it doesn't go in public prayer, how much a part of our private prayer should it be? Shouldn't be there. I desire therefore that men pray everywhere.

Why would Paul say, I desire? Paul often comes back and visits these churches and these are visible prayers. When Paul comes, this is his desire. This is what he wants to see because he is likely to be present.

He spent a lot of time in Ephesus. And he is trying to convey the immediacy of observation. This is visible to man.

This is visible to the apostle. Therefore, how much more visible and open is it to God in heaven? Without wrath and doubting. So the men in an assembly, the men in the group that are in a leadership position, they are an elder, they're a presbuteros, they are a diakonoi, they're a deacon, or they are an episkopos, they are an overseer, translated bishop in the King James.

These are the men who are going to stand and offer representative prayer for the group. And it should neither contain nor spark anger or disputation. Dialogues Mas can also be translated doubt.

Why would it be translated doubt? Well, I'm not sure because there are two ways of looking at this. There are two opinions. There are two viewpoints.

I don't know which one is right. So I have doubt. There is supposed to be the unity of faith and the bond of peace.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of us all, one mediator between God and the one God and man, Christ Jesus, to which he has just alluded. So how important is prayer? Prayer, especially public prayer, is representative of the spiritual health of that group and should reflect a lack of anger and a lack of double-mindedness. Double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

What about a group that is of two different minds, splits into factions, one or more, two or more factions? I guess you have to have two factions to have a split. Division, dissension, subjectivity, eyes on people. I'm right, you're wrong.

My right meter is telling me I'm right. And every time I pointed at you, it just goes to the W and pegs on that. You're wrong, I'm right.

It's unhelpful. Me being right and telling somebody they are wrong doesn't change them. It is only someone who decides to hear, consider and go to God, Lord, am I wrong in this? The humility to change our minds, that's what repentance is, is change of mind.

Change of mind is impossible without humility. Humility says, I could be wrong. Maybe I need to revisit this.

Maybe I need to pray through this. I need to study more. I need to listen to this truth being spoken by those who do so in love, not in anger.

A word fitly spoken, apples of gold, pictures of silver. Greedous words stir up anger. It's the soft answer that turns away wrath.

Anger never convinced anyone. Putting force behind your argument instead of offering that argument for consideration so that someone can change their own mind. It is such a mistake to think that we can change someone else's mind.

And when we think they're wrong and we see that they're wrong and we're sure that they're wrong, if I just shout loud enough, they'll see it too. It is not me or my argument or my voice that has any power. The only dialogue worth having is with believers.

And it is God's truth and God's spirit that has the power. So if I speak the truth in love and let the Holy Spirit work on that individual. And as soon as I started thinking this way, I always stop and I'm gonna do so right here out loud.

When I'm thinking about this other person and I need to speak the truth in love so that the Holy Spirit can use it and maybe there'll be a conviction. And I think, you know what, stop. I need to consider the truth.

I need to cultivate the presence and power and the voice of the Holy Spirit talking to me to get my head right and my heart right. If I can just speak the truth, it's up to God. It is God's will that people be delivered and come to a knowledge of the truth.

God will handle, I need to focus on me, myself, and I. As soon as I start thinking, well, if I do it right, God will fix that person. I need to stop, I need to reverse and concentrate on the only heart I can change. I can have it changed by the power of God.

Only God can change my heart. And only if I have humility and if I consider the truth and cultivate the Holy Spirit's power to use that truth to break up the rocks in my heart. Quit worrying about the other guy.

That leads to anger and dialogue. Go to God, lift up proper hands, respectable hands, hands that nobody can dispute ought to be lifted up because my lifestyle reflects personal choices, personal dedication to God. And when people look at my hands, they say, I can't find any fault with that guy lifting up his hands.

When God looks at us, we're acceptable in his sight through Christ, because when he sees our hands lifted up, he sees the Lord Jesus' hands with those nail prints, with that blood having been shed. That's the right blood to be acceptable in God's sight, not the blood of violence and crime against each other. So there's a lot going on here in this prayer.

First of all, we pray for those in authority, then we lift up prayer and how do we do it? Holy hands, this is men by the way, and he specifically says men. He doesn't say people, this is not the generic hoi polloi, this is men who are to offer representative prayer, lifting up their hands in public without wrath and disputing in like manner also the women adorn themselves in modest apparel. Notice the contrast, the men when they are observed and when they are thought of, notice how apparel and adornment are in view, this is the public perception.

This is what you look like when you're in the group. You can be in your inner chamber dressed in your nightie or your pajamas and pray, doesn't matter where your hands are, doesn't matter what your posture is, it's your spirit that counts. These are externalities, these are visible to outsiders.

And when prayer is offered to God on behalf of a believing assembly, it is to be done by the men. I'm sorry, that's what the scripture says. And you say, well, but can't women speak? Don't they understand? Isn't it that? Do you remember what we just covered in the first part of the chapter? It doesn't have to make sense to me.

I don't have to approve of what God says. It's kind of the other way around. Do I approve of instructions to take your offspring up the hill and lay them on an altar and raise the knife and sacrifice them to God? I do not.

Everybody still has trouble with that picture. That is a difficult passage. I don't care how you look at it, that's a hard truth.

But it's in the inspired scriptures and God did it and it makes sense to him. It was good and acceptable in his sight. He made sure the outcome was beneficial to everyone.

Vindicated Abraham's faith, demonstrated Abraham to be a friend of God, made him the example of all of those who will believe God in the face of arguments that seem to have a lot of traction. What trumps traction? What trumps narrative? What trumps human reason? What is good and acceptable in God's sight? It is good and acceptable in God's sight that men lift up their hands, qualified men, men who neither express nor stir up anger and strife and pray to God. Likewise, the women, when they are observed in public should not be the first thing you think is, well, what a clothes horse she is.

What a runway model she is. Look at the adornments. The first thing, the definitional thing.

Well, when I drive past that church on my way to the golf course and the people are coming out, those ladies have all got pearls and jewelry and hats and expensive dresses and expensive cars and expensively dressed husbands and expensively dressed children. And they're just dripping and reeking of wealth and affluence. That shouldn't be the first thought, the first observation when a group of believers are observed.

What should we be notable for? This doesn't mean you can't put on an earring, that you can't take the power out of your face with some modestly applied makeup, that you can't do up your hair and not look like you just rolled out of bed. That's not what this is talking about. This is talking about public perceptions should be, we should be aware of the effect and the impression that we give the outside world.

Not obsessed, not defined, not driven or motivated by those observations, but aware. There is balance in this. Am I going to distract someone from the truth that God wants all men everywhere to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth by making an issue of myself? Am I gonna be enough of an issue that people are angry or disputational? Am I gonna make an issue of myself with my jewelry and my adornment that people can't listen to what is being said in the assembly? They can't hear the content of the prayer or the content of the Bible class because they're looking at me with my fancy stuff.

The flash of sunlight off of my gold hair clip is distracting someone from the deeper, greater truths. That's a problem. And that's what Paul is addressing here.

He knows the people in Ephesus. There are a lot of rich people in the church. And he says, are you going to put off the poor? Are you going to spark anger on their part? Remember, the woman is the glory of the man.

So when these couples would come to church, who's got the fancy stuff on? Who is displaying affluence and wealth? It's going to be the wives. They don't get to speak in church, so they're gonna speak non-verbally with all of their accouterments. What is that gonna do to the modest and to the poor, to the slaves who come, to those who have very little, who are in Corinth, got elbowed aside at the meal table, and that food could actually do them some good.

They're kind of hungry. And they're being dismissed and not thought of. It's the same spirit here.

It isn't that wearing jewelry is in any way sinful. It is its effect. What is your public prayer's effect? Are you angering people by praying that your football team will win? Probably.

Really? God takes sides in a football game? And that's kind of a hyperbole. Most people generally pray that it will be a good game, that the players will be safe, that it will be enjoyable for all. But is that really God's interest? God cares that a sporting event comes

off with no injuries? That kind of prayer puts off people.

And say, well, these Christians, seriously, you think God cares if your team escapes injury or not? Is that what's important to you, is that your kid comes home without a cast? And it can anger people. So don't offer that kind of prayer. Lift up holy hands in a way that is non-confrontational, non-disputational, that doesn't spark controversy and anger.

We are to live in a way that is invitational, that draws and attracts people to God, not puts them off that we're invoking God to fulfill our earthly wishes. Even if those earthly wishes are thought by man to be good, well, isn't it good that nobody gets hurt? That's not the issue. What is good and acceptable in God's sight? That's what counts.

And deciding how much adornment to wear when you are going to an assembly where there are people of every different economic level, could I unwittingly give offense by wearing the most expensive thing I have, by doing myself up? And when somebody that has come from being a house slave sits next to me or kneels next to me or stands next to me, I have now caused a problem. I've distracted from the truth and distracted from what's important. That's the issue in this section.

And we'll see it fully when we go through it next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, we do thank you for the order and structure that you have created in human society. We thank you that we do experience a great deal of freedom and opportunity.

We certainly are free to gather and study your word and enjoy fellowship and the opportunity to catch up with each other and lift each other up in prayer and express our appreciation for the Lord Jesus and his representation and intercession on our behalf, as well as his overall work of redemption and reconciliation and propitiation. It's such a privilege, and you have created an environment for us in which those things can take place. We are thankful for it.

We do pray for those that are in authority over us, that the result and outcome of all of their activities will be that we can lead a peaceable and quiet life and we can express godliness and reverence each and every day, that our personal behavior, whether it's our public prayer or our public persona, our appearance before each other and others outside the faith and outside the fold will be such that your glory will be reflected, they will see our good works and glorify you as you are seated in your throne in heaven. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.