

## **1Tim 24-06-02b**

Let's resume our study now in looking at this cluster of important concepts. We began looking at our conscience. What happens when our conscience isn't functioning properly? We can't sort truth from deception.

We can't sort sound doctrine from false doctrine. And we are misled and neutralized. We're taken out of the conflict.

We are no longer in the battle. We are no longer usefully wrestling against forces of darkness and their wilds, their projects here on the earth. And it is so important for us to be engaged.

We think, especially the older we get, and our horizons begin to creep toward us and our abilities diminish. We're not as ubiquitous. We don't travel as much.

We don't see as many people. We don't do as many things. We don't have as much energy.

We don't have as much opportunity as in our prime, perhaps. But this is the beauty of God's plan, is we're not here simply to interact with as much of the world as possible or as many people as possible. The battle is spiritual.

And as long as we're alive and conscious, we're engaged in that spiritual conflict. And we can have mighty conflicts and mighty victories by God's grace, sitting in a chair, puttering around the house. This also, even for when we're younger, you can be knocked down by an illness or an injury.

And we think, well, I'm not out there. I'm not in it. I'm not a part of what's going on.

If we're awake and we are thinking thoughts, there is intake and output. But we're in the spiritual conflict. The battle is spiritual.

The power by which it is won is also spiritual. And you can be immobile. You can be immovable and inscrutable like a sphinx.

Somebody could look at you, at your face, and you're impassive. You're unreadable. You can't tell that anything is going on.

And inside your heart and your soul and your mind, you can be loving the Lord. You can be praying. You can be appreciating.

You can be applying the Word of God to situations that scroll across the TV screen or come across your telephone in conversation or in canvassing what is going on in the world and formulating thoughts, analyzing, exercising discernment and perception, sorting what is right from what is wrong, honing and sharpening and strengthening

conscience is critical. It's not something to pass the time. We are all going into the eternal future, where we will have opportunities to serve and to function and to accomplish things that are a part of an assignment from God in the kingdoms that are to come.

And to do those tasks, we need to be ready. Let me just offer a for instance. It is the millennial kingdom.

We have made enough progress that we are on the list of believers who are going to rule and reign with Christ. You are assigned a province somewhere in Asia Minor, near the kingdom, but not in it. But within a day's drive, let's say, maybe in the northern part of the Mediterranean, might take you a day or two, unless you have a speed boat, but you're nearby and you are the governor.

You are the overseer of some responsibility. Some area that's got people in it requires justice and governance, requires fairness, requires decisions to be made. People are not going to be striking a pose for a thousand years in the millennial kingdom.

There is going to be commerce. There is going to be worship. There is going to be activity.

There is going to be travel. There is going to be occupation. There's going to be consumption of food.

There's going to be weather. There's going to be all kinds of things that are a part of life as it exists today. Well, you have been given this assignment to oversee.

You are ruling with Christ. You're overseeing the justice system. Cases are going to come before you.

Well, it's this or it's that. I've got this issue. There is a conflict.

There's a dispute. There is a difference of opinion. There's a difference of understanding.

Please settle this. What is the right course? What decision can I make? What authority can I exercise that is going to please the Lord Jesus who is ruling with the rest of the sons of David out of Jerusalem? And I am coming in for reports and meetings. I will face Him and give an account of my stewardship in this privileged opportunity.

You say, oh, well, maybe I don't even want to be a good, I don't want to rule and reign with Christ. It sounds like too much pressure. It's not pressure.

It's a privilege. It's a gift. It's an opportunity.

And to be a functioning, useful, healthy, fruitful part of the rule and reign of Christ, to be a means by which the Lord Jesus is blessing people in His kingdom by having faithful,

watchful, well-informed, and well-experienced people. We're never tested above what we're able to bear. We'll never get an assignment in the future that we're not ready for.

But wouldn't you want to be ready for big things, to see a wider vista of the grace and the mercy and the faithfulness and the power of God at work in the world, to come to Jerusalem and hear other believers who have similarly been given this opportunity to tell of the wonderful grace of God as it is being dispensed like the rain across the world and across the subjugated kingdoms that are sending their glory into the Lord Jesus, to not be out in the audience, not be out there chopping cotton on somebody's plantation in Timbuktu, but to be useful and functional, to put it in sort of crude human terms, that God is glad He saved us, that the Lord Jesus appreciates our response to His sacrifice on our behalf, that we love Him and we want to please Him and serve Him and be useful to Him. You think about members of your family, it is always a privilege and it feels good to be useful, to help someone in need, to put a shoulder under a load. We all count that a great privilege and you have more opportunities if there's more things you know how to do.

If you can cook and somebody's under the weather and you can make wonderful food and take it to them, it's a win-win. You feel useful, you've been able to do something productive that you're able to do that others can't and the person receiving it benefits. It is grace and glory from God when those kinds of things take place between and among believers.

Hospitality, usefulness, how much more so in the kingdoms that are to come? Well, to be thoroughly equipped for every good work is to learn those skills and gain that experience now and you can do it right where you sit. You can do it in whatever circumstance you find yourself because it is spiritual in nature. It isn't what you do, it is how you think.

It's how you process input, how you apply the Word of God, the conclusions that you draw, the discernment that you exercise, the recognition of what is really righteous and what is not, what is true and what is false, what is sound doctrine and what is false doctrine. Every waking moment that you do this, you are building skills and experience into the soul that is useful to the Master. One of the big problems, and all of us know this, when you first get out of school, whether it's high school or college or whatever, and you go out on the job market and we used to look at the want ads in the newspaper because that was the pinnacle of technology in those days.

Now you go to online job shopping places, but you would look at the advertisements. What is someone looking for? Well, we would like somebody that knows this. I've got it.

They know that. I know that. Has experience with this.

Oh, I did that in school. I did that for a project in class and has two years of experience. Oh, I'm fresh.

I don't have two years of experience. I haven't even done an internship. And job after job after job, two years on the job, three years of experience, two years, three years.

We don't want anybody that's coming fresh out of school. We want somebody that's done it a little bit. Experience counts for a lot.

Why are we here facing the slings and arrows of the world of flesh and the devil? To get experience. We're not just schooled in Bible class. We don't have a head knowledge of what scripture says.

We go out and we put it into practice. This is our practical application. This is our internship.

This is our engagement in turning gnosis into epinosis. If you like those Greek terms, epinosis is knowledge that is known not just hypothetically or academically, but by experience. This is how you're supposed to interact with an animal that, you know, I love watching this guy, Caesar, that Caesar Milan, that takes dogs that are, you know, hopeless yappers and ankle biters and hysterical dogs that create all kinds of problems if you try to walk them on a city sidewalk.

But he has learned dog language. And you can watch the program and say, boy, that Caesar's really something. Look at that technique whereby he got this dog to calm down and do his business outside instead of inside and not be a terrible companion as a dog.

But what really makes that stuff useful is when I do that with my dog. I realize I'm rewarding bad behavior when I inadvertently reward the dog for doing something bad. He wants attention.

He starts barking. I pay all kinds of attention trying to get him to shut up. He's getting what he wants.

This is true of children also. They don't get the attention they want. They'll do negative things because it is attention that they want.

When they get attention by doing bad things, they'll keep on doing bad things. And you learn a principle that you don't want to reinforce bad behavior. You want to reinforce good behavior.

You want to discourage carefully bad behavior. You don't beat dogs. You don't beat horses and you don't beat children.

You can discipline them by spanking, but that's not the same as beating. And it has to be done unemotionally. It has to be done respectfully.

It has to be done in a way that the child can still respect the parent and the parent respects the child in so doing. I'm talking about small children now for spanking. You

don't spank a child once they're old enough that you discipline them by other means.

But there are times when they're the only way to communicate that there is a bad consequence for selfish and irresponsible behavior. But to learn this by practice, to have implemented it in your own experience and to have seen how it works, see how it works better when I do it this way and better when I do it that way. This is not so that we can get along well in the world.

All of these things we learn are a part of our hope. We need this experience. We need this application.

We need this for the future. And if we end up practicing bad behaviors and whether it is pet training or taking care of stock or working with people in various lines of contact and interacting as a receptionist or a service technician or whatever it may be. There are people who say, well, you ought to do it this way.

And a lot of people do it that way. And it's terrible. It has bad results.

And they don't seem to learn from the bad result. It's a false doctrine, if you will. And there are many believers who are fed false doctrine and they're not paying enough attention to realize that and to disabuse themselves of it and get at the truth.

If you go to the biblical warnings about being deceived, let no one deceive you. One of the biggest forms of deception and the primary source of deception is self-deception. Self-deception.

So, for example, James 1, 22. Everybody knows the first part of this verse. Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only.

Right? James 1, 22. Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only. Did you know that that's not all of the verse? Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving your own selves.

Deceiving yourselves. We can hear the word and not do it and fool ourselves about that problem. We have got to turn the corner from hearing, observation, interpretation, which we often do in a shared fashion, but application is all us.

I have heard it. I understand it. I've at least been given a suggestion as to what it means and what it ought to produce, but I've got to now do that.

Coming to Bible class is not enough. Functioning daily in the light of what I learned in Bible class is what counts. And if it doesn't turn the corner into that practical application of God's truth, we deceive ourselves.

We're fooling ourselves. What's bad about being fooled is you think that you're fully dressed and you look marvelous and you go to a formal function. What if you glance

down and see that you got on one brown shoe and one black shoe? What if you made a last stop in the restroom before circulating and don't realize that you're trailing toilet paper from the waistband of your clothing? You're deceived.

And when self-deception is revealed, it is embarrassing. It's awful. Nobody wants to realize that they've been fooling themselves about something, trusting something I shouldn't have trusted, buying something I shouldn't have bought.

I got sold a bill of goods and I got stung, but I deceived myself. I told myself it was good, told myself it was the right thing. Self-deception is an awful thing once it is revealed.

Jeremiah 17.9, verse I learned with my mom when I was probably four years old, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. The King James says, who can know it? If your own heart is deceitful, if your conscience is not functioning properly, how are you going to know when you're wrong? How are you going to know when something is false? There's a beautiful piano piece. If you haven't heard it, find it somewhere on YouTube.

It's called The Heart Always Asks Pleasure First or something close to that. The Heart Asks Pleasure First. Beautiful piano piece.

I don't know where the title came from, but the heart will deceive because the heart is analogous to the itching ears. Hearts want to be filled. They want to be enjoying things.

You don't want to have a sad heart. You don't want to have a depressed heart. You don't want to have a disappointed heart.

You don't want to have an angry heart. The heart always seeks pleasure first, and the heart is deceitful in that regard and desperately wicked. Left to itself, it's going to choose that which doesn't partake of God.

Jeremiah 17.9. So we can deceive ourselves about whether we're actually practicing what we hear. We can deceive ourselves about thoughts and intents which are in the heart. How do you fix the deceitful wicked heart of Jeremiah 17.9? The word of God sharper than any two-edged sword piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, the joints and the marrow, and is a judge, a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

If you want to find out if they're wicked or not, if you find out if I'm really thinking correctly or not, it's the word of God. That's why Paul is emphasizing how important instructing the brothers in these things as a good minister of Jesus Christ with words of faith and good doctrine, these things command and teach. Teach is getting the information across.

Command is exhorting being a doer of the word, right? First thing they teach you when

you're wet behind the ears lieutenant is how to give commands to troops. You're going to march a platoon around and you're going to give them marching commands. They're at parade rest and you say port arms, right shoulder arms, left face, and so on.

Actually, you want to leave them at the order when you face them, then bring the weapons up to the port or to the shoulder. But they tell you there are two parts to a command. There is the command of preparation and the command of execution.

So you say, right shoulder, if they're at the port, you got your rifle in front of you, right shoulder, nobody moves. That's the command of preparation. Now I know what I am about to do when the command of execution is given.

So I've got my rifle in front of me. Somebody says right shoulder. I know exactly what movements and I'm thinking ahead.

As soon as I hear the command of execution, this is what I'm going to do. I'm going to put my right hand on the butt of the stock. I'm going to shift the rest of the weapon over in front of my face, turn it 90 degrees, and I'm going to pop that thing against my arm and I'm going to try to do it in as much harmony and unison with the rest of the group as possible.

Right shoulder is the command of preparation. This is what I need to know as to what I should do. Homs is the command of execution.

Do that. Command and teach. Give the commands of preparation, give the information, give the instruction, the good words of faith and sound doctrine, and then command.

You've got to do this or it doesn't matter. I can only imagine the disorder and chaos that would happen if a large group of Marines is standing there with their weapons at the port and somebody says, right shoulder, right shoulder. And then there's just silence for five minutes.

Well, now what? If it doesn't get executed, what was the point of the instruction? It's got to happen. You've got to be a doer of the word and not hearers only. Otherwise we're deceiving ourselves and we are going to get a very nasty surprise in the present when God chastises us as sons and in the future at the judgment seat of Christ.

It's not worth it. Why be deceived? And certainly why deceive myself? First John 1.8 says, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. This is the underhanded message that is coming by way of doctrines of demons in the progressive postmodern church.

It doesn't matter if you're living with the same gender partner. It doesn't matter if you're spending hours looking at pornography. It doesn't matter if you're engaged in gossip and maligning and backbiting and judging.

It doesn't matter if you're sitting around stewing in a pool of worry and doubt. It doesn't matter because God loves you just as you are. God wants a deep personal relationship with you.

You see, I'm on a hobby horse this morning. It's a deception. Focus on how much God loves you.

Don't focus on your responsibility because of that love to do, to be, to function, to get it done in whatever circumstance, high, low, active, inactive, able, unable, well, sick, happy, sad, prosperous, strapped. Every single day, we have an obligation to be doers of the word and not hearers only. Otherwise, we have been deceived and we are deceiving ourselves.

If we say that we have no sin, sin's not an issue. I don't need to examine myself to see if I'm in the faith. I don't need to judge myself so that I won't be judged.

I don't need to look at what just happened with this bad conversation, this stressful situation, this everything going haywire and I and others have lost our peace and our joy and our forward thinking and our fruit of the spirit. Something bad has happened here. What was my part in that? Track down my sin.

Well, but he, but they, and I'm on a point of finger. What was my part? I can't confess that guy's sins. I can't confess that gal's sins, that child's sins, that parent's sins, that employer or that worker's.

I can only keep house in my own house. If we say that we have no sin, well, it's all their fault. I'm going to shift the blame.

I'm going to direct my attention to everything that they did that is a failure. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. This passage is a warning against being deceived.

Deception neutralizes the conscience. And guess what? That conscience has a lot of different areas of operation. Think about this.

If one area dulls the conscience, calluses over the conscience, well, it's, it's in this one situation here. I'm just, I, I'm not concerned about what's right. I'm not concerned about whether I have sin in this and you dull the conscience.

It doesn't suddenly get sharp and clear and wonderfully vibrant and well lit in some, in another place. You've got one conscience. And if you dull it with one thing, it's going to be dull everywhere.

And you will start to miss things in areas where you used to be strong and you will fail to discern and to perceive in areas where formerly you had clarity dulling the conscience.

You've only got one. You don't have a set of eight.

It's not a, it's not place settings in your silverware drawer. You've got one conscience. And if you dull it with one thing, it's dull in everything.

This is why seemingly harmless sins. Well, I, I like to vaporize about things I don't like, but I keep it to myself. I don't talk to other people.

So it's just in my own head and I can rant and rave and strut and fret in my own mind. I'm not hurting anybody because I don't let it escape my lips. I can do this, this sin, and it's not affecting anybody.

It's not known. It's okay. Sorry.

No, because it damages the conscience and you are using your conscience everywhere else. Sin sears the conscience and you will be fooled by deceitfulness. We'll be fooled by our own heart.

We'll be fooled by doctrines of demons and deceptions from ravaging wolves. You will be led astray. You will be damaged.

It's kind of like, well, I got the mop dirty on this one floor, but now I'm going to go over and mop this other floor. If your mop's dirty, everywhere you use that mop is going to get dirty and not clean. You've got one conscience.

Don't let it get damaged. The Word of God and the Spirit of God, the cleansing grace of God is needed to keep the conscience sharp, to keep the heart pure, to keep our faith unhypocritical. That's the goal of the instruction.

That's the goal of the truth. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Isn't it interesting? If I say I have no sin, the truth, what truth? A lot more than just the truth that I actually do have sin.

If I say that I have no sin and deceive myself, a whole bunch of truth goes away. A whole bunch of truth goes away. I err in one place and everything is thrown off.

I've used this illustration many times, but if you lay a foundation and you're going to build on it, but one corner of that foundation is high, you didn't check it with a level, you didn't measure it carefully, how are you possibly going to build floors and walls and second stories? How are you going to hang windows and install doors in, in whopper jawed construction? I know people that have had to unbuild and rebuild whole walls because the previous construction person or repair person or modifying person didn't ensure that plates were level and studs were vertical and that the building framework is straight and true. Everything else gets affected. You get cracks where you shouldn't have.

You have windows that stick and doors that hang because your walls aren't straight. One area can affect a whole lot of other things that you wouldn't even think for. If we say we have no sin, 1st John 1.8. James 1.26. If anyone among you thinks he is usabella, he is godly, he is religious.

If anyone among you thinks he is religious, but does not bridle his tongue, he deceives his own heart and his quote unquote religion is useless. Thinking we are godly, thinking we are righteous, thinking we are religious. If we've got a loose tongue, if we can't stop committing sins of the tongue, if we can't stop hurting other people and misleading other people and shading and distorting truth, hiding some facts and emphasizing others in our speech, does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart.

Religion is useless. In the same way that love is a measure of our faith and our hope, what we say is a measure of whether we actually have a healthy spiritual life or not. Our tongue will give us away.

Finally, Galatians 6.3. If anyone thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Galatians 6.3. Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. There's nothing more tempting than recognizing that somebody else has messed up.

It is so easy to mess up in the process of dealing with someone who has messed up. We have to cultivate, we have to actively and consciously make sure we have a spirit of gentleness. Many times somebody screws up, you want to yell, you want to scream, you want to throw things.

How could you, you know, what made you think, what's the matter with you? This happened. Something wrong with you and that is not a spirit of gentleness. If someone is overtaken in a trespass, any trespass, notice, any trespass, any trespass, you who are spiritual, there are people that should be kept out of this process, by the way, in a group, in a family, in a, certainly in a church, when people are in contact, you know, on a daily basis.

If someone is overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual, restore, work with them to recover from the fault, from the failure, in a spirit of gentleness. If you get on your high horse, if you start dictating, if you start getting out of line in this, that is the temptation, is that someone else's stumbling causes you to stumble. You see this in races all the time, whether it's on a car track, on a bicycle race, runners in the Olympics, one person trips and falls, a whole bunch of other people suddenly trip and fall.

And Paul warns against that, don't trip just because the other guy tripped. And the key to not failing is ensure that every word you say, every thought you think, every action you take is dictated by, and is sourced in a spirit of gentleness, moderation. It's like they

used to say about Brylcreem, a little dab will do you, gentleness.

There is a difference. If you want a horse to do something, saw some horses this past week, so horses are on my mind, but you can have a court. And when you want a horse to do something, you can slap the horse on the flanks.

You can gouge them in the ribs with your stirrups. You can yank on the reins and yank on that bit between their teeth, or you can guide. Good horsemen learn how to steer a horse, how to guide a horse, just by laying the reins on one side of the neck or the other.

The horse feels the reins touch on one side of the neck, and they'll just turn. You gently pull back, they slow down. You lean forward, they feel the shift in your weight, and they'll speed up.

You can take them from a canter to a trot to a gallop just with your body language. Don't even have to say anything, nothing with the reins. You change the horse's speed that you become attuned.

They learn your body language, and it's gentle. They want to please you. They want to enjoy their activities as much as you do, and it takes experience, it takes time spent, it takes intimacy, and there is that spirit of gentleness.

And if the horse starts to go the wrong way, wants to do the wrong thing, you've got to use a spirit of gentleness. Come around a corner on a trail, and there's a copper head in the middle of the thing, and your horse wants to rear up and panic, you don't start slapping him with the court and saying, quit that. How is that going to help? It takes a spirit of gentleness to calm them, to steady them, to let them know that it's okay.

Nobody got bit, nobody's hurt. They draw confidence from your confidence. They draw gentleness from your gentleness, and it is never more true than in the spiritual realm.

Overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual, you who know how to do this, some people can't maintain a spirit of gentleness, get them out of the situation. Lest you also be tempted, bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. What is the context of bearing a burden here? Bear one another's burdens.

It is a burden to fail. It is a burden to be overtaken in a trespass. Something produced it, something caused it.

I've got a weakness if I trespass, and I'm overtaken in it. If someone is going to restore me, they're going to have to help get a shoulder under that load so that I can stand back up under and do what I'm supposed to. I have tripped and fallen.

Somebody is going to help pick up what I'm bearing by way of my personal load, get me to stand back up, help me reposition it, get it strapped on so that I can carry my load

effectively. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. What is the law of Christ? Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

Love your neighbor as yourself. If you stumbled, you would appreciate someone helping you to get back on your own two feet, able to function independently again. Do that for someone else.

That's the law of Christ. Help them get back to where they were before. If anyone thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

You're not your brother's spiritual head. It's a brotherhood. It's a fellowship.

You don't insert yourself between another believer and the Lord Jesus. I will mentor you. I'll disciple you.

I'll tell you how you ought to live your spiritual life. We can come alongside, but we're on a level plane. And if we think we're more than we are, we deceive ourselves.

Let each one examine his own work, then he will have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another. Oh, look at what I did. Look at the impact I had on this brother.

I'm helping him so that he can get up on his own feet and have a good opinion of himself before the Lord. I'm not going to take pride in having been the one to come alongside. I'm a great come alongside-er.

Each one shall bear his own load. I can help somebody get back under theirs, but now they're going to walk. I've got to bear my own load, and I can't be constantly invested in the lives of others at the expense of my own.

I will be deceiving myself. Well, these are some of the reasons why it is so important for us to not be misled, to not be misguided, to not have wrong priorities offered to us as legitimate functions of spiritual life, but taken to an extreme, blown out of proportion while others are diminished and neglected. Balance.

Let your moderation be known to all. The Lord is at hand. The Lord is nearby.

He's watching. I want to be effective. I want to be balanced.

I want to realize that every waking moment is an opportunity to prepare myself for service and function now and in the kingdoms to come. There's opportunities to rest, to rejoice, to refresh ourselves at the oasis of God's Word, the oasis of fellowship with other believers. It's a wonderful blessing.

But to never slack and end up being deceived by others or deceived by our own heart. We are here for a purpose. The time that is granted to us is a stewardship.

Redeem the time. Purify the heart because the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Redeem the time because time left to itself, the days are evil.

It's up to us to use God's provision, God's grace, God's power in the person of His Spirit and in the power of His Word to transform and to prepare to gain that experience that is going to serve us throughout the eternal future. There won't be a time in the eternal future where we are wrestling against principalities and powers. This is the only chance we get to learn those skills in this environment.

Well, let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the wonderful opportunity we have to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to wash and be clean, to be nourished and built up by that which every joint supplies, to have the treasure of Your Word even as we are still earthen vessels. We pray that as we reflect on our position in Christ, our daily opportunities, that God the Holy Spirit will illuminate the path, show us where we can improve, how we can do better, how we can reveal those areas where we might be deceiving ourselves or be susceptible to deception by others, to cling to the truth, to eschew what is evil and thereby to represent the Lord Jesus Christ in a way that is a light shining to those who are looking for a relationship with You and a reflection of the glory of the Lord Jesus.

We ask it in His name. Amen.