

Bible Basics Conference 2008: Dispensations

Part 11

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[00:00:01] Following on, really, from what Rosti was speaking to us about, I'd like to read one verse from Philippians chapter 3. You won't be surprised by the verse. It's chapter 3, verse 20.

For our conversation, or you could translate that, our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The subject, again, is dispensational truth and daily living.

But I suppose you could say it could be described as God's ways and our ways, [00:01:07] because the dispensations are God's ways in this world. He has different ways according to His mind and will at different times. Now, what we need to make sure is, is our way in accordance with His way? Do they match? Are we going in the same direction as God is, reverently speaking?

And for that to be so, we need to know His word and put it into practice. And then we'll be faithful to Him and a blessing to others.

And I've given two scriptures there. One scripture from Philippians mentions us as being lights in the midst of a dark and perverse generation. That's from Philippians chapter 2.

There's a danger that if we don't follow God's way, our light, our witness will be distorted.

[00:02:01] It will be in some way masked or may even not be shining at all.

So what are His ways today?

Well, I'm not going to try and anticipate what Mike's going to say in the last session, but just to look over some of the things that we've been saying about the current day, the church's day, we could describe it, the day of grace, the Christian day, the Spirit's day, the Gentile day.

Are we living in accordance with some of those things? Well, of course, we are Gentiles, most of us, I

think, here today. But are we being true to the character of the current day?

The church's day, the day of grace, the Christian day, the Spirit's day.

Now, there's five wonderful facts about today. And I must admit, I got these facts from an article which is on biblecenter.org.

[00:03:08] But I thought they encapsulated the character of this day very well. There's a man in heaven, we mentioned that earlier. There's a person of the Godhead on earth. The church has come into being. The Father has been revealed. The Lord Jesus could come at any moment. Now, are we living our lives in accordance with those glorious facts? Well, those facts actually help us to live our lives in accordance with God's mind and will. Because the Lord Jesus is in heaven for us.

He appears before God for us.

The Holy Spirit on earth, we mentioned that he indwells the church. But, of course, he indwells each individual believer, too. To enable him to live for the glory of God.

We have the word of God. [00:04:01] We have a new nature.

But the Holy Spirit gives us the power and energy, guidance, direction to live according to the will of God. We are members of the body of Christ.

And we need one another.

And we enjoy this most intimate relationship with God.

That you couldn't have enjoyed in any other dispensation.

Just think of it.

You and I can say to God, Father.

In fact, we can go further than that. We can say, Abba, Father.

Doesn't that bring home to you the reality of the work of the Lord Jesus upon the cross? That he's brought us into this close relationship.

Nearer we cannot be to God.

We know him as our Father. He's the one who cares for us. Who loves us.

[00:05:02] He's the one who desires to hear our worship to him. And we've got a heavenly hope. We've got an object in heaven, the Lord Jesus. If we can refer to him as that. Sounds a bit impersonal. But we've got a person as an object. A hope.

Someone to whom we look. But someone also to whom we're going. We're going to be with the Lord Jesus. We expressed that in one of our hymns earlier on today. The one who loved us and gave

himself for us. He's in heaven. And we're going to meet him one day. Doesn't that put a different color upon our lives from the lives of other people? It must do, mustn't it?

It must affect the way we think and speak and act.

We can always come into the presence of God as our Father.

This, of course, is a verse which speaks about the throne of grace. There's a place we can go to whenever we meet a problem or difficulty. [00:06:05] We can go to the Lord Jesus for help.

We can go to the Father for his loving care.

We know all things.

We have the Holy Spirit. John says this, doesn't he, in his first letter? That even the babe in Christ knows all things.

Has an unction from above.

The Holy Spirit poured out upon us, indwelling us. And as a result, enabling us to see right from wrong. We may not be able to explain every verse in the Bible. Doesn't mean that we know everything that's in the Bible and we can explain everything. But we have an understanding of what God's will is for us at any point in time. If we keep close to the Lord Jesus.

We're here as companies of his people.

And we're to display the all various wisdom of God to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies. [00:07:02] Have you ever thought of that? That where you gather, if you gather according to scriptural lines. There are those who are looking down. They're looking down on the whole church of God, of course. But it's often locally that we put these things into practice. We're a lesson book for the principalities.

And the authorities in the heavenlies. And we have this privilege which Rusty spoke about of expressing our love. Which is really what worship is. It's expressing love to him in the way he desires and approves. The Lord Jesus said that the father seeketh worshippers.

True worshippers.

And to worship him in a way which is according to his mind and will. We must worship in spirit and in truth.

And of course as we've already mentioned we're waiting for his son from heaven. [00:08:02] So to just go back a little over those points. What is Christian worship about?

I don't want to overlap too much with what Rusty said. But this was one of the things that was mentioned in the exercise in regard to this particular presentation. Our worship is by the spirit. Our service is by the spirit.

That's what Paul says in Philippians chapter 3.

And the word of God should form our worship.

That's why we're privileged to have the hymn book we have. So many of the hymns, virtually all the hymns in that hymn book. You can, as you read them, think of verses in the Bible. That's the way it should be. Our worship to the God should be formed. Its substance should come from the word of God. We're expressing to God the truth which he's given to us.

There should be substance in our worship.

Choruses are good in their place.

[00:09:03] But very often they're not expressing fully the thoughts of God.

And that's what God looks for. If you look at the verse like the one that's up there in Colossians chapter 3 verse 16. You'll see that it's speaking about worship that has spiritual substance in it.

And then praise the fruit of our lips expressing to God what we feel about his love towards us.

His greatness.

The perfection of what he's done.

The way he's working out his will.

And yet it's also so simple.

It's been said so often that when you think of the remembrance of the Lord Jesus on the Lord's Day morning. The only tangible things we have there are that loaf and that cup.

And they're so expressive of his love to us.

[00:10:02] The wonderful thing about gathering to the name of the Lord Jesus is it's so simple. It leaves out all that man would bring in.

That would distort things. And take our attention away from the Lord Jesus himself. Those two things, the loaf and the cup. They immediately focus our thoughts upon the fact that the Lord Jesus gave himself. His body and his blood separated in death for us.

We simply take that loaf and we take that cup.

In answer to his love and request made all these centuries earlier. And it's come down to us through those centuries. Do this in remembrance of me.

Is there a believer here today? Perhaps you've trusted the Lord Jesus for some years. You've been baptized.

But are you answering to the request of the Lord Jesus to remember him? You know the opportunity to do this will soon be gone. [00:11:03] When we're in heaven the Lord Jesus will be there. We'll see him. We won't need the loaf and the cup.

They're a kind of photograph of his love to us. When we have a photograph we say that's my dad. That's my wife.

We don't say that's a photograph of my wife. That's a photograph of my dad. We say that's my dad. That's my wife. And in the loaf and the cup we have as it were a photograph of the Lord Jesus.

In the moment of his devotion to his father.

Yet his devotion to us in giving himself upon the cross. Are you remembering the Lord Jesus in his death? You should if you believed on him as your savior. Why aren't you?

I must admit I left it a long time in my life. But really and truly you're depriving the Lord of what he should have from you. Perhaps you're doing it because there's something in your life that you know is not compatible with remembering him. [00:12:04] You need to get rid of that from your life. So that you're free to remember the Lord Jesus. Give him what is due.

But in Romans chapter 12 we're told that our lives should be a living sacrifice. Now are we really living a living sacrifice?

And that goes back to something of what Rusty was saying earlier. We shouldn't be molded by this world.

We should be transformed. That's what Paul teaches in Romans chapter 12 verses 1 and 2. By the renewing of our mind. It's letting the word of God come into our mind. There's so much material around today.

Books, yes but the internet especially.

Films and so on.

The news. 24 hours.

We live in a 24-7 culture unfortunately today.

When the devil is occupying people all the time with the things of this world. [00:13:05] But the trouble is a lot of us as believers we're being occupied by these things as well. They're coming into our minds and we're giving very little time to God's word. And as a result we're not living it out in our lives. But if we were we would answer to this verse in Ephesians chapter 5 verse 2. Walk in love.

The Apostle Paul says.

And he gives the standard, the example of the Lord Jesus. I'll read the verse out. Ephesians chapter 5 verse 2.

Walk in love.

Sometimes we forget those words at the beginning of this verse. We start at Christ.

Well of course that's good and very appropriate when we read this verse out at the supper. But we shouldn't forget walk in love comes first. [00:14:03] Walk in love.

Christ also has loved us and has given himself for us. An offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.

Are we thinking of giving a sweet smelling savour to God from our lives? And in Hebrews 13 verse 16.

We are exhorted to be doing things for the Lord. And to be communicating, giving to others.

So that talks a bit about our relationship with God. But what about our relationship with one another? Well we've mentioned some of these things already. The church is one body, it's not an organisation. It's a spiritual, not a physical house. But here's a practical thought in connection with the thought of it as the bride of Christ. In 2 Corinthians chapter 11 the Apostle Paul writes with jealousy. [00:15:01] He says I'm jealous for you. I want you to be for the Lord Jesus. Because he says that we should be a chaste virgin for Christ.

Sadly some of us when we look at our lives we feel we're not really practically of that character as we should be. We allow ourselves to be mixed up with the defiling effect of things in this world.

And of course we are together the sheep of God's pasture.

And we are to look after one another's needs. And we're to care for one another, not exploit one another, not dominate one another. As we see very often happening in the religious systems of man. But caring for one another readily and willingly. That's our lives with one another. And then what about our lives in respect to the world? Well we're in the world but we're not of it.

[00:16:01] Once we've trusted the Lord Jesus we're no longer of this world. And this is something the Lord Jesus speaks about in his wonderful prayer to his father in John chapter 17. If you read Ephesians chapter 5 you'll see some of the practical characteristics the Apostle Paul expects to see in the lives of believers. Who realise they're in the world but not of it.

And the thought of being light comes back again so powerfully in those verses.

We have an entirely different principle of life from those around us. For me to live is Christ.

Sometimes we've sung that, many of us have sung that in these choruses haven't we? But have we really taken home to our hearts what we're singing when we sing those words?

When the Apostle Paul wrote them he meant them for me to live Christ. Christ was his life.

[00:17:02] And everything he did, everything he said and he spoke.

Well I know he no doubt failed because he was a sinner like we are.

And there were times when he didn't always do exactly God's will but the great Apostle's motivation was Christ.

It was Christ.

And if there's ever a man who's lived for Christ it was the Apostle Paul and he's an example to us. For me to live is Christ. Can we really say that?

We're created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Remember we had earlier in the thought of law and grace the thought that we've received God's salvation. It's a matter of grace and yes even the matter of faith is a matter of grace on God's part who's given us that faith.

[00:18:03] But later on in that chapter as a direct result of it having said that we can't work for our salvation.

The Apostle Paul says you can't do anything for your salvation it's all grace. But having believed on the Lord Jesus you're then those who should do good works.

Good works should mark us in our lives. And in Titus chapter 3 verse 8 the Apostle Paul is quite definite about it. He says I strenuously affirm, I strenuously affirm that Christians should do good works. And we should seek to live in peace with all men. Christians shouldn't be cantankerous, difficult neighbours, colleagues. They shouldn't be people who make life awkward for other people. We shouldn't be like that. [00:19:01] People should see our good works and they should give praise to God for it.

I know they won't often do that but that should be what they should do. Because they see in us good things which can only really be approved.

Now is that true of our lives in a practical way? Or are we marked by those who always try and screw the most we can out of other people when we do business with them? I've heard people suggest that that's alright for Christians to do that. Because you're in business, screw what you can out of something. Well they haven't actually used that word. But that's more or less what they've meant. I don't think that's right. Are we really meant to be like that as Christians? Of course we have to be wise. We have to do our jobs correctly.

We have to do what our boss wants us to do. Within what's legal etc.

But we have to be very careful that we don't allow other things to become a more important motivation. [00:20:01] That person you just did down five minutes ago.

Are they really going to accept a tract from you when you try to witness to them later on? They're not are they? So our lives must, must back up our words.

Now this gets on to the vexed question I've been asked to just mention. Should we get involved in politics?

Because here we've got some Christians. I think they're all Christians who are involved or have been involved in politics. I'm not going to go through them all. But some of them you'll recognise. And I'm pretty sure from what I've researched that they probably all trusted the Lord Jesus as their saviour. Some of the things they say now might not indicate it. But the Lord knows them for his.

So we don't have to really be too worried about that. But they're all people who have trusted the Lord Jesus as far as we know. [00:21:02] But they've also got involved in politics. And some have done very great things. The man on the middle row there, one in from the left, is William Wilberforce.

We all know that he was used to the abolition of slavery.

But sadly there are some there that have also been connected with things that have not been so good. And have often brought dishonour upon the Lord's name.

So I'm not going to mention them because I don't want to start getting into criticisms of believers who've lived at different times. But nonetheless, some of them are great men. And they were believers and yet they've been involved in politics.

So just bear that in mind while I say what I'm going to say next.

Some Christians have used politics for good ends. But what of Paul's words about being unequally yoked? [00:22:03] Now if you go on the internet you can find a website that's called Christians in Politics. And what it says is it's supported by the major political parties in this country. And what it tells you to do is first of all decide which political party you're going to join. When you've done that you can join us. Is that really a right principle?

Do you think that's a right principle? I don't think it is. How can Christians be from different persuasions about what should be done and then just join together because they're Christians when they disagree probably about some fundamental things?

I don't think that's a real practical way forward. And it will involve you of course being connected with people who aren't believers on the Lord Jesus. Now I work for a political organisation. Not because I'm involved in politics but simply because councils are political bodies. [00:23:06] And I can see and I know what kind of horse trading, what kind of actions are done by people who are in politics in order to get their way, in order to achieve their aims. Because remember the only successful politicians are the politicians in power.

And in the end they'll do anything to be in power. If you get in connection with politicians you'll find that you will be connected with compromise in order to get into positions of power and influence.

And you will be forced to make decisions which will go against what the word of God says.

So being involved in politics will almost certainly involve you being unequally yoked.

[00:24:03] What about the vexed question of voting? Well I remember a brother saying that very often he used to be asked the question I'm very sorry dear brother that you were imprisoned during the Second World War and you suffered at the hands of the political party that was in power in Germany in those years.

And that brother used to say don't worry brother you don't need to be sorry, you don't need to apologise to me unless you voted for that political party. So maybe we have to be very careful and say if I vote for a political party I become responsible then for their actions because I've put my thumb if you like, my signature, my cross to their voting card.

[00:25:02] So I think you have to think very seriously about whether you should get involved in voting. How can it be that one Christian can vote one way and another Christian can vote another way? Goes back to a point we were making earlier. Does the Lord direct one person to take one decision that's completely opposite to another Christian's decision? I don't think he does.

So I think we have to be careful about that and of course I've put up a point there that if you, and this is an argument you'll find quite a lot on the internet, the Apostle Paul never got involved in politics because there was no point. It was a dictatorship in those days. But if he was living today he would because we live in a democracy. But you know one act of democracy that did occur in the Bible was when Pilate decided to pass over the question of whether the Lord Jesus should be crucified to the people. [00:26:01] And you know what they voted. They said away with him, crucify him. So democracy, despite all that we say about its merits, won't necessarily involve the right action being taken. So be very careful about voting.

We need to remember this world is under judgement. Now, take that boat there as a picture of the world.

I don't think it's an exaggerated thought. Particularly after the last few weeks on the money markets, I think we could say that that's a pretty good picture of where the world is at the moment. What would you do? Would you send a carpenter to try and patch it up so it doesn't sink?

Or would it be better to send a lifeboat to get the people off it? If you get involved in politics you're a carpenter. If you stay as a believer, a witness for the Lord Jesus in what way you can, you're a lifeboat. [00:27:06] Barack Obama, however good he may seem to be, he's another carpenter. And we have to remember that there have been many, many people who seem to be great hopes in this world. But often, ultimately, because they are dealing with a world which is under judgement. And remember what the word of God says. The whole world lies in the wicked one. In fact, the word means it lies in the lap of the wicked one. It's like a cat in the lap of the wicked one.

It's totally under the control of that wicked one. Of course, God is overall superintending things.

But in a practical sense, we live in a world which has rejected God and therefore is suffering the consequences of the activities of the evil one. So really, we need to have a clear witness to people. [00:28:02] And very often we'll be found, if we get involved in politics, having to compromise. And our witness will be compromised. You know, I was listening to a radio program. Perhaps I shouldn't, but I was.

And I was listening to this radio program and somebody said to this man who worked for Christian Aid, well, it was about the sad case of that aid worker who got assassinated in Afghanistan a few weeks ago. He said, are you involved in any kind of spreading the Christian message?

He said, I can tell you, Christian Aid is absolutely not about that.

So really, you have to see an organization there which was created, no doubt, with a Christian desire to do good in this world. And there's nothing wrong with that. But because it's got involved in politics, [00:29:01] it's had to amend the way it works to the current ways of this world, which means it's lost its Christian testimony.

And that will happen to us. We have to remain outside the systems of men.

But remember what the Apostle Paul said, I strenuously affirm those who've believed that they give themselves to good works. So God's not saying to you, don't care about the needs of this world. But what he wants us to do is to meet the needs of this world individually. I don't just mean entirely individually, two or three of us, if we felt there was a need in this town for helping the down and outs, it would be completely right to do that if we felt it was the Lord's will. And through the opportunity that gives us to witness to those people. There are many who do practical good things like that. And that's just what the Apostle Paul is talking about. But he's certainly not talking about joining men's systems and organizations, [00:30:06] political or otherwise, to achieve this. We should be model citizens. We're citizens first of heaven. We should uphold God's creatorial order.

They're model citizens, I think. We should uphold God's creatorial order. Not very well at the moment. It's obviously used to Michael's touch. So we're citizens of heaven, but we should uphold God's creatorial order. It would be completely inconsistent with God's will [00:31:01] if Christians who know God's word were to go against his order. God has set certain order in creation. For instance, there's the family order. So Christian young people should honor their parents, should obey their parents. As subjects, we should honor God's government. The dispensation we mentioned that involves Noah involved government.

God has instituted government in this world. He hasn't taken that away. So that's why the apostle Paul says we should pay our taxes to the government. We should pay our taxes. And we should respect those in authority.

Very often Christians, I hear Christians talking, I sometimes do it, very disrespectfully of those who are in places that God has ordained they should be.

[00:32:04] Is that a good witness to those around us? We might not think much of those who are in those positions, but you'll never find Daniel talking disrespectfully of Nebuchadnezzar. And I think Nebuchadnezzar in some respects was far worse than many of the rulers we have today. So we have to be a bit careful in that respect. Sometimes we become a bit loose and careless about the fact that God has ordained authorities and powers.

They are there because he's allowed them to be there. We need to remember law and order is a very important part of a society being able to go on together, Christians being able to meet together and to be able to witness to him. We should pray for those who are in authority. That's what the Apostle Paul says, lifting up holy hands. Like the Apostles, we can turn the world upside down in a different way. [00:33:05] By preaching the gospel, by being witnesses for the Lord Jesus. We should be occupied with our Lord's affairs. He's gone into a far country, we're left here in this world waiting for him to come for us. We're here to serve him till he come. Occupy till I come is what the one who went into a far country said to his servants. And in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, the Apostle Paul says our weapons are not fleshly weapons, they're spiritual weapons. Remember that group of people who thought that it was terrible that people in Ireland were worshipping this particular idol in a square, I don't know what

it was. And they went at it with sledgehammers and knocked it down, this was a few years ago. Now I'm sure their motives in some respects were good, but did it honour, was it a good witness for the Lord? No, of course it wasn't. That was the wrong thing to do. [00:34:03] Our weapons are spiritual, they lie in witnessing according to our Lord's words. We should let the Lord Jesus shine through our ways and our words. And if you get the copies of these presentations, you'll see that those scriptures all point to that. We should present our bodies, a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Think about these things in your life, particularly if you're young. Your education, where you will go to university, what course you will take, what job you're going to do, what interest you should have in your life, what you're going to spend a lot of your time doing, what possessions you're going to go in for, what friends you're going to have. Think about them in the light of this verse. [00:35:03] That verse will guide you to make the right choices. Now, remember there was a bus on the first presentation. This is the last presentation, David. But this just brings home to us the world in which we're living. This world isn't going to get any better. It's going to get a lot worse. There's no point in putting investment in your future here as if you are an earth dweller. You're not.

We are heavenly men by birth. This world is going down the plug hole.

And we are going to heaven. And we should show by our lives that that's where we're going.

And our aims and objectives should be connected with heaven. There are practical responsibilities, but let's not let those obscure the fact or be an excuse for us to lose the sense that we're going to heaven, [00:36:03] that we're going to be with the Lord Jesus one day. Wherefore we receive in a kingdom which cannot be moved. Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.