

Bible Basics Conference 2009: "Walk Worthy of the Calling!"

Part 10

Speaker	Bible Basics Conference; Simon Attwood; Michael Hardt; Graham Warnes; Hugh Clark; Paul Dronsfield; Andrew Poots
Place	Catford
Duration	00:30:25
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/cbb003/bible-basics-conference-2009-walk-worthy-of-the-calling

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[00:00:01] I'll read out each question and then I'll ask whoever presented the session to come and answer it. And the first one is one for our brother Robert Wall. Every family, that is chapter 3 verse 15, it mentions every family.

How many families are there and are angels a family?

The question arises from Ephesians 3 verse 15, of whom the whole family, or as it might better be translated and as JND translates it, of whom every family in heaven and earth is named.

And in the course of the session for which I had responsibility, we noticed the three main, though not only, families, [00:01:04] which are the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of God. But there are most certainly other families.

And one that comes to mind, for example, are all the children, the babies and children who die before they reach the age of responsibility and haven't trusted Christ.

The work of the Lord Jesus covers every one of them.

They don't form a part of the church, but they do form one of the families that we're reading about in Ephesians 3 verse 15.

Angels certainly form a family and I'm not sure whether this is altogether accurate.

[00:02:01] There may be, within the category of angels, subcategories.

So we can see that there are many families in heaven and on earth that range themselves under the name of the Father. And I just want to make some further comments about that, of whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, to explain this just a little bit more than I attempted to do when I was speaking earlier.

And that is, in the revelation of the Father by the Son, we are come to the full and final revelation of God.

And because it is the full and final revelation of God, it includes within its compass every revelation of God that has preceded it.

[00:03:05] And so God our Father stands in relation to these different families, but not every family knows him or enjoys him as we Christians know and enjoy him.

Only we Christians enjoy him as he is fully revealed in the Son.

And the Jews that will be converted after we've gone to heaven will enjoy him as Jehovah. And the Gentiles who also are brought into blessing will enjoy him as the Most High God. But all of these families range themselves under this God who is now fully revealed in the Son. There are two questions that I am going to ask our brother Simon Atwood to answer. [00:04:02] The first one is, what is the unity of the Spirit and what can you do to endeavor to keep it? Is it local only?

The first thing I'm going to say is that I'd be quite happy to have some help from any brothers to answer these questions if they don't think I've covered the subject completely.

The first question was to do with the unity of the Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 12 In verse 12 it says, For even as the body is one and has many members, [00:05:01] but all the members of the body being many are one body, so also is the Christ. For also in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit. So I take it that the unity of the Spirit is that which has been formed as a result of the Holy Spirit coming down on the day of Pentecost. And as such that unity is something which is there and cannot be broken. It's a fact that's been produced by God himself, by the Holy Spirit in particular. And our responsibility is to put it into practice, to express it in the way in which we live together as believers on the Lord Jesus. [00:06:01] Although it's true to say that these things are manifested locally, there's no way in which we could limit the unity of the Spirit to just a local thing. It's a universal matter. So it's important to realize that we have a responsibility to put it into practice. The word we looked at when we considered the scriptures earlier today was endeavoring. It's a matter of exercise. It's a matter of work, diligent work to achieve it. Because one thing I did want to say and didn't say is that the devil, he is anxious to destroy what he can of the work of the Lord Jesus today in this world.

And he can't destroy it, of course, but he will try to undermine it. And one of the ways in which he's doing that today is to drive wedges between believers. He's been very successful over all the centuries of the church's existence in this world. [00:07:07] We only have to go out into the streets of London to see how many different churches there are, how many denominations there are. This itself is an indication of the way in which through man's carelessness and unbelief, the devil has been able to do a work which has, in effect, in a practical way, has spoiled the unity that should be seen among believers.

But he will try and do it within a gathering of God's people. He will try and use personal difficulties that we have with one another. He will attempt to convince us that those difficulties are of such a fundamental nature that we should have done with each other. Because he wants to wreck any display of the unity of the Spirit in this world.

[00:08:04] And we must be watchful. And one of the ways in which we can use Scripture to help us is to

look at those verses we looked at. The beginning of chapter 4, the matter of loneliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing with one another in love. That is how the Apostle Paul says we work out, we express, we display, we maintain, we keep that unity which is there but needs to be shown out in a practical way among us. It's done locally, but the unity of the Spirit is a universal matter. Second question for you, Simon. Chapter 4 verse 13 refers to all arriving at the knowledge of the Son of God.

Matthew 11, 27 says, No man knoweth the Son but the Father.

[00:09:01] Please explain.

Yes, okay.

First of all, one thing that we must say, and this is no criticism of the person who's asked this question. Believe me, it's not. But one thing we do have to say when we look at things like this, it's a good thing to always keep in mind is that because Scripture is the Word of God, it doesn't contradict itself.

So the fact that in one Scripture we're told one thing which appears to contradict another doesn't mean it does contradict the other. Obviously it doesn't. We need to study it to try and understand it more clearly.

When we looked at that verse which talked about arriving at the knowledge of the Son of God, that's something that Paul is saying we should all be seeking to do with the help of the Holy Spirit.

And the Apostle Paul himself was a wonderful exponent of this. [00:10:05] He says in Philippians chapter 3, doesn't he?

It's very difficult to break into this chapter, but just to quickly break in at verse 9, that I may be found in him, not having my righteousness, which would be on the principle of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith, to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if in any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead. It's that desire to know this one who is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus.

And also, incidentally, the Lord Jesus says in his prayer in John 17, just refer to this, [00:11:07] he says, and this is the eternal life, the verse 3 of chapter 17, that they should know thee the only true God, Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. So clearly, it should be our desire to know the Lord Jesus more and more in our lives.

It seems when the Lord Jesus himself was speaking in Matthew chapter 11, that he was showing clearly that the only way in which we know things or know persons is as God enables us to, as he reveals them to us. And in those verses, it says, all things have been delivered to me by my father, and no one knows the son. This is the problem, perhaps, behind the verse. Well, it is obviously behind the question, I mean. And no one knows the son but the father, nor does anyone know the father but the son, [00:12:03] and he to whom the son may be pleased to reveal him. And of course, the Lord Jesus has revealed the father to us. I think our general view of this verse in relation to the Lord Jesus is that it's knowing the Lord Jesus in the sense that he is both God and man in one person. That is something which is beyond us. We were talking earlier on, weren't we, today, about the fact

that there are certain things we cannot bring together in our minds. They are beyond our minds to take in. And this is one thing that is beyond us to take in. It's akin to what happened in the Old Testament when the people of Israel looked within the ark. They looked into that which was beyond them to take in. And one aspect of truth is the person of Christ in the sense that he is both God and man in one person. That is beyond our knowledge to take in. [00:13:02] We believe it. We know he is man. We know he is God.

But to try and understand how that can be, that is beyond us. But we can still know the Lord Jesus as the one who is our Saviour, the one who is the Son of God, the one who loved us and gave himself for us.

Chapter 4 verse 30 says, Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Grieve not the Spirit. The question is, is that the same as quenching the Spirit referred to in 1 Thessalonians 5.19?

If not, please explain the difference. I'm going to ask Brother Nick Fleet to address that one.

[00:14:02] Well, firstly I should apologize if what I said caused any confusion because of course I did, in referring to Ephesians 4 verse 30, grieve not the Holy Spirit, I did also use the expression quench. And I used it really by way of expanding the thought. But I would say quite expressly, no, they're not the same thing. I think it's helpful really to say as a matter of principle that where the scriptures use a different word, we're entitled to understand that a different thought is intended. Now of course sometimes the same word in Hebrew or Greek may be translated differently by various versions, in particular the authorized version in seeking to give a very full and rounded idea of what's meant [00:15:02] may use different English words to express the same word in the original. But particularly if in the original there are different words used, then I think as a matter of principle it's a good thing if we can do some homework, if we dig and the truth is revealed to us in a wonderful way. But clearly here in Ephesians 4 verse 30 we have grieve not, and in Thessalonians it's quench not. And I suppose the answer lies in really the use that scripture makes of various pictures of the Holy Spirit. You'll be familiar of course with the picture of the Holy Spirit as a dove, and typically the use of the picture of oil and sometimes of fire.

These are all symbolic uses that the scripture employs to convey something of the truth of the Spirit of God. [00:16:08] And grieving is, I think it's something we're familiar with, it's not a difficult concept, it's when we cause sorrow.

And if we imagine what would grieve us, well if someone close to us, if someone of our family causes us hurt, then we're grieved, it's a very personal feeling. And it brings out the true personality of the Holy Spirit. He is a divine person and he can be grieved.

I suggest in the context of Ephesians, it's if we sin, it's a matter of personal grief to the Holy Spirit. He indwells us and we are causing him to be present when we go into sin.

[00:17:05] Maybe we go somewhere we shouldn't, maybe we think something we shouldn't, or we say something we shouldn't. And that has a personal effect on the Holy Spirit. And for that reason we're exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit. In Thessalonians, it's the thought of quenching. And I suppose we think here really of the picture of fire. And we're familiar, I suppose, if we had a fire and we wanted to put out the fire, we'd pour water on it and the fire goes out. And so insofar as the scriptures give us this picture of the Holy Spirit, the source of power and energy, we can suppress him.

We can refuse to be prompted by him. And acting in this way, it's not sinning in the same way, it's not grieving him. [00:18:04] There's a similar thought, but it's not the same. And by way of illustration, I would mention, if you've ever read an account of how the Lord used the evangelist Charles Stanley in a book which covers some of the Lord's work.

He mentions, as a young believer, he went to a place where Christians were met together to remember the Lord. And he had, during the meeting, a distinct impression to stand up and read some verses, I think, from Corinthians. And he was strongly convicted of it, but through fear, whatever, he remained seated. And shortly afterwards, the brother in the book referred to as Captain W. I suppose it must be Captain Wellesley, the father of the hymn writer, a few of our hymns. He stood up and he read the very same passage and gave a wonderful explanation, [00:19:05] expounded these verses to the benefit of the assembled company. And Charles Stanley took this as a gentle rebuke, that having been prompted by the Holy Spirit, he didn't act on it. And I suppose we can say that was an example of where he quenched the Holy Spirit. It didn't have an ongoing effect in his life for the moment. And the Spirit, being who he is, was able to use another for the benefit of all present.

So they're not the same thing. I think they're very closely linked. But they're certainly things to distinguish and there's a difference.

We have here two questions in remarkably similar handwriting which are important.

[00:20:01] I don't think we've actually yet come to them in our progress through the Epistle to the Ephesians. But on the basis that this is the last open question and answer session, and we don't want anyone to go away feeling that their legitimate concerns have not been fairly addressed, I think we should deal with them now. And I've asked our brother, Rusty Warnes, to give the answers. I'll read them out one by one and let him answer one at a time because they are quite long. The Christian in a job. No, let's start with this one.

The Christian in marriage.

There may be slimmer reasons for women to get married in this day and age. A career reaps material benefits.

Companionship is amongst brothers and sisters in Christ.

[00:21:04] If one gets broody, one may borrow one's way into looking after a child. But also know the relief of returning this to their rightful owners. How may I be convinced marriage is for me? Rusty.

The quick answer is it isn't.

Basically, I know as I stand here that I'm going to say things that you might think I'm trying to offend some of you here. But I can assure you that I have no intention of upsetting or offending anybody here. [00:22:03] I would just quote the verse that we will look at tomorrow. And that is in Genesis 2, where the words are, For this reason shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and they twain shall be one flesh. As far as I can see, it is normal, as far as God's order is given, that there should be a husband and wives together. That doesn't mean to say that it is abnormal for people to be single. But I think that we can see that in God's order, it is that men and women should marry and be together.

Now, if there is those here that are not married, I believe that there are, amongst others, and I'm going to just mention two reasons why people decide that they are not going to get married. [00:23:05] You may have many other ones you can tell me afterwards. The first one is, as we had this afternoon, according to the course of this world. And in the world in which we live, it is quite popular for young people to think, I don't want to get married. I don't want to have a husband. I don't want children. I want to spend my time and my money for me.

And if that is the attitude, I'm going to suggest that that is wrong. We as Christians are here for the Lord.

There may be others, and for this I'm going to quote a verse from 1 Corinthians 7, 32.

But I would have you without carefulness that he that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord. [00:24:01] And in Matthew 19, in verse 11.

But he said unto them, well, we read verse 10. His disciples say unto him, if the case of the man be so with the wife, is it not good? It is not good to marry. And he said unto them, all men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.

So putting these two verses together, it seems to me that if there are those that are single, those that haven't married, you have to have a special gift from the Lord. And in here, this verse says that there are those that have a special gift of the Lord to remain single. And in 1 Corinthians, it seems to indicate that those that have that gift and remain single do it for the Lord, that they can serve the Lord much better as a single person than as a married couple. [00:25:04] And I think that we all have heard of Mr. Darby, that after much prayer, he came to the conclusion that it was far better for him in his service for the Lord to remain single. We could add, those of us, or those of you here that are anticipating marriage and are still single, what you have to do is to make it a real matter of prayer that the Lord would guide you. And perhaps the Lord has a job for you that requires you not to be married. And if so, I'm sure that the Lord will give you the gift, give you the ability to remain unmarried. The second question, I read it before, but I can't read it now.

[00:26:06] It's a question of having employment. There can be a great deal of pressure to proceed. Titus 2 verse 4, shall we read that one?

There can be a great deal of pressure to progress into or step into posts that may not complement or be conducive to continuing the calling stated in Titus 2 verse 4.

How does one balance the two?

Well, Titus 2 verse 4 says that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children. [00:27:12] I think that the whole question of employment and getting on in this world is again what we had this afternoon. This is a worldly idea that you have to succeed. You have to work. We have to work, but we don't have to work as hard as this world will want us to work. Because your employer will never say you've done enough. He'll always want a little bit extra. And sometimes in our lives we've got to be prepared to say enough is enough. And only last week I was thinking of Jacob. Remember Jacob when he left and went to work for his two wives with Laban.

For 20 years he laboured for his two wives. And at the end of those 20 years, 20 years in which there

is a dearth as far as his spiritual growth is concerned, [00:28:11] we read nothing of him speaking to God. We find that God speaks to him and he says, Jacob, I'm the God of Bethel. And you know, in the world today there is this idea, get on as much as you can. Get the next point. Get the next position. You'll get the next salary rise. And it's always a rat race, as we say. And at the end of the day, God will speak to us and say, there are things that are real. There are things that God could say, I'm the God of Bethel. I'm the God of the house of God. And if we had our thoughts more centred on the things of God, these other things I think would fall into their right perspective. I missed a point which I think is important to say. Remember we were talking about unity of the spirit and whether it's just local. [00:29:04] I want to emphasise that in a practical way it is more than local and we can practice the unity of the spirit beyond our localities. The Apostle Paul sent a letter of commendation for Phoebe to the saints at Rome. We can pray for others in other countries. We can send them gifts. These are ways in which we practice unity of the spirit beyond our locality. I don't think I emphasised that enough in my first answer. That's all I wanted to say. I just wanted to back up what Rusty was saying from my own recent experience in employment. It is an increase in pressure to go on and you will find young believer, if you trust the Lord and you seek to serve him, your employer will especially trust you because they know they can trust you. They see that from the way you do your work and it becomes sometimes something which lures you into taking on more and more duties at work. [00:30:07] And then you can't serve the Lord in your local meeting or in some other way. So we do have to strike that important balance if we want to serve the Lord. It's very difficult today because the pressure is on more and more in the world of work.