

1Tim 24-03-10a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 10th of March 2024, freshly on daylight savings time. And we continue our study looking at the image of God.

We have some fascinating things to see from the word of God this morning, both Old Testament and New. And it is so helpful in determining what our priorities and our policies should be toward both those who are near to us and those who are at a greater distance. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of study and our fellowship, and we'll begin.

Father, what a privilege it is to gather and spend this time together, being encouraged and built up from the powerful truth that is contained in Your Word, in the hands of the Holy Spirit. We know that it can transform us and guide us, motivate us, and remind us of who we are and why we're here. Our lives have purpose and meaning and have a future destination because we are in Christ, Your Son.

We know that He sits at Your right hand at this very moment, representing us, interceding in our behalf, and awaiting the day when You will give the command for Him to return and take us to Himself. We pray that in this intervening time, we can make the most of our opportunity to grow in grace and knowledge, to be thoroughly equipped for every good work, and to be those upon whom You can call for service and function in the coming kingdoms. We pray that our study this morning will be a blessing to each one who participates, both now and in the future.

We pray that in all things, the Lord Jesus will be glorified, and we pray it in His name. Amen. This has been for me a very fascinating topic to clarify my own understanding of what the image of God is and what it means.

We've spent the past four sessions looking at what the Word of God has to say about it. Generally speaking, people will argue that the image of God is a reflection of some of the attributes of God. So He has righteousness and justice.

So we see this reflected as moral conscience. He is sentient and can plan and consider and think thoughts about the present and the future, consider life and death. And we see these in humanity as separating us from the animal kingdom.

As much as we love our pets, they don't consider mortality and the meaning of life and deeper questions of existence. They don't typically plan and imagine and create things out of imagination. We've learned new ways of agriculture.

We've invented technology. We have the ability to look at a problem and solve it by means of our own efforts. And we're not driven by instinct or genetic programming or

experience per se.

These things are a part of us, but we transcend that. And most people believe that there is an immaterial component to man that is called the soul or the spirit. And so because man is uniquely said to have been made in the image of God in Genesis 1, 26 through 28, those things that distinguish man from the rest of creation are thought to comprise that image or to somehow reflect that image.

It's not a illogical deduction to make, but we always want to go to what Scripture says and what the context tells us. And gratifyingly, several of the other opinions and understandings of the image of God that we have run across draw the same conclusion from Scripture that we have in these recent studies, which is that this is not so much a description or a reflection of God himself, as it is a divinely delegated function. God has dominion and he has delegated this function of dominating and ordering things in creation and serving as an under shepherd, if you will, of that creation.

And I like it when others see the same things that we do in Scripture. And I think that's a good analysis. So understanding this prevents us from making some faulty applications, because in the modern day, as in days past, seeing the imago dei or the divine spark or some presence of God in every single person has led to faulty policy, faulty stewardship, faulty attitudes and actions in various ways and construing love expressed toward any member of the human race, charity expressed, implemented toward any and all in the human race is understood to be righteousness and something that we should do, because the image of God is in every man.

And what we have come to understand from looking at Scripture, you can make that work logically, but we have to look at what Scripture says, because human logic, there is a way that seems right to a man, but it doesn't end well. So the idea that any member of the human race can be a reflection of God that bears the divine image is problematic, both scripturally and logically. And if the image of God is properly reflecting God, what is the nature of God? God says, be ye holy for I am holy.

So humanity in its fallen state is not holy. So in what sense are you bearing the divine image of righteousness and justice and truth and consistency? We only recover, we only bear the image of God to the extent that we are godly. Godliness is a reflection and is derivative of and from God.

But being ungodly, you think about the Psalms, be a tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth his fruit in his season. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff. So this notion of the universality of the image of God in all humanity has led to some grievous misunderstandings and misapplications.

So we're trying to ensure that we're on solid scriptural grounds. So we have looked at the image of God and seen that it is regularly associated with exercising delegated

authority according to the command of God. That is a working definition that I would offer.

This is responsibility. This is why in Ephesians 4, when Paul is talking about Christ and the church and husbands and wives, and he says, the head of Christ is God. The head of the man is Christ.

The head of the woman is the man. And by extension, when you read children, the head of the children are their parents. But there is this chain of custody, this structural authority that starts with God through Jesus Christ, then in human normal function, you're going to have a marriage with a man and a woman.

And the man is given that authority. With that authority comes accountability and responsibility. You remember Eve sinned, but Adam is the one that is held accountable.

In Adam all die. Doesn't say any of all die. Adam was the responsible party.

Adam was formed first, then Eve, Paul told us. So we look at this and realize that the image of God is only reflected to the extent that that image is in fact of God and partakes of divine attributes. This is why idolatry is such a heinous evil as it is described in the Old Testament.

Because if you make an image that resembles an animal or a four-footed beast, that is not going upward toward God, that goes downward toward the creation. And you worship creation instead of the creator. And you have this described in some detail in the latter part of Romans 1 and elsewhere.

So we're looking at this and God's very adamant that there not be any images that are worshiped. And the danger is if you begin to impute the image of God to every human being, you're going to be giving attention to those people as being imbued with a divine spark. When that attention needs to be directed toward God, we love not because His image is in every man, we love because He first loved us.

The first command is to love the Lord your God, not to try to find something godly to love in every person. It's pushing a rope, it's backward, it's wrong-headed and wrongly directed. We saw that the image of God that was lost by the first Adam is found in the last Adam.

Jesus Christ is the image of God. We've seen these passages in great detail, 2 Corinthians 4, 3 and 4. The light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, is what should shine. We are not motivated to come to God by seeing the image of God in people.

We are motivated to come to God through Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. He is the fullness of deity and bodily form. He is the express image of God's purpose and

we saw this in Hebrews 1.3, Colossians 1.15, John 1.18, John 14.9, Philippians 2.6 and last time we saw that to the extent that we leverage, that we partake, that we seize the opportunity and the potential that is ours in Christ, that image is formed in us.

Christ formed in you the hope of glory. So we saw this in Colossians 3.10, 2 Corinthians 5.17, Ephesians 4.20-24, put off the old self with its corruption and its fallenness and its deceitful lusts and put on the new man who is created in the image, who is renewed in the image of the creators, what it actually says, renewed in the image of its creator. Our old man is gradually replaced by the new man.

It's a process and that's why it is renewal and we tend to kind of slip and slide. We take two steps forward and so many steps back. Sometimes it's less, sometimes it's more.

But renewed in the image of the creator in Ephesians 4.20-24. Turn with me to 2 John because with this understanding, we have to realize that the way we treat people around us has to be considered. What should my policy be to those who are near and those who are far? The image of God assumption that everyone has the image of God says that everyone should be treated with love, that all of the 60 plus one another commands should be expressed and exercised toward everyone because everyone has the image of God. And this is not biblical, it is a deception and it disperses and diffuses and dilutes our proper exercise of representing Jesus Christ as his body.

This is not what Jesus did in his incarnation and it is not what we should do either. Jesus Christ was not indiscriminate in expressing love, in healing, in teaching, quite the opposite. And this distraction and deflection and dilution of Christian witness, Christian effort, Christian understanding that is permeating, is washing the church in a fruitless direction is based in part on this notion that, well, I have to go out of my way to militate and demonstrate for these oppressed people hither and yon throughout the world because they are made in the image of God.

If you have any kind of a social media feed, you will see memes and tropes and posters and Banksy paintings and all kinds of little aphoristic image-based posts that are saying you ought to get with it, you know, evil proliferates when good men do nothing and these people are made in the image of God and if you're not doing something to help them, you yourself are perpetrating evil. When in fact, that notion itself is evil because it is not scriptural and whatever is not of faith is sin. And this is not in the Bible and we're going to see it this morning.

But look at 2 John. This is John writing to the elect lady and her children. This is the church.

This was obviously written at a time of great persecution. You get the idea that these could be in the times when the Roman empire was actively seeking out and persecuting Christians. And so John is careful to name no names, to give no locations.

This is a somewhat cryptic greeting and closing. You can look down at verse 13, the children of your elect sister greet you. Unlike Paul in Romans 16, he doesn't name names and talk about worthy ones and greet so-and-so and the church that is in their house.

You can tell that Paul's letters are early because if this letter is intercepted, Paul's not worried that someone is going to get hammered by the Romans or worse. John has very much that concern. So he is very cryptic.

You know who I'm talking about here when I say the elect lady and her children and the elect lady's sister, which is the church where John is currently ministering, sends greetings to this others. No names because there is a lot of persecution. Her children whom I love in truth and not only I, but all those who have known the truth because of the truth, which abides in us and will be with us forever.

Now right away, does the truth reside in everyone? We've already seen a subset of the human race in view here. This is not everybody being spoken of. I love the children and the elect lady in the truth, not only I, but those who have known the truth.

Jesus said, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. How many people have been set free by the truth that is in Jesus? I am the way, the truth. Who knows the Lord Jesus? Those are the ones who know the truth.

The truth is in Christ. So we are now talking about believers and not just nominal believers, not just assenting and not going to the lake of fire believers, but those who know the truth because of the truth, which abides in us and we will be with us forever abides with us. If Jesus is the truth, we're talking about the indwelling of Jesus Christ here, not just abstract doctrinal truth, but the truth of the Lord Jesus, grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God, the father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of the father in truth and love.

Notice the tight interweaving. I love those who are in the truth. Those are in the truth, love you because you are in the truth.

And this is the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of the father in truth and love. Notice love is inextricably bound up with truth by John here. So if you are going to love others, what has to be present? What has to be both pitching and catching? Truth, genuine love, deep love, Christian love is in truth.

If someone is outside the truth, if they reject the truth, if they exercise the sin of the high hand and rebel against the truth, as Paul says again in Romans one, if they suppress the truth in unrighteousness, guess what you cannot do? You can't express love. You can't. Love is expressed in truth.

Paul says the glory of God is revealed from faith to faith. If you have no faith, guess what you can't understand and can't appreciate and what you cannot transmit to someone

who is not of the faith. They're never going to understand the glory of God.

The glory of God is expressed from faith to faith, right? Same thing here. The love of God is expressed in truth, from truth to truth. Those who love the truth can love one another.

Look at that tight interweaving. You can just marinate in these first three verses and it really helps straighten out our understanding. He goes on in verse four, I rejoice greatly that I have found your children walking in truth.

Notice some of it's in italics. I have found of your children walking in truth, a characteristic of your children. This doesn't mean well, some of them walking in truth as we have received commandment from the Father. Notice he doesn't say walking in love.

Paul says elsewhere, walk in love. Here he says they're walking in truth because truth is the environment in which love can function. It's like the triad of Christian virtues, faith, hope, and love.

Faith has as its object, the truth of God. Hope has as its foundation, the truth of God, the promises of God, the prophecies that God has given us. The love is grounded on and is the full expression of and becomes the measure of our understanding and our walking in truth.

If we're walking in truth, we can see the outworking of it in love. We received commandment from the Father. The Father's commandments are truth.

Now, verse five, I plead with you lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. One another. Who are these one another's? Those who are walking in truth.

Those who know the truth and love the truth. That is the one another. This is love.

Verse six, that we walk according to his commandments. This is, there are who say John didn't write this and that it's spurious and secondary and it's sort of epigraphical and so on. The inspiration of this short letter is evident in every phrase.

Look how tightly constructed, how intricately woven and how thematic and central to everything that you learn in the Gospel is expressed here. He says, we have this. This is not a new commandment.

Notice the word commandment in verse four, we received commandment from the Father. This is not a new commandment in verse five. It is a commandment we had from the beginning.

This is love that we walk according to his commandments, plural truth. This is the commandment that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. Don't be led astray by additions, distortions, perversions, corruptions, omissions, alterations.

Stick with the truth you have from the beginning, the commandments of the Father. Where do you find the commandments of the Father? New Testament or Old Testament? Actually both, but formally speaking, the commandments, the statutes, the ordinances that we see constantly referred to in Psalm 119 and in the Proverbs, a great deal of this is Old Testament truth. More about that shortly.

Many deceivers, verse seven, have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh. Do not confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh. So what is this? This is a distortion, a change related to our point, which is the first of the mysteries, the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

These people are distorting and perverting the incarnation. The specific perversion here is that he didn't actually partake of human flesh, that he was an emanation. He was a manifestation.

He was sort of a spirit that appeared, but he wasn't really flesh. And this is emblematic and representative as we see time and time again in scripture. You don't have to limit yourself and say, well, I'm not committing that error, therefore I'm off the hook.

Any distortion of the incarnation of Jesus Christ falls under this same condemnation. This creates this same problem. If you construe the incarnation as being all there is to know about Jesus Christ, that he is only the suffering servant, that is all the same as if you distort and pervert his incarnation as not being true humanity.

Anything you do to distort or dilute the truth that pertains to Jesus Christ as revealed and succinctly distilled in Philippians chapter two, emptied himself, took on the form of a servant and came in the likeness of men. Notice those are past tenses. That's what he did the first time.

He's not going to empty himself and take on the form of a servant and come in the likeness of men at his second coming. But if you limit Jesus Christ to the suffering servant revelation, you're committing this error. You're distorting the incarnation.

You're not confessing Jesus Christ who is going to come in the fullness of his hypostatic union the second time. He will appear a second time apart from sin for salvation, for deliverance. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

They're talking about the Lord Jesus. They're not preaching Buddhism or Confucianism or Hinduism or the Vedic hymns or Roman God worship or Greek God worship, idolatry. They're not saying worship Diana of the Ephesians.

They're talking about Jesus Christ, but they are distorting the truth about him, distorting the truth of Jesus in his incarnation. They are deceivers and antichrist. Word antichrist never occurs in the book of revelation.

It occurs right here. And to distort the truth about the coming of the Lord Jesus in the flesh is antichrist. And the spirit of antichrist is already at work.

John says in another place, look to yourselves that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. You'll see a text note there that some texts say you and some say we doesn't really matter. We know who we're talking about here.

We are those who love the truth, who love each other because we are in the truth. And this is a special and unique love. This is love that is expressed in grounded in the truth.

We speak the truth to one another in love, right? Truth and love woven together. Those who do not partake of the truth do not partake of this love. You can have other kinds of love, but not this divinely inspired, this divinely approved, this divinely energized love.

The love that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Romans 5.5. So look to yourselves that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Love that is expended in the wrong direction, that is based on a misunderstanding, that is taking time and effort away from genuine love and spending time expressing genuine truth is wood, hay, and stubble at best. At best, it is human good.

And whatever is not of faith isn't just human good, it's sin. Verse nine, whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ. Why doesn't he say the love of Christ? There's such an emphasis today on love, love your enemies, love the image of God that's in every man and love the oppressed people everywhere.

If they're starving, they're worthy of our love. Oppression is not a qualifier. It's not a virtue.

Being oppressed, having a hard time is constantly construed as a virtue. Some people need oppressing, some people need imprisonment, some people need deprivation, because if they are fully supplied, they are going to become twofold the child of hell of the person that supplied them. And with those resources, they're going to perpetrate all kinds of evil.

I'm not saying everyone, but there are those who say anyone who is oppressed is the poor in spirit and should be blessed, and we should go about trying to bless them. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst and they leave off the righteousness. If they're hungry and thirsty, we'll look at the sheep and goats' judgment.

We should give them something to eat and something to drink. It seems logical to the human mind, but it's not what the Word of God says. Whoever does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God.

If you pervert and distort the commandments of the Father, the doctrine of Christ, you don't have God. Notice you don't still have the image of God. If you're not walking in truth, if you don't have the commandments of the Father, and you don't have the doctrine of Christ, what do you not have? It could not be plainer.

Whoever transgresses, does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God. Whatever abstruse, abstract notion you want to have of the image of God, in any functional, practical, operational terms, you don't have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

Where did John learn this? Upper room, Jesus, the one who has my words and keeps them. He's the one who loves me. I and my Father will come to him and make our home with him.

John repeats that and emphasizes to you, he who abides in the doctrine of Christ, not the love of Christ, not the compassion of Christ, not the long-suffering toleration of Christ, not the indiscriminate, I'll party with anybody Christ that is currently being purveyed in mainstream Christianity today. The doctrine of Christ, the one who has my words and treasures them, tereof, guards them, recognizes their value, doesn't let them get polluted, corrupted, distorted, perverted, has both the Father and the Son. Verse 10, if anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, the mainstream of Christianity today, if they were writing this, every place you see doctrine and commandment, they would substitute love.

We just got to have the love of the Father. You got to have the love of Jesus Christ. Every place that says truth, it would be love, walk in love.

Doesn't Paul say walk in love? Look at the context. This love is within the realm of those who love the truth, just like John is talking about here. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, this truth, do not receive him into your house.

Do not greet him. Don't receive him into your house. Don't greet him.

Anyone who doesn't embrace this truth, separate. What does this do to this indiscriminate expression of, well, I'm going to love you because somewhere in you is the divine spark. You're made in the image of God.

People who are talking about Jesus Christ and perverting and distorting the truth, don't let them into your house and don't give them the time of day. Don't say, hi, how are you doing? Do not greet them. Well, how is this walking in love? Love is expressed in truth.

This is the apostle John writing and communicating what the Lord Jesus Christ began revealing in the upper room in John 14 and 15. Abide in me. Let my words abide in you.

Abide in the vine. I am the vine. You are the branches.

Abide in me and you will bear fruit. This is the doctrine of Christ. It's a harsh change for some people who want to just, can't we just all get along? Can't we love everybody? John says, you've got to make a distinction.

You have to perceive if someone is not walking in the truth, you have got to cut off fellowship. Do not fellowship. Don't receive them into your house.

Do not greet him. He who greets him shares in his evil. You are complicit.

You are an enabler. You share the guilt. You will share the judgment.

Standing for the truth is what God does. What's God going to do at the great white throne judgment? Is he just going to love everybody regardless of whether they accept his commandments and accept his truth, the truth which is in Christ, accept the son? He that hath the son hath life. He that hath not the son of God hath not life.

Destination is wrath. Then Paul gives his farewell. I'm sorry, John gives his farewell here in the second epistle.

It could not be more clear, even within those who claim the name of Christ, if they distort or pervert the truth related to the incarnation of Jesus Christ, we are to separate. Don't share food at the table. Don't allow them into the house.

Don't even say hello. This is the heathen and tax collector model. We don't persecute them.

We don't punish them. We don't spread bad reputation, gossip, and maligning against them, but we do not let them into the intimate inner realms of fellowship that belong to those who know and love the truth, therefore know and love Jesus Christ. This is inspired scripture from the apostle John, and we need to apply it.

Church today is not so doing. So separation from ungodliness. Great is the mystery of godliness.

This is our passage in first Timothy chapter three. Great is the mystery. Christ, who? And you remember that whole passage.

Our focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ. If someone loves father and mother more than me, he cannot be my disciple. If someone loves sister or brother more than me, he cannot be my disciple, Jesus said.

John emphasizes that we are to be careful and be discriminating in where and how we engage in fellowship. To fail to do so is to share in the evil. Our good, our love does not blanket the other person with righteousness and acceptability in God's sight.

Quite the opposite. Touch not the unclean thing. We touch that it defiles us.

We share in the evil. Couldn't be more clear. Well, kind of a downer there, but things are going to get better when we come back after the break.