

1Tim 24-02-21a

Greetings, welcome to Wednesday Night Study at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We are continuing what, for me, has been a really fascinating study in the mystery gospel of Paul. And we have done a six-part study so far detailing what that sevenfold mystery is that God gave Paul to reveal to us.

Tonight, we're gonna answer my favorite question of Bible interpretation. Y'all ought to know the answer to this question. What is the best question you can ask when you're looking at the word of God, you're observing, you're interpreting, what is, it's just two words.

So what? If this is the gospel of Paul and this is what I'm supposed to know, if this is what God gave him to communicate to me and to us, so what? Another way of putting it more elegantly is Francis Schaeffer's famous book title that I've mentioned dozens and dozens of times, *How Should We Then Live?* What difference does it make that we have learned these truths? If the word of God doesn't make a difference, we're doing something wrong. So we're going to launch tonight, we're gonna take point by point the elements of Paul's gospel and in looking at these elements, what difference does it make for you and for me today and tomorrow and in what remains to us of this life until the Lord Jesus returns and we stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an answer for how we invested the talent, the mina that was handed to us in terms of our time and our opportunities, what did we do? Did we take five and make five more? Or did we wrap it in a cloth and shove it in our pocket and give the master grief when he comes back for an account? We wanna be in the first group, not in the second group. And I think looking at the effect and the attacks on these elements of Paul's gospel will help us to see why it is so critically important, not only for us to know these elements, to know the gospel that saves us, that delivers us, but to see the outworking of that knowledge, what it ought to do by way of shaping our opinions, our attitudes, our solution to problems, our conversation, our prayers, and so on.

So with that, let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our study, and then we'll begin. Father, we're grateful for this time of fellowship and of nourishment from the pages of your word. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will give us understanding, impress it on our hearts, help us to see its application.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. If you will remember, this sevenfold mystery began, and in no particular order, they're just listed out.

With the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Paul identifies this as his gospel. In 2 Timothy 2, verse eight, the mystery of godliness, the mystery of eusebia, which is our spiritual life. Eusebia, the best way to translate it is spiritual life.

So Jesus Christ is the seed of David raised from the dead. And in 1 Timothy 3, 16, we had

the mystery of godliness revealed. This is what occasioned our study to begin with in Sunday mornings, 1 Timothy 3. Who, it says God in your Bible, scratch it out.

It says who, it's Greek word, hos, H-O-S. Who was manifest in flesh. You can scratch out the, it's not there.

Manifest in flesh, he is justified in spirit. Seen of Angeloi, messengers. This could be heavenly, could be earthly.

I personally lean toward his disciples as those who are with him from the beginning and are messengers, eyewitnesses of his incarnation. He was preached unto the Gentiles, and this overlaps with another part of the mystery, which is that Jews and Gentiles both are equally a part of this new creation, which is the church. But he's preached unto the ethnoi, the nations, the Gentiles and that's new, always in the past, lost sheep of the house of Israel.

You want to come to God, come to Israel. Now, if you want to come to God, you come to Christ and become a part of his body. Preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, in the cosmos, in civilization, believed on.

And this is irrespective, it's not believed on in Israel, not believed on in Galilee or in Judea, believed on in the world. Once again, the universality of the invitation is stressed and received up into glory, the ascension, which presupposes death, burial and resurrection. So these things are under attack and we're going to take them.

We're only going to do the first two tonight. I'm not going to try to put five pounds in a two pound bag. So we're going to take the first two.

This, if you can believe it, this mystery of the incarnation of Jesus Christ is under attack. It's under attack in many ways. You can talk about those who have, they don't believe that Jesus really came.

He is a legend. He's a myth. He is, was an apparition of some kind or it's the historical Jesus.

And he was blown up into, Bart Ehrman has a book on this theme called How Jesus Became God. And he says, you know, he was just a raggedy Jewish rabbi and never intended to be elevated to divinity. And that book is so bad.

We've done a couple of Bart Ehrman books, but not that one. It's just not even worth the time. But suffice it to say, Bart Ehrman is one of the most popular authors in the country.

He sells millions of books and millions of people are reading How Jesus Became God and coming to the conclusion that the incarnate Christ is a fiction invented by the church. And that's all I'm gonna say on that. But I'm just gonna take one aspect.

There are many avenues of attack on each of these elements of the gospel by which we are saved and which we are called and commanded and exhorted to hold steadfast until the end, did not be moved away from the hope of the gospel, my gospel, Paul's gospel. And it is founded on the incarnate God-man, the mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus. Seed of David speaks to that.

In both of our Timothy passages, he is fully human and he is also divine. He is the second person of the Trinity. So this is important.

And you say, well, I believe that. So what's the big deal? It is a big deal. I'm just gonna give one of these many lines of attack tonight on the issue.

And interestingly, this is, you could title this first session, Jesus, friend of sinners. In his incarnation, how did Jesus act? Because we are now the body of Christ. So if Jesus acted in certain ways and we are to be conformed to the image of his son and we are to live as he lived and act as he acted and represent him on this earth, Jesus is twice specifically called friend of sinners.

So what does that mean? And in what way should we be a friend of sinners? Well, there have been articles written on this and I'm gonna summarize a couple of them to save time. But turn to Luke chapter 15, verse two. Luke chapter 15, verse two.

You know that Jesus is gonna be coming up on the parables of the lost things in this chapter, the lost coin, the lost son and so on. But notice verse one, all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to him to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained saying, this man receives sinners and eats with them.

This is an attack on Jesus for countenancing tax collectors and sinners gathering to him. And so this is held up as an example of unconditional love. Jesus loved everybody.

He would eat with anybody. This has been stretched to weird limits. There is a great article on this by a fellow named Kevin D. Young.

He published it about 10 years ago, March of 2014. But it's really good. And I'm gonna reiterate some of his points because they're exactly my points, but they're already written down.

So this is an article by Kevin D. Young called Jesus, Friend of Sinners, But How? How is Jesus the friend of sinners? And I will tell you, I'm gonna give you a summary of the elements, the points which are biblical in this article with which I fully and completely agree. And you'll say, well, that's real obvious. This article, this point of view, our point of view has come under tremendous attack.

There is a rebuttal article to this one that just savages it and says, this is terrible. So as you listen, see if you think these are terrible points or not. So D. Young says, as precious

as this truth is that Jesus is a friend of sinners, like every other precious truth in the Bible, it needs to be safeguarded against doctrinal error and ethical error, misusing it, misunderstanding it.

This is the attack on the incarnation, one of many. So you take the general truth that Jesus was a friend of sinners and twist it out of all biblical recognition. So Jesus ate with sinners becomes, and I would encourage you if you're taking notes, write these stages down because this happens in any number of areas with any number of biblical truths.

It's like the whisper game, whisper something in somebody's ear down a long line. And what does the last person in the line say? So Jesus ate with sinners, that's the first version. Is that true? Yes.

Zacchaeus, Pharisees invited him over and he ate with them on two or three different occasions. So Jesus ate with sinners. This becomes Jesus loved a good party.

That's the second line. Jesus loved a good party. Which becomes third line, Jesus was more interested in showing love than taking sides.

Jesus was more interested in showing love than taking sides, which behind and underneath that line is Jesus didn't judge. He didn't care if people were sinners or not. He didn't take sides.

Well, prostitutes are out, tax collectors are out or prostitutes. He just didn't take sides. He just loved a good fellowship.

He didn't care who was there. Anybody that comes, cool. So Jesus was more interested in showing love than taking sides, which becomes Jesus always sided with outsiders, religious outsiders, the oppressed.

He always sided with the outcast and the marginalized. Jesus always sided with the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, those who were judged unworthy. Always took their side.

Which becomes, and DeYoung's word, which I don't quite understand is, Jesus would blow bubbles for violations of the Torah. Which I think means Jesus didn't give a hoot in a rain barrel if people were violating Torah. He wasn't about the scripture.

He was about love. The letter of the law kills, the spirit gives life and love. And so love above all.

He was loving his neighbors. Here we have an example of a whole truth being used for a half truth in the service of a lie. DeYoung says, once as a younger man in ministry, I made an offhand comment about how Jesus hung out with drunks.

And you hear this all the time. Jesus hung out with prostitutes. Jesus hung out with

sinners and tax collectors.

Hung out with, with no context. And DeYoung says, I was gently and wisely corrected by an older Christian who had himself overcome alcohol addiction. He challenged me to find anywhere in scripture where Jesus was just hanging out with people in a state of drunkenness.

Words matter. Details matter. Context, context, context matters.

Proof texting is a road to Hades paved with good intentions. The intentions are good. Can't we all just get along? Let's love, we'll be Jesus to the world and they'll be drawn and attracted by our selfless, unconditional love.

No, they won't. No, they won't. As we will see.

So let's take a look at the passages in which Jesus actually was a friend to sinners. And again, I'm indebted to Kevin DeYoung for compiling this list. He leaves out and I leave out as well, the pericope of the woman caught in adultery.

That is a troubled text and it's fraught with dangers of misapplication where we're not gonna address that one. Here are others. Five passages.

Number one, Matthew nine, nine through 13, which is also echoed in Mark two, 13 through 17. If you just get one of these, your Bible will give you the parallels. Luke five, 27 through 32.

Just turn to Matthew nine, nine through 13. Matthew chapter nine. Matthew nine and its parallels in Mark and Luke.

This is the calling of Matthew, the tax collector, Levi, the tax collector, if you will. As Jesus passed on from there, this is Matthew nine, nine. He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office and he said to him, follow me.

So he arose and followed him. Now it happened as Jesus sat at the table in the house. This is Matthew's house.

Matthew has followed the Lord Jesus and has now invited him to dine in his domicile, right? Jesus sat at the table in the house, Matthew's house. Behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? When Jesus heard it, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Now we've been through this in all three of our gospel studies, Matthew, Mark, and Luke and hopefully we recall what is carefully

detailed here.

Jesus didn't walk down the street with his disciples and say, look, here's a tax collector house. Let's knock on the door. It looks like they're having a meal.

Let's go in and fellowship with them. Let's, looks like a party. Let's crash it.

Let's go. How does the Lord Jesus end up at Matthew's house? By invitation. Did Matthew have the option, if you're not a Calvinist, when Jesus said, follow me, to not come? All you have to do is remember the story of the rich young ruler.

Jesus said, sell your stuff and follow me. And the young guy leaves sorrowing. He's not willing to part with his possessions.

Matthew's got probably a thriving tax collecting business. There's no indication that the tax collectors were poor and barely scraping by. One of the benefits of the job is that Romans paid well.

So Matthew leaves his tax collecting booth. I don't know if he grabbed a handful of coins on the way out or not, but when Jesus says, follow me, he goes, leaves it, abandons it. He is no longer a tax collector at that point.

He is now a follower of the Lord Jesus. He is invited and he responds. His friends hear that Jesus is at his house sharing a meal.

What do they do? They come over. They don't have quibbles. They've already heard the Pharisees and others condemning Jesus, but the Pharisees and others also condemn them.

And they say, well, maybe we ought to listen to what this man has to say, this rabbi, this teacher. Let's go and see. Now, have they perpetrated saving faith in the Lord Jesus at this point? Are they converts and disciples? What is it that brings them? Maybe curiosity, but they are seeking, aren't they? Didn't have to come.

They voluntarily leave their families and whatever's going on. And they come over to Levi's house, to Matthew's house. And I want to hear what this man has to say.

Look at this, he is a teacher of the scriptures and yet he doesn't have any scruples about coming over and eating with our fellow tax collector. What is it about this guy? But Jesus didn't randomly pick a tax collector to eat with, did he? There is response and others are drawn by Jesus' willingness to put the past in the past and to honor those who honor him, to fellowship with those who choose to fellowship with him. So is Jesus saying category tax collector is a non-issue for me.

Category prostitute, I don't care if you are a practicing prostitute, let's party. I don't care if you're heaping food on the plates and letting the wine slosh all up and down the area

here. Is that the message Jesus is conveying? Or is it, it doesn't matter what your past is.

It doesn't matter what mistakes you have committed or what lifestyle you have followed in the past. If you are willing to change your mind, if you are willing to come and hear and respond. Now, did Jesus take a list of every one of these tax collectors and sinners that came to Matthew's house and say, all right, well, these guys are all on my good guy list.

Who would he eat with in the future? Jesus eats with another tax collector, you remember his name, Zacchaeus, wee little man, sycamore tree. I'm coming to your house today. What kind of a man is Zacchaeus? So you follow that story.

He is repentant, he is responsive, he is thrilled that Jesus has come to his house. And he doesn't say, look, tax collecting is cool. Jesus doesn't care if I'm a tax collector.

Do you think Jesus cares if you're a cheating, skimming, unfair tax collector? Zacchaeus can tell that Jesus doesn't want that. And he says, if I've defrauded anyone, I'll restore it fourfold. I don't want to be guilty of any fraud, any graft, any unfair treatment of my fellow Israelites.

And if anybody can show me where I made a mistake, I'll give them four X, whatever the difference is. So what this argument overlooks is there is a condition. Jesus didn't throw a dart at the map of the town and say, oh, look, tax collector, let's go eat there.

He's there by invitation. And the scribes and Pharisees grumble about this, and he is accused of associating with sinners and tax collectors. What does Jesus say? Hey, we're all made in the image of God.

God's love is indiscriminate. God loves the entire world. My friend John here is gonna write that down one of these days.

God loves the world, and he's gonna send me to die for it. So what's the beef? Why are you making an issue out of these people's sins? Is that Jesus' response to the observation that he is eating with these tax collectors and known sinners, breakers of the law? Jesus said, I have come to call sinners to change of mind. That's the response to the accusation.

If you think you're righteous and you have no sense of need, you're not gonna respond, you're not going to come. Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites. You're not willing to change.

You're happy with the status quo, but those who are willing to change, it doesn't matter what they are changing from. You can't commit sin so bad that you can't repent and come to Christ and be received and be forgiven and be cleansed and be able to walk in newness of life, to be that new creation, to function in our age as a productive member

of the body of Christ. The past is gone.

Listen to old Aerosmith there. The past is gone and it truly is. You can't change the past, can't remediate the past, but you can change your mind away from dead works and place your faith in God.

Hebrews 6, change your mind away. God removes our sins as far as the East is from the West. We are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Is our sin and failure too much for the blood of Christ? Well, sorry, I've got grace, but I don't have that much grace. I've got power, but I don't have that much power. You just did such an egregious thing.

I saw in a documentary Elizabeth was watching, I saw Alice Cooper, who has become a firm, solid, public Christian. And that guy was as wild as they come in his rock and roll, bite the heads off a chicken's days. He is a solid Christ affirming Christian.

And he'll tell anybody that'll listen. The old, that old life was awful. And I have found peace and I have found joy and I have found meaning in my life in Jesus Christ.

It doesn't matter what the past is. The past is gone. It is the present.

It is change of mind. And Jesus said, I haven't come to eat with these sinners. I've not come to love on these sinners.

I've not come to fellowship and let them know that they're accepted and it's all okay. I've come to call them to change of mind. And guess what happens if they don't change their mind? More about this upcoming.

So that's the first example, Jesus' friend of sinners. Is this unconditional and without limits and without boundaries in your observation? It certainly isn't in mine. Number two, flip a page over to Matthew 11, 16 through 19.

And it has a parallel in Luke seven, but we'll just use Matthew. Matthew 11, 16 through 19. To what shall I liken this generation? They rejected John the Baptist for being too strict and they rejected the son of man for being too loose in a nutshell.

And this is the passage where you get one of the two uses of the phrase friend of sinners. We played the flute and you did not dance, too strict. We mourn to you and you did not lament, too, too loose and free.

John came neither eating or drinking and they said, he has a demon. The son of man came eating and drinking and they say, look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. This is they, this is the Pharisees and the religious leadership.

Now, let's take a look at this accusation. They say, look, Jesus is a glutton and a

winebibber. True or false? Is Jesus a glutton? No.

Is Jesus a winebibber? No. So is he a friend of tax collectors and sinners? Is part of this accusation wrong and suddenly the last half of it is right? Did the Pharisees, are the Pharisees half right? Well, he is a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Is that what Jesus is a friend of? No.

This accusation is completely false. Completely and entirely wrong. Coming off the lips of the hypocritical self-righteous, self-satisfying, self-indulgent Pharisees and scribes and chief priests and elders of the people who are subject to the eightfold woe that Jesus is gonna pronounce on them later.

There's six woes in Luke. There's eight woes in Matthew pronounced on the people saying this. Do you think that they're half right? Well, sure, he's a friend of tax.

No, he's not. Who is Jesus a friend of? He is a friend of those who repent. You don't have to be a tax collector to repent.

You don't have to be a sinner or a prostitute to repent. Jesus is a friend to those who seek him. He is a friend to seekers.

If you believe this, if you say, well, this is true. The Pharisees got it right here. Jesus is a friend of tax collectors.

All right, all tax collectors are off the hook now because Jesus is their friend. All sinners are off the hook because Jesus is their friend. Not true.

Remember the whisper game? One thing becomes another thing, which becomes another thing, which becomes another thing. Did Jesus partake of food at feasts? Yes. Did he drink wine at feasts? Yes.

Does partaking of a bountiful table make Jesus a glutton? No. You're taking a truth and twisting it into a falsehood. Does partaking of wine at a meal make Jesus a wine bibber? Did Jesus come staggering out of one of these feasts and the disciples are helping him down the street to wherever they're lodging? No.

Partaking of wine has been twisted into he's a drunk. Partaking of bountiful food, abundant food, has made him a glutton. And allowing the presence, tolerating and not minding the presence of tax collectors and sinners who came to Matthew's house, who came to Zacchaeus's house, because they were interested and they were looking for redemption.

They were looking for salvation. They were looking for a change and for the true relationship with God that Jesus revealed when all of their religious leaders had failed to do so. They heard something they had not heard before and it attracted them.

Jesus is not a friend of tax collectors and sinners. He is a friend of seekers and those who repent. That's what Jesus is a friend of.

This accusation, look at the source. Can a foul spring bring forth fresh water? No. By their fruits, you will know them.

And nothing they say is true. And it's so easily twisted. Jesus' friend of sinners.

If he's not a glutton and a drunkard, he may not have been a friend of any old tax collector and any old sinner. Context, details, they matter. The third instance, real quickly, Luke 7, verses 36 through 50.

You will have to turn to this, it has no parallel. Luke 7, 36 through 50. And the Luke parallel to the one we just looked at immediately precedes this one.

Luke gives the first one and then he gives the second one. Luke 7, 36. One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him and he went to the Pharisee's house and sat down to eat.

Here comes the woman who is a sinner. She knew Jesus was at the table. She brought the flask of fragrant oil, stood at his feet, weeping, washed his feet with her tears, wiped them with the hair of her head.

She kissed his feet, anointed them with the fragrant oil. The Pharisee who had invited him saw this and spoke to himself saying, if this man were a prophet, he would know what manner of woman it is. She's a sinner.

Jesus answers and says, Simon, I have something to say to you. The Pharisee says, teacher, say it. And you know the rest of this story.

And real quickly, what is the difference here? Jesus is eating at the house of a Pharisee, why? Same reason he was eating at Matthew's house. Same reason he eats at Zacchaeus house. He was invited.

Now, Jesus already has a bad reputation amongst the Pharisees. This Pharisee is willing to invite him and his disciples anyway. And Jesus says, do you want to hear what I have to say? And the man, Simon says, teacher, say it.

He is willing to listen. He is willing to consider. The reason he has brought Jesus under his roof and to his table is to converse.

Think about Nicodemus in John 3. He comes by night, but he says, you've got to be from God or you couldn't do the things you do. And Jesus says, well, you got that right. And then they have this wonderful conversation.

We would not have John 3 16 if it weren't for Nicodemus and Jesus receiving him. He is

seeking, he is willing to listen. And we know that this is going to work itself out and Nicodemus is going to be a convert.

And you have Nicodemus and you have Joseph of Arimathea at the end of the Lord's life intervening on his behalf. And we're going to find that many of those in religious leadership actually came to belief in Christ, but they didn't say so publicly for fear of the consequences. It may be a weak faith, but it's faith.

This is not an indiscriminate, any old Pharisee, is it? And in a weird twist, are the Pharisees guilty of the crimes that Jesus calls out in the eight woes later in Matthew? You wipe the outside of the dish and inside it's corrupt. You whitewash the tomb and inside are dead men's bones. Who are the real sinners? It's the Pharisees.

Which of the Pharisees will Jesus consort with despite their woeful condemned behavior? Those who ask, they're willing to listen. They want to hear what Jesus has to say. And if they're willing to listen, Jesus doesn't say, well, you're a Pharisee and you're a rotten bunch.

I don't consort with Pharisees. I'm going to go find a prostitute, a drunk and a tax collector and go consort with them. Doesn't matter what the pattern of sin is in the past.

Anyone who is willing to come, anyone who is willing to invite, anyone who is willing to approach and hear what Jesus has to say, he never turns them away. He's willing, willing to speak. So that's the pattern.

Jesus, friend of sinners. What has this been twisted into in the modern day? No limits, no boundaries, no borders, no condemnation. Anybody, we'll love on anyone.

We're going to love them into the kingdom. We're going to love them into the faith. Jesus was careful to discern who's seeking.

The people that he fed, the 5,000 that he fed, what was the discriminator there? You say, well, 5,000 people, surely some of them had to just be unrepentant sinners. What was the filter for the 5,000? They stayed and listened to him teach for three days. Three days.

If somebody is still there after three days, what do you think their heart is like? They're seeking, they're receptive, and they're responsive, right? That was not a general distribution to an indiscriminate population, was it? Well, we have more to see about this because it affects our notions of charity, of willingness to go and associate and attempt to be a blessing to someone in our periphery. Do we do this no matter what? Is it unconditional? Or do we need to prayerfully and honestly look for some hope of response, some seeking note, some indication that the love of Christ is producing as it flows through us is producing a response. We can try once, we can try twice.

We're gonna see the passage when we come back. If you approach someone who has ought against you, then maybe they think your faith is silly. You give them a chance.

But if they indicate that they're not interested in reconciliation, they are not interested in repentance and change of mind and being united in the faith, treat them like a heathen and a tax collector. We'll see it in the next session. Let's pause here and take our break.