

1Tim 24-03-13a

Good evening. This is the 13th of March, 2024. We're continuing our special study, looking at the gospel of the mystery as entrusted to, and communicated by the Apostle Paul.

This has been very fascinating, and has led us to the seven elements that are unique to that gospel, and disclosed in detail by the Apostle Paul. The first of which is the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. And that in turn has led us to try to improve our understanding of what it means to have the image of God, which is mentioned in Genesis chapter one, and the creation of Adam and Eve.

And then is mentioned again and emphasized by Paul when he talks about the incarnation. And not only as a characteristic of the Lord Jesus, but also the recovery of that image as we are transformed by the renewing of our minds into the image that was lost at the fall. And this informs our treatment of others, whether we are to treat them in the same category as one another's, to what extent are we to engage, because there is a false idea that everyone still bears the image of God, and should be treated as sacred, and be the object of as much charity and consideration as we can aim in their direction.

And this isn't what we're finding in scripture. It's a noble thought, it's appealing on many levels, but there is a way that seems right to a man, and the ends thereof are not where we wanna be. We wanna be on the narrow road, heading through the straight gate that leads to life, and not the broad road and the wide gate, and end up in destruction, the loss of the opportunities for stewardship, and glorifying God in the genuine sense by being conformed to the image of his son.

Romans 8, 28 through 30, we are destined by God ahead of time to be conformed to the image of his son. If we already have the image of God, then it's just a matter of dusting it off, not changing us, putting off the old man, and putting on the new man. We saw that last time.

So we're gonna continue that study. Let's ask God's blessing on it, and we'll begin. Father, what a privilege as always to spend time together, seeking to improve our understanding, to be more faithful and obedient, to understand your word and your will more completely so that we can represent the Lord Jesus as you would have us do in the time that remains to us on this earth.

We pray that as we look at the scriptures together, that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth, help us to see its pertinence, what the proper application is for us, and to grant us the strength, the courage, the peace of mind to live our lives in a way that is pleasing in your sight, that glorifies our Savior. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. So last time, we were looking at the scriptures that deal with those who are outside.

This is not a formal biblical distinction to divide people into three basic groups. It's more a matter of convenience, really. And we have three different kinds of terminology.

These are not completely discreet. There is some overlap, and it is sort of a concentric idea where there are people in general, there are those that are in our immediate periphery who we would call our neighbors. And then, of course, our loved ones are generally in our periphery, but there are a lot more people in our periphery than we would classify as loved ones or the one another's that we are directed to love.

So we were looking at the scriptures that deal with those who are outside. And it is very sobering that there are those from whom we are commanded to cut off contact, fellowship, don't eat, don't greet, don't consort, don't spend time in contact. And when we look at these scriptures together, we see that this is conditioned.

There are a few conditions on this. Paul said in 2 Corinthians, if you try to separate from everybody that's not walking a worthy walk, you would have to go out of the world. And in 1 Corinthians, he had instructed them to separate from an immoral brother who was shackled up with his stepmother.

And this caused a lot of grief and consternation. More information was passed back and forth. And Paul modified that initially rather severe indictment by saying, you've got to be smart about this.

We're not legalistic. We don't just take the word of God and bludgeon ourselves or others with it. So there is the need for discernment and for discretion.

And one of those conditions is who is initiating the contact. And we are not to slam our door in someone's face, to say you're evil, get thee hence. Even when Peter malfunctioned and said, Lord, you don't need to go to the cross and you don't need to be delivered into the hands of men.

And Jesus said to him, get thee behind me, Satan. You're thinking the thoughts of men and not the thoughts of God. He didn't excommunicate Peter from the disciples and say, I'm never talking to you again.

This was an episode. It was a moment. It was an immediate circumstance where Jesus told Peter, head of the class of the disciples, get out of my sight.

If somebody is behind you, they're out of your sight. Get out of my sight for now, because at present you are not thinking the thoughts of God. You're looking at things in human terms.

And so long as I am thinking in divine terms and you are thinking in human terms, we have no basis on which to maintain fellowship, discussion, and so on. Peter, you've got to go get your heart right. But that was not a permanently closed door.

So these are the kinds of things. These are just quick examples of what we're looking for. So we saw last time those who are outside is a pretty clear category of hostility to the Lord Jesus and hostility in this age to the Christian faith.

If they hate me, they're going to hate you, Jesus said. And people who hate the Lord Jesus are manifestly outsiders. Now this is hostility.

There's a difference in hostility versus apathy or indifference or lack of interest. People who are just disinterested are not necessarily hostile. They're not looking for a rock to throw.

But when Jesus sent his disciples out in Matthew 10, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. He didn't say I send you forth as sheep in the midst of goats or sheep in the midst of a barren land or sheep where there is little pasture and less water. He said, wolves, what the wolves do to sheep, they attack them, they kill them, they devour them, right? So these outsiders in Matthew 10, 16 are manifestly hostile, antagonistic, will not stand for Christian faith, Christian talk, Christian standards, Christian presence.

And you see this in our culture today. There are certain groups who have an agenda. They have a flag to fly.

They have a cause that they support. And it is in line with their own desires that are outside biblical standards in opposition to what the word of God teaches as far as morality, as far as justice and so on. And they are actively attacking Christian faith, attacking the Bible because they find it, it contraindicates their pet cause or their belief or their set of choices.

I want to live in this way. I want to be treated in this way. I want to flaunt some aspect of my alleged personality.

And the Bible comes out against that. So boo on the Bible, boo on Christians who believe it. Hostile, wolves.

So this is pretty easy to spot. I don't think we have difficulty identifying those who are our opponents and antagonists and who would like to see us gone. There is another group that is not very interested, if interested at all.

They will tolerate Christian presence, Christian beliefs, Christian teachings, Christian views, but not for very long. They will either wander away or walk away at varying speeds, but they are not interested. Jesus said, there is a difference in those who are for me and those who are against me.

And so in Mark 4 11, when the disciples come to him and say, why do you speak to the crowds in parables? These are crowds, they're not staying home saying, I have no interest in the Galilean carpenter or whatever they viewed him as. They have come out,

they have sat and they have listened. And Jesus is telling these stories in parable form and they're listening, but they're scratching their head and pretty soon they're just going to wander away.

So when the disciples ask Jesus, and these are not wolves, they're not picking up stones to stone him. The Pharisees incite this kind of reaction at other occasions, but not in this case. The mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to you, Jesus says to his disciples in Mark 4 11.

The mystery has been given to you. Notice there is a prototype mystery that is given to the disciples at the close of the age of Israel with the coming of the Lord Jesus. He is revealing mysteries, but only to a select group.

Right? In the same way that in the church age, there are mysteries to be revealed and understood, but only to a select group. And most of those who identify as Christians or claim to be Christians are not interested enough to enter into the revelation of the mysteries that we are looking at in this study. They don't understand the implications of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They don't understand the implications of the blindness that has happened to Israel. They don't understand or care about the possibility of Christ in you, the hope of glory, the indwelling Christ, and the other aspects of that sevenfold revelation. They're just not interested.

It doesn't mean they're not Christians in the same way that it doesn't mean these people weren't people of God, Jews, those to whom Jesus was sent. The father sent Jesus to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They're lost.

Well, which ones are gonna hearken to the voice of the shepherd and follow him back to the fold? Those who don't hearken and follow, it doesn't make them not sheep. And it also doesn't make them wolves. They're in an intermediate area.

They're not hostile, but they are not endeavoring to get on the narrow road and head through the straight gate. So this is why I suggest that for convenience sake, we can think of people in our world in these three general categories. There are those who are hostile, those who are neighbors, and those who are in the inner circle, the one another's.

And there is some overlap in those first two groups. How do I know if somebody is a neighbor or an outsider? What if he's not a believer, but he's not hostile? Do I always treat him as a neighbor? Do I treat him as an outsider? There is a blurry line there. And we don't have to define that line until it becomes important for application.

We can err on the side of generosity and use the neighbor rules. The rules are very general for those who are outside. They are more specific for a neighbor and they are

extremely specific.

There are around 60 commands for the one another's. We're gonna look at those tonight. But let's start by looking at those who are outside.

This is review. Those on the outside, everything is in parables. In this case, those who are outside, formally speaking, if we're gonna use our definitions, they are neighbors.

They're right here in the periphery. The disciples can take bread and fish out to these people, right? They're not Romans. They're not Gentiles.

They're not Samaritans. They're not Syrophenicians. They are fellow Israelites.

And using our definitions, Jesus says those who are outside, meaning outside this inner circle of one another's. So when you say outside, outside of what? That's Mark 4.11. Paul tells believers of this age in Colossians 4, verse five, walk in wisdom toward those who are outside. And once again, these can be neighbors.

They can be the truly outside, the wolves, the hostile, the antagonistic world. In either of those cases, does it make sense that Paul would say walk in wisdom when you're in contact with those that are not in the immediate fellowship? Be wise, be wise as serpents, but harmless as doves. And Paul says in Ephesians 5.15 in this same point, pay careful attention then to how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise.

So this is why we're undertaking this study is to try to cultivate a wise walk. The extremes are pretty easy to deal with. We know when someone is in our intimate circle and the one another commands apply.

We know when someone is a hostile wolf wanting to eat us up and is a minion of Satan. It's the ones that are in between where we really need wisdom to understand how far is far enough? Where is a line of separation drawn? If there's going to be one, what are my responsibilities? So that's where we're gonna focus our attention. But in Ephesians 5.15 and 16, we pay careful attention to how we walk, not unwisely, but wisely as wise individuals, redeeming the time because the days are evil.

Redeeming the time. This is an important aspect of wisdom. If we are gonna walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, ones that we're not doing the one another's for, who don't wanna speak the truth to one another in love, don't wanna encourage one another, aren't in that circle of active and growing faith, we need wisdom.

One of the aspects of that wisdom, write this down somewhere, stick it in the margin outside of 5.15 and 16 in Ephesians. One of the aspects of wise walk is not wasting time. Good use of time, stewardship of time.

There can be people who are not wolves, nor are they intimate brothers and sisters in

Christ that are an encouragement and we benefit from the exercise of mutual spiritual gifts and all of the one another's are functioning and this is just as good as it gets in terms of Christian fellowship. Those who are in between, one of the ways to figure out how to act is does the time I spend in engagement, in fellowship, in conversation, in contact, does that time bear any fruit? Is there, and I do this prayerfully, I ask God for wisdom. Remember in James, ask God for wisdom and that's not a prayer he's gonna fail to answer in the affirmative.

I'm not asking for financial genius wisdom, Lord, tell me how to get rich, Lord, tell me how to succeed, Lord, tell me how to beat this competitor. I'm asking for wisdom. When Solomon asked God for wisdom, God said, I'm not just gonna give you wisdom, I'm gonna give you all kinds of things because you asked for wisdom.

So wisdom and an aspect of wisdom, an important aspect is what is the result of your stewardship of time if it is spent invested in these people that are in the indeterminate middle? If the time spent seems to move me toward the darkness, tends to defile me and drag me into sin and sinful attitudes and tends to distract me, if it takes away my peace, godly contact and the exercise of divine wisdom does not rob us of our peace. And if spending time with individuals, we come away troubled, we come away darkened, we come away deflected and distracted and our emotions get stirred up and we've been in the presence of sinful behavior and sinful attitudes and the kind of lack of interest in the Lord Jesus that isn't necessarily a hostile, but it is a drag. It's an anchor to the soul.

If it does not uplift, if it does not edify and you say, well, I believe this is in the realm of believers, fruitful time spent, redeeming the time will edify. Iron will sharpen iron. We will build one another up in love.

If we come away feeling torn down and we're pretty certain the other person didn't get anything out of that time spent, we're not redeeming the time. So put it down. Dealing in wisdom is analyzing the fruit of sin of time, the fruit of time spent, fruit of time invested.

And it doesn't necessarily mean, well, that time wasn't well spent, that, well, I'm not gonna spend any more time, but it means we're gonna have to heighten our awareness and limit our time and watch for time that does bear fruit. To him who has more will be given. And if we spend a little time and it seems to bear fruit, that would encourage us to spend more time.

If we spend time and it does not bear any fruit and has kind of the opposite effect, that is a signal to reduce time, not necessarily cut off and you are dead to me, but to be cautious about getting dragged into a swamp and to consciously limit that contact and wait for that person to initiate contact rather than saying, let me greet you, let me eat with you. I would like to come over and spend time with you. We conserve, we circle the wagons a bit and wait and hope that there will be some spark of interest that will bring them to us.

Our light is supposed to shine and draw people. We are not told to take our flashlight, turn it on bright and go shine it in people's faces. Our light should shine through our life.

And those who are drawn to the light will be drawn to God the Father through us, not drawn to us as an end in itself. If they're drawn to us and they're not really in Christ, not operating in Christ, what is the motivation? Well, I get security, I get comfort. Somebody, I can cry on their shoulder, they will listen to me.

This is why people pay counselors so that they can lay on a couch and for an hour, this person is a captive audience who will listen to whatever I say and nod their head sympathetically. That is not help. That's an expenditure of time that does not bear fruit.

Airing your dirty laundry out in front of somebody doesn't wash the laundry, it's dirty laundry. You don't hang it to clean it, it's got to be washed and it really needs to be washed in the blood of the lamb and us listening doesn't do that. So we've got to be wise.

And that's why this Colossians and Ephesians are so important. Colossians 4, 5, Ephesians 5, 15 and 16. Just spend time prayerfully thinking about specific situations in this light.

The days are evil by default and we've got to redeem the time by investing that time productively. Exercising faith, living a life that God can shine his light in and through and let God work in the lives of others. 1 Thessalonians 4, 12, to behave properly toward outsiders is to not be dependent on anyone.

Behaving properly toward outsiders, not being dependent on anyone. We saw this last time. 1 Timothy 3, 7, a qualification for leadership in a local group, a local assembly, an elder, an episkopos, specifically an overseer must have a good report in the eyes of those who are outside.

Outside where? Are these neighbors or are these truly hostile wolves? Well, a good report isn't going to come from the wolves. It's going to come from those who are outside the fellowship but are in the periphery and close enough to observe and to form an opinion. And so these would be largely in the neighbor category.

They are nearby, there is contact, but it's not intimate fellowship. They are outside the one another's circle, but we should not be doing anything that makes neighbors and onlookers and passersby and those standing by have an ill report. Our good should not be spoken of as evil and not to say that there can't be any criticism or any question or any frown.

Well, why aren't you doing more in this, that or the other category? But the individual episkopos shouldn't have people who say, you know, he took out a loan from me and never paid it. He borrowed something from me and never brought it back. He moved the

fences and refused to admit it.

He has dealt underhandedly with me in business or in commerce or in some social activity. This is individual to individual, you know, where is the, he asked me for a cloak and I gave him the coat also. He asked me to go a mile, I went twain.

He was sort of, he treated me in a shameful fashion. This is the slapping of the face. And I didn't retort, I didn't respond in kind.

If he wants to keep shaming me in some public fashion, I'm just gonna let it go. That's turning the other cheek. Turning the other cheek is not failing to defend yourself from physical harm and threat.

A slap in the face, and Jesus shows this image carefully, a slap in the face is public disparagement. It is trying to shame you or make you ashamed in public for my name's sake, as Jesus speaks. There are times when we absolutely do defend ourselves, but not from a slap.

So 1 Corinthians 5, 12, and 13. Remember 1 Corinthians, there are diffugalties and disagreements, so much so that the Corinthians are starting to take each other to secular court, to sue each other in civil court. And Paul says, you're talking about people on the outside, what do I have to do with that? Do you not judge those who are within? There are those who are within and those who are without.

And it's reinforcing the fact that we've got to figure out where people stand. We don't have an indiscriminate policy that is one size fits all. Our love is not tube socks.

We figure out where someone is. There are those who are outside and those who are inside. So he goes on to say in 1 Corinthians, I am writing to you, this is 1 Corinthians 5, 11, not to associate with anyone, and here are the conditions, who claims to be a brother, but.

Now this is Paul writing to Corinth. This is the church age, Pentecost has happened. These words apply to all of us as much as they did then.

Do not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother, but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a verbal abuser, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man, do not even eat. We had this same exhortation in 2 John.

What business of mine is it to judge those outside the church? You know, these kinds of things go on outside the church. Well, there's a different set of rules that apply to that. These rules apply inside.

You are to judge those who claim to be brothers. God will judge those outside in verse 13. And 13 goes on to say, 1 Corinthians 5, 13, expel the wicked man from among you.

Now, here is my understanding of the application of this passage. Because what does it mean that someone claims to be a brother? I don't think this just means someone who claims to be a Christian. I think this is someone who claims to be worthy and part of the inner circle of intimate one another fellowship.

They claim to be on the narrow road going through the straight gate. They claim to be worthy of all of the one another considerations. And Paul says, you expel them from your inner circle.

And this means that they're not wolves in the sense of hostile and antagonistic and trying to extinguish and completely eliminate and erase Christianity. But they are claiming to be faithful. They are claiming to be doing the worthy walk.

They are claiming to be worthy of our intimate fellowship. And yet they are doing these things. These are practices and characteristics and behaviors.

So do not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother but is sexually immoral. And there's several different kinds of behavior that qualify for that description. Or greedy.

Greedy would mean I am in it for what I can get. I'm talking a big fight, but notice how many free meals I get or notice I get emotional comfort or I get a sleepover or I get sympathy or I get this or I get that. Greedy isn't just money.

Greedy is I am going to try to get something from you that I'm not really worthy of. And I want for self-gratifying reasons, not because it's glorifying to Christ, not because it builds up the fellowship and reflects the glory of the Father, but I need it. The needy can be greedy.

And well, I feel bad if you're not spending time with me and so on. And I don't want to feel bad, I want to feel good. Making someone feel better about themselves or feel better that everything is okay does not glorify God in and of itself.

Feeling better is not a godly goal. Reflecting the glory of God, laying hold of righteousness by faith, representing the Lord Jesus Christ is a worthy goal. And sometimes that representation means separation.

And the best way to get someone to be confronted is to let them know all is not well, that this is not right, this is not good. You are not acceptable as you are. You have made choices, you have adopted stances, you are engaging in behaviors that are anti-God, that are dismissive of Christ.

And if you claim to be a brother, but you have no interest in loving the Lord Jesus and having and keeping his words, you're not like me and you are not one of us. And it's bad stewardship for me to try to invest time and throwing pearls before swine, casting what is holy to dogs. It's, that is a waste and a kind of sacrilege.

So expel the wicked man. And this is someone who is claiming to be a brother, but is actually practicing wickedness. And you have to remember also that when Paul writes this, he is considering those who are outside the fellowship.

And if those outside the fellowship see those inside the fellowship with improper toleration of wickedness, what does that do to the reputation of the group and reputation of the overseers in that group who are supposed to be well thought of outside as those who have integrity and maintain a standard. And it's not just, well, it's just between me and this immoral brother or brother claimant. There are those in the periphery who can be caused to stumble because they say, well, I had a hard time overcoming this particular evil in my own life.

And yet you're just totally accepting of it in this other person. Why did I bother? If it's acceptable to you and acceptable to God, why did I, why am I trying to make progress on the moral front and leave behind old ways and old immoralities and try to follow Christ when everything seems to be okay with this other person? What's the point of progress? And it can be deeply confusing to onlookers if we do not reflect God's values, God's righteousness and God's guidance when it comes to how we act with those in our periphery. So it's important.

And this is even an Old Testament concept. In Deuteronomy 13, five, a prophet or dreamer that starts spreading words that don't come from God, oh, this is okay, 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. This prophet or dreamer has tried to turn you from the way which the Lord, your God has commanded you to walk, commanded you to walk.

What is our walk? We walk in wisdom toward those who are outside. And there are those with whom we maintain distance. We hate the garment that is spotted by the flesh.

We touch not the unclean thing. And it is necessary. Somebody has to represent the holiness of God on earth.

And if we don't do it, who will? Are we gonna hope they'll pick up a Bible and read a passage that says, you really shouldn't be doing that? Or is the presence of Christ on earth that method? And Jesus' current incarnation, which is His body, which is us, needs to reflect the Lord's values. And He was not indiscriminate in His fellowship. He was willing to accept anyone.

He even went to the house of Pharisees who invited Him to come and eat at their table. He said, well, Jesus, didn't you listen to yourself? Haven't you seen the woes to the Pharisees and all of the brood of vipers and whitewashed tombstones and wiping the outside of the dish and full of defilement and dead men's bones? How could you go to this man's house? He was invited. The man treated Him very shamefully.

And this is where the woman washes his feet with her tears and dries them with her hair and so on. And the man's name is Simon. And Jesus comes because He was invited.

But Jesus stands for the truth. And He doesn't let this disrespectful behavior pass. And this wrongful speaking about this wonderful woman who appreciates the Lord Jesus to such an extent and who is acknowledging and repentant of her sin where Simon the Pharisee is not.

And Jesus calls it out. And this might've been considered rude, but well, you've come to my table to eat my food. Now you're insulting me.

You insulted me first. And now you're insulting a woman who is one of my one and others. And Jesus calls out the Pharisee, but He didn't refuse to come.

Those who approached Jesus, Nicodemus comes by night. Jesus didn't slam the door and say, get out of here, you Pharisee. Those who inquired, those who asked Him questions in the crowds, even hostile and antagonistic and unkind questions.

He responded. Why did He say that? He opened not His mouth. He uttered not a word.

He engaged when they, it's at least interest. It's some kind of curiosity and Jesus gave it every chance. And when it manifested itself as uninterested, not seeking, hostile, then Jesus had no further contact.

You could imagine He didn't go back to the house of Simon the Pharisee a second time. Unlike Zacchaeus, who is also a tax collector, but Jesus goes to his house. And that is a wonderful, productive use of the Lord Jesus' time.

It bears fruit. There is positive faith and righteousness expressed. It's a wonderful example.

And we can tell what is the fruit of spending this time. So walking in wisdom toward these that are not necessarily easily identifiable as wolves and also clearly not in the inner circle of my blessed family of brothers and sisters in Christ, who I would trust with my life and they would trust me with theirs. This indeterminate middle is where we need wisdom and we need guidance from scripture.

So hopefully watching what we do with our time and watching for response. Is there progress toward the light on the part of this person or is there regress and walking away? It doesn't take long to figure that out. Is there a selfish interest in their cultivation of fellowship with us? Are they needy and wanting something to gratify themselves? Or is there something beyond interest in us? I wanna ask you a reason for the hope that is in you.

There's something in your life and I want that in my life. And it goes beyond, I just need

you to accept me. I need you to talk to me.

I need you to let me cry on your shoulder and so on. That is discernment. And if that asking a reason for our hope, if that tracking of the light and trying to progress past us to the Lord Jesus and through him to the father, if that seeking note is not present, this is the time to start reducing the time and backing away in the distance and let God do his work.

Think of the father of the prodigal son, what he did do and what he did not do during the entire time that his beloved son bore the very same relationship to him as the son who stayed. They are both sons. They are both believers, as it were.

They have a personal relationship with the father, but the father does not pursue, does not cajole, does not invite, does not wheedle, doesn't try to encourage with presence and comfort and a soggy shoulder. Father held his ground. If you're gonna be in my household, you have to come to me on my terms.

And that is the repentant change of mind, the prodigal son develops. I will go to my father. He treats his servants wonderfully.

I will at least get that good a treatment if I go to him. And he gets that and so much more. Well, food for thought.

We'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll finish this and we're gonna get into the one and others. We know what it's like for the outsiders.

That's a firm bracket on one side. We know the one and others, which we're gonna look at now. That'll be the firm bracket on the inside.

And then we're gonna do artillery and we'll split the bracket and figure out what to do in the middle.