

1Tim 24-03-06b

We're resuming our study here, looking at the scriptural witness regarding the image of God. Based on context in Genesis chapter one, in Genesis chapter nine, to which we're about to turn, I'm going to offer a definition of the image of God. And it is the exercise of authority slash dominion in accordance with God's command.

It is the exercise of delegated authority slash dominion. Delegated is important because these are things that God in earlier times or at different times reserved to himself. God had dominion over the animals and the earth until he delegated it to Adam.

God had judgmental authority, moral authority to judge sin until he delegated that to man in Genesis chapter nine. Now, any old exercise of authority is not a reflection of the image of God. You can think about your notorious world dictators, the Caesars and the malcontents and the heinous examples even in the last century of people who took authority over others and abused it.

People are doing that even in the modern day. And you can't look at somebody like Pol Pot or Ho Chi Minh or Mao Zedong or Hitler or Stalin or any of your classic evil mustache twisting dictators and say, well, they were exercising authority. That was the image of God.

Notice the qualification on that definition. Exercise of delegated dominion and authority in accordance with God's command. Adam is commanded by God to have dominion.

Noah is given the command for him and all subsequent generations. If someone sheds man's blood, be it an animal or a human, by man shall his blood be shed. For God created man in his image and he is capable of receiving and exercising this delegated authority, this delegated responsibility.

They used to make a big deal in the Marine Corps about you can delegate authority, but you can't delegate responsibility. You can hold someone accountable and that's responsibility. So depending on the context and how you want to parse that idea, God has entrusted stewardship to mankind in certain areas.

And when those functions are fulfilled in accordance with God's command, doing it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men, not yielding to political pressure or trying to fulfill one's own power lust or drive for wealth and aggrandizement and so on, it is being done for the right reasons. And in essence, this is the main idea here that I want to get across. This is not an image of God that individuals possess.

This is a function of God that individuals exercise. It is a function, not an attribute. Do you see the difference? This is a role that we fulfill.

It is a God assigned role. It is to be done according to God's standards. And it is to be

done looking to Him for His approval, not looking at some attribute of the victim or the target and doing it for that sake.

Remember the second commandment. Let's review the first few commandments. Remember the first four are toward God.

The second table is all horizontal, but it begins with the vertical. As all of our thinking, all of our lives, goals, values, and priorities should always begin with the vertical. The first and great commandment is love the Lord.

The second is likened to it, love your neighbor, right? But let's talk about those first couple. What's the first commandment? Everybody knows this. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

And that is the context for the second in the same way that love your neighbor has as its context, love the Lord your God. If you don't love the Lord your God, the second commandment is kind of a waste of time to even talk about. People who don't love God, people who are not believers, what responsibility do they have for the second commandment if they have trampled all over and ignored and repudiated and rebelled against the first? To love the Lord your God, have no other gods before me.

In other words, you have me as your God. Well, if you don't have him as God, what are we talking about? Why waste your time talking about commandments? Go live the self-centered life and God will catch up with you at the judgment. The second commandment, thou shalt have no other gods before me, thou shalt not make unto thee any what? Any created image as a representation of God.

You shall not bow down to it or worship it. You're not just making art. You're not fashioning statues because they're fun to look at.

You're not putting St. Francis in your garden or a frog or a rabbit made out of concrete to stick out there in your yard. The graven images God is talking about is images created for the purpose of worship. Don't make them in the image of an animal.

Why? Why is it mentioned in it? What if I make it in the shape of a palm tree? Can I worship it if it's a palm tree? What about a pomegranate? There's pomegranates in the tabernacle. The idea is think about the dominion that is expressed in fulfilling that delegated authority as image of God. You will have dominion over these things.

You don't put them above yourself and worship them. You don't worship creation. You don't worship the environment.

You don't make the environment your priority. I'm gonna go green. I'm gonna save the planet.

I'm gonna stop global warming and anthropogenic heating and all the rest of it because you are creating an image and you are worshiping that. You are giving to that image what belongs to God. Again, second commandment, don't make an image and bow down to it and worship it.

Give to it the fealty and the love and the obedience that belong to God alone. Think about this when people mistakenly assume that every single human being possesses the image of God and is therefore deserving of attention and charity and justice on that basis. I wanna be careful to say, I am not saying that because the image of God is not present in every man that those people don't deserve justice or charity or whatever else.

I'm saying they do not deserve it on the basis of this notion of the imago dei. I must respect these people even though they are egregious sinners and horrible God-hating pagan desecrators of all that is holy, but they still have the imago dei and this is the reason I should love them as my enemies and do good to them even though they hate me because they still bear the image of God. There are other truths that govern how we treat those who are outside, how we treat our neighbor that justify doing good to them but not on the basis of imago dei, not on the basis of well, they bear the image of God.

That by implication is sort of a violation of the second commandment because you are saying this person is kind of a golden calf that needs my attention and this is the image of God. That's what they said about the golden calf. Aaron makes it.

They say, this is the God that brought us out of the land of Egypt. This is an image of God and it's not an image of God and you could say, well, shouldn't God let them off like he did Cain because Moses hasn't come down the mountain with the commandments yet. So they don't know that they are not to make any graven image and they came from Egypt.

There's all kinds of graven images. So they should be excused and not punished for that. Ignorance of that law because Moses has not yet read them the 10 commandments doesn't get them excused.

God says, I'm gonna slay them all and make a new nation out of you Moses because they are guilty of worshiping something as an image of God, paying attention to it, valuing it instead of God in heaven. And it is a dangerous thing to assume that there is an image of God that needs my stewardship directed towards it. Because when you go to Paul's epistles and he says, whatsoever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men.

Well, if the image of the Lord is in men, then how do I separate the two? Well, I'm not doing it because you're a person, I'm doing it because you bear the image of God. It's confusion. You're either doing it to the Lord in heaven or you're doing it to a man because you think he contains or has, or in some way reflects or bears God's image.

Well, you can't make that work. There are other truths. There are other commands.

There are other concepts that define and prevent us from being calloused and indifferent to the world. We're not calloused and indifferent, but we are not loving and caring because of the image of God in them. It's different truths that pertain.

This is why doubtful things in Corinth, my old pastor wrote a book with that title. One observes days and seasons and feasts. Others treat every day alike.

Some eat meat offered to idols. Others abstain. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind because whatever is not of faith is sin.

If you do this because you believe this is what God wants, and to be fair, people who want to base their charity on their, in my view, and I think biblically speaking, it's a mistaken notion that everybody bears the image of God, but if they are doing what they do heartily as unto the Lord, Lord, this is someone made in your image, and I'm gonna try to do good to them, that is of faith. The faith may be mistaken, but God will honor it as your best understanding. And if you persist, you know, God will eventually illuminate our path at the point that we need to make that distinction.

As I've said so many times, the judgment seat of Christ is not a theology test. It is what did you do? So that being said, no images of God. If we're not to create them and say, well, this is a means by which I can honor God through this intermediate image, if we're not to make any graven images, we being, you know, Israel receiving the law, in Exodus 20, verse four, and reviewed in many other places in scripture, you can put Isaiah 42, eight with that.

Then we need to be very cautious about assuming that there is an image of God that we should pay attention to in every man. The Bible never says that. In fact, as we saw in Genesis chapter five, it goes to great lengths to emphasize and point out that Adam's son that survived and is going to be the line of Noah, the line of Shem, the line of David, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Christ, comes through Seth, and Seth is image and likeness of Adam.

Why does it say that? What is the point? It doesn't say it about anybody else except Seth. Doesn't even say it about Abel, because the Cain and Abel picture is aimed at a, and when I say picture, I'm not saying it's a made up story, but the point of the narrative of that true set of events has its own point and purpose. But here, the book of the genealogy of Adam begins with living 130 years and begetting Seth in his image and after his likeness.

The point being, Adam is not transferring the image of God to his descendants. He is made in the image, but Seth, by simple fact of birth, does not have the image of God. Now, can Seth or Abraham or Isaac or Jacob or Moses or David or anyone else begin to

recover or reflect the image of God? Do they have that possibility through faith and obedience, be a friend of God, a righteous man? They can, but the Bible is at pains to not talk about that until Christ.

You have no further references to the image of God in any of the law of Moses. The law of Moses, the most pertinent part, one of the most prominent parts, says don't make any images and don't bow down to them and worship them. Don't have any substitutes or any division of the direction of your attention and worship.

It should be to God. And based on your love for God, you should love one another. And the commands to respect the person and property of others is predicated on love for God.

If you don't love God, his commandments are meaningless to you and you're gonna go your own way and do what you want. But if you love God, part of the stewardship, part of the delegated authority and that reflection of image is to be morally conscious and sensitive toward your neighbor. Love your neighbor.

Well, this brings us now to the New Testament because Paul in several places talks about the first Adam and the last Adam. Something happens when Jesus Christ comes. He is formally labeled.

He is another Adam. The first Adam was fleshly and earthly. The second Adam is spiritual and heavenly.

And the first Adam lost the image of God through sin and no longer retaining it, he couldn't be in God's presence anymore, driven out of the garden and so on. There are reflections of that assigned function for mankind anticipated in Genesis 1, verse 28, that filling the earth, having dominion, multiplying, subduing it. This is associated with the image of God.

And to the extent that that function is fulfilled by mankind as a group, as an entity or as individual nations or whatever, there is a reflection. There is a functional reflection of the image of God. God used to do that.

Now mankind is entrusted with doing it. It doesn't really reflect the image of God unless it involves believers who are doing it heartily as unto the Lord. But the idea is there that this should remind people that the reason there is such a thing as moral accountability, the reason there is such a thing as decently and in good order is because God decreed that it be so.

And assigned man the function. He doesn't say, rabbits, make sure the earth runs smoothly. And hey, dogs, you make sure that you chase down and execute anybody that commits a murder.

These responsibilities for causing the moral order and the functions that God originated, this is to be carried out by man. And in that sense, his corporate life reflects the image of God. It doesn't mean that each individual possesses the image of God, but to the extent that those functions are fulfilled, they originated with God and they reflect back on that origin.

You find a watch, somebody made the watch. And so this gets back to let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works and glorify your father, not glorify you because you are somehow reflecting the image of God or respecting the image of God in others. They're looking to your father in heaven.

They will see your good works and glorify your father where? In heaven. Not your father as he's dimly reflected in the defaced image that every man possesses. It's just not a scriptural concept.

It's like so many other parts of worship and Christianity that we have received as traditions. You say church and you think building, parking lot, pulpit, choir, instruments, Sunday school. You think of certain things and just assume that they are so because everybody thinks that's the way it should be.

And they've not been subjected to analysis. They haven't been looked at closely. What's the biblical foundation for this? So, and it is important.

So, where is the image of God once it is lost through sin? Its functions can be reflected in dominion and subduing. And to the extent that order exists in the world, the image of God is reflected in the order, not in the individuals, but the order that says we have a justice system. We have a law enforcement system.

We don't let murderers go free and murder anybody they want. We exercise the dominion that God assigned to us as a part of the image of God, reflecting the order that was ordained by God. So, it is lost in Adam.

It doesn't go down to Seth and individuals don't have it by nature. What is our nature? It is fallen. We have an old sin nature.

And the carnal mind can't understand the things of the spirit because they are spiritually discerned. And if we are carnal as believers, or if we are unbelievers, there is no image of God to which you can appeal. And the Holy Spirit doesn't come and convict the world of the nascent image of God that it contains but doesn't honor.

It's sin, righteousness, and judgment. There's no implication that the Holy Spirit just needs to polish up and refurbish the image of God that's in the heart of every man. It's not there.

It is recovered in Christ. So, where is that found? Well, 2 Corinthians 4, 3, and 4. We

looked at it last time. If our gospel be hid, our gospel, Paul says, my gospel.

My gospel is inscrutable to those who are perishing. The God of this world has blinded the minds of those that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Corinthians 4, 4. Christ is the image of God.

Hebrews chapter one, verse three, which I think was also written by Paul. You know this. But Hebrews chapter one, verse three.

In this last day, God has spoken to us by his son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person. Whatever else you want to believe or say about the image of God in mankind in general, you cannot refute or deny unless you throw Hebrews out and you don't think it's inspired. And you don't think Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, there's a bunch of people say, Paul didn't write 2 Corinthians.

Well, you go be warned, be fed. And I want to stand well away from you at the judgment. Hebrews 1, 3 says, the Lord Jesus Christ is the express image of God, God's person.

You have Colossians chapter one, verse 15. He, Christ, who achieved our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in the previous verse, our redeemer, the one who conquered sin, he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Jesus Christ is the image.

He's not the restored image. He's not the painted image. He's not the shined up, recovered image.

He doesn't reverse the defacing. He is the image. Of course, John 1, 18.

If anybody comes close to understanding this other than Paul, it is the apostle John. In John chapter one, verse 18. No one has seen God at any time.

The only begotten son who is in the bosom of the father, he has declared him. Jesus Christ is the image. He reveals him.

Nobody has seen God. You can't find some pale image of God in every man. And well, you know, the conscience that people bear, that's a witness that there is a God.

Well, maybe so, but it has nothing to do with the image of God. You have John chapter 14, verse nine. John 14, verse nine.

Philip says, show us the father. It is sufficient for us. Jesus said, have I been with you so long? You have not known me, Philip.

He who has seen me has seen the father. How can you say, show me the father? He doesn't say, look at each other. Don't you see the latent image of God, the imprint, the

fingerprint of God.

Don't you see that you with your moral conscience and your decision-making sentience, you're a witness to God. He says, you've seen me, you've seen the father. Not you've seen moral conscience in each other and that's the image of God.

Jesus had any number of occasions to point out the image of God in others. When he fed the 5,000, they're hungry and do you not know they're made in God's image? We need to exercise charity and sensitivity to their needs. That is not what he said.

And he could have so easily, easily cleared up the fog, but he does not because it just isn't the case. Philippians chapter two, verse six. That wonderful, beautiful chapter about the Lord Jesus.

Let this mind be in you. Let this mind be in you. This is an option.

This is something for you to pursue. This is, if you wanna talk about the imperatives of Jesus Christ, those 34 things that we saw. It's interesting, the old pastor to which I so often refer had a list of 34 things that happened at the point of salvation.

34, I'm not sure what's special about that number. Philippians 2, five, let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus. You need to make this happen.

It's not there by default. It's not there sleeping and you just need to wake it up. Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, taking on the form of a bond servant and coming how? In the likeness of men.

The humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ in Philippians 2, seven is not the image of God. It's the likeness of men like Seth. Jesus is descended from Adam on his mother's side and descended from God on his father's side.

But he came in the likeness of men. If you translate likeness in the Old Testament into Greek, this is the word. It's used in Genesis one.

It's used in Genesis five. And if you look at the Septuagint, the likeness, this is the likeness. Likeness of men, he came.

Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient. Notice the opposite of dominion and subduing. In his first coming, Jesus is the lamb that is going to be slain.

As a lamb at the slaughter, he opens not his mouth. This is the opposite of dominion. He is not here expressing the image of God.

It is not until he conquers sin and leads captivity captive and gives gifts to men. Once he

conquers sin, now he is raised up on high that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow. He is highly exalted.

And now he subordinates. He fulfills the dominion aspect of the image of God as he is raised up above those in heaven, those in earth and those under the earth. And that the name of Jesus, every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is the lamb, that Jesus Christ is the servant, that Jesus Christ is found in appearance as a man.

What does every tongue confess? He is Lord to the glory of God, the Father. Jesus Christ's accomplishment of victory over sin and his exaltation, it is in his exaltation that he fulfills the image of God and exercises the dominion and the authority that has been given to him by the Father. He recovers and expresses the image of God in his exaltation, in his humiliation, he is image of man.

And he has to be man in order to accomplish the purpose for which he was sent. Now he is highly exalted. Now every knee bows and every tongue confesses that he is Lord to the glory of God, the Father.

God is glorified as his image is reflected here. That is Philippians chapter two. And so, because Christ is the image of God and in him, we begin to recover that image.

You have Colossians chapter three, verse 10, which says, do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man with his deeds. You have put off. He doesn't say the old man has been taken away from you.

You have yourself taken off the old garment. You have put off the old man and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created him. You put on the new man and the image of God begins to appear.

The new man is created according to the image of the creator. It goes all the way back to Genesis chapter one. Let us make man in our image after our likeness.

The new man that is being created in us is in the image and likeness of God. We've got to put off the old man so that this new man can be created and the image of God can be something that is associated with us. So important.

Colossians 3.10. Second Corinthians 5.17. Paul says in verse 16, therefore from now on we regard no one according to the flesh, even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away.

All things have become new. All things are of God, verse 18, who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ and has given us that ministry of reconciliation, has given to us, to me, Paul, and to those closely associated with me. That's second Corinthians 5.17. Ephesians 4.20 through 24.

Paul dwells on this concept in Ephesians 4 and 5, but Ephesians 4.20, those who are past feeling and have given themselves over to lewdness to work all uncleanness with greediness in verse 19. Verse 20, you have not so learned Christ. You have not so learned Christ.

If indeed you have heard him and have been taught by him the words of Christ. Why did we spend at least four sessions on the words of Christ? I think it was six sessions in total. You've got to learn Christ to be in Christ and for Christ to be in us.

We have to learn Christ. If you've heard him and been taught by him, the truth is in Jesus. Paul is not preaching something different than Jesus.

He is detailing, according to his commission and his gospel, the truth of Christ. You've been taught by him. The truth is in Jesus.

He says, you put off concerning your former conduct, the old man, which grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts and be renewed in the spirit of your mind and that you put on the new man, which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness. The same thing that he says elsewhere, he says here in Ephesians, you put on the new man, you put him on. You don't stand still and wait for God to drop him on you.

It isn't an automatic function of faith in Christ at salvation. You've got to put on the new man by learning Christ and being taught of him, having his words and keeping them, loving him so that he and the father can come and make their home in us. You put on the new man, which was created according to God.

This is the image of God. The new man is the image of God. Guess what? If you don't have the new man, what do you not have? That which is created according to God.

You don't have the image of God. You don't even have the possibility or the presence or any attachment to the image of God if you are not in Christ, learning Christ and being renewed according to the image of the creator. That's what this passage says.

You want the image of God? Learn Christ, be in Christ. He is the image of the invisible God. He is the fullness of deity and bodily form.

True righteousness and holiness are in Christ. The image of God is true righteousness and holiness. It's not moral conscience and the ability to make decisions.

Nowhere in scripture does it say that, imply it, assume it, or in any way infer it. We have decided that that's what it must be because we want to try to make sense of it. How can all humanity have the image of God? Well, what's unique to humans that dogs and cats and rabbits don't do? Well, we're sentient.

We can speculate about death in the future and we have a moral conscience. Dogs don't

have a conscience. They'll eat each other's food.

It's funny to watch the dogs. You feed them, put two dishes down. One dog walks away from his food.

The other dog's gonna come over. That dog wants to come back and finish, but he's got to go burp or something and the other dog just comes and steals his food and eats it. Well, they have no sense of right and wrong.

They know what will have consequences and what will displease their owners, but they don't have a moral sense. And so we say, well, see the moral sense. That's the image of God.

Any unbeliever can have a moral sense. The Holy Spirit convicts unbelievers of sin, righteousness, and justice before they come to faith. And they make a decision on that basis.

And read the last half of Romans chapter one if you want to understand why man is accountable and responsible. It's not because he is refusing to acknowledge the image of God that he possesses. It's that he is suppressing the truth of God, God's eternal power and deity that is reflected in creation.

They are without excuse, not because they are somehow refusing to acknowledge the image of God. It's because the God of creation and the God of heaven has revealed himself and they aren't interested. They suppress that truth and righteousness and God gives them over.

Nothing about the image of God in Romans one. So that is Ephesians four, 20 through 24. Romans 8, 29.

Christ is the firstborn among many brethren. There is a group with whom Christ is associated and that group of brethren partake of that which Christ has achieved. First Corinthians 15, 49.

We've seen this already. This is, we bear the image of the earthly and in Christ we will bear the image of the heavenly. Second Corinthians 3, 15 through 18.

Second Corinthians chapter three, verse 15. Even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies over the heart of Israel. Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Once again, second Corinthians 3, 16. When one turns to the Lord, the veil that hides the glory of God is taken away. The Lord is the spirit.

Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. We all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image. The glory

of the Lord, the image of God that reflects his glory.

Human society reflects God's glory when it seeks to preserve the moral order and the dominion and responsible subduing of the environment that God enjoined mankind to accomplish and perpetrate. And it doesn't matter who saved and who's not, civilization, society, a nation, a community reflects the image of God functionally when it accomplishes those purposes. Because you have to eventually go back and say, well, where did this all come from? In the same way, we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord.

Who are we looking at when we see the glory of the Lord? Who reveals the glory of God? Jesus Christ. When we have his words and keep them, when we so learn Christ, we behold as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, that transforms us. We are being transformed from the image of the earthly into the image of the heavenly.

We are transformed into the same image from the beheld glory to the reflected glory that we can bear in Christ, transformed into his image. This is the image of God. This is what it means.

This is how it counts. This is what matters. Just as by the spirit of the Lord.

If the spirit of the Lord is not present, none of this can happen. Carnal mind can't understand the things of the spirit, spiritually discerned. The spirit leads us into truth.

The spirit reminds us of the words of the Lord Jesus. He will take of the things of me and transmit them to you, Jesus tells his disciples. And that is a foreshadowing of what goes on in this age.

It is so important to understand this. This coming Sunday, I'm going to briefly include the misapprehension and misapplication and misdirection and deception that surrounds misunderstanding the image of God on the assumption that everybody has it. And because this bears on what is spirituality? What is a healthy Christian walk? And if you measure it by how you treat the masses and the extent to which you engage in and support and wave the flag for social justice, every minute you spend thinking that way and doing that is a minute not spent in genuine conformity to the image of Christ, who is the reflection of the invisible God.

And if you're looking for God in people, instead of looking for God in Christ, you've been deflected, you've been deceived. Jesus said, do not be deceived. Many will come saying I am he and are going to lead a bunch of people astray.

They're doing all of this in Jesus' name. Lord, Lord, in your name, did we not do all of these things that we thought were good? And he's going to look out the door and say, I never knew you and that door is going to shut. In your name, we did good works, but I don't know you.

I didn't come to your table and sup with you and you with me. I knocked on the door and you didn't answer. You're busy looking for other people to invite to the table.

I could go another hour on the passages about separating from ungodliness. In Jesus' words that we just rehearsed, number five was pluck out the eye and cut off the hand that leads you into sin. It's better to not have those things and enter into life than to retain them and receive the discipline of the garbage heap, right? If something offends, if someone by association leads you into sin, Paul says bad company corrupts good morals.

And if you associate with someone and it leads to sin, you've got to cut that off. That was number five. Number 25, if someone won't be reconciled, if they are divisive and cantankerous and offended, treat them like a heathen and a tax collector.

Number 19, don't give what is holy to the dogs. Don't throw your pearls before swine. There are some people that you cannot try to share your faith with and your understanding.

You're giving what is holy to those who have no ability to appreciate it. Number 22, beware of false prophets. If you're gonna beware of them, what do you do? Are you gonna invite them over and sit with them and eat with them and try to love them into the kingdom and try to change their mind about what they're prophesying? If you're gonna beware of false prophets, Matthew 7, 15, that means stay away from them.

Don't listen to them. Matthew 25, 31 through 46, the sheep and goats judgment. So important.

I could spend a lot of time and we have done in the past, but the pertinent part of that is if you have done it or not done it to the least of these, my brethren, you've done it to me and the goats, picture the scene here. This is my last point. We're almost done.

Picture the sheep and goats. He will put the goats on his left and the sheep on his right and to those on his right, he will say, enter into the kingdom prepared for you by my father because when I was hungry, you fed me, et cetera. And they will say, when did we see you hungry and naked and in prison? If you have done it for the least of these, my brethren, these my brethren.

He says, my brethren, when he's talking to the sheep, you have done it unto me. You sheep go into the kingdom prepared by the father. To the goats, he says, you're condemned because when I was naked, you did nothing for me.

When I was hungry, when I was oppressed, you did nothing. When did we not do something for you? If you did not do it for the least of these, who's he pointing to when he says the least of these? Is he pointing to fellow goats? Pay attention now. This is a new point I have never made before about the sheep and goats judgment.

When he says, if you have not done it for the least of these, who is he pointing to? The sheep. You did not, he doesn't say, you didn't do it for one another. These, and he has already identified these earlier on as my brethren.

My brethren have looked out for each other and they are going into the father's kingdom. You, he doesn't say, you didn't look out for each other. These my brethren, you did not care about and all of you goats are going into the fire.

So do the sheep get credit for trying to help the goats? The sheep do for each other. The least of these, my brethren, you've done it unto me when you do it for a brother. He is the firstborn among many brethren.

The church is his body. We love each other on that basis. And whatever else you wanna say about charity for those who are outside the fold, who are not the sheep of Christ's fold, are not members of his body, are not his brothers and sisters.

And remember, Jesus makes a distinction. Well, your mother and brothers are outside. Jesus said, these that are sitting here listening to my teaching, these are my brothers and sisters and mother.

We are brethren and you others are not. Other people are not my brothers. He doesn't say, well, everyone is my brother.

It's an important point. There is a distinction to be made. Some people are sheep and some people are goats.

And the judgment on charity is what do you do in the realm of the sheep? The sheep do for each other. You all saw when you had needs, you responded to those needs. And when you did that, you did it for me.

Do it for the least of these, my brethren, you've done it to me. That is addressed to the sheep. When he's talking to the goats, he says, you have not cared about these and you did not do for me.

Christ is the issue. He doesn't say you ignored the image of God that's in the heart of every man. You were selfish and insensitive and oblivious to me.

And that is the basis of your fire destruction judgment. So why doesn't he say, well, even though you were, you were insensitive, you still bear the image of God. So we, you know, there's functionally no value in saying that the goats somehow have the image of God.

It doesn't save them. It doesn't justify them. It doesn't vindicate them.

It doesn't say, well, you sheep, you know, why are these people goats? Why didn't you turn them all into sheep? That there is a distinction. Some people are dogs. Some people are swine.

Doesn't mean you go kicking dogs and running over swine every chance you get. You can respect them. You can let them go their own way, but you do not treat them on the basis of them possessing the image of God.

This is the mistake and it has tentacles. It leads to behaviors and decisions and priorities and goals and values that are unbiblical. There are other reasons to determine how we are gonna treat those who are outside, but it is not that there is an image of God there that we have to pay attention to.

Huge, huge error. Infected virtually the entire realm of public Christianity today. The more you look, the more you will see.

I can show you any number of articles. Look up Imago Dei and read what is said in Christian circles about it. And it's tragic because every minute spent trying to worship the image of God in a human being by giving it an offering and giving it respect and giving it honor and trying to uplift it and bring it out of the mud or whatever you think you're doing, it is essentially a violation of the second commandment.

You're finding an image of God in a place where it does not exist. You might as well stick a golden calf in your yard. Not to say charity doesn't have value too indiscriminate.

I don't have to find out if somebody's saved if I decide I wanna help them. But I'm not helping them on the basis of the image of God. There are other reasons.

And I need to know those reasons and I need to understand them if I'm gonna be a good steward of what God has given me. So important to understand. Well, we're going to pick this up and see the biblical basis for distinguishing and discerning who is in the fold, who is in the body, who is a brother and who is not because it conditions our responsibilities.

We have a completely separate and unique set of responsibilities toward one another. The one another commands are unique to those who are in Christ. Stronger and weaker brother.

Once you see this, you can't unsee it. All of the passages that have the one another's are in the context aimed directly. There's even an image of God passage in James about the use of the tongue.

And that's the one image of God passage we really haven't covered yet. We'll cover it next time. But we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the revelation of your truth. And as we ask and seek and knock and endeavor to be recreated through the Lord Jesus Christ into that which reflects your glory, we pray that God, the Holy Spirit will give us understanding, give us balance, help us to see the pertinence and application of these truths in our circumstances, the opportunities that we have, the stewardship that we exercise, the responsibilities that

you have assigned us for exercising authority where we possess it, functioning under authority where it exists, and in all things living in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus. We pray it in his name, amen.