

1Tim 24-04-28b

We're ready to pick up our study here. We are doing sort of a combination of three things this morning. We are finishing up our study of love, we are finishing up our study of the sevenfold aspects of the mystery, and we are moving forward in 1st Timothy chapter 4. We're doing all of these at the same time because they all overlap so beautifully and so powerfully and so importantly for our current immediate application.

These are things you and I need to know and pay attention to right now. This is not in the far-flung future. This isn't a thing to say, well, in the sweet by and by, maybe at some future date.

We have to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves right now. The exhortation of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24 and elsewhere, we have it from the Lord Jesus, we have it from the Apostle Paul, we have it from Peter and John, all of them emphasize don't let yourself be deceived. This is something we have to think about for a moment because the nature of deception is that you don't know it's happening.

I am listening to a fascinating book right now on the rise of artificial intelligence, the ability of these systems to scrape Facebook, to find out places where you have email or text information. It can be obtained on the dark web, people that have hacked various systems and what you think only your friends can read on Facebook is available on the dark web to anybody who wants to pay a But if someone aims an AI at you, they will have all kinds of information, your purchasing history, your browsing history, your interactions with other people, your opinions. The results that you get will be subtly curated to persuade you down a certain road.

And it is so subtle and so able to persuade by hooking into things we don't even know about ourselves or don't want to admit about ourselves. But these systems can detect insecurities, vulnerabilities, emotional touch points or flash points, what you are worried about, what you are angry about, what you are indifferent to. And the art of manipulation and deception in the age of AI is going to reach levels, has already reached levels unseen in human history.

You always have charlatans and deceivers and those who want to be influencers and lead people down a path for a specific purpose. They are limited by their human abilities to achieve these goals. These systems are unlimited and are powerful in ways that weren't even anticipated by the people who built them.

And this is not so much artificial intelligence, there is no danger that these are going to become sentient or self-aware or suddenly arrive at consciousness and become malevolent and decide they need to exterminate the human race and cut off the water and poison the food. All of these dystopian science fiction ideas are patent nonsense for reasons I won't go into. Anybody that knows computers knows that can't happen.

It's impossible. That's not the danger. But this is the hand waving in the air saying, oh, be careful, they might become sentient.

They might be, you know, Ex Machina, or they might be iRobot, or they might be, you know, Wall-E or one of these other movies that takes a robot. Well, I don't know. I don't really watch.

Wasn't he a sentient robot? Why not? But he had a personality. Don't mock my lack of knowledge about sci-fi. But the idea, that's not the danger.

That's not what to be worried about. What is already happening is the deception. Think in very crude terms, and this is old now, but think about what happens if you are trying to Google information about a social issue or a political question, or the progress of a legal trial and what you expect in its outcome, or the prospect of an election and how someone is doing and what the polling indicates, or you want to investigate whether or not taking a shot for a particular disease is a good idea or not.

I heard a statistic, the average person, and this is as of over a year ago, the average person checks their phone 352 times a day. 352 times a day someone is looking at their phone. What do they get when they look at their phone? There's a text, there's a prompt, there's a post, there is a news item, there's information that is coming into the front gate of the mind over 350 times a day just from the phone.

This doesn't count the TV you watch or the radio you listen to or what you stream. When that information has been carefully curated and subtly conditioned to persuade and to reinforce desired attitudes and you don't even know it. We used to think, oh, this subtlety in advertising, there's one frame of a box of Tide in the middle of something that is being presented on TV and this subconscious advertising.

We thought, oh, people are going to give us these invisible cues that our mind picks up but we're not aware of. That's like rubbing sticks together to get fire compared to the sophistication that is now currently being perpetrated on you and on me anytime we engage in anything that has come through a computer, anything on television, anything on your phone, any information that you gain from any source is already being manipulated by AI. It's not going to become conscious and honestly, me personally, and this isn't from the book, this is my notion, it shouldn't be called artificial intelligence.

It should be called simulated intelligence. It is the simulation game. Go all the way back to Turing.

It's not actually conscious. It doesn't know or care what the issues are. It is a very sophisticated tool for the manipulation of human hearts and minds in the hands of agencies that have an agenda, that have a purpose and have a goal.

Why am I belaboring this? This is exactly what Paul is talking about in 1 Timothy chapter

4. Deception is when you don't know you are being misled. You don't know that what you believe is true is not true. It is a simulation of reality.

It is a narrative or a story that is being told by people who know exactly how to tell the story in a way that will prompt you to action. In a very crude example, think about commercials that come on television for a hospital where children are treated for cancer or Shriners where other kinds of birth defects and health problems and you have these sweet little kids and it's so tragic that they have these difficulties and their families are endeavoring to try to find ways to enrich and enhance the lives of those who start at a great disadvantage in some way. You think about the ASPCA commercials and these where these dogs are shivering in the cold and have heavy chains around their necks and have been horrifically abused by people who are so uncaring.

And when you see this kind of thing and someone says, look, if you will send us a couple of bucks, we can do something about this. Well, I didn't start my day looking in the mirror, brushing my teeth, making sure I was ready to go out and do my job, thinking about the plight of animals that are abused or people that have great, great hardship. This was sent into my mind by something that I chose to turn on and watch.

And it's inserted between the things that are actually of interest to me. And I suddenly find myself considering an issue and developing an opinion and making a decision about how motivated I am to actually contribute to a cause to investigate. There's not time available to go and do the research and well, look, I'll send them money.

I don't know where it actually goes. It may not go anywhere near any of these dogs. I often ask myself, you know, the people with the cameras and did they actually do something about this situation? These that go to starving kids in Afghanistan or wherever, and they are looking for, you know, situations where there are flies and there are swollen bellies and there are prostrate children and weeping mothers and the rest of it.

Well, they were right there on the scene. This is now a neighbor situation. Did they bring food? Did they remediate everything in the periphery? Did they come prepared to not just film this to motivate people? Did they leave them as they found them? I don't know.

And if I contribute to that organization, how much of any given dollar that I send them is going to go to actually give these people medicine and food and clothing and shelter and protection from the overlords, the warlords, the enslavers, the corrupt governments that have put them in that situation in the first place? How is this money going to be spent? How much does it cost them to send camera teams over airplane flights, production costs, advertising costs to put these commercials on the TV? And is this justified? Is it necessary that 85 cents of every dollar goes to overhead so that they can take 15 cents and actually do something about this situation? And does that even happen? Or is it just a story? And I am impelled emotionally to contribute, and I don't actually know where

that contribution is going. To what extent is deception or subterfuge or misdirection going? Well, those are obvious cases. What Paul is talking about here, these are doctrines.

People believe when they depart under the influence of these, that this is God's will, that this is God's truth, this is God's way, this is God's kingdom. This is being a Jesus follower and a dissident disciple and a Babylon resister and an anti-Christian nationalist, and I am going to wave a flag and wear a crown, and I am active, I am significant, I am righteous. My righteousness is implicated in my support for a cause or a point of view or one side in a conflict.

I am laying hold of righteousness in my social engagement. Does the Bible anywhere indicate that our righteousness is based on or obtainable through social action? Certainly not directly. If I have righteousness by faith, if I am walking in truth, if I am led by the Spirit, if I am on the narrow road going through the straight gate, will there be times and occasions and opportunities for me to perpetrate good in society, to exercise neighbor love and support and encouragement for those who are outside? Absolutely.

But I don't go directly there. James says, you have faith and I have works, I will show you my works, and that's my righteousness. What does James say? I will show you my faith.

All of my works are motivated by, guided by, and perpetrated in and through faith. Faith is the necessary intermediate step. Okay.

Everybody believes something to motivate their actions, so what is your faith in? This is the issue in 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 1 and 2. The Spirit emphasizes, expressly says, wants us to know, clarifies, and makes prominent the truth that in latter times, some will depart from the faith. They will start out in it, but they will be misled, deceived, and will actually leave it without knowing they've left due to hearing, deceiving spirits, doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy. This will, the outcome of it will be starting out with believing the wrong thing and listening to the wrong thing is going to result in speaking the wrong thing and living hypocritically, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.

If your conscience is seared, what does that mean? It means your truth detector, your I am right indicator is broken completely, irretrievably and irredeemably unworkable. How scary is this, that you don't know you're in grip of deception, because your deception detector is burnt out. Talk about a way that seems right to a man, and the answer of being the ways of death, you have no way to detect it using your own equipment.

You must appeal to an outside reference. But it isn't so much, what is your reaction to marriage or what is your reaction to food as taking these subject areas and making them the basis of righteousness? I am a good person because I don't eat animals. I am a good person because I don't support in any way CFOs, condensed feeding operations, cattle

pens where they don't ever get into a pasture or chickens that never leave a cage.

I never give a dollar to anybody that raises eggs or beef that way. I don't believe in the or chicken farms, poultry operations, turkey farms. I eschew all of that and I base my righteousness on that or on what I do or don't support by way of marriage and which genders can engage in it or whether or not you ought to even do it or worry about it.

These areas of issue, these are social questions. These are opinions that are held in front of other people and people who have their minds made up about these issues instead of what God has done. If God created foods to be received with thanksgiving by those who do what? Who believe and know the truth.

Believing and knowing the truth is the issue. Well, we're going to get into this in more detail. I just want to show the connection here because when Paul says there is a mystery of divine intentionality, there is a mystery of godliness, of spiritual truth and he gives the details that we've just seen.

He transitions immediately into here's what happens when people forget about that. Here's what happens when they are led astray and deceived into making an issue out of things that ought to be a result and not a means of righteousness. Our opinions and our actions ought to spring from our faith, not be the content of our faith or the basis for our righteousness.

They're skipping the faith step and moving directly to works. This is as old as the Pharisees and older. Well, where does this take us? As we look at these facets of the mystery and we come to number five of these seven is the mystery of the translation of the church.

We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed. If you're not already there, you can go to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. What I want to point out here, you are well familiar with the content of this chapter.

I declare to you the gospel. First importance in verse three, Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. He was buried.

He rose again the third day according to the scriptures. He was seen by these various individuals. He was witnessed.

He was witnessed in the world. He was witnessed by messengers, by Angeloi. This gets back to the content of first Timothy three.

He was seen by me also in verse eight. This is chapter 15. He is then going to argue in the middle of this chapter, as we've seen in detail in our Corinthian study, that the resurrection of Christ, which goes back to the first element of the mystery, the incarnation, death, burial, resurrection is central.

If Christ is not raised, if the dead are not raised, you are yet in your sense. And we are of all men, most miserable, but Christ has been raised. And if you move down to verse 35, 1 Corinthians 15, 35, someone will say, how are the dead raised up with what body do they come? Foolish one.

What you sow is not made alive unless it dies. Seeds are buried in the ground and they sprout a plant that looks nothing like the seed. There is a transformation.

God gives it a body as he pleases. I want to skip down to verse 45. Above that, it's sown a natural body.

It's raised a spiritual body. There's a natural body and there is a spiritual body. Verse 44, 45.

It is written, the first man, Adam became a living being. The last Adam is a life-giving spirit. Notice the flesh and the spirit that are a part of that, that use of a mystery in first Timothy three, he was observed in the flesh.

He was vindicated, justified in spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural and afterward the spiritual and pay attention here. Verse 47, this gets back to our Christian personalism and the notion that everyone is worthy of attention, respect, uh, the outward, we should aim one another love at every single human being, every single individual, because they bear the imago Dei in Latin, the image of God.

And you're required to honor the image of God in every single person, regardless of what a rascal they are, regardless of how violent, how terroristic, how criminal they are. You are required to respect them and affirm them and, and seek them out and try to do them good because they bear the image of God. Pay attention.

Now, the first man was of the earth made of dust. The second man is, it says the Lord in your new King James, scratch it out. That's not there.

The first man was of the earth of dust. What image did Seth bear when he came into the world? He was in the image of Adam and after Adam's likeness made of dust. The second man is from heaven.

Look at verse 48, as was the man of dust. So also are those who are made of dust as is the heavenly. So are those who are heavenly.

Now, how many human beings are as the earthly and made of dust? All of us. How many of us are as the heavenly? There is a distinction. Not everyone who is of the dust and of the earth is of Christ and of the heavenly, right? Is this not an absolute incontrovertible, uncontradictable truth? Not everybody is in Christ or of Christ.

Not everyone is associated with the heavenly. If any man be in Christ, he is a new

creation. Old things are passed away.

All things have become new, right? In Christ, in Adam, all die in Christ. All shall be made alive. But the all in Christ is not the same as the all who are in Adam.

As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of dust as is the heavenly. So are those who are heavenly. Look at verse 49, as we have borne the image of the man of dust.

Image, icon. We bear the image of the man of dust. That is the image that every human being owns.

That's what defines us. That's what we are. Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.

Did God say this right after he made Adam? Did God say it right after he made Eve? Well, you're of dust and of dust you are to dust you will return. When did God say this? After the fall, after the complete and total loss of the image of God. We are still enjoined to carry out some of the functions such as oversight, fill the earth and subdue it, be a steward and so on.

There are functions, but bearing the image, what does Paul explicitly say? What does scripture plainly say here? We now bear the image of the man of dust. We shall bear the image of the heavenly. Who is the heavenly? Christ.

What do we know about Christ? He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. What has Paul just been talking about here? Resurrection. Christ is raised.

We will be raised. John says we don't know what we'll be like, but we will be like him. What is he like? He is the heavenly.

He is the image of God. Conclusion. All systems of Christian ethics, and this goes back centuries, that start with a founding assumption that every man bears the image of God and should be treated accordingly are founded on a falsehood.

This is not a biblical teaching. It is a seduction. It is a distraction.

If Satan can distract believers into endeavoring to redeem the irredeemable and love the unlovable into salvation, into a better place, into social justice, into relief from their oppression, that is not the divine mission. Is it a wonderful thing for those who are oppressed to be set free? What does Jesus say? I am here to liberate the captives, to give sight to blind eyes. That's all about the Lord Jesus, right? But there is a time and there is a place in God's plan for that to happen.

And social justice warfare is not it. Jesus healed some people and not others. Who did he heal? Did he stand on the pinnacle of the temple and wave his hand across the land and

suddenly there were no lepers and no blind? There were no lame.

There were no deaf. There were no issues of blood. Could he have? But he didn't.

Who did Jesus heal? Those who came to him. The slightest pretext, it doesn't say that they even believed in him, but they did come to him. And in the age of Israel, which is the age in which Jesus lived, the material is a shadow of the spiritual.

Why did Jesus heal people that didn't make a profession of faith? Because their action in coming is a picture of faith. It doesn't represent faith necessarily. Many who came to him also believed in him.

Your faith has saved you. Your faith has made you whole. I've not seen such great faith in Israel.

I'm talking about the centurion. But the act of coming is a picture of faith. The physical is a picture of the spiritual.

And in this age of the spiritual, you're not going to achieve righteousness by aping or mimicking or attempting to perpetrate righteousness in social action directly. It has to spring from faith, hope, and love. This is why, and here's my closing thought, this is why when you look at chapter 13, flip back two pages in your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 13, Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not love, I have become sounding brass or clanging cymbal.

Gift of prophecy, understand all mystery and all knowledge, though I have all faith so that I can remove mountains. Notice he has heard the words of the Lord Jesus. People who say, well, the content of the gospels wasn't circulating in the days of Paul.

He didn't know the life of Christ. Faith to move mountains. Whose words are those? That's not an Old Testament truth.

That's Jesus telling his disciples. If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could talk to a mountain and it would be cast into the sea. If you had faith to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

I can bestow all my goods to feed the poor. Pay attention now. Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, I give my body to be burned.

I make the ultimate self-sacrificial action and have not love, it profits me nothing. So the question is, aren't people who are altruistically endeavoring to perpetrate charity and relieve the oppressed and, you know, nobody is excluded. Oppression is itself a virtue.

If you're oppressed, I'm going to come help you because I'm a good person and I'm going to love you. Where does this love come from? Does the love come from a belief in the proposition that benefiting the poor is an intrinsic good? And if I can find a poor person

and help them, if I can find an oppressed person and relieve their oppression, if I can put myself out on behalf of somebody who's got adverse circumstances, I am doing righteousness. The intermediate, necessary, vital spiritual steps have been skipped.

You can't just say, God says to love the oppressed. I'm loving an oppressed person. I'm handing him a sandwich and a sweater.

What has been skipped? A. Faith. And this is what we're going to see here. You know this description of love very well.

Love suffers long and is kind. Verse four. Does not envy.

Does not parade itself. Is not puffed up. Does not behave rudely.

Does not seek its own. Is not provoked. Thinks no evil.

Does not rejoice in iniquity. Rejoices in the truth. Rejoices in the truth.

Bears all things. Believes all things. Hopes all things.

Endures all things. Notice all. There are legitimate cases where all doesn't mean all.

If you believe all things, would you believe every deception that comes along? Well, if all means all, you have to look for conditions in context. This is love that has discernment and believes all things that are worthy of belief. Bears all things that need to be born.

Believes all things that need to be believed. You can't just believe any old thing. Hopes all things that are legitimate expectations for an obedient believer.

Endures all things that are recognizable as having been made a part of our life by God himself. This is a cross for me to bear. This is a thorn in my flesh that I need to endure.

This is of the Lord. If he wanted me to be relieved of it, he would do it. I will endure it because it is from God.

Love never fails. Prophecies will fail. Tongues will cease.

Knowledge will vanish away. We know in part. We prophesy in part.

When that which is perfect has come, that which is in part will be done away, and so on. So in chapter 14, pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially what? Especially prophecy, that you as a group will prophesy, that somebody in the group will stand up and preach and teach the truth. What is between the love chapter and the resurrection and translation chapter? The mystery of the translation of the church in 1 Corinthians 15.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. You flip over there. After talking about this, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit

incorruption.

I show you a mystery. 1551. We shall not all sleep.

We shall all be changed. In a moment, twinkling of an eye, last trumpet. Trumpet will sound.

Dead will be raised incorruptible. We shall be changed. Who's we? This is not every believer of every age.

This is the church. This corruptible must put on incorruption. Why? Because we don't currently have or bear the image of God.

We've got to become heavenly and put off the dust. The seed has to be planted in the ground and the new life has to arise. Subsequently, after the necessary step of putting off the old man, we will put on the new man.

When this corruptible has put on incorruption, this mortal has put on immortality. That's when we recover the imago dei. We will be raised in, through, and with Christ.

Then shall be brought about the saying, death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where's your sting? Hades, where's your victory? Sting of death is sin. Strength of sin is the law.

Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast and movable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing your labor is not in vain in the Lord. Faith, hope, and love.

But this content of chapter 14 is all about, there needs to be teaching that is clear and understandable for everyone who comes into the assembly. Everyone who participates in the fellowship needs to hear something clearly. That's what this whole notion of the contrast between prophecy and tongues is.

I would rather speak five words that can be understood than 10,000 words that are gobbledygook. Because understanding the truth is necessary for faith. Faith is necessary for hope, and faith and hope are both necessary for love, proper love.

Holy Spirit guided, enabled, and empowered love comes from faith and comes from hope that is based on the prophetic preaching of the truth. That's what prophecy was. They didn't have a Bible.

So when you come to church, you can't bring your Bible. Where does the truth come from? The Holy Spirit imparted truth to those who would stand up and prophesy truth. They would speak things that are now written down in the Bible.

When that which is complete, the written canon, is available, that which is in part the prophecy that is going to give you a scripture, truth, in the assembly will be done away.

We know in part, we prophesy in part. There's going to come a fulsome revelation, and this other will be done away.

This is why we don't believe in the perpetuation of temporary gifts. They were a gap filler until that which is perfect has come. And in the larger sense, when the Lord Jesus has come, the partial righteousness, the partial partaking of the heavenly, the partial new creation that we enjoy now will be replaced with the fulsomeness at the resurrection.

This is why 13, 14, and 15 are so essential to understand in their sequence. What comes between understanding what love needs to be and how to fulfill it in Christ, abounding in the work of the Lord, motivated by hope, in between is a whole chapter on you've got to have clear representation of the truth. That's why we're a Bible church.

That's why we focus on the scriptures. And that's why we let the plain sense make common sense and seek no other sense. We don't back-rev social justice or wrong-headed application of one another love to those who are outside.

We don't do it backwards. Communication of the truth, how shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach unless someone is sent? Someone is provided in some cases, more than one to prophesy, to preach truth. We cannot be deceived and put our faith in something false, dark spiritual forces, doctrines of demons, which in the latter days, some are going to leave faith, leave love, leave hope and misunderstand God's plan and purpose, misunderstand God's way.

They will wrap themselves in a flag of righteousness. They will dismiss and deride those who don't agree with them. They will find fault.

They will invoke failures of the past to indict and dismiss sound foundational biblical truth. They will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. And they will have a new idea about marriage.

They will have a new idea about food and feeding and so on. They will engage in social issues instead of starting on the foundation of faith. That's what's happening today.

That is the seduction of Christianity. Great book title by Dave Hunt. Well, we will pick up at this point.

We're going to finish the last point in the sevenfold mystery of the doctrines revealed by Paul, which is once again, church related and summarizes the previous six. Number seven summarizes the first six, and that is Christ and the church. This is Ephesians chapter five.

What does it mean that husbands should love their wives and wives should submit to the God ordained authority of the husband? We think, well, this is a guide for marriage. Did you hear what Paul said about people getting wrapped up about what marriage is and

isn't? Paul goes through this entire thing in Ephesians five, 22 through 32. And how does he conclude this mystery of husbands and wives love from the top and submission from below? And it is hierarchical.

There is an above and there is a below. There is a head and there is something below the head. The head of every man is Christ.

The head of Christ is God. There is subordination. If Christ can do it, the husband can do it under Christ.

And if the husband can do it under Christ, the wife does it under the husband and the children do it under both the father and the mother. It is a truth. And Paul says, this is a great mystery, but I'm not really talking about marriage.

This mystery is profound, Ephesians five, 32. But I am speaking about Christ and the church. If you want to be a genuine Jesus follower, if you want to be a real disciple, you have to understand this mystery.

Paul says, I'm not giving you marriage counseling here. I'm not telling you how marriages ought to work as an end in itself. I'm talking to you about Christ and the church.

That's what you don't want to be misled about. That's what you don't want to be deceived into misunderstanding, misapplying, and end up departing the very thing that you claim to be embracing in the very act of claiming to be a higher and greater disciple. You are screwing up big time, as they say in the vernacular.

And this is the hypocritical life. This is conscience seared with a hot iron. You cannot be, and this goes to Hebrews chapter six.

If you once tasted the good word of God, the heavenly gift, the powers of the age to come and fall away, it's impossible to get you back to repentance. Your conscience is seared with a hot iron. You're putting Christ back on the cross and putting him to an open shame in the very act of claiming to be a fruitful field.

You're bearing thorns and briars. You're fit for burning and near to a curse, and you don't even know it. Awful.

We don't want to fall into that trap. And the word of God, as communicated here by the Apostle Paul, is central to avoiding this massive deception, which is captivating huge chunks of what purports to be the church right now, on this day, in buildings all across the country and elsewhere. Well, we'll see more about this when we return on Wednesday, but we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the wonderful grace that enables us to partake of your divine

nature through the presence and power of your spirit, through the example and the potential for the indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ, your presence in our lives, so that we can reflect your glory and shine as a light, so that those who are seeking will be drawn, and we can speak the truth, we can express love in a proper and divinely enabled and empowered way that is effective, that accomplishes your purpose, that redeems the time and lays hold of treasure and opportunity in the eternal future. We pray that as we reflect on these things, the Holy Spirit will let us see not only the principle, but also its application in our relationships, in our conversations, in what we say and do in the days ahead. We pray that in all things, the Lord Jesus will be glorified in and through our lives and our fellowship, and we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.