

1Tim 24-04-03a

Greetings, welcome to Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 3rd of April, 2024, and we're picking up after a bit of a break for Resurrection Sunday and our two-part study of the 17th Nissan. I found it fascinating when I put it up on the church website, I just used the seven individuals.

So if I can remember them, it's Abraham, no, it's Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Hezekiah, Esther, and the Lord Jesus. So something significant happened in their lives on or about that very same day. It was a really interesting study.

I enjoyed it. I hope you did as well. But we're going to pick up tonight and looking at the gospel of Paul, the mystery aspects as they have been revealed to us.

We've been taking a bit of time to improve our understanding, hopefully, of the image of God and the responsibilities that we have in that regard. There is a very prevalent idea that we should behave toward others based on and starting with the assumption that the image of God is present. And this has led to a lot of confusion and misapplication.

So in a nutshell, to summarize our last several weeks of study on the image of God, the word of God encourages us to focus on the image of God inside us, not to what extent it appears in others. We as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are being renewed in the image of the creator. He is the image of the invisible God, the Lord Jesus is, and to the extent that he indwells us and we reflect him as members of his body, we now shine the light of the glory of God that is sourced in that image.

And it is so much more practical to focus on living in the light of the image of God within us than it is to try to ascertain whether or not it exists in someone else. And that led us to looking at the different categories of commands in the word of God related to neighbor love, one another love, and our behavior toward those who are outside, about whom there are no love commands. Neighbor love and one another love are explicit in scripture, but those who are outside, there's not a single love command in the word of God.

God has expressed his love to the world. And when you read Romans one, you see that there are many who their reaction to that love is to suppress the truth in unrighteousness and to start acting with regard to images and likenesses that are not related. So this is where we're going to pick up tonight.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study and we'll begin. Father, it is always a renewed blessing and a wonderful opportunity to spend this time together and to try to improve our understanding. And from that, our walk before you, the stewardship we have of our time and resources, the gift that you've given to us, the opportunities you set before us so that we can walk by faith and not by sight, we can reflect the presence

of the Lord Jesus and recover your image as he indwells us through the power of the Holy Spirit and the guiding light of your word.

We pray that as we look at your word together tonight, that God, the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth, help us to see its pertinence and application for ourselves in the hours and days ahead so that we will be conscious of our mission, of our assignment, our purpose, our representation of the Lord Jesus in the time that remains before he returns to take us to himself. We ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.

Let's turn to Romans chapter 12. Romans chapter 12. We have seen Romans 1 often enough.

I was tempted to review that and I will simply read one or two verses from it. As you turn to Romans 12, but Paul says in that very familiar chapter in verse 20, Romans 1 20, since the creation of the world, God's invisible attributes are clearly seen. Now, if the attributes, if God's image was clearly seen in faithful men, that would be in Paul's list, but it's not.

If you've got your finger in Romans 12, you can turn back to chapter one. It is interesting to see this on the page, but the unbelieving world is without excuse because the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. This is verse 18, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Because what may be known of God is manifest where in his people, in his image that is in their hearts. None of that is here. What may be known of God is manifest in them for God has shown it to them.

And that when it says manifest in them, this is among them. This is the same use in Greek as when, when Jesus says the kingdom of God, the King James says the kingdom of God is in you or within you. That's not correct.

The kingdom of God is among you. It's in your midst. It's evident.

You can see it just by looking around. It's not in heaven where you have to climb. It's not down below where you have to dig.

It is near, it is visible. It is, it is at hand. So what may be known of God is manifest among them.

God has shown it to them. Since the creation of the world, God's invisible attributes are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made his eternal power and Godhead. So that they're without excuse creation.

We have a eclipse coming up here in a few days and the odds of the size of the moon and its distance from earth and the size of the sun and its distance from earth, that

those would be exactly the same, not even off by a little bit so that you can get a perfect eclipse. The moon is no larger and no smaller, and you can see the entire Corona of the sun perfectly. The odds of that are astronomical.

And beyond that, that the path of the moon would be such that it would occasionally pass in front of the sun and create a full solar eclipse. These happen at all different times of the day. They crisscross all of the continents of the earth.

Everybody at some time or another has the chance to see a full or at least a partial eclipse. But the full eclipse, if you go back and look at all of the paths, that thing has crisscrossed over the years and the centuries, it is a commonplace. It's not unusual in any given place.

It may be unusual, but they are well known. And this is a part of creation. It is a sign in the heavens that, that there is design to the location of the earth, the traverse of the moon, the nature of the sun's arc across the sky, the tilt of the earth's axis, the perfection with which this earth is maintained as a suitable habitation for man, what may be understood about God's invisible attributes is clearly seen.

Notice it is visible. It's not an invisible characteristic of people's souls. It's not an abstraction.

It is clearly seen. It is manifest in creation so that they're without excuse. Although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, nor were they thankful.

They became futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened, professing to be wise. They became fools. It's very interesting to me that within the last week, Richard Dawkins has made a very ear catching claim that he considers himself to be a cultural Christian.

This is the man who, along with Christopher Hitchens and one or two others has done more to savage modern day Christianity. The new atheists, they are called. Sam Harris, I believe is of the three or four horsemen of the new atheist apocalypse.

But Dawkins went on to say that he doesn't believe anything that's in the Bible or that is held by faithful Christians, but he likes the effect of Christianity. He appreciates the beauty of the architecture and the art and the music and the peaceable culture that it produces and all of it. He loves the benefits of it.

He just doesn't want to be one. And it reminds you of other things that come from the far left where, well, we want this to happen, but we don't want to personally do it. We want swarms of immigrants to come to the country, but we don't want to host them or have to deal with them.

We want you, you hoi polloi out there to, you know, handle it. And this is Richard

Dawkins in boldface on video saying, I love a Christian culture and I consider myself a cultural Christian. I am for everything that Christianity produces.

And I don't want other religions. He says, I don't want an Islamic culture. I don't want to, you know, cultures that are produced by other religions.

I want the culture produced by Christianity. I just don't want to be one. And so it's just very, very ironic to me.

And it is a true irony, if you look up the definition of irony, that that somebody who has done more to dismember Christian culture is now bemoaning its disappearance and saying he he longs for the days when it was more prevalent. But professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And look at verse 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God.

Remember, image and glory are related. Changed from glory to glory. Into the image of the creator, this is what happens to us as believers, changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man.

Notice the image of God is incorruptible. His glory and his image are incorruptible, so only an uncorrupted man can bear that image, we can't bear that image since Adam's fall. We can't be or bear that image.

We can reflect Jesus Christ who bears that image. We can be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We can be conformed more and more closely to the image of his son.

But it is Jesus Christ who bears the incorruptible, uncorrupted image of God. And to the extent that we reflect Christ, we recover and reflect that image. But we don't bear the image.

Even now as faithful believers, narrow road, straight gate, isn't it consistent with everything we saw in the early verses of Ephesians that everything we have comes to us through Christ? Our sonship, our heirship, our priesthood, our election, our predestination, everything we have comes to us through Christ and the image of God to the extent that it is present and reflected in us is because of the presence of Jesus Christ. It's his glory and being conformed to his image that begins to reflect and shine the glory of God's image. And what happens when Christ is not present, when Christ is rejected? You exchange the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man or birds or four-footed animals and creeping things.

And you see this in the secular scientific glorification of nature and the investment that's made in trying to preserve species that are going to go extinct. And I say this carefully because stewardship and dominion over the planet creates responsibility to not be wasteful and trash up and destroy what God has created. But we should exercise that

stewardship and find that concern within us for the environment and for animals out of our love for God and out of our respect for his commission to us to fill the earth, to have dominion over the animals, to have dominion over the earth, but as a responsibility to God in the same way that charity only glorifies God if it is done in God's name.

If you give a cup of water to one of these little ones in my name, you have done it unto me, Jesus says. This has merit and this has value. Other people can give cups of water by the buckets full, but if it doesn't glorify God, if it is not in his name and for his sake, it is ultimately meaningless.

Environmentalism for the planet's sake and mother earth and science saying, oh, they are now attempting to recover extinct species. They're going to bring the dodo back. They're going to bring woolly mammoths and saber tooth tigers back.

Come to find out the idea that all the DNA from some of these species that went extinct anytime in the last eight to ten thousand years by science reckoning. I'm not sure their clocks are right, but they've been able to recover soft tissue, bone marrow, blood cells. They are recovering fragmentary DNA.

This is why they have the DNA of Neanderthal man who's been gone for thousands of years, but they've been able to reconstruct the entire genome and they are reconstructing. They've got the genome of the dodo and they've got its close cousin, which is the pigeon, I believe. And so they're going to use pigeons.

The problem is a pigeon can't lay an egg as big as a dodo. And so they've got to find some external means of creating, you know, quickly explode a pigeon trying to be like an ostrich trying to have an ostrich egg form inside a banty hen or something. But they're working on it and they're endeavoring to recover nature for nature's sake.

Well, they have their reward. They have their reward. It extends no further.

When we do what we do out of love for God and out of love for neighbor or love for one another, we are reflecting the glory of Jesus Christ. And so that is what's being spoken of here. And because they exchange this image, they're not interested in the image of God.

They want the image of corruptible creatures. God gave them up. And you know how the rest of this turns out.

And what is the result? Verse 28, even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind to do those things which are not fitting, being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil mindedness, whispers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful. There is a widespread emphasis in mainstream Christianity all around us that these

people nevertheless should be treated in a special way because they bear the image of God. They are made in the image of God.

What does the Bible say about those who push away the image of God and choose something else? This is what they are and there is nothing of the image of God. If God wanted to make the same point that modern Christianity is making, Paul could have made it here. Nevertheless, don't hate on them too hard because they still are made in the image of God.

It's not here. We are instructed nowhere in Scripture, Old Testament or New, to give some sort of special consideration to those who are outside, who are suppressing the truth of God in unrighteousness. And this is not apathy we're talking about here.

This is the opposite. This is embracing, upholding and reflecting rank evil. Apathetic people, our degree of separation is really based on where someone falls on the spectrum between apathy and horrific outright sin of the high hand rebellion.

And when you see this list of attributes in someone's life who is not a believer, who is not a faithful person of any kind, when you see these things as life pattern characteristics, these are the ones that John says, don't meet, don't greet, don't eat, regardless of what they may claim in terms of, oh, yes, I believe in Jesus. But here are the characteristics of their life. This is touch not the unclean thing time right here, because they are suppressing the truth of God in unrighteousness.

They're not just indifferent to it. They're not uninterested in it. They're not apathetic toward it.

They are greatly antipathetic. They have antipathy. They have a hatred.

They are wanting to stamp out God or anything that reminds them of God. Knowing the righteous judgment of God that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same, but approve of those who practice them. Believers who approve of those who practice these things have to also be separated from.

There is righteous judgment of God on those who practice such things and approve of those who practice them. And we are inexcusable starting in chapter two, if we judge others and end up condemning ourselves because we're doing the same things, but now flip over to chapter 12, chapter 12, very famously in our experience, we've memorized verses 12, one and two, we've quoted it many times. Pick up at verse nine.

Let love be without hypocrisy, not two-faced. Abhor what is evil and cling to what is good. Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good.

And this is in the expression of love. If you don't abhor what is evil and if you don't cling to what is good, then you have a hypocritical love. Be kindly affectionate to whom? One

another with brotherly love, brotherly love, in honor, giving preference to whom? One another.

Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. We can exercise one another love because it is service to the Lord, to Jesus. We can do so.

The self-sacrifice involved in sacrificial beneficial love is dedicated to God. Sacrifice and offering, who is the target of a sacrifice? If your brother has ought against you, did Jesus say, go take a sacrifice and give it to them, and if you give them a big gift, you can be reconciled. Who gets the sacrifice? Who is the object of sacrifice? It's God.

If I am being sacrificial to self and beneficial to someone else, to whom am I offering that self-sacrifice? Not to the person, to God. This is directly related to the health and wellbeing in our relationship to our heavenly father. If I love God in heaven and I love the Lord Jesus Christ, then being self-sacrificial to somebody who may or may not appreciate it or be a worthy object of love in the eyes of others, it doesn't matter.

The sacrifice is not for them. It's for God. Serving the Lord, verse 12, 12, 12, rejoicing in hope.

Hope of what? Hope that we'll be appreciated, hope that we'll be thanked, hope that we'll receive some kind of reciprocal benefit, hope that we're going to improve our circumstances. Hope is like faith and love. It is first and foremost directed to God himself.

So if I'm rejoicing in hope, I'm rejoicing in what I know God is going to do, what God has promised, and in meeting the conditions for those promise fulfillments. Patient in trouble. When there's tribulation, when there's hardship, when there is defugally, when there's pushback, there's friction, I am patient.

Continuing steadfastly in prayer. Take these things before the throne and leave them there. Casting all your cares upon him.

He cares for you. I'm rejoicing in my hope. I'm patient in times of trouble.

I am steadfastly praying. By the way, this doesn't mean repeatedly praying and endlessly bringing things up before God. Steadfast means anytime there is an aspect, anytime there is an issue that comes up, I am steadfast in taking that to God and leaving it there and rejoicing in my hope and being patient in that time of trouble.

Steadfastness doesn't mean being repetitive and bringing it up to God over and over and over again. Repetition to God is often more a form of self-soothing. We're really praying to ourself that this keeps coming to our mind.

We haven't really left it with God. We haven't really expressed faith that having

exercised our privilege of bringing this issue to God, he's got it and he's going to handle it. And that's not healthy to keep bringing it back and coming back and praying repetitively and gnawing on it like a bone.

Faith says, I have taken it to God. I have asked him for guidance. I've asked him if I'm supposed to do something, if I need to be somewhere or engage in some activity, if there's something I should do other than rest in faith, please make that evident to me and then wait and let God do the talking.

Sometimes people spend so much time praying about something that is on their mind that have you ever been in a conversation and you really had something you'd like to say, but the other person just won't quit. You can't get a word in edgeways. Often God has something to tell us, but we are so busy talking to him.

We're not listening and we're not resting. We're not patient in our trouble. We're not rejoicing in our hope.

Now that God's got this, I can celebrate. All I've got to do is wait for him to send the guidance that I've requested to shine a light on the path that I should take to give me comfort and encouragement in whatever this tribulation might be. So what can I do? I can distribute to the needs of whom? To whose needs should we be paying attention? Whose needs should we be most familiar with? Distributing to the needs in verse 13 of the sanctified ones, the saints, the one and others.

People are so anxious to go out and do indefinite charity and send something to someone far, far away. We have the opportunity and the responsibility to look near at hand where we have knowledge, we have contact, we have accountability, and we can distribute to the needs of the saints given to hospitality. What is hospitality? What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of hospitality? This is somebody coming to your house, right? Hospitality, they come and, can I get you something to drink? We've got a meal to eat.

Is this a comfortable chair? If you're staying for a day or two, here's the accommodations. Here's the towels. Here's the pillows.

Here's the blankets. We are near at hand. This is a time of close fellowship.

Hospitality, given to hospitality, those near at hand. Can you exercise hospitality to somebody that is currently located in another state, in another country, in another time zone? You can't. Hospitality is hands-on personal contact given to hospitality, looking for those with whom we have the opportunity to have reciprocal one another contact.

Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

Now, in this day, who would persecute you? Is it the government in Rome that is persecuting you, or is it the Roman soldier or the tax collector or somebody in the neighborhood? Persecution came with personal contact. Right? So if you are going to bless those who persecute you, if you are going to love your enemy, do good to someone who hates you and pray for someone who spitefully uses you, this is someone that you see and who sees you. This is personal contact.

It's in the near periphery. It's in the neighborhood. It isn't somebody far, far away.

Can't be. Are they writing you letters from a different country and you feel persecuted? Not at all. It's, this is face to face, mano a mano.

And there are believers who have a different understanding. Remember the Judaizers? They believed in Jesus, but they thought when you come to Jesus, you still have to keep the law and spirituality is by works. And they were refusing Gentiles to come into the church of Jesus Christ.

They were believers, but they were persecuting. To whom is Paul writing here? Jews in Jerusalem, the diaspora that Paul, that Peter writes to in his epistles. Who's he writing to? Gentile Christians, largely in Rome.

Bless those who persecute you, who curse you because they are probably messianic Jews, they believe in Jesus, but they think you shouldn't be in the church. Uh, you can think back to previous centuries in this country where there were Christians who didn't think their black co-residents of the South ought to be in their church or in the building or using the same facilities. And what is the proper response? If you are a victim, bless, pray for, do good.

Be why they are near at hand and they are fellow believers. They are misguided. They are sinning.

They are committing heinous acts of whatever it may be. Discrimination, racism, inconsiderate, uh, callous, indifferent, ungrateful, unholy, unthankful, but because they are a neighbor, we have a special set of rules. This does not apply to outsiders who decide to take up arms and form an army and invade our country and crush us.

Different thing. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse. Pay attention to verse 14.

Romans 12, 14, you could put out beside it in the margin, James three, nine. This is what we're going to look at here shortly. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

Be of the same mind toward one another. Notice how he's not jumping points of application or targets of application. This is all within the fellowship, within the brethren,

within the family.

Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Don't be a respecter of persons.

Remember in James again, God is no respecter of persons. Don't pay attention to somebody in the fellowship because they're rich and ignore somebody else because they're poor. Remember Paul, when he is talking to the Corinthians about the Lord's table and he says, you're being inconsiderate to some people who could really use that meal.

Consideration, all of this is in the fellowship, in the family, in the brotherhood, even in a family. You've got some people you're closer to than others. Some cousins are like brothers and sisters.

Other cousins are like very distant relatives. Practically never see them, nothing in common. Repay no one evil for evil.

Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. Now we're broadening and looking outside. Notice verse 17, after he says, associate with the humble, do not be wise in your own opinion, this helps prevent schism and conflict and partition and the kind of things that Paul hears about the Corinthians.

I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos. Don't be attached to your opinion and divide the brotherhood. Now in verse 17, repay no one.

Now we're talking about everybody. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

Do you see the change here? All men, nobody should be getting evil from us just because they have done evil to us. And when they think of us, they should think, you know, those people are really focused on what is good, like Richard Dawkins. Look at the good things that have come from Christianity, not the persecutions, not the inquisitions, not the impaling of martyrs on stakes.

Not the Crusades trying to go back and take a piece of allegedly holy ground and murdering all kinds of people in the process, raping and pillaging and plundering in the name of the Lord with a cross on your banner. That is not regard for good things in the sight of all men. Is it not treating people of a different color who are brothers and sisters in Christ in a different way, regard for good things in the sight of all men.

Verse 18, to the extent that it is possible, as much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Do you see the difference between the earlier section? One another, the saints, one another, each other. Now, all men, those who are outside, all men.

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, rather give place to wrath, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he's thirsty, give him a drink. In doing so, you will heap coals of fire on his head.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. This pertains to everybody outside, neighbor or one another. It's a universal truth.

Even an outsider enemy, if he's hungry, feed him. But notice, if he is hungry, your enemy, not an enemy, not somebody in a distant land, he's your enemy. So this is somebody with whom you have personal contact.

They are expressing enmity toward you. And if you have the opportunity, you can do something good for them. You can feed him.

This is you yourself out of your own pantry, your own stock, your own hands preparing food and giving it. If he is thirsty, you yourself give him a drink. Remember the Good Samaritan? No previous contact with those two individuals.

Plenty of a case for animosity in both directions. But this is exactly what the Samaritan did. Neighbor love.

Who is my neighbor? Someone in need. Don't have to know him. I can meet their need.

In doing so, you heap coals of fire on their head. We don't want to heap coals on the head of one another necessarily. But to those who are outside, this is going to give them a hard time in opposing Christianity, like Richard Dawkins.

There's all of this good. If there wasn't the bad coming from Christianity, how much more likely would it be that atheists would give the faith a balanced hearing and not immediately say, look at all of the harm and the grief and the wars and the oppression that have been done in the name of, look at all of this. Look at all of the immorality that has taken place among prominent Christians who did not pursue what was good and didn't cling to what was good in the sight of all men.

And they've been immoral and unholy and corrupt and perverse and have taken advantage of people in the name of Jesus Christ. This gives traction to people who say, well, whatever the truth is, it can't be there because look at how nasty those people are. We can't be those people.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Overcome evil with good. This is personal good, personal expressions of good when conditions permit.

Well, let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see this work itself out when we go to the book of James.