

1Tim 24-03-10b

Let's pick up our study. We're looking at the implications of what the image of God is and what it isn't, and understanding that the image of God, and however you want to construe it in the Garden of Eden, when Adam was created from the hand of God, perfect, God looks at creation and everything that he sees is very good. This is before the fall.

This is before sin enters, and he partakes of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And it's so interesting to me that when you get to the end of Genesis 3, and God says, man has become like one of us knowing good and evil in both Hebrew and Greek, and I reviewed it again this past week. If you say man is created in the image of God, and this includes decision-making, moral conscience, purpose, consideration of life and death, and the day thou eatest thereof you will die, and so on, and so on, that after the fall and after the judgments that are pronounced on the serpent, on the woman, and on the man, then God says, and once again, speaking in the plural, as he does when he says, let us make man in our image after our likeness, and God made singular in his image and after his likeness.

And the inclusion of the plural, we've seen the implications of that, but it recurs again at the end of chapter three. But isn't it interesting, God says, man has become like, and if we say the image and likeness, so how is it different than the image and likeness in chapter one? Well, the assumption, and most of your capitalizing Bibles, like the New King James, it'll say man has become like one of us, capital U, but in both Hebrew and Greek, in Hebrew, it's the preposition signified by the letter maim, from, one from us, not like us, which would be koth. Man has become koth, like us.

It's not a K, it's an M, one from or out from. When you see the translation in the Septuagint, the Greek translators of the Hebrew Bible used ek, ek, out from, exerkomai is to come out of the house, to leave the house. One who has gone out from us, one who has left us.

And the one there, he has become like one. I believe, and we've covered this previously, that this is talking about Satan, who committed the five I wills. And he was sentient.

He was the highest thing that ever came from the hand of God. And he entered into evil. And of course, rebelled and was cast out of heaven.

And man is now like, he's no longer like God. He's no longer in the image of God. He is in the image of Lucifer.

The one out from us, knowing good and evil. Knowing it in a way that God does not know it, because God doesn't perpetrate evil. He doesn't choose evil.

He is light, and in him is no darkness at all. There is, it is one thing to know what evil is, to be able to identify it, to contain it, to judge it. God does all of those things.

But God does not perpetrate it. To perpetrate it, to act motivated by it, and to express it, this is something Lucifer did, something Satan did. And man is now like Satan, knowing good and evil.

And he can't be allowed to live indefinitely, perpetrating evil over and over. And his offspring would live indefinitely. So he is expelled from the garden, lest he put forth his hand, partake of the tree of life, and live forever.

But this idea of image, if you wonder, well, did Adam somehow retain image of God after the fall? The only scripture we have that bears on likeness is that passage at the end of Genesis 3, or in the latter part of Genesis 3. And God says, he's not like me anymore. He's not like us. He's like one out from us, one who left us, knowing good and evil.

And there are consequences for that. But the image is recovered in Christ. And we've seen this in so many passages.

Our old self is crucified with Christ, Romans 6.6. And if you're still in 2 John, you can flip back to 1 John 3, verses one through three. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God. Who is the we? This is not the human race.

Every human being is not a child of God. This is an expression of the Father's love. God so loved the world in John 3.16, written by this same author, that he sent his only son so that whosoever believes doesn't perish.

The entire world is the object of making salvation available, but not everyone to whom it is available lays hold of it. Those who believe don't perish. What manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God.

Therefore the world does not know us. The world doesn't say, well, I'm an image of God, your image of God, so we have a bond, we have an obligation, we have a shared love. The world does not know us because it did not know him.

Beloved, now we are children of God. It has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him. Likeness, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Notice even now as recipients of the Father's love and as the status children of God, and you think about what it means to be a child, to be a son. Jesus tells the Pharisees, I am the son of the Father, you are the son of your father, the devil. And you are sons of those who slew the prophets.

You are like them in that respect. And so there is an element of likeness in being children of God. Children resemble their parents in some ways, but are not carbon copies and are not the fullness.

They don't inherit their parents' experiences, their skills. I would love to have automatically been able to play the piano like my dad could play and to know the entire map of Northeast Oklahoma the way my dad knew it. But being his son doesn't mean that I am like him in every respect or that all of his attributes and qualities devolve to me.

We are children of God, but we need to grow. And many times as we mature, we may take up the same profession or occupation as our father. We may grow to look more and more like him.

We don't look like him as children, but the older we get, the more we resemble. And there is a picture here of spiritual truth that as we grow in grace and knowledge, we more closely resemble our father and his son, who is the firstborn among many brethren. It has not yet been revealed what we shall be.

Notice there are some mysteries, even with the gospel of the mystery that Paul is entrusted to communicate, some of these mysteries are not yet revealed. And John says, writing after Paul here, it's not yet been revealed what we will be like. Some things God is keeping to himself.

But we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him. We shall see him as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure.

Notice we are not automatically pure because we are children of God. He is pure. We are his children, but we have to purify ourselves.

We have to endeavor to be conformed to the image of his son. And that of course is Romans 8. You remember this, if you go back to Paul talking about this in Romans 8, 28 and following, when he says, all things work together for good. Good.

We know this, to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose, for whom he foreknew, he also predestined to what? To be conformed to the image of his son. To be conformed to the image of his son so that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And the provision that enables us to be more and more closely conformed to the image of his son, who was perfect in his obedience, perfect in his faithfulness, perfect in his imaging, if you will, of the father.

If you've seen me, you've seen the father. This is the calling and the justification and the glorification that is involved in that passage. So this is what we're talking about.

Now, this tells us that there are those who are in the truth, walking in the truth, walking

in love and those who are not. And we are to treat some people differently than other people. It's the scriptures.

Love is not equal. If you say everyone has the image of God and our love is directed at that image, then there is no distinction and no discrimination. It doesn't matter what people do.

It doesn't matter what they choose. It doesn't matter their attitude toward God. They bear the image of God.

Therefore, they are worthy of our attention. We should attempt to support social justice and make society a better place for everybody because everybody's in the image of God. You cannot believe until you start looking how ubiquitous this misunderstanding is in Christian circles.

It's just everywhere and it's simplistic and it's easy because I can support social justice from my armchair and I don't have to do any level of deep thought. I don't have to discern. I don't have to apply the word of God.

I don't have to know the difference. I don't have to make any sort of effort to figure out what I should do. Well, if anybody's here, I should just, it's love, love, love.

Any unbeliever can do that. You can be John Lennon in the 60s as a member of the Beatles and after. It was one of the biggest proponents of love there is.

All you need is love. Love is all you need. Give peace a chance.

That's all we're saying and so on. Well, what does the word of God say? Let's begin with those who are outside, those who are not walking in truth, those who are not therefore walking in love, those who are not the one another's, who are not brothers, those who are outside. Is there such a thing? Is there a distinction to be made between those who are inside and those who are outside? Well, you can look no further than the Lord Jesus Christ himself in Matthew 10, 16, when he is sending out his disciples, and he says, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.

You are sheep. I'm sending you out among wolves. He doesn't say, I am sending you as sheep to the lost sheep.

And all you need to do is fellowship with them, kind of get them into flock mode and then come back toward me and they will follow because you're all sheep. I am sending you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. You therefore have got to be wise as serpents.

You need to be characterized by wisdom. Wisdom is God's truth in application. It's not just knowledge.

It's not just gnosis. It's not just an understanding of what is true. It is the application and

perpetration and practice of what is true.

That is wisdom. Be wise as serpents. You've got to know where you are.

You've got to know what you're doing. But notice the second part. This is Matthew 10, 16.

I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Do no harm.

Don't go out there and punish. Don't swing a big stick. Don't create conflict.

Don't waste your time in opposition and debate and defugalty. You need to be wise. You also need to be harmless toward those who are outside.

Got to be wise. Don't be eaten by the wolves, but they would harm you. Do not harm them.

Do not return evil for evil. That's the Lord Jesus talking to his own disciples. But notice there is a clear distinction.

Is there a difference between a sheep and a wolf? And this is within the nation of Israel. The people of God, quote unquote. Mark 4, 11.

Jesus, when the disciples say, why are you talking to everyone in parables? Jesus replied, the mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to you. The mystery of the kingdom of God, something heretofore unrevealed. Jesus is revealing it in a new way.

It's not fully disclosed. It's not fully anticipated in Old Testament scripture. It is a mystery.

The mystery of the kingdom of God has been revealed to you. This is the truth that is in Jesus, that he is the king, that he is both the suffering servant and the conquering king. The truth that is in Christ.

The mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to those on the outside. Underline it. Mark 4, 11.

Those on the outside, everything is in parables. Jesus explains the parables. He unfolds the mystery to his disciples, but not to those who are outside.

And once again, this is within the realm of Israel. You could say, well, are these people not neighbors? They are near at hand. They have come, they've heard the teaching.

You're talking to them face-to-face in this crowd. You can see their faces. They can see your face.

They can hear your voice. You can hear their questions. Jesus treats his disciples differently than the crowds.

Why? The mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to you. What have the disciples done that the crowds have not done? You have been with me from the beginning. Even after the controversy about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, they did not leave.

Crowds come and listen and leave. The disciples come and listen and stay. The Pharisees heard the parables, couldn't make heads or tails out of them.

The disciples were given insight into the mystery. The kingdom mystery has been given to you, to those on the outside. Jesus distinguished inside and outside, and so should we.

So what does Paul say? Colossians 4, verse five, walk in wisdom. Doesn't this remind you of the Lord Jesus? Be wise as serpents. Paul, Colossians 4, 5, walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.

It's funny to see that the word there is redeem, *ex agoradzo*, which is the same word used for the Lord Jesus and his work of redemption for us, redeeming us. But many modern translations change this from redeeming the *kairos*, the time, to making the most of every opportunity, which isn't at all what it says. As though walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, making the most of every opportunity brackets to witness, to try to drag them into the kingdom, to convince them that they need to accept Jesus as their savior and ask him into their hearts and so on.

Making the most of every opportunity. Jesus didn't make the most of us when he redeemed us. Making the most of every, it's just not there.

What is redeeming the time? You go to Ephesians 5, 15, and 16 to find out what redeeming the time is. You can put this as a parallel to Colossians 4, 5. Paul says in Ephesians 5, 15, pay careful attention to how you walk. Pay attention.

You can't be indiscriminate and undeliberate and unthinking, just feel your way along. How does it feel? Well, this feels good, I'm gonna do this. Feelings and emotions can't think, they can't reason.

Feelings can't apply the word of God. It is our mind that accesses truth and applies it. Pay careful attention then to how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise.

Notice wisdom in the Lord Jesus, wisdom in Colossians 4, 5, and wisdom in Ephesians 5, 15. Pay attention to how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise. And the next verse, redeeming the time because the days are evil.

The days are evil. Why are the days evil? If you watch a reality series like *Alone*, and you have people out in the wilderness and they are by themselves, there's no day that is evil

per se. It's not got a morally degenerate component.

What makes the days evil? It's the people who do what they do in the day, as well as in the night. But the days are evil because human culture and society is inherently intrinsically evil. It's not the days reflect the image of God or people reflect the image of God.

That's not what scripture says. We've got to redeem the time. We have to walk in wisdom and look at how we are walking and be wise as serpents, even as we are harmless as doves, because the days, the environment, the society, the culture, those who are outside are trapped in and inescapably perpetrating evil.

They can't help it. They have not looked at the exit sign and decided they will walk through it. They haven't availed themselves of God's grace in Christ.

They are enmeshed and hopelessly enslaved to sin and evil. And we have to walk in wisdom. Second John, pay attention.

Don't fellowship, don't contact, don't get defiled and corrupted with the garment spotted by the flesh. If you touch it, it harms you. You're not gonna fix it.

It's gonna debilitate you. So walk in wisdom toward those who are outside. You've got to know the difference between those who are inside and those who are outside and apply that discernment.

We treat those outside differently. Jesus treated those who are outside differently. Jesus didn't love everyone.

And come on, all you prostitutes, I'll make some of you ladies disciples and we'll just all be one big happy family because we've all shared the image of God. Quite the opposite. Jesus saw those who were outside and treated them differently.

Necessarily so, and told his disciples to do the same. 1 Thessalonians 4, 12. If you go to 1 Thessalonians 4, what is the context? Aspire, this is verse 11.

Aspire to live quietly, attend to your own matters. And work with your own hands as we instructed you. Then you will behave properly toward outsiders.

He doesn't say create charities, work for social justice, liberate the oppressed, send money to the helpless. Aspire to live quietly, minding your own business. That's literally what it says.

Live quietly, mind your own business, attend to your own matters. There's such an emphasis on, you've got to get involved in reshaping society. This is without saying so, this is if we build it, he will come kingdom thinking.

We've got to start building the kingdom here so Jesus will come and take it over. What unconscious hubris. Work with your own hands, tending to your own matters, living quietly as we instructed you.

Paul says, we've told you this before. Then you will behave properly toward outsiders. What is proper behavior toward those who are outside? Mind your own business, support yourself, be quiet, pay attention to the instruction you've received specifically from the apostle Paul without being dependent on anyone.

You don't look to society to meet your needs. Needs are met within the household of faith, not outside. Charity is expressed, the naked are clothed, the hungry are fed, the thirsty are given to drink.

Those who are imprisoned and limited are visited and cared for in the household of faith. Brothers and sisters, tending to the family, mothers and fathers and sons and daughters, looking out for one another. In terms of those who are outside, live quietly, tend to your own matters, work with your own hands.

That's how we instructed you. Then you will behave properly toward outsiders. You're not engaged with them, you're not asking them to meet your needs, nor are you endeavoring to meet their needs because they are outsiders.

I cannot emphasize this enough. 1 Thessalonians 4, 11 and 12. What does scripture teach? This is not what the church is teaching today.

This is not the common mainstream Christian view at all. And it's tragic. Because you are casting what is holy to the dogs.

You are throwing pearls before swine. All they will do is turn and tear you to pieces. We wish it was otherwise.

We would love to try to wheedle and cajole and love people into the kingdom and love them into a better relationship with God and with us. You can't do it. And the instruction is toward outsiders, disengage, work quietly with your own hands, meet your own needs, attend to your own matters, live quietly.

That's proper behavior toward those who are outside. Outside what? Outside the brothers and sisters, outside the one and others. They are not, read 2 John again.

That's those who are inside, those who love the truth, those who walk in truth, those who love others who also love and walk in truth. That's the definition of inside. It's clear, it's unmistakable, it's not hard.

It's hard to apply. It's not hard to understand. So how to behave? What clear guidance we have from the word of God.

1 Timothy 3, 7. We saw this already in our 1 Timothy study. When we see the communicator, the leader in the fellowship, an overseer manages his own household well and keeps his children under control. It doesn't say he's busy engaged in social efforts.

His own household keeps his children under control with complete dignity. If someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for society, for the culture, for the wider world, the church of God? This care and oversight begins in the home and is exercised in the home where there are mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters, sons and daughters. And that extends then to the church of spiritual fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters and sons and daughters.

That is the realm in which these oversights and management functions are exercised. He must not be a recent convert. He may become conceited and fall under the same condemnation as the devil.

What is the devil's condemnation? Decided to go his own way, invent his own system of righteousness. I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will be like the most high.

Furthermore, verse seven of 1 Timothy 3, he, the overseer in the church must have a good reputation with outsiders. Paul distinguishes between insiders and outsiders. And you can't be viewed as an evildoer and a reprobate and a rabble rouser and a troublemaker by outsiders.

He must have a good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the snare of the devil. Devil is mentioned twice as we've seen in this context. But Paul here distinguishes insiders and outsiders, household of the overseer, household of faith.

You don't just open the door and let any old body into your home. You don't open your doors and let any old body into your Christian fellowship. There are insiders and there are outsiders.

And for the sake of protection and security and peace and harmony, we discern who is an insider, who is an outsider. 1 Corinthians 5, 12 and 13. Paul says, now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who claims to be a brother, but is sexually immoral or greedy or an idolater or a verbal abuser, a drunkard or a swindler.

They claim to, now this is getting closer. This isn't those who are outside and care nothing about Christ. Within those who claim to be believers, Paul says, I write to you, do not associate.

Same idea as in 2 John. If someone is not walking in truth and doesn't love the truth, even if they claim to be a believer, I am writing to you, do not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother, but the practice in their life doesn't reflect a love of the truth. They are sexually immoral.

They are out for personal gain. They are greedy and self-indulgent. They are an idolater.

They prioritize and are guided by and exercise stewardship towards something that is not God. Something else is in the place of God as their first priority and guiding light. They're an idolater.

Remember covetousness is idolatry. Or a verbally abusive person. They don't bridle their tongue.

They judge, they malign, they backbite, they spread discontent. And by the way, this can also be somebody that can't get off the subject of politics, can't get off denigrating that with which they do not agree or those with whom they do not disagree. That's a verbal abuse.

Believers shouldn't spend their time denigrating the politics that they don't agree with. You can express, you can answer a question, but we've got to be wise as serpents. We've got to hold our tongue, bridle the tongue.

This is James chapter four. A drunkard, someone who is drunk with wine or anything else wherein is excess, something turns off self-control. Something overcomes.

It is an addictive behavior. And this doesn't have to be substances. This can be anything.

You can't get off gambling. You can't get off, you can be a junkie on all kinds of things. You can be a news junkie, you can be a politics junkie, you can be a world events junkie.

You can be a TV junkie. You can be a movie junkie. You can be a celebrity junkie.

Anything that constitutes drunkenness. This is what fills me instead of the Holy Spirit. A drunkard or a swindler.

Those who are out to get something from other people. I'm engaging in this fellowship for what I can get instead of what I can contribute. I come to church because I'm a, this is what they call consumer Christianity and it is rightly condemned.

We should not come to church looking for entertainment, looking for emotional uplift, looking for the kind of absolution of sin that comes from people instead of from God. Oh, you're perverse and living a degenerate lifestyle in some way. Well, that's okay.

You know, we're accepting of everyone. Jesus accepted prostitutes and ate with tax collectors. So you come on in.

We're not gonna judge you for your addiction and entrapment in perversion, where if you are walking in the truth and loving the truth, God would deliver. You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free. Free from perversion, free from entrapment, free from enslavement, free from addiction.

The truth will set you free if you know it and if you love it and if you walk in it. And those who aren't are outside. Do not associate with anyone.

Claims to be a brother, sexually immoral, greedy, idolater, verbal abuser, drunkard, or a swindler, a cheater, those who are in it for what they can get. Doesn't really belong to me, but I'm gonna cheat my way into getting it anyway. We're looking at 1 Corinthians 5, 12, and 13 here.

With such a man, do not even eat. Much less God suppressing, atheistic, paganistic, self-centered, I am my own God people. This is people who claim to be believers.

Engaging in these practices, don't even eat. Same thing John says. In the mouth of two or three witnesses, the thing is established.

John says it in 2 John, Paul says it here in 1 Corinthians 5, 12, 511, actually. With such a man, do not even eat. Verse 12, what business of mine is it to judge those outside the church? If they're outside the church, I'm not even taking time to figure out what's going on with them.

To judge, I would have to know the details, right? You don't have a trial and just have a knee-jerk verdict. A trial investigates. A trial adduces evidence and investigates facts.

Paul says, I'm not even worried about judging stuff outside the church. What they're doing, they're outside the church. It doesn't matter.

Are you not to judge those inside? We have our hands full figuring out with whom to fellowship among those who claim to be believers. Verse 13, God will judge those outside. God will judge.

So I'm not going to waste my time figuring out which of these two political candidates is the more evil, the more heinous, the more reprobate, the more hypocritical, the more deceitful, or the more qualified. God will judge. Verse 13 of 1 Corinthians 5 ends by saying, expel the wicked man from among you.

Expel. If somebody is in your inner circle and they are acting wickedly, expel, remove. Cut off fellowship.

And this is a quote from the Old Testament. I'm going to give you these references. You might just write them down.

I'll read them to you. Deuteronomy 13, five, a prophet or a dreamer whose prophecies lead you away from God must be put to death because he has advocated rebellion against the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery. He has tried to turn you from the way in which the Lord, your God has commanded you to walk.

So you must purge the evil from among you. This is a specific kind of endeavor to lead the people of God astray. And this person might even believe what they're saying.

It doesn't matter. I have a dream, but it's not a dream from the Lord. I have a prophecy, but it's not a prophecy from the Lord.

Even if they themselves are convinced and believe it, you must purge the evil from among you. So many people in the church today, they're convinced that what they're saying is true and right and attractive to the world and it's gonna make Jesus more palatable and it's gonna be less divisive. And can't we all just get along and we'll love people into the kingdom? Purge the evil from among you.

Deuteronomy 17, seven. The hands of witnesses shall be the first in putting him to death. And after that, the hands of all the people, those who are closest to it are first.

After that, the hands of all the people, you must purge the evil from among you. So Deuteronomy 13, five. Deuteronomy 17, seven.

I don't have time to give you the context on these. Please look it up. Deuteronomy 17, 12.

The man who acts presumptuously, refusing to listen either to the priest who stands there to serve the Lord your God or to the judge must be put to death. Notice there is divinely ordained authority for communication of God's word. And the man who acts presumptuously refuses to listen to the priest who stands to serve the Lord your God or the judge must be put to death.

You must purge the evil from Israel. That's 17, 12. Deuteronomy 21, 21.

All the men of his city will stone him to death. So you must purge the evil from among you and all Israel will hear and be afraid. This is not just a cleansing for the immediate community, but it is an example to the rest of those who are allegedly the people of God.

Deuteronomy 22, 21. This woman who has malfunctioned shall be brought to the door of her father's house and there the men of her city will stone her to death for she has committed an outrage in Israel by being promiscuous in her father's house, i.e. she's not married. If she doesn't marry a man and the transfer of responsibility doesn't go from the father to the husband, guess what? She's still in her father's house and she is sleeping around.

She has dealt, she's acted promiscuously in her father's house. You must purge the evil from among you. Woman who flouts her father's authority and is promiscuous, purge the evil from among you.

And you remember Judges 19 and 20, the concubine and kind of the parallel to Genesis

19 and Judges 19. Elizabeth and I were talking about this yesterday. The whole thing with the concubine and she's outside the door and gets murdered by the Benjamites.

Israel hears about it and they're shocked and chop up the pieces and send them throughout the land. You get to Judges 20, 13 and the people of Israel say, hand over the wicked men of Gibeah so we can put them to death and purge Israel of this evil. But the Benjamites refused to heed the voice of their fellow Israelites.

That whole sad, sorry, depressing episode in Judges 19 and 20, hand over the wicked men so that we can put them to death and purge Israel of this evil, but they refused. And look at the aftermath. It is tragic, it is bloody, it is awful.

Finally, I'm a little over time, but let me just close with this. When you go to 2 Corinthians 6, verse 14, do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. And this is apisteia, this is the faithless.

This doesn't mean do you have a card saying at some point in your life you accepted Jesus as your savior. This is those who are practicing a lack of faith, who are living out a lack of faith. It doesn't matter what their ultimate eternal destination is if they are faithless, do not be unequally yoked together with them.

What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? Notice this isn't referencing in any way well, but they still have the image of God. What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? This is how they live, what their practice is, not what they claim. What communion has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever, a pisteia person with an apisteia person? What fellowship, what part, what portion, what shared present or future? Remember part, meros, this has to do with portion, with allotment.

What is the common ground? What is the allotment in the present and in the future of the trophies and the victories in Christ? What part has a believer with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? And if you are not worshiping God, you're worshiping idols, some way, shape or form, something has taken God's place. You are the temple of the living God. As God has said, I will dwell in them and walk among them.

I will be their God and they shall be my people. Therefore, verse 17, 2 Corinthians 6, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Make a distinction.

Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you. What is the flip side of that coin? If you maintain contact with that which is unclean, what happens to being received by God? What did John say? That you do not share in the evil. And if you share in the evil, you share in the judgment on that evil.

And that is not being received, not being acceptable in his sight. Be separate, says the

Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you.

I will be a father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. Our sonship is on the line. Who do you value more? Will you sacrifice relationship with God to maintain relationship with that which is unclean and God has commanded us to separate from? That's the choice.

To maintain it is to throw over acceptability in God's sight. We will not be accepted and recognized and blessed as his sons and daughters. We will not be received.

Do not touch what is unclean. Come out from among them and be separate. Don't greet, don't eat.

That's the exhortation of scripture. I emphasize this because we are virtually alone at this point. There are 7,000 that haven't bowed the knee to bail, but if you look at public Christianity, you will not find this being preached or taught.

And it is replete in scripture, old Testament and new. And shame on the people of God for not paying attention to the word of God and walking in that truth. We don't want to end up in that fellowship and suffer that penalty and that judgment.

Come up to the Lord. Lord, in your name did we not do all these wonderful works in the wrong direction and for the wrong reasons and failing to heed the word of God. What is Jesus going to say? I never knew you.

Much less present us before the father, holy and acceptable in his sight, without spot or wrinkle, blemish, any such thing. Won't happen. This matters.

This is important. We cannot progress. We cannot bear fruit.

We cannot abide in the vine if we constantly suffer mildew and blight in our leaves, in our associations. What's going to happen to blighted and withered and unproductive branches in the vine? They will be cut off. God says, I will trim so that what remains can bear more fruit.

I don't want to be trimmed off. I don't want to be useless and have the product of my life go up in flames as wood, hay and stubble, nor do you. The chaff is going to be burned.

The wheat is going to be gathered into the barn. This truth matters. We must distinguish those who are outside.

Next time, this coming Wednesday, we're going to look at, okay, if it's not outside, if it's inside, what's the difference in neighbor and one another? There are those who are neighbors. There are those who are one another's. And this is also a distinction we must make.

We'll see that on Wednesday. We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the clarity and the power of your word to shine a light on our path, to guide us, to give us insight and understanding, and to enable us to walk worthy of the calling with which we are called, to reflect the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ as his body, to do what he did, to live a life that is acceptable in your sight as he did, to reflect your glory as he did.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will give us understanding and the power to implement the truth that we find in your word so that we can truly fulfill our function and purpose in this life until the day you send the Lord Jesus to receive us to himself and present us before your throne. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Yeah. Well, I think a lot of us can look back. Mom was appreciating the distinction that we've seen in scripture on how to know with whom we associate and who we don't.

I think all of us can think back to times that we've not really followed that guidance and when has it ever turned out well. What we're gonna see this coming Wednesday, and I wish I'd had time to work it in as a little bit more of a hopeful note, but when someone comes to us, when someone approaches us, we have unbelievers in our periphery who will call up and say, hey, I'm driving across the country. I'd like to stop by.

That's an open invitation, but they are initiating and we are responding. And we can assume, giving the benefit of the doubt, that they want to be in our presence because there is something, some portion of the light that is shining that draws them and that they want more of. And so we can certainly extend hospitality toward those who approach us, but it is a different thing for us to initiate it and to try to cultivate it instead of waiting for that, what we can hope is a seeking note of some kind.

And so now, and this is what we'll see on Wednesday, it becomes a matter of who is initiating and who is responding. And that's where, and being harmless as doves, not ever putting someone off or shutting them out or acting as though there's not a path in to our fellowship or our friendship or our family or our good graces or whatever, to never leave that impression. Being harmless as doves means, like God, God never says, well, you've made one too many bad decisions, you can never come to me.

You know, it's never too late as long as we're breathing air, but there is a time when God no longer pursues, when he no longer initiates. He makes the initiation, people that don't respond, unless and until they decide to come of their own accord. You can see this represented in the prodigal son story.

The father is harmless as a dove. He doesn't do anything to discourage the return of his son, but he also doesn't send servants or go out himself to the hog trough and say, oh, son, won't you please come back? And the son says, well, okay, I guess I will. You don't see that.

And so there is a model there. We'll explore it more on Wednesday, but it's an excellent point to, you know, we don't want to be off-putting to those who might be in the process of developing a seeking heart.