

1Tim 24-03-03a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 3rd of March 2024.

We're continuing our special study on Paul's gospel of the mystery. I've just found this so fascinating and we're going to enter into an aspect that I think will be a bit of a surprise. I like it when I learn new things.

So let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study and we will begin. Father, it is always a blessing and privilege to spend this time together in Your presence receiving the ministry of Your Holy Spirit as we look into the truth of the Word and seek to improve our understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ so that we can represent Him more fully and more effectively as members of His body. We thank You for the portion of Your Word that we will look at this morning and we ask that You will bless it in terms of our understanding and our ability to see its application, the difference that it makes as we conduct ourselves, make our decisions, implement our priorities and pursue our goals.

We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified and others will see the light of His glory and be drawn to You through our presence and our witness in this world. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

We have been looking at the sevenfold mysteries or mystery, sevenfold mystery or seven mysteries that comprise Paul's unique gospel. When you think about 2 Corinthians 4, 3 and 4, this is one of many references Paul makes to the uniqueness of his gospel. It's easily overlooked because we think when he uses a possessive pronoun he's just talking about the gospel that all the apostles preach, that everyone understands.

But Paul uses personal pronouns on purpose. So in 2 Corinthians 4, 3 and 4, But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. And there are a number of important truths reflected in that passage.

It's one I learned as a child and it has come to my mind often in the course of the years. But the gospel being hid to those who are perishing, to those who are not advancing. We are either progressing and living out salvation or we are regressing and trending toward death.

Who will deliver me from the body of this death? We can be dead to sin and alive to God and so on. And perishing is to miss all of the fruits and benefits of eternal life that God has for us through the Lord Jesus Christ. But in the course of reflecting on 2 Corinthians 4, 3 and 4, there is a phrase there that bears directly on our study.

We've been looking at the first aspect of Paul's gospel, the first mystery truth, which is the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is his incarnation, his embodiment in flesh that makes possible his death, burial and resurrection. All of these are a part of that first mystery.

My gospel, Jesus Christ, the seed of David, having a human ancestry and a physical birth, raised from the dead. 2 Timothy 2.8. This was the very first scripture we looked at in this regard. The mystery of godliness that we've seen in our present study in 1 Timothy 3.16, who was manifest in the flesh or manifest in flesh, justified in spirit or the spirit, seen of angels, messengers, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world and received up into glory.

As a human being, the humanity of Christ ascended and was received and accepted into the Father's presence. We saw 1 Corinthians 15.1-4, Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, buried and raised on the third day according to the scriptures. And Paul says, this is the gospel.

This is my gospel. Colossians 1.25, whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God, which was given to me for you to fulfill the word of God, even the mystery, which has been hidden from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to the saints, to the sanctified ones. So this is the aspect that we've been looking at, which is the incarnation of the Lord Jesus.

And as a part of that, fulfilling His words. Paul emphasizes our identity with Christ, our identity as His body, as His representation. And it is necessary for us to look at the purposes for the incarnation, because we are here to continue to fulfill some of those, but not all of those.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth from John 1. You find that in verses 10 and 14. And the Lord Jesus embodies and reflects the fullness of the Father. We are pale reflections of that.

We can't approach the fullness of that representation that the Lord Jesus accomplished, but we are photos of that. It's one thing to have a visit in person. It's something else to look at a picture.

And we can reflect the glory that the Lord Jesus reflected in a more limited way. But that is a part of our function, is to live our lives in a way that reflects good works so that others will see us and glorify the Father who is in heaven. And the purpose is to be a means by which people can come to the glory of the Father so that the gospel is not hid.

The light of the glorious good news of Christ, who is the image of God, shines not only through the scriptures, but also through the body of Christ as it exists now. So obviously

the Lord Jesus came in the flesh to die for sins. That's not something we do, but we endeavor to reflect that in a more limited way.

The death He died, He died to sin, and the life He lives, He lives to God. And we can do the same. We're not going to bear the sins of the world on the cross, but we can be reflections of those who are cleansed and freed from the power of sin.

And even though the body is dying, our spirit reflects that eternal life that the Lord Jesus gave us. So we then took a look at the commands of the Lord Jesus, because to have His words and keep them reflects genuine love for Him and makes possible the indwelling of Christ and the indwelling of the Father, which is another aspect of the mystery that's coming up. So we've looked at those.

There's a total of about 34. I think I've given you 33 of them. 33 is obey what I command.

If you love me, you will obey what I command, John 14, 15. And 34 is be ready. Jesus said, you also must be ready because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.

This applies both to the second coming for Israel and to the rapture for us. That is Luke chapter 12, verse 40, Luke 12, 40. And if you have my list, which I will post in the First Timothy special section, the sevenfold gospel notes are there in a document form, and I will put this there as well.

So if you need to check references or ensure that it's complete and numbered correctly, it'll be there. But we are looking at those because we are interested in representing the Lord Jesus. We are now His incarnation in many ways, not in all ways.

We don't die for sin. We don't reflect the fullness of deity in bodily form, but we can be reflections of the Lord Jesus' glory, and that is our task. And this is an implication of this mystery.

It was heretofore unrevealed that there would be a people of God who are the embodiment and the presence of God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. That wasn't foreseen in the Old Testament, and it doesn't get reflected in 1 and 2 Peter or 1, 2 and 3 John or in James. It is Paul who reveals to us the truths about being the body of Christ, and a part of that is to have His words and keep them so that as He indwells us, we are a full and effective reflection of the Lord Jesus.

So that's why we reviewed those words, because what is the application of this revelation of the mystery? The mystery of the incarnation of Jesus Christ is going to reflect itself in being the body of Christ, which is reflected both in the third and the seventh aspect of the mystery, that the church, what its composition is, and then number seven, the body of Christ itself. So we have a bit of a chiastic structure in our

seven-fold revelation, because the incarnation of Jesus Christ is point one, and the mystery of the body of Christ, that we would be His body and represent Him and communicate much of what He communicated, is number seven. Having said that, let's think about 2 Corinthians 4, 3 and 4, because this brings up an interesting point, and I benefit greatly from fellowship I have with believers that are near at hand, i.e. in my own household.

We have many fruitful discussions, and think about that verse again. I can't remember if it's in our memory list or not, but mom and I memorized it when I was about four. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of those who believe not, those who are faithless, a pistea, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, here comes the who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

They are faithless already, and as a result of making the choice to be faithless, and this can be an unbeliever who's bound for the lake of fire, or a faithless believer, the light of the glorious gospel of Christ does not shine to those whose minds are blinded because they have chosen to be faithless. Opportunity for faith comes up, reject it, that door closes, and the light no longer shines. The God of this world is going to deceive, and deflect, and distract, and render neutral believers who are faithless, and for whom the light of the glorious gospel of Christ is not shining.

That's why we are taking pains to understand the gospel of the mystery as communicated by the Apostle Paul, uniquely so, because if that light does not shine, his gospel, remember the second word in the verse, or yeah, second word, if our gospel be hid. He doesn't say if the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. Paul says if our gospel is hidden, it is what Paul is communicating, and his gospel is the glorious gospel of Christ.

But the phrase there is the image of God, and we had a discussion about this, and it is very pertinent to the misunderstandings that are going on in the progressive, deconstruct, reconstruct emphasis that is permeating and pervading so much of what passes for Christianity in the modern day. The Christ is the image of God. We have a lot of application in terms of whether or not our efforts to benefit others, to be a blessing, to love others, and to do for others based on scripture, two scriptures are generally adduced.

One of them is the sheep and goats judgment. When I was hungry, you fed me. When I was sick and in prison, you visited me.

When I was naked, you clothed me. When I was thirsty, you gave me a drink. If you do it for the least of these, you've done it for me.

And they don't include the qualifier, the least of my brethren. We talked about this on

Wednesday, that there is a circle of limitation that is important to understand. The one another limitation is pertinent.

And my brethren and one another is a circumscribed group. And it is important not to engage in pearl hurling or distributing what is holy in places where it should not be given. And it's important to understand.

And so the sheep and goats judgment passage is one of those. Another is the idea that God made man in his own image and after his own likeness. Turn back to Genesis chapter 1 verses 26 through 28.

Genesis 1, 26 to 28. You will see that we have, of course, the creation story. And before we get to the detailed account, we have the general account that is more of interest to us because God says, let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.

Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. Then in verse 27, so God created man in his image, in the image of God, he created him, male and female, he created them. God blessed them in verse 28 and said to them, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over the fish, the seabirds, the air, every living thing that moves on the earth.

So people come to this and say, people, human beings are made in the image of God. Is that true? What does this passage say? Who was made in the image and likeness of God specifically? What does the passage say? Adam. And you have to sort of read an implication in to even believe that Eve was made in the image of God.

It doesn't say Eve was made in God's image. You have the prediction, the idea expressed, God says, let us make, then in verse 27, God makes him, and then God has a retrospective that we'll see in Genesis chapter five. But look carefully at the verse.

Now I'm not trying to find a little thread to pick and change what the verse means, but it is important to pay attention to detail. Words mean things. God says, let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.

What is the bulk of this passage? When you look at verses 26 through 28, what is mostly being talked about? Is this the idea that man is special and sanctified and set apart from the animals and unique and his life has intrinsic value because he's made in God's image? Just read the passage and ask yourself the question, what is the emphasis attached to image of God here, image and likeness of God? Does this put divine value into the man or is it functional? Is it a description of function? Let me read it again, and I'm going to put emphasis on that function. Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. Let them have dominion.

Let them have dominion. What is the attribute of God that is first and foremost? God

controls the universe. God dominates from the same root.

God has dominion over the heavens and the earth. He has dominion over the angels, dominion over people, dominion over nature, dominion over the cosmos. Let's make man in our image according to our likeness and let them have dominion.

I am going to delegate dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, over the cattle, the domesticated beasts. But look at all of the aspects of dominion. Why didn't God talk about the aspects of his image that confer value and sacredness and inviolability and holiness to man? Made in God's image, be holy for I am holy.

But what aspect of God is this image and likeness? This passage emphasizes dominion. You are the one accountable, responsible, in control. Make him in our image and our likeness.

Let them have dominion over the fish, over the birds, over the cattle, over all the earth, over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. The bulk of verse 26 is describing dominion. So God creates man in his image, male and female.

Look at verse 28. God blessed them and God said to them, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and what? Subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, over every living thing that moves on the earth.

You are going to be God to the earth. You're going to be responsible. You're going to have control.

You're going to have influence. You'll be able to think and plan and engage in the use of resources, resource management. You're responsible for the environment, for the well-being of the animals, for what lives and what dies, whether they are fish, birds, beasts of the field, creeping things.

And look at verse 29. God said, look, behold, I have given you every herb that yields seed, which is on the face of all the earth, every tree whose fruit yields seed to you. It shall be for food to every beast of the earth, every bird of the air, everything that creeps on the earth in which there's life.

I've given these herbs for food. And God sees that that was a good day. Sixth day.

So the emphasis here is on dominion. Go to Genesis chapter five. Genesis chapter five, verse one.

This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them, called them mankind in the day they were created.

Then you begin the descent, the genealogical chart. Notice verse three, Adam lived 130

years and begot a son in the image of God. Is that what it says? Whose image? We don't, we don't see Cain or Abel, right? It doesn't mention Cain.

Doesn't say Cain was made in the image of God. Doesn't even say Abel was made in the image of God. What is the image here? Adam lived 130 years and begot a son in his own likeness, after his own image.

Seth is in the image of Adam. Is he not? That's what the verse says. Doesn't say Seth was image of God.

It says, Seth is image of Adam. And it uses the very same phrases that relate Adam's original creation, Adam and Eve to God, image and likeness. But the begetting creates someone in Adam's image, right? I'm just reading what the Bible says.

And this is important. Only Adam and Eve are said to be made in God's image and likeness, specifically Adam by implication, Eve. But the only one that you can go to the mat and say, I will die for this truth is God created the first man in his image and likeness.

So the idea is now Adam is a progenitor. He is the patriarch of his line through Seth. And you have the rest of this line.

Seth lives and begets Enosh. Enosh goes forward all the days of Seth. Enosh, Canaan, Canaan, Mahalal, and so on.

And you have this descent on down through. But if you look back at chapter four, at the birth story of Cain and then Abel, it doesn't say anything about image one way or the other. Eve conceives and bears Cain and says, I've acquired a man from the Lord.

She bore again, this time his brother Abel. That's as much as is said, but there is certainly no attachment of the image of God to Cain. And the earliest foreshadowing of resurrection is with the death of Abel and the birth of Seth.

And the godly man, Abel dies due to the sin of his brother. But God raises up Seth in his place. And we see this later with the Azazel goat and with the doves.

One is slain and the other is dipped in its blood and so on later in the law. But look down at verses 10 through 15 of chapter four. Where is Abel your brother? Am I my brother's keeper? God says, what have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

Now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you, a fugitive and a vagabond shall you be in the earth. Cain says, my punishment is greater than I can bear.

Surely you've driven me out this day from the face of the ground. I shall be hidden from your face. I'll be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth.

And it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me. The Lord said, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. The Lord sets a mark on him lest anyone finding him should kill him.

What do you not see here? In the crime of murder, there are two aspects. First of all, God doesn't say you are guilty of a grievous crime because you have destroyed someone who bears my image and my likeness. And you have to be cautious in arguing from silence.

But it's interesting to me that the first murder, when God describes it and judges it, he doesn't say murder is the most heinous crime there is because you have rubbed out someone who is in my image and after my likeness. That is not that you've taken a life that is sacred because this was a divine image bearer you killed. God doesn't make that point.

The other thing is, God doesn't go back to the growing family of Adam and say, convene a court, we're going to have a capital murder trial. Bring in the evidence and you judge whether or not he is innocent or guilty. Does he? Who judges this crime in Genesis 4, verse 15 verses? God does.

God has dominion. God has authority to judge. And God says his blood cries out, not my destroyed image cries out to me, you've violated the sacred and the holy.

It's his blood. The life of the flesh is in the blood. Seth is in the likeness of Adam.

He's flesh and blood. Doesn't change the grievousness of murder as a crime, but the basis of it being grievous because you have somehow violated the sacred image of God isn't in Genesis chapter 4. It is nowhere to be found here. And this is the archetypal murder and the archetypal murder trial.

The judge here is God and God does not decree capital punishment. Like he is going to decree after the flood to Noah. On that score, turn to Genesis chapter 9. Once again, our subject here is, what is the image of God? If our gospel be hid, it's hid to those who are lost.

The God of this world is blind to their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. You might be able to anticipate where we're going here. Genesis chapter 9. You've got the details about now you can eat animals.

I've given you all the beasts of the earth, birds of the air, fish of the sea. They're given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you.

Every moving thing, no restriction on swine or shellfish or the ones that divide the hoof and chew the cud or don't. I've given you all things, even as I gave you the green herbs. But, verse 4, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is its blood.

Blood of Abel cries out to me from the ground, his physical life. You shall not eat flesh with its life, you shall not eat the blood. So much for the British with their blood pudding.

Surely for your life blood, I will demand a reckoning, not for the desecration of my image in you. That's not the basis for the crime of murder. It is taking someone's physical life.

God demands an accounting for life blood, your life blood, your human. I will demand an accounting for your human life blood. From the hand of every beast, I will require it, and from the hand of man.

From the hand of every man's brother, I will require the life of man. He could have easily said, for man is made in my image and after my likeness. He doesn't make that point.

If that is the ground of the crime, why isn't it mentioned in chapter 4? Why isn't it mentioned in chapter 9? The emphasis is on taking human life. Life of the flesh is in the blood. The blood cries out.

The blood demands an accounting. Verse 6, whoever sheds man's blood, doesn't say whoever violates my sacred image, whoever sheds man's blood by man, his blood shall be shed for in the image of God, he made man. Ah, Sam, see, you didn't read far enough.

For in the image of God, he made man. And as for you, be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it. So the image of God is mentioned here.

What is the significance? Remember in chapter 1, the image is associated with dominion, with authority, with responsibility and accountability. Is the image of God being invoked here in verse 6, because this is what makes murder a crime? Or is the image of God being invoked here because this is the point at which God delegates his judgment authority over capital murder to man. Whoever sheds man's blood by man, his blood shall be shed.

You now have dominion over the adjudication of this capital crime. For in the image of God, he made man. God says, I am making you the judge and executioner for those who commit murder.

No longer is God going to judge and God going to decree the penalty the way he does for Cain. This is new after the flood, just as it's a new dispensation, the diet changes and the accountability changes. I would suggest to you that we have misunderstood and misconstrued the mention of the image of God here in verse 6. And people say, well, you've got to execute murderers because they disrupted the image of God.

We have to hold one another to account for murder because we are made in the image of God. The image of God is being invoked here in terms of dominion, accountability, responsibility. God says, I'm not going to judge every murder from heaven the way I did Cain and Abel's blood crying out to me from the ground.

If someone sheds man's blood, now it's on you. You have responsibility. You have accountability.

You have delegated authority to judge murder. It's all about taking the life and the life being in the blood. Whoever sheds man's blood by man, his blood shall be shed.

For in the image of God, he made man. If you circle man at the end of that verse, go back to the second. Man occurs three times in this verse, right? There is the murdered man, which is the first man.

Somebody shed that man's blood and he died. By man, his blood shall be shed. And the reason man has authority to implement capital punishment is because he is made in God's image and he has God's delegated authority to adjudicate that crime.

So circle the second man and the third man and connect them with a line. The image of God is reflected in exercising dominion and judgment all the way up to the taking of life. That's the image of God in Genesis chapter nine, verse six.

And notice he continues in verse seven, as for you, be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it, which is a footnote back to chapter one. Have dominion over the fish of the air. Yeah, if there are any up there, if it's raining fish, the birds of the air, the fish in the sea, the cattle, the creeping things.

Once again, verse seven here is a reference to filling the earth and dominating it, fulfilling that commission. And God just gives the multiply aspect, but it includes have dominion because he's already talked about dominion in verse six. He says, you've got dominion over everything.

And the highest of creation is mankind. And you have dominion to adjudicate crime in that realm. So be fruitful and multiply.

Dominion's mentioned in verse six, multiplication is mentioned in verse seven. It is a rehearsing and reiteration of what he said in chapter one. So I would argue from scripture that we at least need to balance our understanding of the image of God as reflecting responsibility for oversight, for order, for reflecting God's image in terms of making things good.

What's that? Social justice. Yeah. That we have a responsibility that justice be fair and impartial and all up to and including capital punishment.

And believers who don't believe in capital punishment, I think are wrongly understanding image of God, that a life for a life is somehow not a biblical concept. But we're going to pause here and take our break. But this has widespread implications because once people say our justice system when it comes to capital crimes and murder in particular is based on violating the image of God in the victim.

Now, when you look out at the world beyond one another and beyond the body to the world at large, you say, well, every single person everywhere is made in the image of God, and therefore we should treat them in a certain way, recognizing the image of God in them, a point that is made exactly nowhere in scripture. The image of God is never invoked, Old Testament or new as the basis for how we treat those who are outside. But it starts here.

It starts in Genesis, getting the image of God right starts in Genesis. More about this when we come back from the break.