

1Tim 24-03-27a

Greetings fellow members of Grace and Truth Bible Church. It is Wednesday night time for another investigation of the mystery doctrine of the Apostle Paul as it is revealed and as it reflects other Bible truths both Old Testament and New. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study and we'll pick it up.

Father what a relief, what a comfort, what an encouragement it is to know that You are our strength and our Redeemer. It is not only requirements that come from You but also provisions and enablements and blessings through the power of Your Spirit, the illuminating light of Your Word, and the ongoing intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself on our behalf. We pray that as we look at Your Word together this evening that the Holy Spirit will enable us, lead us into truth, help us to remember it, and to discern and understand the best way to apply the things that we are learning so that our lives will be pleasing in Your sight and glorifying to our Savior.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well it has been such an interesting exercise in discernment in looking at the people that surround us in terms of proper application of God's Word where they are concerned and seeing the one another commands, the love for neighbor commands.

So it is very helpful to us to be able to understand what God expects of us in terms of how we treat one another, how we treat our neighbors, and how we deal with those who are outside. So we have done an extensive look at the one another commands and the reciprocal nature of that and that this is a protection for us to not be exposed to unnecessary exploitation by opening our homes and our hearts to those who will turn around and wound us or tear us to pieces or take advantage in a way that causes us to be enablers and facilitators of that which is sinful or evil. We are to touch not the unclean thing.

We are to hate the garment that is spotted by the flesh and by hate that means and there are things from which we remain separate. We don't try to accomplish the one another commands to those who are unable or unwilling to reciprocate and who are not like minded, who are not in that unity of the faith and the bond of peace, who we are not in close fellowship in the Holy Spirit so that there is safety and there is the beauty of reflecting the glory of God from both ends of that transaction. They are loving us.

We are loving them. God is glorified at each end and it doesn't mean that there are not things that we do for neighbors and that we do recognizing and even targeting those who are outside, but they are different commands. There's a different basis and there is a different kind of protection from God for those things than there is within the household of faith and this is why it is so important to purge the immoral brother from our midst, for example, so that one another love can be practiced in a safe and God

glorifying way.

And so we look at those who are outside and this is our current study. What is our policy? How is it that we function with those who are outside? First of all, to recognize that there is a distinction and we've seen this many times out of Matthew 7 and verse 6, do not give what is holy to the dogs, do not cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces. Matthew 10, 16, we saw Jesus telling his disciples, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.

So these pictures are all of animals that don't understand your thinking. Jesus is not trying to find a way to insult or denigrate people. He is drawing a distinction in terms of their inability to think the way we think.

So swine, dogs, and wolves, they have their own agenda. It is selfish. It is driven by appetite.

It is insensible to the higher thoughts that God puts in our hearts and enables us to understand in our souls by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. That's the purpose of these figures, dogs, swine, and wolves. It isn't to insult or belittle.

It is to distinguish those who can think the thoughts of the spiritual man and those who are trapped in the world of the carnal. The carnal mind cannot understand the things of the spirit because they are spiritually discerned and one another love can only be practiced in the realm of the spiritual. It is spiritually enabled.

It is a spiritual function. It is often driven and impelled by spiritual gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit who sheds God's love abroad in our hearts so that we can then practice it to one another. So that's Matthew 7, Matthew 10.

Jesus specifically tells his disciples in Mark 4, 11, the mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to those on the outside, the teaching is in parables. Those on the outside, those on the inside, those on the outside. And we saw in both Colossians 4, 5 and Ephesians 5, 15 and 16 that the guiding principle for dealing with those who are outside is to walk in wisdom, redeeming the time.

We will quickly discover if we are spending undue time with those who are outside, that time is not being redeemed. The days are evil by default. We find out in Ephesians 5, 16.

So Paul says in Colossians 4, 5, walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Anytime we're dealing with someone that we know or suspect is those who are outside, you can quickly tell by what happens to time spent with them. A little time goes a long way.

And if we're not redeeming the time, we will discover that it is wasted time. It is time that ends up pulling us toward evil rather than the person toward good. There's a bit of a

spiritual tug of war.

And if you spend excess time with those who are outside, we get tugged in the direction of evil. They don't get tugged in the direction of good. We need to be able to see that there is a seeking note.

There are questions about the hope that is in us and about the understanding of scripture that we have, and that there is a thoughtful response. That's what we're watching for. Redeeming the time.

Is it time well spent? And we know this. As we are prayerful, as we cultivate the presence and power of God's Spirit, we will quickly discover whether that time was well spent or not. We can ask God, show me that I should continue and invest further in this conversation or this relationship or this line of dialogue, time spent with this person.

If it is bearing fruit by their fruit, you will know them. And if this is an early stage fruitful plant, there's going to be some spiritual fruit that will be born as we spend time with this person. As we speak the truth to one another in love, that truth will bear fruit.

If you spend time, if you try to put some of the water of the Word on a plant and it's bringing up thorns and briars and things keep diverting themselves into an unfruitful path, there's gossip, maligning, judging, self-centeredness. You begin to get the feeling that this person just wants a captive audience so that they can vent, so that they can spend time engaging in and talking about the unfruitful works of darkness. It quickly becomes evident.

And this often takes place in the sphere of our friends that are near at hand, our relatives, family members, and there's a great difficulty. We don't want to say you are dead to me and send somebody hence. We love our loved ones.

We love those with whom we are presently or formerly intimate and we certainly want their best, but we have a higher obligation. And the love that we have for others, whether they are one another's, whether they are others in the neighbor category or those who are outside, has to be like the love of God. God loves the world, but God doesn't spend quality time with the world.

God doesn't waste his time on the world. If he sends his rain on a field and it brings thorns, you think about Hebrews chapter six, the rain falls many times on it and it bears only thorns and briars. What's God's opinion of the field? It is fit for burning and is near to a curse.

And this is believers. These are those who have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come and have partaken of the Holy Spirit and so on. But God does not invest his time in those who do not respond with growth, faith, and positive productivity.

God says that field is going to have to be burned so that I can start fresh. These thorns and weeds and tears and briars are going to have to be burned away before I can even try again. If that's God's policy, have we got a higher, better way than the Lord God in heaven? No, of course not.

So we take our cue from God. God loves the world. He sent his son in a self-sacrificial role to demonstrate his love.

God demonstrates his love for us in that while we are yet sinners, Christ died for us. But if we do the sacrificial beneficial love toward those who are outside and it does not draw, there's not a response, there's not a question about our hope or what is this peace that you have, how is it that you can be so calm in the face of these trying circumstances and stressful situations. If that expression of love, look at what God did.

God expressed his love in his son. There are those who respond and there are those who manifestly don't. And if our exercise and expression of God's love, sacrificial toward self, beneficial toward others, doesn't produce a palpably, visibly, positive response, if it seems to have the opposite effect, we have to pull in the fence and leave them on the outside where they have chosen to be.

Men love darkness rather than light when their deeds are evil. If our life is full of light, people are not going to be comfortable in that light. And contact with such people creates the worst kind of friction and dissonance and it makes that evil from that day all the more lively.

And we become a cause of bad things instead of an agent of good. And we can discern this. We pray, we seek the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, we keep ourselves soaked in the word of God.

And this gives us eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart that understands not just the word of God, but also those around us. Remember that in these spheres of love, the word of God enlightens us. We know how to please God and have a worthy walk.

And we also know how to deal with those with whom we are in contact. So walk in wisdom toward those who are outside redeeming the time. This is our watchword.

I can tell if I am wasting my time, if the time I spend with those who are outside drags me down and is just an occasion for even more sins of the tongue, mental attitude sins, overt sins in some cases. And if the contact creates a bad, it's, it's heat and not light from that friction. We, we pull in, we will reduce that contact.

We are not ugly. We're not judgmental. We're not holier than thou.

We just find a way to touch not the unclean thing and to hate the garment spotted by the flesh spotted by the flesh. You know, this is, this is the garment that a leper would

wear or that somebody with, with oozing separating sores might have. And to touch is to become defiled, to become defiled is to be unable to associate with the people of God.

And we also have to be aware of the witness. If we encourage, if we tolerate, if we sponsor, if we allow under our roof sexual immorality or other practices that those who are outside might think are perfectly okay, we're going to see some of that from Leviticus tonight. This is also damaging to the weaker brother who is within the one another circle.

And they will not understand if we compromise our integrity and our spiritual and moral standards in the interest of trying to love someone into a better place. Not only will it not help the person on the outside, but it can cause those on the inside to stumble. Well, why is it that you talk a good fight, but when it comes to people in your periphery, you compromise you, you do gray area things and you, you tolerate and, and, uh, permit, uh, things that, uh, I thought you, we just learned from the word of God, these things ought not to be.

So in here, your, your countenance in this, in, in your intimate relationships, what, what gives, I don't understand. And Paul says, if something I'm doing in my life is going to cause a weaker brother to stumble, I will take it out. Even if it's okay, if food or drink or any other lifestyle feature causes other believers to stumble, it's not worth it because spiritual progress should be our personal goal.

And the spiritual progress of those around us, uh, is a feature of one another love. And we don't want to do anything to hinder one another trip one another up, uh, or distract, deceive in any other way, uh, create that, uh, scan the lead zone, which is to be ensnared, to trip, to be caught and not be able to make progress. That's those are the lexical definitions of scandalism.

So this is so helpful. Our conduct toward those outside the principle is redeem the time. The days are evil.

If time spent trends toward evil and not toward good, that is something we've got to attenuate. We've got to put distance. We've got to limit greatly.

If not eliminate altogether contact, I would say, start with limiting. We want to leave a door open. God leaves the door open.

He doesn't, he doesn't countenance sin in his presence, but he also doesn't wipe everybody off the earth that sins. We'd all be gone, but God will limit his contact with us. When we have unconfessed sin in our life, when we are making a practice that turns sin into evil, because it's a pattern sin, evil is pattern sin.

It becomes a part of our identity. Uh, it's, it's something that sort of attaches to our, our walk and our character. That's, that's evil, but notice God doesn't zap us with lightning.

He doesn't cut off the ability to pray. He doesn't take his Holy spirit from us, but he will not hear us. Even as healthy believers, there are things that, that make our prayer get no higher than the ceiling, lack of forgiveness for others, lack of love for others.

Uh, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. If I do not forgive others, I am not forgiven. Uh, if I bear a grudge, God will hold a grudge against me.

So long as I hold a grudge against others, the parable of the servant and the underservant, uh, the issue of forgiveness, uh, the model prayer given to the disciples, forgive us as we forgive others who have sinned against us. So these are, uh, cautions against getting on a high horse and, uh, you know, swinging a big ax on anybody that we've decided is on the outside. That's not appropriate either.

Let your moderation be known unto all. We are moderate. We are self-controlled.

We're not judgmental. We're not bigoted. We're not unkind.

We're not unmerciful. Uh, but at the same time, there is a graceful way to maintain a distance. That's what God does.

God graciously maintains a distance with us using that distance to teach us the harm and the hazard and the unhappiness of that distance so that we move back toward him like the prodigal son. And this is our hope for those with whom we necessarily have to maintain distance is that the light that shines from our life and the grace of God that we experience, the forgiveness that we enjoy will be attractive and draw people toward God through us or through others who are like us. Sometimes there are personal issues and we can pray that, you know, there is some history with us and someone that we love or wish well.

And that if because of that history, it's going to be too awkward and uncomfortable for us to be able to communicate truth and bring someone by speaking the truth into a place where they can respond directly to God, that some other believer will be able to do so. And this person is not going to be put off of Christians because we are such a hard case and we're such a intolerant, intransigent person. Intolerance is not godly.

We can judge, but we don't have to be judgmental. Uh, we can maintain standards, but we don't have to be harsh and inconsiderate and off putting as we do so. Um, especially when we couch these things when asked, well, why is it this? And why do you do that? Uh, it is not about an effort to teach or punish or in some way affect others.

It is a part of our personal walk before the Lord. If I don't act in this way, if I don't maintain this distance, if I don't cultivate this kind of fellowship and not that it affects my walk with the Lord. And this is the most important thing in my life.

So, uh, redeeming the time is something you can really get a lot of mileage out of. And it

has a lot of traction in terms of deciding exactly what to do in specific cases. Time is a gift from the Lord.

It is spiritual capital. And the way we spend it is our stewardship or lack thereof. And God takes it seriously.

So pay careful attention, Ephesians then to how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise. These two passages are just two sides of the same coin, Colossians four, five, and Ephesians five, 15 and 16. Redeeming the time is in both of them.

Wisdom toward those who are outside is in both of them. Uh, it's so important. Um, first Thessalonians four, 12, we've looked at it before.

We're going to cite it again. Um, about brotherly love. Paul says in first Thessalonians four, nine about brotherly love about one another love.

You do not need anyone to write to you because you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. Brotherly love is not just anyone who is a brother or sister. It is the one another love.

And you are indeed showing this love. Paul says to all the brothers throughout Macedonia, but we urge you brothers to excel more and more cultivate that more and more concentrate and focus your time on the love that is productive on the love that edifies and builds up and is reciprocated. And the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts because God's spirit is in it.

And it's God's love that is being shed abroad and is being practiced. And it is God's glory that is reflected in so doing to God. Be the glory is a wonderful hymn, but it's got to be more than words.

My daily life, my redemption of the time. God redeemed me so that I can redeem time. God loved me so that I can love others.

We love because he first loved us. And if it isn't a direct pipe from God with love from him to us and from us to one another, then it can't glorify God. If we are trying to love someone in the practical sense that God cannot love in the rebellion, there is rejection.

There is loving darkness rather than light. Well, the glory of God is not going to be there and that day is going to stay evil and we're not redeeming the time. You've been taught by God to love one another and you are indeed showing this love to all the brothers.

These are not physical relatives per se. They can be. And they're not all believers per se.

These are brothers that are brothers indeed. Jesus when told that his family is visiting and he says, you who are here listening to my word and loving God because you hear the truth, you are my brothers and sisters and mother. You are my family defined by how

much you love God and his word and the truth that his messenger communicates.

In that case, it's the Lord Jesus. But that makes us brothers and sisters because we have that shared love and enthusiasm. We are those who keep or guard Jesus' words.

So those are brothers. We urge you brothers to excel more and more. Make that your focus and your concentration.

If you want a theme for your life, it's not look for where God is at work and join him in his work. It's not pray the prayer of It's not find the image of God in everyone and express your love toward that. The theme and the focus, if you want to sum up what we are supposed to do, it is to excel more and more in showing brotherly love.

Notice that Paul does not say you've got to love the people in the world and fulfill the great commission for them. Nothing wrong with sharing the gospel. God forbid, none of us would be saved if somebody hadn't shared the gospel with us.

But it is a fruit and a result of cultivating a wise walk, love for one another. And the lamp doesn't run down the street trying to illuminate every house. The lamp sits on a lamp stand and that light attracts.

Let your light so shine before men. You just sit still. Where does the light come from? The lamp doesn't make the light.

That fire was put there by a higher agency. Let your light so shine before men. It is a passive function to let the light shine.

They will see your good works, your good life, your wise walk, your fidelity and obedience to God, your adherence to principles of integrity and moral character. That's the light. That is the character of God, who is righteousness and justice and love, eternal life, truth that shines from our life.

Others will see those works and they will glorify your father. They will see and they will glorify. It doesn't say they will hear your good words.

They will respond to your impassioned plea. They will be drawn in by your persuasive arguments and your adept command of scriptural truth. They will see the fruit of your life.

They will see what you do. They will see how you live your works. And if anyone is going to be drawn to the light, they will go past us to the father, which is always the goal.

Even the Lord Jesus said, I am the way. No man comes to the father, but by me. The truth and the life reflected in Jesus are the way to the father and the destination is the father.

For any communicator of the word of God, you don't want to stop short at the communicator. I just read a whole set of things about someone who was in the Mennonite community. He really made strong scriptural arguments for pacifism and the way that the Christian life should be lived.

But then he engaged in some horrifically bad behavior in his personal life that seemed to violate the very principles he was. And when I say violate, there was violation involved. And he had talked about, don't violate the dignity and the humanity of other people.

This is why you need to be a pacifist and don't kill them. Well, you shouldn't take advantage of them in immoral terms either. And his life ended up being littered with replete examples of deflowering young maidens and one thing and another.

Well, so now the big question in this whole article was agonizing over, well, but what do we do with his teaching? It seems like he was able to elucidate these principles of the word that we like, but his personal life turned out to be a big pattern of rascality. So should we no longer quote his teaching? Should we no longer read and buy and recommend his books? What should we do? Well, here's the thing. If you start tying your principles and your behaviors to what some guy said or printed in a book or published, the communicator is to find truth and treasure in the word of God.

Give us all that truth and treasure. And my walk and my decisions about warfare and military service and killing and immorality or morality are grounded in the word, not in this guy's book. This guy wrote a book.

This guy fails. Well, what do I do with his book? Well, you shouldn't have been depending on his book in the first place. If he is a good communicator, he is taking you to the word of God and your decisions about how to walk worthy of Christian calling will be grounded in the scripture.

It doesn't matter if the communicator stands or falls, gets hit by a beer truck or whatever. My faith and my practice are grounded in Colossians 4, 5 and Ephesians 5, 15 and 16 and First Thessalonians 4, 9 through 12. And somebody says, well, why are you endeavoring to redeem the time and walk in wisdom? Because it's from the apostle Paul and it's in the inspired scriptures of the word of God.

You don't have to mention Sam or Billy Graham or anybody else that you ever heard. It's independent of the messenger when the messenger is bringing you a message that is from God, inspired by God, is in God's word, is enabled and empowered and informed and illuminated by God's Holy Spirit. Your faith and confidence are in God and not in men.

And anybody that you wind up saying, well, you know, fill in the communicator's name here, said this and said that, well, cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh

his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord. You're going to be the shrub in the desert. You're not going to see good when it comes.

Don't get hung up on a communicator, good, bad, or otherwise. And by extension, I have elaborated this example for a reason. We've talked about it before, but think about each one of us ourselves.

We are body of Christ. We are here to reflect the light and the glory of God. You now are in a communicator role.

Don't let people make you an issue. You can see it clearly talking about a pastor, right? It's, you know, it's not the man, it's the message. Well, guess what? We are all messengers.

You are a messenger to those who are outside. You are a messenger to neighbors and you are a messenger to the one another's. And whatever we do, it can't be about us.

To Sam be the glory is not in the hymnal and never will be. And to fill your name in here, be the glory is never going to be in the hymnal. So in dealing with those who are outside in particular, but also with neighbors and with one another's, one of the features of a wise walk, a worthy walk, a walk that redeems the time and prevents the day from ending up being nothing but evil is to ensure that subjectivity does not creep in and people get their eyes on us instead of their eyes on the Lord through us.

So important. And if we become the issue and in dealing with people and explaining why maybe we have to do some things and not others, and we maintain a certain level of distance, or we participate in this and not that, and we attend this and not that, is not to make an issue out of ourselves. The last thing you want is somebody to walk away and say, well, you know, that Sam, he's just such a prude.

He's a holier than thou. And, you know, I'll bet I could dig into his life and find a bunch of peck. You probably could, but that's not the issue.

We should endeavor when we communicate with others to shine the light of God's grace, God's glory, God's righteousness, God's intolerance in his presence of sin and evil, and that we are endeavoring to do the same, not because of what we think, but because we are endeavoring to live a life that pleases God. That has to be crystal clear. People need to be dealing with God, not with us.

Whether they are close, growing, narrow road, straight gate, fellow believers, whether they are neighbors or whether they are those on the outside, the issue that comes up in contact with us should always be relayed to God. To God be the glory. It is God's grace.

It is God's power. It is God's standards. It is God's righteousness.

This is what drives our lives. We don't have the Holy Spirit so that we can have some kind of personal concept of holiness. It's God's holiness.

God's spirit represents that holiness and guides us and leads us into it. God's word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path for God's righteousness to walk in God's paths. We have failed in some way.

If people walk away saying, well, that's so-and-so's personal standard of good or bad. We have to do our best to ensure that people understand that what we do and why we do it is our love for God, our representation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our honest endeavor, however flawed it may be, to live a life that is pleasing in His sight. And if somebody has issue with what we choose to do and not do and with whom we choose to associate or refrain, that they can take it up with the Lord God because we're operating as best we can by the light from His word for His glory.

Well, that's a great overarching principle. It's a great starting point. Colossians 4, 5, Ephesians 5, 15, and 16, redeeming the time.

Easy to see. People are recommended a movie, they watch it, and they say, well, that was a complete waste of time. I didn't get anything out of that.

I didn't enjoy it. I thought it was badly done. We know when our time has been wasted.

You get a sales presentation or you get something that sounds good and it whips around into a sales presentation. There's always a hook in the bait. Free, free, free.

However, it only works for 14 minutes and then you've got to pay. We know when our time's been wasted and it is ever more so true and ever more important when it has to do with spiritual things. Well, when we come back, we're going to continue with specific guidance from God's word on what we tolerate based on His standards and what we don't.