

Dispensationalism

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Is that, is it, oh, there it is. So Roger has control. If he doesn't like what I'm saying,! But we've had a busy summer.

This is, we're almost, is this the halfway point, Rebecca? Almost. We have eight Bible schools this summer, so it's a full summer. We'll be home.

Twelve days from now, I will get to spend a week at my house, which will be really nice, and then we won't be home again until September 8th, so you can pray for us in our many travels. I was telling Roger Phipps this morning that when I get home in three weeks, I have to change the brakes.

I was told last week, my brakes have about a month or two, and they should be changed, and so since we're heading to the hills of Kentucky next, I figure that'll finish them off, and I want them changed before I head out to Colorado and possibly Wyoming.

So pray for us in our travels. We've had 16 kids trust Christ as Savior this summer, so that's exciting.

[1 : 24] That makes everything we do worth the juice worth the squeeze, right? So in our travels this summer, the Bible school theme is the grace adventure, and as you know from last year, with the theme, what the children are learning is dispensationalism, and so the adult sessions are also focused on dispensationalism, and I thought, while you all won't get to hear the entire series this week, I thought it would be good in Sunday school this morning to go through basically my introduction to dispensationalism, because I really want to shift the focus on dispensationalism back to where I think it should be, and back to where it should have never left.

I think dispensationalism is one of the most important topics to understand when it comes to understanding this book. If you don't understand the Word of God dispensationally, you are headed for a lot of confusion and a lot of problems, and I would say that I hold to your typical view of dispensationalism.

Some people hold to six dispensations, some hold to seven dispensations. I would probably be right there in those friendly confines, and I think that's important.

It's important to understand how many dispensations there are that God is dispensing things, but I think there's something that's even more important about dispensationalism that we often miss, and so I want to look at that this morning.

So take your Bibles and turn with me to Ephesians 1, and I'm going to attempt to give you a summary of this topic in the next 42 minutes, which will be a tough thing to do, but we will do our best.

[3 : 33] I want to begin in Ephesians 1 and verse 10, but before I do that, let's pray. Our gracious God and Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this local body of believers, Lord, and I thank you for the body of Christ.

I thank you for creating that body, and Lord, I thank you that each of us can be a member of that body of Christ, a part of that body, an important part of that body, simply by trusting, by believing that your Son, Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead for our sins.

And Lord, I thank you that the moment we trust in your Son, Jesus Christ, and what He did, His finished work on the cross of Calvary, that we are a part sealed into that body of Christ, and that nothing can take us out of Christ.

And Lord, this morning, as we come together in a building like this, and we come together in this time and in the service to follow, Lord, I just pray that that you will be honored and glorified by all that's said and all that's done.

And I pray that we are equipped to go forth into this world and to honor and glorify you. And it's in your Son's name I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. We're going to be in two...

[4 : 57] Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Will this be able to be heard later? Roger, will this be able to be heard later? He's saying yes. It's being recorded.

Yes. So, we're going to be in two passages of Scripture this morning. Ephesians chapter... We'll just say the book of Ephesians and the book of 2 Timothy. And we're going to do this in a very quick, in a very rapid way.

So, bear with me. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 10 says that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in Him.

And then across the page, Ephesians chapter 3, verse 2, says, If you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you word. And obviously, there are contexts to both of those verses, but I bring you to these two passages in particular because we find the word dispensation in our Bible.

Now, I share that because many years ago, I was a pastor in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. And right before, don't you always love, well, maybe Nathan, Nathan will relate to this.

[6 : 10] And you're getting up to preach. Okay? You're focused on your message. You've got, you're trying to zone everything else out so that you're dialed in, you're ready to preach, and somebody comes up and drops a bombshell in your lap.

That's always, that's always the best. Worst, worst example of that I ever had one time. I was, I was minutes from getting up to preach and I found out that a, a couple in the church had separated and it's like, I, you know, how do you, how do you recover from that to preach your sermon when the entire time all you're thinking about is what has happened?

And so, I was preparing to get up to preach and I don't remember the, exactly what I was going to preach but a man handed me a letter and he handed me this letter and the letter was basically a, a, a debate, an argument with his brother-in-law over whether dispensational, dispensations actually exist or not.

And in the letter, the, the, this man that was writing to this man from our church said, dispensation doesn't even appear in the Bible. Doesn't even appear in the Bible.

And when, when he said, when I'm reading this letter, you know, right before I get up to preach and it changed the entire direction of my message. And I always joke because that, that message went from I had one sermon to preach and it ended up becoming a 27 week series based on the letter that was given to this man in our church, which some of you may know, Nick Michael, actually, Nick and Marty Michael came from this church many, many years ago and we'll talk about that later.

[8 : 10] I saw that look. We'll talk about, yes, so they were here I think for a very short time, but it was in this church that they were introduced to dispensationalism and then lived a lot of different places over the course of the years before they settled in the Oshkosh area.

But anyway, he was having this debate with his brother-in-law who had been a missionary in Africa for between 30 and 40 years.

and it was this missionary brother-in-law who was writing to him and telling them dispensationalism, that dispensations aren't even in the Bible. Like the word doesn't even appear in the Bible.

And so, sometimes when you hear things like that, your knee-jerk reaction is, well, this guy must not read his Bible. Or, or he must not read a Bible translation that uses the word dispensation.

And while we may be quick to throw out those arguments and those reasonings for this man not believing that the word dispensation appears in the Bible, I think we need to step back from that and make a greater observation.

[9 : 21] And that is this. Ephesians chapter 6. Turn over to Ephesians chapter 6 for just a minute. And let me remind us all of a very important truth that must never leave the forefront of our mind as believers.

Okay? Ephesians chapter 6 verse 12 says, For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

we need to realize that every one of us are in a spiritual war. We are soldiers in a spiritual battle.

We are soldiers struggling in a spiritual conflict. And so often we lose sight of that. we divide with one another.

We fight with one another. We see others as the problem. And it's not that there isn't conflict between individuals. In any church there is conflict between individuals.

[10 : 42] But what we need to realize is that the individuals with which we are having conflict, whether it's somebody in the church, somebody in the family, or in the case of the letter that Nick received, a conflict between saved individuals but who hold to very different biblical beliefs.

We need to realize that it is a spiritual battle at its very core. And the understanding of this book is very much at the center of that spiritual war that we are in.

Listen, Scripture tells us in Corinthians that Satan is blinding people to the glorious gospel of the grace of God. And so when we come across someone who does not believe what we believe, who does not see Scripture dispensationally as we see Scripture, or who doesn't see it dispensationally the exact same way that we see it dispensationally, that does not mean that they are the archenemy just because they see it differently.

In fact, one verse that has come to mean a lot to me in recent years is a verse, and I think it's in Acts. I can never remember if it's in Acts or Corinthians.

I'm pretty sure it's Acts. It's where, okay, let's go to Acts 18. That's not why I married her, but I am so thankful for her.

[12 : 12] Well, you know, you only need one good sermon, right? Acts chapter 18.

Let's start in verse 24. Acts 18. 24 says, And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Now, let's stop there for just a minute. What do we know about Apollos at this point? My Bible says eloquent. When I think of eloquent, I think well-dressed, put together well.

That's not what it means. The Greek word there is logios. In other words, he was a good speaker. He was able to communicate well.

That's what it's referring to here. Communicate the word. He was mighty in the Scriptures. So, what do we know about Apollos? He could speak well and he knew this book.

[13 : 15] What else do we know about him? And a certain Jew named Apollos. So, he was Jewish. So, here's this Jewish man who was able to communicate his Jewish understanding of Scripture and he knew the Scriptures well.

Verse 25, so would you say that we would have a theological difference with Apollos? Yes or no? Well, some more.

Maybe not so much theology proper as far as God is concerned. Sure. But doctrinal. Yeah. Dispensationally there would be some, he would have seen things differently at this point.

Okay, verse 25, this man was instructed in the way of the Lord and being fervent in the Spirit he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord knowing only the baptism of John and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard they took him unto them and expounded unto him and this is the part that I love the way of God more perfectly.

Isn't that an interesting way for that verse to be inspired God breathed to be written. So there's recognition that this man holds to the baptism of John he obviously sees things dispensationally different than what Aquila and Priscilla knew of the word of God because they had been with Paul that they had this understanding and you know what they didn't do?

[14 : 58] they didn't do what we often do when it comes to somebody that we disagree dispensationally with.

Let me tell you what we often do. We often at a minimum we label people. Don't we? We use phrases like well he's a covenant theologian or sometimes people who dispensationalists will throw rocks at each other with labels so somebody who believes acts to dispensationalism they will say well that we are ultra dispensationalists or hyper dispensationalists it was was that you that showed me that Harry Ironside and I actually have that I can show you that that was in my notes I didn't add that because of you Harry Ironside wrote a book many years ago wrongly dividing the word of truth okay now Harry and I probably agreed on a lot of things in the word of God but rather than sitting down and having a conversation and coming to see the word of

God more perfectly it was easier to just put a slap a label on because what happens when you label someone let's take this and remove this from a biblical context what if you're having a conversation with someone or you hear somebody make a comment and they say and you hear them say something and oh they're a socialist at at this point you no longer have to have a conversation with them you have labeled them and marginalized them by putting that label on them they're a kook they're out of their mind whatever it is that they believe politically is off the wall and I don't have to deal with them I don't have to explain what I believe about being a!

conservative anymore they're just a whack job end of story and we do that sometimes with brothers and sisters in Christ oh they're an ultra dispensationalist oh they're a hyper ultra dispensationalist oh and I just came across this one the other day they are a moderate ultra dispensationalist so you know and I joke one time I joked I said well if we are hyper dispensationalists that would mean that they would be hypo dispensationalists right I mean if we're just making labels to make labels but here's what I want you to understand and this is so important so the first thing I want you to understand is we are in the middle of a spiritual war so if somebody doesn't see it the way we see it we need to realize that that person who doesn't see it the way we see it might not see it the way we see it because they've been blinded because we are in a spiritual battle the other thing that

I want you to see is now hear me out on this it's possible it's even probable that we don't know it all I know I know well I've actually heard a pastor pound on a pulpit and say and I quote we've got it all figured out yeah absolutely that was a very cringing moment for me and because listen we can have confidence in what we believe I'm not saying we should go out and question everything that we believe but we should never come to the point where we just think we've got it all figured out and everybody else is just wrong because the moment we do that what happens to us we stop growing we stop learning and listen I can say with!

[19 : 09] I'm never going to come around to water baptism is for us today in the dispensation of grace but I am strong enough and comfortable enough and grounded enough in what I do believe that I can have conversations with people who I disagree with and learn things from them and I can hear a brother in Christ who does not have an understanding needs to come to an understanding of the word of God more perfectly I can listen to him and hear him make statements and think huh I never thought of it that way I'm going to go back and look at that a little more and it ends up strengthening what I believe and building me not because I have somehow crumbled to something that is not in line with scripture but it forces me to go back and examine what it is that I my understanding of scripture that that's healthy that's okay

Lee Lee used to always say he wished that he could get different sides of of grace believers together to have debates over things hey let's talk about these things you see it one way you see it another way praise the Lord let's talk about it and find out hear both sides of it and let people decide but somehow sometimes we're afraid to do that we're afraid to have those conversations like somehow somehow that's going to lead us down the primrose path of heresy I would hope that we would all be students of the word of God I mean we shall I say pride ourselves on the fact that we are Bereans right well Bereans search the scriptures well if we think we've got it all figured out are we going to do that anyway I'm getting off track so the second so that was that was still the first thing that

I wanted you to learn we're in a spiritual battle I kind of broke it into two things there one that we're in a spiritual battle and two we may not know it all and three now let now the thought escaped me what was the third point that I was making oh the third point I got it now I remembered sometimes the train leaves the station and the cars aren't all connected that person that we disagree with let's suppose let's suppose they're Baptists that's bad or let's suppose they're Pentecostal let's suppose they're charismatic let's suppose let's suppose they think that we're all going to live through the tribulation are there doctrinal problems there everybody go like this please go like this absolutely but what if that person who believes that whatever that they hold whatever that belief is that is erroneous that we know doesn't line up with scripture but they believe that

Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sins and was buried and rose from the dead for their sins they're trusting in that alone for their salvation salvation that makes that person a saved individual does it not and that makes that person a brother or sister in Christ does it not but how often do we blow our brothers and sisters in Christ out of the water because they believe something that we know isn't right and so we label them we marginalize them we think they're kooks we say well they're just running on feelings they're running on emotions and that may be true and they very well may be believing something that is completely out of line with the word of God but we must always remember that they are that they are our brother and sister in

Christ so how do we deal with assist and help those who hold to beliefs that we don't believe now notice I didn't say I'm not asking any of us to compromise what we believe I would never in a million years would you ever hear those words come out of my mouth but how do we work through how do we become the Aquila and Priscilla who come alongside Apollos how do we come alongside the Apollos in the church today who hold to things that are very different from what we believe without marginalizing them without compromising what we do believe without being carried away into false teachings that we don't believe that aren't in line with scripture you see that's important too we want to show love we want to we want to come alongside them but not at the expense of being carried away doctrinally ourselves because that would be dangerous would it not somebody besides

[25 : 02] Roger that would be if we get carried away into some false teaching that would be a very dangerous thing so how do we balance that and the answer is in a mid-acts dispensationalist favorite chapter of the Bible in fact the answer to that question is the entirety of a mid-acts dispensationalist favorite chapter of the Bible which is 2 Timothy chapter 2 so go to 2 Timothy chapter 2 and we are going to spend the remainder of our time this morning in 2 Timothy chapter 2 answering those questions how do we become the Aquila Priscilla coming alongside the Apollos the Apollos of this present dispensation in which we are living in the year 2025 and assist them without compromising ourselves and what verse is it that we are so familiar with in 2

Timothy chapter 2 yeah 2 Timothy 2 15 study to show thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth and I'm going to divide this chapter into two sections!

The first part of 2 Timothy chapter 2 deals with our responsibility my personal responsibility the second part of this chapter deals with not my responsibility and I'm going to leave it at that for right now so two parts to this chapter my responsibility and not my responsibility your responsibility and not your responsibility and when you look at 2 Timothy chapter 2 this way as we go along in the 20 minutes 19 minutes that I have left you will see that there are two distinct parts to 2 Timothy chapter 2 so verse 1 my responsibility this is Paul to Timothy giving Timothy this charge thou therefore my son be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus that's a pretty straightforward responsibility that I have that you have if you know the grace of God you have the responsibility to be strong in the grace of God now what does that mean to be strong in the grace that is in

Christ Jesus that means that we must know the truths that were given to and through the apostle Paul to us today in the dispensation of grace yes or no yes absolutely we must know those teachings we must know them well we must be grounded in them we must we must 2 Timothy 2 15 study them we must pour over them we have we have that is foundational because what you believe has a direct impact on decisions you make in life how you live your life but I think there's another part to be strong in the grace you see it's not enough for us just to know it to know hey we're looking for the rapture and not the second coming we have security of the believer we are looking for the blessed hope you know those that were part of the body of

Christ you know it is important for us to know those things but I think when Paul writes this be strong in the grace I think for Timothy he's telling him beyond just have a head knowledge of the things that I've taught you but to also live out grace in your life to those that you are going before look keep your finger in 2nd Timothy chapter 2 and look at 2nd Timothy chapter 3 maybe you don't need to use a finger to do this but 2nd Timothy chapter 3 verse 10 a verse that I keyed on last year 2nd Timothy 3 10 but that was fully known my doctrine comma manner of life comma purpose comma faith comma long suffering comma charity patience persecutions afflictions which came unto me at Antioch at Iconium at Lystra with what persecutions I endured but out of them all the

[29 : 44] Lord delivered me yea and all that will have godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution I think when Paul is writing to Timothy and he says listen Timothy you need to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus he's putting himself out there as the example Timothy I am strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and it's more than just teaching it's more than just doctrine it's the application it's the purposefulness of my life it's the direction of my life I think as as grace believers as we refer to ourselves it is important not only that we know what we believe but that we live what we believe I was recently reading a book and listening to this author give some lectures this was not a biblical lecture this was not a biblical book book but the man the man is a doctor

PhD and he made this statement he said I deal with people all the time who say they believe whatever it is about health and he said but their life tells me that they don't really believe what they tell me they believe and he was making this long application with that and I thought that will preach because how often do we say you know what I believe the grace of God to which different times I just want to be totally snarky and say do you do you really do you really believe in the grace of God because you know you're saying things and acting in a way that really doesn't reflect the grace of God much in your life so when Paul says hey be strong in the grace yes know your theology know what you believe know those positional truths know all those things but to be strong in it means know it and live it

Titus chapter 2 says the grace of God the theme for Rebecca and I for our ministry for our family's ministry is the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust we should live righteously soberly and godly in this present world to be strong in the grace means to live it so when we're talking about my responsibility I need to know what I believe but I need to live it I need to live it out in my life verse 2 and the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also so we have a responsibility my responsibility your responsibility we have a responsibility to teach others now that doesn't mean that that's pastor Nathan's responsibility I mean it is his and it's Roger Phipps responsibility and it is his but I think all of us if we're looking for personal responsibility what's my role

I need to be teaching others you need to be teaching others now that doesn't mean you need to be in charge of your own Sunday school class but that means we should be pouring into someone else the grace of God that we know that we believe it may be a co-worker it may be a friend it may be a sibling it may be it may be a friend that you go out for coffee and what do you do you you talk about we have a friend she for years every week she would go out with her her girlfriend on Monday or Tuesday they would get together they still do they go together and they have coffee and they would talk about she would share with her friend what I was preaching they just talk about it and the result of that teaching others led to her friend and her husband leaving the

Lutheran church and getting saved and attending another church now it's not a grace church how dare but you know what this might bother somebody but who cares she's she's learning the word more perfectly and she's growing and they continue to get together and talk about those things but you know what else happened as a result of her meeting with her friend and sharing with her friend she also grew spiritually by leaps and bounds in what she believed because she was teaching someone else and the thing is 15 years ago she had no idea what the glorious gospel the grace of God was they came out of a extremely charismatic style style church and do

[35 : 13] I mean doctrinally confused and then walked away from that and lived in the world for a number of years because they saw things in there that weren't true and so she's on this spiritual journey of growth and growing and she's learning these things and coming to understand these things but then she's bringing somebody else along how important is it that we do that every one of us knows somebody that we could spend 5 10 15 20 minutes with that's our responsibility to talk to others people I've heard way too many grace believers say I don't I don't I don't really know enough I couldn't I wouldn't want to I'd say something wrong yeah you know when they say that you know what I say yeah you probably will you you probably won't you probably won't know something that's okay I've been preaching for 20 years there's lots of things that people say to me

I'm like I don't have an answer to that I don't know what to say that's okay just tell them what I do know and pour into other people's lives so you can see as we're going through here these are very important things for me to focus on I'm not going to have time to go through all of the chapter let's go down to verse well let's just go to the end because I want to take these 10 minutes to go through this go down to verse 24 so the first part of this chapter even 215 study that's my responsibility these are my responsibilities in this dispensation of grace so that I am grounded so that I am prepared so that I am equipped and that I am pouring into others but in pouring into others you're going to be dealing with others now let me show you very quickly what is not my responsibility what is not your responsibility and I want you to see this because

I want you to be liberated okay I want you to feel free and this is so freeing to me verse 24 2 Timothy 2 verse 24 and the servant of the Lord who's that that's me that's you isn't it listen there is no greater title I believe for us today than servant of the Lord you can hold a lot of titles in this world but I would trade them all in for that one servant of the Lord all of us are servants of the Lord but what does he say about the servant of the Lord the servant of the Lord must not strive well that's a freeing statement but how often do we do that oh you believe this and we get into this intense conflict verbally with a person and eventually that conflict leads to separation of friends or separation of relationship because we found out there was a doctrinal disagreement and we get into this this disagreement and it leads to the destruction of the friendship this says to me the servant of the

Lord must not strive well that's you know who are you going to strive with people that you agree with or people you disagree with probably people you disagree with that's where the strife comes in right do you ever disagree!

with your spouse on something that's where have to step back and say I'm sorry dear I was wrong right Roger right I saw that nudge wow so he says the servant of the Lord must not strive but be gentle unto all men listen to that listen to what he's saying the people we disagree with the people that we have up until this point probably labeled and marginalized because we hold to a different biblical understanding than they do he says listen we must not strive with them we must be gentle to them isn't that weird that somebody that we disagree with who and let's we we may be exactly right and they may be exactly wrong but even though we can go to scripture and show listen what they're believing is 100% off the wall completely wrong scripture still says don't strive with them and be gentle toward them gentle gentle handle them with kid gloves apt to teach we must be apt to teach we must be patient how many of you have ever shared something with someone who's doctrinally wrong you take them to scripture and you show them something that is or you point out something that they're believing that is not true and then you have to go back and tell them again another time what you're believing is not true and then another time and then another time and again and they continue to keep going back to what they've been taught all along and they just don't get it but remember they're in a spiritual battle they're being blinded to the glorious gospel of the grace of God and we must be patient to them because

[41 : 07] Satan is hard at work and we keep giving them the word of God but we keep doing it in a gentle way in a non-strife way we're not going to strive with you we're not going to be gentle toward you we're going to be patient toward you besides what's accomplished if we're not I would agree with that except he said nothing but I actually think what's accomplished is destruction if we are not gentle if we are not patient we're destroying opportunities down the road because we've become impatient because we haven't been gentle so it says the servant the Lord must not strive but be gentle unto all men apt to teach patient in meekness meekness is power under control instructing those that oppose themselves instructing those that are in opposition those that are believing something that we don't believe those are the very people we must be gentle toward patient toward not striving with we need to keep it under control but here's where it shifts to not my responsibility!

my job is to be patiently teaching but look at the middle of verse 25 if God who here is God okay not my responsibility very clearly not my responsibility this is God's responsibility if God per adventure if God perhaps will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth so now we've entered into this is God's responsibility my job is to be patient but God perhaps will give them repentance a change of direction to the acknowledging of the truth that's God's job that's his department how often do we become impatient because man they just need to see it they just need to change they just need to come back to the truth no that's not my job that's his job why should I become impatient with his job I'm not him he has never given me the responsibility of that my job is just to patiently teach and be gentle and not strive with them let

God do his job just do yours that's what you know in ministry as a pastor that is such a freeing statement it's not my job to change everybody's opinion it's my job just to preach what the word of God says or what I see the word of God say and let God work in his time in their life and then verse 26 and that they who here is they I know that's a weird question in 2025 none of us are they okay I am me you are you they are they that they may recover themselves so I have my responsibility be strong in grace to study to teach to pour into others and do so in a gentle patient non-striving way God's responsibility is that he might give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth and verse 26 their responsibility the one to whom you are speaking that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil who are taken captive by him at his will that is to me and I've got two minutes left that is

God's design for us in the dispensation of the grace of God yes we have an understanding of the word of God dispensationally and our responsibility is to teach it to know it and to teach it in the way prescribed in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and leave God's job to him and that other person's job to them and that is how we need to approach teaching others the word of God let's pray father thank you for this morning lord thank you for the time lord I just pray that these words ministered to us and that we learn a little bit about maybe the approach that we take in teaching others that we do so in a loving gracious kind and patient way it's in your son's name I pray the name of Jesus Christ amen