

## **Matthew 22-05-01a**

This is the first day of May, 2022. Welcome to the Sunday Morning Services at Grace & Truth Bible Church. We're continuing our study in the Gospel of Matthew, looking at chapter 24.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and we will get started. Shall we pray? Father, what a privilege it is to spend time together in fellowship and in the study of your Word. We are so grateful for our relationship to you through the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is our salvation. He is our righteousness. He is our peace.

He is our sanctification. We could not even think to approach you without His work on our behalf, His love for us, and our standing in Him in your presence. We pray that as we spend this time together looking at the truth of your Word, that your Holy Spirit will minister to each of our hearts, help us to understand it fully, to see its pertinence and application in our life day by day, and that as a result of our time spent together this morning, our love for you will grow stronger and more fulsome.

Our love for each other will be energized and informed, and our witness before the world will be enhanced as we reflect the glory that we find in the words and the works of the Lord Jesus Christ. We ask these things in His name. Amen.

Well, let's take a moment to read our passage. We're in Matthew chapter 24. We have seen the first 14 verses of this chapter.

Jesus has been asked in verse 3, What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? Jesus answered and said, Take heed that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars.

See that you are not troubled, for they must come to pass, but the end is not yet. Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines, earthquakes in various places.

All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. We've seen that beginning at verse 9, when it says you, this of course refers to those who are alive as Israelites in the time of the 70th week that has been determined upon the people of Daniel, Daniel chapter 9. So when it says they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

This specifically refers to those who belong to God, who are people of faith. They are Old Testament saints. The church is gone.

The rapture has taken place. And so first and foremost, although we should be ready to suffer for his name's sake, this does not refer specifically to us. We are those who have been delivered from the wrath to come.

This is during the tribulation. This is persecution and animosity and hostility from the Antichrist and those who are under his control, those who are approving of him and supporting him against the people of God who are Israel. I emphasize again, when you get to verse 9, at this beginning of sorrows, these sorrows are on Israel.

This is the tribulation period. Verse 9, they will deliver you up to tribulation. We are pre-tribulation rapture believers.

This is what the word of God teaches. It is abundantly clear that we are not a part of this 70th week operation, being hated by all nations for my name's sake. So these are what we would call today messianic Jews.

They are not only Israelites. They are not only from the 12 tribes. They are not 12,000 from each tribe as you find in the book of Revelation, but they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then many will be offended, verse 10, will betray one another and will hate one another. We saw this in chapter 10 verses 35 and 36. Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

Prophets primarily operated in the days of Israel. You have the Old Testament major and minor prophetic books. We have the record of the ministry of those prophets.

This was the way that God communicated to Israel. You will notice that in the New Testament, our books, our written communication from God is from apostles. We don't have the book of Agabus.

We don't have the book of other New Testament individuals who had a prophetic gift. Our books were written by apostles or those closely associated with apostles. Luke wrote Luke and Acts.

He is not an apostle, but he is closely associated with the apostle Paul and so on. So when it talks about prophets, we look to the Old Testament record where Israel was enjoined to discriminate, to discern between true prophets of God and false prophets, many false prophets. Notice that Jesus did not say many false apostles will arise.

These are people who are purporting to present the word of God afresh, something that is beyond scripture, something that is extra biblical. They will bring a message that purports to be from God, but is deceptive. This principle, of course, is true in any age, but it will be explicit during the tribulation.

False prophets will rise up and deceive many. Verse 12, because lawlessness will abound. Notice lawlessness.

The law, comporting with the law, obeying the law, being faithful to God's law is a function for Israel. The precepts, the concepts, the commands and so on that come from the law will pertain, because this is the time of Jacob's trouble and the people of God who are Israelite, who are Jewish, will be looking to God's law. But lawlessness will abound and the love of many will grow cold.

We saw this in Daniel 11, verse 29 and following in our preceding studies. But he who endures to the end shall be delivered. Saved here does not refer to salvation, of course, it refers to deliverance to God's grace, God's mercy, God's blessing, God's future hand upon those who will be rewarded for their faithfulness even unto death.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations. Notice there is a distinction between the people of God and the nations, because you go back to the distinction between the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the Gentiles. Those who come to faith in this age will be numbered with Israel.

This gospel will be preached in all the world as a witness to the nations, to the Gentiles. Then the end will come. Well, this is a fascinating description.

We are comforted in some ways because we understand that it does not pertain directly to us. But as goes the nation of Israel, whether it is in the Old Testament past or in the prophetic future, we learn lessons for ourselves as individuals. What do we take, by way of summary, as church age believers from this? We can heave a sigh of relief and say, well, I won't be here for the tribulation.

I feel bad for the folks that are going to have to go through it, but praise God, I'm going to be up in glory with my loved ones, with the Lord Jesus, doing something different. But this is just as pertinent, just as applicable for us as it is for them. How so? There are conditions that pertain here that are mirrored in our own generation.

Have false prophets arisen and deceived many in the Christian church? This is a given. You've seen Christian television. You've seen the aisles of Christian books at bookstores.

You've listened to the radio. There is widespread misunderstanding of the Word of God in the present day, and many are deceived. How can we avoid being deceived? We really can't avoid being deceived in and of ourselves.

The truth has to be illuminated by the Spirit of God, by the Word of God. We have to be actively asking and seeking and knocking to appeal to the Lord to give us discernment and wisdom, to open our eyes so that we can see. It is not possible to avoid being deceived without the power of God.

We are not capable in our own strength and in our own wisdom of cleaving to the truth, adhering to the truth, and not being deceived. We will be fooled. We will be deceived because Satan and his deceptions are stronger than our strength.

They are capable of fooling us, and many in this current age, before the rapture, have been deceived. We get deceived in a variety of ways, and if we are not actively appealing to God for illumination, we will be deceived. I would submit, I would suggest, I would allow, I would opine that most believers today are actively in the grip of deception.

Look around the world, look at the issues that have been raised. There is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death. It seems right.

Social justice seems right. The issues that are raised in politics, that are raised in society, that are raised for the environment, that are starting to create flames in the area of your hair when it comes to the environment, or to what seems to be just common sense, well this is obviously wrong. This obviously has to be changed.

Is the devil's lie? Why? Is it wrong to want social justice? Is it wrong to want to lift up the downtrodden and pass laws and take measures to help those who are disadvantaged in some way? Maybe they have physical limitations. There are all kinds of isms. We talk about age-ism, where they discriminate against the elderly.

There is discrimination against those who are handicapped. There is discrimination against those who are of color. Discrimination against those who have certain ideas about themselves and about the world.

Shouldn't we as believers be advocating and militant in our pressure on government or on society to change these? And the answer surprisingly is no. The answer is no. Why? Where in the Bible do you find God crediting righteousness to the account of those who are seeking to better the world, seeking to better society? There is a huge segment of Christianity today that will tell us that righteousness comes by what you do for the community.

It is community advocacy. It is community service. It is community if you do not love your enemy, if you do not love those who are underprivileged or oppressed, you are not righteous.

And your righteousness is measured by your love for others. This is a twisted truth. You have to sit and think about it for a moment.

What is the basis? What is the scriptural basis? This is your first pop quiz question of the morning. What is the scriptural basis for righteousness? How does God credit righteousness to you and to me? Does God look down and say, well, you have loved your neighbor as yourself. You have put yourself out.

Your neighbor came to you and said, I've had a visitor come unexpectedly. Let me have your lamb so that I may serve it to my neighbor. The parables that Jesus told about such things, the unfortunate neighbor and so on.

Is this the way God credits righteousness? What is the nature of being justified before God? Is it based on what we do for one another? It is not. Obviously, when we are doing what we are supposed to do and when we are righteous in God's eyes, we are going to credit and we are going to benefit and we are going to look out for that second part of the law of love that fulfills all of the Old Testament law and prophets. Love God.

Love your neighbor. This fulfills the law. But it is not the basis of righteousness.

It is not the basis of justification. This message, I cannot tell you how scrambled and twisted and deceived Christian minds are in the present day from misunderstanding this point. There is a difference in obedience.

There is a difference in the practice of love and in the nature of righteousness. Righteousness comes from faith. We lay hold of righteousness by faith, not by works.

Remember when Paul says, by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Think about that. What are the works of the law? Jesus said, if you love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, all your mind, love your neighbor as yourself, you have fulfilled the law.

Right? So why are we not justified by loving God and loving one another, expressing love, agape love, active love, looking out for the disadvantaged, those who are having a hard time, those who need help, those who require assistance, those that we can benefit, we put ourselves out on their behalf. Think now, what is the difference in love versus righteousness? Does the scripture ever say God credits righteousness to our account because we love? Have you ever thought about this? It's kind of an interesting point to me. Righteousness is not credited to us because we love.

How are we assigned righteousness? How are we judged to be righteous? Abraham did what? Abraham loved God. Abraham loved Eliezer. Abraham loved Sarah.

Abraham loved Isaac. Abraham loved Abimelech. How did Abraham get assigned righteousness? What does the scripture say? Old Testament and new.

Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness. The modern church, modern Christianity, current believers that we know, that we're related to, that we've rubbed elbows with, have gotten confused on the biblical assignment of righteousness, that righteousness comes by love. Second pop quiz question.

What was the first one? What was my question I just asked? How do we receive the assignment of righteousness from God? When God looks at us and says, fill in your name

here. I'm going to record them in the book of the righteous. I'm going to give them not only the righteousness of my son, the Lord Jesus Christ, but I am going to credit them with righteousness on their own account, living a righteous life, being a righteous individual.

How does that come? Faith. Abraham believed God when God made a promise. Abraham lived his life in the light of the promises of God.

Had nothing to do with his love for Sarah, his love for his children, his love for Keturah, his love for his 17 sons with Keturah, his love for his neighbors, his love for his servants, his love in rescuing Lot. All of the adventures that Abraham had, not a single one assigns him righteousness from God because of love. Second quiz question.

What is the group of Christian virtues? How many are there? How many Christian virtues does the New Testament teach? Christian virtues. How many are there? I like to call it the triad. So how many is that? How many is in a triad? How many sides does a triangle have? Three.

The triad, the threefold group of Christian virtues, what are they? This is review, faith, hope, and love. What distinguishes those three from one another? What's our memory aid? What is faith? What part does it play in our lives? I'll give you a hint. One thing is the motivation, one thing is the means, and one thing is the measures.

Three M's. You have the triad of Christian virtues, and each of them can be described by a word that starts with M. Which one is motivation? Hope. Which one is love? Hope.

Hope is the, I'm glad we're reviewing these. I see some surprised faces. Motivation.

What motivates us? Why do we live the Christian life? We have the hope of the resurrection. We have the hope of unification with Christ, the hope of reunion with our loved ones, hope of eternal life, hope of future service and function and presence with God, with the Son of God in the realms of the eternal. That's our hope.

Why not just eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die? Because we have the hope of the resurrection. What does Paul say in Corinthians? If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable. Our hope is the promises of God through the Lord Jesus Christ that we will transcend and graduate from this life.

Hope is the motivation. That's why we pursue righteousness. Who cares if you're righteous or not? It's more fun to be evil in the short term.

Evil is fun. Sin is scandalously inviting. It is stimulating.

It's exciting. That's why people sin. It's enjoyable.

We enjoy working our evil will on each other. We enjoy being angry. We enjoy being

selfish.

We enjoy gratifying the lusts of the flesh. We enjoy it. That's why sin prevails because it's fun.

Why would we deny ourselves the pleasures of sin for a season? Why would we do that? Remember a few weeks back when I was reading the Lorem Ipsum Dolor Latin quote? Remember that? Remember where it came from? Seneca and his essay on the pursuit of pleasure and the role of pain. Dolor, Lorem Ipsum Dolor. It's actually Dolorem, the first syllable got cut off because whoever quoted that started at the top of a page in the Lieb Classical Library.

They just opened up something and said, well, Latin, nobody knows what this means. And it said Lorem, but it's Dolorem, Dolor. Dolor de cavesa, my head hurts.

I've got a headache. Dolor, pain. Nobody pursues pain for its own sake.

We endure pain because we believe that there is pleasure on the other side. We work out and it hurts, but we want to be in shape. We want to be healthy.

We will endure a measure of pain because there is a greater satisfaction beyond it. In this life you will have tribulation, Jesus said, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.

Paul says we have a momentary light affliction that is working for us an eternal weight of glory. Hope is our motivation. Hope enables us to endure short-term setbacks, short-term pain, short-term difficulties.

We are motivated by the return of the Lord Jesus, by the eternal future, by the wonderful program that God has for us. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, has not entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him. You hear people quote that verse and they don't go on to the next one, but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit.

What eye has not seen and ear has not heard and hasn't entered into the heart of man has been revealed to us. It's not a mystery anymore. We know what it is.

It is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is eternal life. It is the new heavens and the new earth.

It has been revealed. We know what that is. Our eyes haven't seen it yet.

Our ears haven't heard it yet. It hasn't entered into our hearts independently, what God has prepared, but God has revealed it in Scripture. This gives us hope and it motivates us.

It makes it worth it to us. What is the means of obtaining righteousness? How do we enter into the place where the work of the Lord Jesus Christ not only saves us, but makes us approved, be diligent, Scripture says, in the letters of Paul, be diligent to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Be diligent, study to show yourself approved unto God.

How do we enter into righteousness? How do we achieve righteousness in God's ledger? God looks at us and says, if it's time for the marking angel to go forth and preserve someone from judgment, preserve them from divine wrath that is going to be poured out, wait a moment, I'm not going to deliver this judgment. I'm not going to send the flood. I'm not going to send the tribulation.

I'm not going to send divine judgment on sin and evil and the wicked imaginations of men's hearts that are only evil all the day. Wait a moment, I'm going to send out the marking angel to put a mark on those who do what? Those who sigh and cry over Jerusalem in the Old Testament. Remember our study of the marking angel? Those in Revelation who are sealed in their foreheads.

Isn't it interesting that the mark of the beast is in the head and on the hand? And what does God say to Israel in the law about his precepts and his statutes and his ordinances and his law? Bind them as frontlets between your eyes that's on your forehead. Bind them on your hands. Put them on the doorpost of your house.

But the law of God is metaphorically to be a mark on the forehead and a mark on the hand. That's exactly where the beast is going to put his mark, on the forehead and on the hand. It is a choice of what you believe, what you practice, what you put your faith in.

If you want to buy and sell, if you want to operate in society, if you don't want to lose your wealth, if you want to obtain goods and services in the tribulation, you have to subscribe to the policies. You have to believe in the agenda and the purposes and the practices of the beast. It's going to be on your forehead and on your hand instead of, and remember this is the age of Israel, the last seven years, the 70th week of Daniel.

What should be in the forehead and on the hand for an Israelite? God's law. It's one or the other. You can't put God's law on the right hand and the mark of the beast on the left.

You can't put God's law as a frontlet between your eyes and also have the policies and the pursuits and the priorities and the agenda of the beast. It's one or the other. As goes the nation of Israel, when we look at them either historically or prophetically, so goes the individual believer.

We have a choice to make today. What is the triad of Christian virtues? Faith, hope, and

love. Hope is the motivation.

Faith is the means. Faith is how we acquire righteousness. When we look at our day, we've got a nice sunshiny day here.

They were predicting rain, but it didn't happen. A beautiful sunshiny day. We're going to leave church.

We're going to go out this afternoon and have some hours of activity. How do we invest those hours of time? Do we dedicate them to God? Do we go to the Lord and say, this is the day the Lord hath made. Rejoice and be glad in it.

I want to invest this time productively. I don't just want to accomplish tasks that are on a list. I decided this afternoon I'm going to take a nap and restore my soul.

Then I'm going to get up and I'm going to do X. I'm going to do Y. I'm going to do Z. I can still do those things, but you and I can convert that time and those tasks into righteousness. Isn't that something? You could clean out your garage. You could clean out a closet.

You could wash your car. You could mow the lawn. You could take your pet for a walk.

You could spend time with family members, with your spouse, or with your children, or with your parents, or whatever. Whatsoever you do, do it as unto the Lord. Dedicate it to the Lord in faith.

I'm going to have conversation. I'm going to share in an activity. I'm going to engage in an activity.

If I just do it mindlessly, I am no better than an unbeliever. Any unbeliever can mow the lawn. Any unbeliever can spend time with their loved ones.

Any unbeliever can take their dog for a walk. You and I can convert those activities to righteousness because we intentionally, consciously dedicate those activities to God in faith. Lord, bless my conversation.

Lord, bless my stewardship of these physical possessions, these physical opportunities. I want this hour, I want this afternoon to count. I want this hour to count and I want to invest it.

It is like the parable of the talents. God has given us the time. We need to redeem that time.

Redeeming the time, the days are inherently evil. By default they are evil. By default they don't count.

But when we consciously exercise faith, we look to God and say, I know you've given me this afternoon. You've given me physical strength. You've given me material goods.

You've given me time and capability and opportunity. Lord, show me how I can invest this as a stewardship before you. All of us this afternoon can take these hours between now and when we fall asleep tonight and convert them into eternal capital.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth. Remember we studied what moth and rust is. Moth and rust corrupt.

Thieves break in and steal. You can get on social media this afternoon and you can let people with their ideas and their words and their concepts and their chatter rob you of righteousness by faith because your mind is dragged away. There is deceit.

There is distraction. There is all kinds of just occupying the space where faith needs to dwell and live. If you spend too much time watching the news, too much time reading blogs, too much time listening to the chatter, oh my goodness, Elon Musk bought Twitter.

What's going to happen now? All of that will fill the empty house where righteousness should dwell. You drive out the demons. The house is clean and swept.

The demon is going to come back and bring seven of his friends. Why? Because the house is not filled with God's righteousness. Righteousness by faith.

Dedicate hour by hour. This is why David prayed three times a day. This is why Daniel prayed three times a day, evening and morning and at noon.

I will stop the presses. I will get off the carousel. I will go before the Lord and orient myself to the plans and purposes of God by faith.

Faith is the means of laying hold of righteousness. Faith is the means. Hope is the motivation.

What role does all love play? Jesus has a lot to say about love. People today have a lot to say about love related to the Jesus hermeneutic and fulfilling the law, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who spitefully use you. What is the role of love? Love is the measure.

Means, motivation and measure. How faithful are we? How hopeful are we? How faithful are we? I actually love a devotional campfire song that I learned as a child. We are one in the spirit.

We are one in the Lord. We pray that our unity will one day be restored. They will know we are Christians.

How? It's one of the first songs I ever learned to play on the guitar. They will know we are Christians by our love. They will know we represent Christ, that we are the body of Christ on this earth by our love.

Love is the measure of how faithful we are and how hopeful we are. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Romans 5. When and how does the Holy Spirit do that? You cannot decide to love.

You cannot purpose to love. You cannot say, well, if I just do a loving thing, God will judge me righteous. It doesn't work that way.

Love is the outgrowth and the outworking and the product of faith and of hope. I cannot decide to love and suddenly become loving. I cannot read an aphorism or a quote or be exhorted or encouraged to love and suddenly be a loving person.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. You can be as loving and self-sacrificial as you think you ought to be, and it will be in vain if it does not spring from faith and hope. Love is the measure of those things.

Love does not exist truly apart from faith and hope. If we are not denying ourselves and looking out for the interests of others instead of gratifying ourselves, out of faith and out of hope, our love is nothing. A sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Read the love chapter. How can love be patient and kind, selfless, enduring, suffering long, not vaunting itself, not puffing itself up? We cannot manufacture those things in and of ourselves. It comes from faith and comes from hope.

So when you look at our passage, many false prophets will arise and deceive many. What does that deceit do? It substitutes concepts. It substitutes propositional ideas that are not truth.

And because of that deceit, lawlessness will abound and the love of many will grow cold. Why does their love grow cold? It isn't that they just forgot to wake up and be loving. They've been deceived and they are lawless.

Faith is the foundation under love. We want to love God. We want to love each other.

This fulfills the law and the prophets. This is our ultimate goal. The Lord Jesus Christ reflects the love of God.

God so loved the world that He gave His Son. God so loved the world that He gave you and gave me to be here in His Son's place. Love is the goal.

Love is the measure of how well we are doing. But you can't just jump to love. And this is the mistake that huge segments of Christianity are overlooking and missing in the world today.

And we do not want to miss it. Love will grow cold when there is deception and lawlessness. How does that happen? No longer in the scriptures.

No longer aiming belief, trust, faith at the propositional truths of the Word of God. We become deceived into a false gospel, into a false spirituality, a false Christianity, in the name of Jesus Christ. We've seen Jesus warn.

Many will come to me in that day saying, Lord, Lord, in your name did we not do X, Y, and Z? And He's going to say, I never knew you. Because faith is the foundation of our relationship with God, not love. Love is the product.

Love is the result. It is not the means. Faith is the means.

Hope is the motivation. Love is the measure. Love is the product.

Love is the result. Love one another, Jesus says. As I have loved you, so you should love one another.

Did Jesus love us just out of the blue? He just dropped out of the sky, came into the manger, grew up as a kid, looked around and said, I love these Israelites. I love these Jewish people. I just love these Pharisees and Sadducees and scribes and chief priests and elders in Jerusalem.

I just love them. And you know what? I find some of their practices to be a little off-putting. I'm just going to have to try to love them more.

They're kind of almost my enemies. I'm just going to love them more. Where did the love of the Lord Jesus come from for tax collectors and sinners? Where did His love come from that caused Him to weep over the Jerusalem that was controlled by those religious infidels, those religious hypocrites? Where did His love come from? It didn't come because He said, I just want to love.

My Father loves. I want to love. I'm just going to be a loving Savior.

I'm going to be a loving representative of God. Where did the Lord Jesus' love come from? It came from His faith and His hope. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross and despised the shame.

Why? He had faith in the promises of His Father. He had faith in the plan of His Father. He had faith in the purposes of God.

As a human individual, having emptied Himself of His divinity, that's how He did it. Faith, hope, and love. So when we come to chapter 24 and we look at verse 12, verse 11 and 12, false prophets rise up and deceive many.

Lawlessness abounds. Because of lawlessness, love grows cold. Do you see that? Jesus

said it.

Because of lawlessness, because of faithlessness, why would you adhere to the strictures of the law? Why would you deny yourself the gratifications of the flesh when the law says don't do that, do not covet, do not steal, and so on? Because of deceit, because of lawlessness, love disappears. Do we want more love in our lives? Go back to the foundations that love is based on. Faith and hope.

I can't decide to love, but I can decide to believe. I can decide to trust. I cannot, by a decision, generate love in my soul, but I can look at the promises of God and, believing them, be motivated by the coming fulfillment of those promises.

I can be hopeful. I can decide to hope. I can decide to believe, and through those personal decisions, I will become a person who loves, and my love will not grow cold.

Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, and when you find this red ink in your New Testament that the Lord Jesus is talking, it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in what? Instruction in love? Why doesn't it say instruction in love? The word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit and the joints of the marrow. Critic of what? Thoughts and intents of the heart. What do I think? What do I believe? All scripture is God-breathed and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.

Righteousness. When we are righteous, we will fulfill the law of love. Love toward God, love toward one another.

Well, it's a powerful message. It's somewhat hidden. People want to come to Matthew 24 and see eschatology, but this is traction, where the rubber meets the road for our daily lives.

Let's pause here and take a break. When we come back, we'll continue our study in the wonderful