

1Tim 24-03-20a

Greetings, fellow citizens, denizens of Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is Wednesday, the 20th of March, 2024. We're continuing our special study on the gospel communicated by Paul, the elements that were previously a mystery and have now been revealed.

And we are looking specifically at the first element, which is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. What is its significance, both as it relates to him and as it relates to us, being his body. And this has led us to a discussion of the image of God, trying to understand what scripture does and does not say about that.

And the guidance that we have from the word of God on how we should treat people in our periphery, those with whom we have contact, whether they are within the innermost circle of our fellowship, whether they are in the neighbor category or those who are outside. And there is specific and differing guidance from God for us. And understanding it helps us to live our lives in a way that is pleasing and obedient and bears fruit and doesn't reflect poor stewardship of our time and opportunities.

So it's a very important study, very central. It's hard to get through a day without being in contact with people and understanding the guidance that we have from the Lord on what our priorities should be in that regard is just extremely helpful. It certainly has been for me in recent days.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study and we'll dive right in. Father, it is such a wonderful privilege that we are not left to find our own way and to be confused or uncertain about what you would have us do. You've given us such wonderful, clear guidance in the word from the Lord Jesus, from the apostle Paul, from Peter and John and the other New Testament authors.

And we see the foreshadowing and the patterns established in the Old Testament. What a wonderful treasury and resource your word is for us. We thank you for the presence of the Holy Spirit to give us the supernatural ability to not only observe, but also interpret and apply the truths we find in your word.

We pray that as we look at it together tonight, that his ministry will be active, that we, in treasuring your word, will find the Lord Jesus and your own presence with us as we seek to be good stewards of what remains to us in this life. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

As we continue our study looking at these wonderful truths, we have already seen the importance of reflecting the image of God and that is found in Jesus Christ. And we've been trying to determine, and it's really fascinating if you look at the literature across the centuries from the church fathers on down, what the understanding of the image of God has been historically and theologically and so on. And there are three different ideas

about the image of God, that it's structural, that it's relational, or that it's functional.

I'm not going to review all of those. You can go to any competent article on the web and read about these historic understandings. We're just going to cut right to the chase.

Here is my conclusion. Turn back with me to Genesis chapter 1, verses 26 through 28. We've looked at this across recent weeks.

But you shouldn't need the internet, you shouldn't need a stack of commentaries, you shouldn't need the opening of the early church fathers and Calvin and Luther and Constantine and all of these others, Kyle and Dalich, and everybody has weighed in on the image of God. You and I have God, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God, and it's really all we need. And I think because it doesn't just spell it out at this point, it led to confusion, but it's super simple.

And once you see this, you won't be able to unsee it. So you look at Genesis chapter 1, verses 26 through 28. God said, let us make man in our image according to our likeness.

Let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, over all earth, over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in his image. In the image of God, he created him.

Male and female, he created them. And in our past studies, we've seen that over and over again, when you find scripture invoking the image of God in the context, you tend to find dominion. You tend to find the exercise of authority.

Take charge of this post and all government property in view. That seems to be the associated idea, right? Now the likeness is not dominion itself, but there is this close connection between them. So turn to Genesis 5, which we have also seen.

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God, created them male and female, blessed them and called them mankind. In the day they were created, Adam lived 130 years and begat in his own likeness and after his image and named him Seth, right? So what happened here? We're omitting for the moment consideration of mankind and able, but what do we call this when a man begets a male offspring? What do we call that male offspring? He's not a daughter.

He is a son. How many times in scripture do we see, in fact, turn over to the Gospels. This is a spur of the moment, so I'll have to check to see which one.

But in Luke, you have the genealogy of the Lord Jesus. In Matthew, you also have the genealogy and one of those two traces it forward and the other traces it backward, remember? And so in Luke chapter three, for example, you have the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, Mathat, Levi, Jonah, and you go all the way back, son of whom, son of whom

working all the way back and look at Luke 3.38. We've gotten down to Jared, the son of Mahalo, the son of Canaan, the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God, Luke 3.38, son of Seth, son of Adam, the son of God. In this passage, the relationship of Adam to God is exactly the same as the relationship of Seth to Adam, son of, right? Being the son of someone doesn't necessarily imply physical begetting.

Jesus innumerable times is called the son of David. Jews call themselves sons of Abraham, right? But that is the relationship of image and likeness. Adam is a son of God because he is created in God's image and after God's likeness and is thus a chip off the old block in whatever sense you choose to invoke.

But for the time being, let's simplify the idea of image and likeness as being sonship. This seems reasonable, doesn't it? Sonship. So with that in mind, let's take a look at the difference between those who are inside and those who are outside.

The neighborhood can have both outsiders, you can have a complete enemy across your backyard fence or next door to you in the neighborhood, or you can have a wonderful brother in Christ. My two literal brothers lived next door to each other for a period of time. But it is easy to distinguish the one another's and it is easy to distinguish the goats, the wolves, those who are labeled by the Lord Jesus as those before whom you do not put what is holy and you do not cast your pearls because they are completely other.

So one of the ways that this is helpful looking at the image of God in terms of sonship is in that discernment. So for example, we've seen the one another's and all of the one another commands. We reviewed those and the great majority of them were, here are the things, be kind one to another, forgive one another, love one another nearly 20 times, love one another deeply from the heart, greet one another with a holy kiss.

We saw all of those positive things over the last two sessions. And the reciprocal nature of that helps us understand with whom those one another commands apply. If we are trying to fulfill a one another command and it's not coming back toward us in like fashion, we're aiming it in the wrong direction.

These only work in the family. It only works when it is between brothers and sisters in Christ. Sending it one way doesn't work.

Now, it doesn't mean that we cannot be kind to those who are not one another's. It doesn't mean that we should not be courteous, be civil, be considerate, be self-sacrificial and so on. We don't do it because it is in the one another commands.

There is a different basis upon which we act toward those who are outside. In many cases, the behavior will be the same. We are tolerant.

We are forgiving. We don't bear grudges and so on. But it isn't based on a one another command.

It is based on other guidance that says, this is how you should be toward those who are outside. And one of the central and easiest is right in our first Timothy three passage, where our good should not be spoken of as evil, and we should have a good reputation with those who are outside. The leadership of the church are examples of what everyone in the church should be.

So when an episkopos, an overseer, is to be temperate, measured, self-controlled and so on, all of us should try to cultivate those qualities. And the only way we can achieve the fruitful result of that effort is to work in the power of the spirit and the word of God. The power of God has to change us.

But these elders and overseers in the church are supposed to be examples of what God can do in and through us with his spirit and his word. So having a good reputation, working quietly with our own hands, not being busybodies, not being troublemakers, not stirring up conflict, not opposing the government, fear God, honor the king, respect those who have the rule over you and render to Caesar what is due to Caesar. These are all outsider commands, and we are to create no occasion for hostility.

Only if our obedience to our central commands, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, if you get in trouble because the government says don't meet together as a church and you do it anyway, there is a law that trumps the civil law, that out distances it, that takes precedence over it. That's relatively rare, at least in our day. In the Roman Empire it was somewhat different, but if the government demands that you forswear your faith and deny Christ, well, you're going to have to observe the higher law.

But normally we are submissive. We submit ourselves under these ordained authorities by God. That's outsider.

But notice, we don't do it because of the one another commands. There's a different set of commands that apply to those who are outside. Well, let's talk about those who are outside.

We've already seen that Jesus told his disciples, I am sending you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. There is a difference that the Lord Jesus recognized. Some people are sheep, some people are wolves.

In the same way that some people are wheat and some people are chaff, the wheat is going to be gathered into the barn and the chaff is going to be burned with unquenchable fire. There is a difference and it is discernible. It is noticeable.

This is why Jesus said, you don't pick fruit off of thorns and thistles. By their fruit you shall know them. Well, if everybody's basically the same and the same rules apply to the treatment of everyone, why do I need to discern them by their fruit? We observe fruit, we discern, we do not judge, we do not punish, we do not castigate, we do not bad

mouth and malign and gossip about people and feel like we have a free license.

One of the things you will notice in the more extreme fringes of political opinion on any side of a question, there are people who believe that some political figure, a past or current president, for example, that's going to be running for office this year, that that individual is such a rascal and so evil that anything you say, any mocking, deriding, dismissive and bitter vindictive speech about them is okay because they are so bad. And that part of the human soul that likes to find a place where the rules don't apply, there's nothing you can say about this individual that isn't okay in the negative sense because they're just evil incarnate, they're such a bad example of humanity in general and a political figure in particular that nothing you say is wrong when you're disparaging them. The place in the soul where that originates and from which it is expressed is the exact same place where genuine grade A, 24 karat racism originates.

This is the kind of thinking that made white people in the South think that any black person was, there's nothing off limits in oppressing or mocking and deriding and judging and keeping down put burning crosses in their yard, lynch them if you think they need it and that they are not worth what classic racism is. And it has existed in other countries, racism in the South is our most immediate example, but there's plenty of it to go around all over the world. But the place that that originates in the human soul is the exact same place that vicious political disparagement comes from.

And there is a part of human nature, fallen human nature that wants to find somebody that the gloves are off and it's no holds barred. If they're in favor of abortion or reproductive rights or whatever, well, there's nothing too vicious that I can't aim at them. Some cause, some identity, some behavior gives me the license to kill.

I've got a double O seven license. I can do anything I want to them because I am so right and they are so wrong. That is dangerous and it is sinful.

Anything that originates from that part of the human soul is by definition evil. And in many cases it is hypocritical. People that are ready to jump on any shadow of racism, systemic racism, or whatever else you want to say are the very same people who will launch these interminable tirades of abusive, mocking derision against someone they don't like in the political realm.

And it is coming from the very same place as the racism that they are so fanatical about calling out. Well, what kind of a nature are we talking about? Those who are outside, we also saw this in Mark 4 11 when Jesus said, the mystery of the kingdom is given to you, my disciples, but to those who are outside, everything is in parables. 1 Thessalonians 4 12.

When you look at 1 Thessalonians 4, having given three plus chapters of guidance, Paul says, then you will behave properly toward outsiders and you will not be dependent on

anyone. Work quietly with your own hands and so on. This is our deportment, how we comport ourselves with regard to those who are outside.

1 Timothy 3 7, I've already alluded to, an overseer must have a good report from those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. And the snare of the devil originates with those who are outside. And we saw 1 Corinthians 5 in that regard.

Do we judge those who are outside or those who are inside? And Paul says, I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who claims to be a brother, but is, and then he gives a list of behaviors. And we come down to 2 John, which we've looked at in detail, but I want to focus in this session on understanding the image of God or lack thereof in terms of sonship. The two people we absolutely know with no question, debate or argument that reflect the image of God are Adam in the day that he was created and the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no dispute. There is no debate that Adam was created in the image and likeness of God. And so is the Lord Jesus.

In fact, here's a little trivia question for you. What is the difference in the first Adam and the last Adam with respect to the image of God? There's, it's a preposition. It's a two letter preposition.

The preposition is a preposition. Adam is created in the image after the likeness. The Lord Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

He's not after it. He's not in it. He is it.

And that's the difference between an Adam who falls and fails and an Adam who doesn't. He is the image of the invisible God. Adam is created in the image and after the likeness.

But let's look at things that are said in scripture and you might think, where is this coming from? Acts 13. Acts chapter 13. This is a very profitable example to look at.

Acts chapter 13. Paul is out doing his work of an apostle in communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. And when you get to 13, he's in Antioch and there are prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon, called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manan, who had brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul.

They ministered to the Lord and fasted. The Holy Spirit said, separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work. And in verse four, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, notice they didn't just decide, well, we've got this commission to go to the Gentiles.

Let's throw a dart at the map. The Holy Spirit guided them to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they arrived in Solomus, they preached the word of God in

the synagogues of the Jews.

They also had John Mark as their assistant. Look at verse six. When they had gone through the island in Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus.

What does Bar mean in Aramaic? Simon Bar-Jonah. What does that mean? What's our topic? Son of. So this is a false prophet, a Jew named Bar-Jesus, son of Jesus, who was with the proconsul Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man.

This man, Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, Roman proconsul, called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. What a wonderful thing. Here is a Gentile who hears that they're in the area and says, hey, would you come talk to me? I'm interested.

But Elimus, the sorcerer, for so his name is translated, Elimus is Bar-Jesus, withstood them seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. So what kind of guy is this? Insider or outsider? He's a Jew and he says he's Bar-Jesus, but what is he in practice? He is an enemy of the faith, right? He is resisting the faith and he is seeking to turn people away from the faith. He is a false prophet.

So Saul, in verse 9, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit. This is such a key. He is led to come here by the Holy Spirit and now he is going to speak in the Holy Spirit.

When we pray about our relationships with people and we're trying to discern, is this one another? Is this neighbor? Is this someone who is on the outside? Lord, give me wisdom and let me hear and heed the guidance of your Holy Spirit. Lead me into the truth. Give me the words that I need to say in the presence of this individual.

Help me with my discernment to know on what ground I stand as I deal with this person in my periphery. Saul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him. This is face-to-face personal contact.

Why does scripture say he looked intently at him? This is concentration and focus, right? Paul takes a beat. He doesn't speak immediately. He looks at him without speaking, concentrates, considers, probably sent up a quick prayer for wisdom and words, right? While he is looking, he is not speaking.

He looked intently at him. Just take a moment, pray, consider, find that wisdom from God that is promised in such situations. Then he said, O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? Now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind, not seeing the Son.

Remember when Saul himself was resisting God and those who wanted to come to faith in Christ and was persecuting Christians in the name of Judaism, and he was struck blind.

So he knows whereof he speaks. He is looking intently.

Why? He is no longer blind. The blindness that struck him on Damascus Road is gone, and the Holy Spirit is giving him perception and sight. This is what we want.

And what does he see when he aims his perception at Elimas, bar Jesus? You are a son of the devil, and you are perverting the ways of the Lord, the straight ways, the simple ways, the direct ways. A straight way is simple and direct, isn't it? And living our lives to please the Lord is simple and direct. It doesn't take reading mounds of commentaries.

It doesn't mean we've got to read stacks of opinions and ideas. It's simple and straight. We have the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

We know that in the hour we are representing the Lord Jesus before decision makers and so on, that the words will be given to us. So we take a beat, remember who we are and why we're here, and then we speak the truth. But I'm interested here in this idea that Elimas is a son of the devil.

Now, this reminds me of John 8. Flip back to John 8. Jesus is speaking in John 8 to the Pharisees and to the Jews who listen to and follow their teaching. And you remember this context we can pick up in the vicinity of verse 37. I know you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill me because my word has no place in you.

I speak what I have seen with my father. If Jesus says God in heaven is his father, what does that make Jesus? The Son of God. I speak what I have seen with my father and you do what you have seen with your father.

What is the difference between the followers of the Lord Jesus and the Pharisees and those who listen to them, the Jews, in this context? They have different fathers. Those who hear me love my father and therefore they love me because I am the son of the father. You keep going here.

They answered and said Abraham is our father. Jesus said if you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God.

Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father. They said we were not born of fornication.

We have one father, God. Jesus said if God were your father, verse 42, John 8, if God were your father, you would love me. For I proceeded forth and came from God, nor have I come of myself but he sent me.

Why do you not understand my speech? Because you are not able to listen to my word. You are of your father the devil and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a

murderer from the beginning, does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.

That is why these people are rejecting the truth that Jesus speaks and they are seeking to kill the Lord Jesus, which is murder. He has done nothing worthy of death under the law of Moses, but they are seeking to kill him because they are of their father. Now, think about this and then try to get back to this notion that the image of God is in every man, that there is something essential about every human being that partakes of God.

It is a divine spark. It is worthy of respect and we should target love and charity and good works toward people. Jesus said he never invokes the image of God.

He does not say you are sullying it, you are suppressing it. Who are you the son of? It is evident in what you do. Bilineal descendancy can say that I am a son of Abraham, but if you do not act like Abraham, you are not a son of Abraham.

If you are acting like the devil because he is a liar and a murderer and wants to suppress the truth, then you are a son of the devil. Elemas is suppressing the truth in Acts 13 and he is a son of the devil. We looked briefly at the idea of Belial and who is Belial? Belial is the embodiment of antipathy and animosity toward God and the things of God.

So he is a murderer and a liar from the beginning. He does not stand in the truth. There is no truth in him.

When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources. He is a liar and the father of it. Satan is the father of lies in multiple contexts.

So this idea of father and son, whose image do you reflect? We can only reflect the image of God to the extent that we walk in love and truth. So to understand the image of God, remember, Adam is the son of God. Seth is the son of Adam, image and likeness.

Sonship is image and likeness in its essence. So who are you the son of? Those people who are outsiders, who are wolves, who are the swine who turn and tear believers to pieces when they try to share the pearls, those dogs who do not respect what is holy, the goats in the sheep and goats judgment. There is a difference.

A sheep is not a goat and a goat is not a sheep. The dogs are not children and the children are not dogs. Whose father are we talking about? Is your father the devil or is your father God and those who are faithful to God? David, Abraham, and so on.

So this is a really important point. Verse 47, he who is of God, if there is any connection, any relationship with God, verse 47 of this chapter, he who is of God hears God's words. Therefore you do not hear because you are not of God.

You are not of God. You are of your father, the devil. And there is really no escaping it.

There is no rescuing of this status by saying, but don't they still have the image of God? There is no functional or applicational value in saying somebody bears the image of God when Jesus says you are of your father, the devil, and you are going to share his fate and you are not of the truth. You are a murderer and a liar because you are of your father and you are not of God. And he is talking to some of the foremost religious experts that ever lived.

Old Testament quoted chapter and verse. They didn't even have chapters and verses. So turn to 1 John 3. In fact, this is a good place for us to pause and take our break and we will come back and do 1 John 3 because I have several points to make from that chapter.

But to summarize and to distill and to make quick application of the truths we are learning because we are the Lord Jesus body. We represent him. We want to do in our lives what he did in his life on this earth.

And notice that the Lord Jesus made a clear distinction between those who are of the father and those who are of the devil. And it is how people act. When Simon Peter starts trying to divert the Lord Jesus from his mission to go to Jerusalem and be delivered into the hands of men and be crucified and rise the third day.

And he says, Oh no Lord, don't do that. Let it not be so. What does Jesus reply? Get thee behind me.

Who? Satan. You are thinking the thoughts of men and not the thoughts of God. And to the extent that that becomes a pattern in our lives, we reflect sonship.

This is infinitely more important than trying to rationalize actions on the basis of some imaginary image of God. The scripture never invokes in this context, never invokes in terms of our application. We have plenty of other guidance, plenty of other foundations given for how we are to treat others, those near at hand, those who are neighbors and those who are outside.

But none of that is ever linked to image of God. It is linked directly to whose son are you? Whose son is he? Remember they didn't understand in his own town, Nazareth, when Jesus went there, prophet is not without honor. Why? Is this not the son of Mary? And do we not know his brothers and sisters? And they didn't recognize whose son Jesus was.

They tried to link him to an earthly origin and didn't understand his sonship. So critical. The image of God resolves itself very nicely and simply when you look at it as it is introduced in Genesis chapter one and in Genesis chapter five.

Adam, son of God, image and likeness. When he sinned, what happened to that image and likeness? Is Adam still the son of God in sin? We need the second Adam, the last Adam, who is son of man and son of God, fully human and fully divine. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

And to the extent that he is present in us, we recover and reflect the image of God because we are his children. How many times we have the right to be called sons of God. John chapter one, as many as received him, he gives the authority to be called what? Sons of God.

As many as receive him. Don't receive him. There's no sonship.

If there's no sonship, there's no image. Anyway, I hope that clarifies it a little bit. We'll pause here and take our break.

We'll come back and pick up in first John chapter three.