

Helping Our Children Learn To Experience Joy

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 13**

By

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Manual 13

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Growing Godly Families Series

The “Growing Godly Families Series” is the result of weekly topics were prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders; to give them Biblical principles for the development of additional godly spiritual leaders. Because they give Biblical principles for growth in spiritual leadership, they are also helpful for Christians that want to grow and become godly spiritual leaders.

Mark 10:43-45 says, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” In these verses, Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God-given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world, people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Success produces rewards until we die, but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, “So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.” 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The Growing Godly Families Series is designed to make your life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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1.

Learning Why We Can Have Confidence in Our Lives

Today, we are beginning a new series of topics on how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to experience the joy of the Lord in their lives. Many people do not understand the difference between happiness and joy. Happiness depends on the things that are happening around us. Joy depends on what the Lord is doing in our lives. As we help our children learn how the Lord is working in their lives, they will begin to experience a greater and greater joy in their daily lives. We will see that the book of Philippians has many lessons to teach us about joy.

In Philippians 1:1-2 we read, “Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” We see that this letter is sent to the church in the city of Philippi from Paul and Timothy. Paul was the one who dictated the letter and Timothy was probably the one who did the actual writing. We see that they call themselves the bondservants of Jesus Christ. The word that is translated “bondservant” was a common word in the Roman Empire because about half of the people in the empire were bondservants (slaves). Usually a slave was in bondage to a master. However, for Paul and Timothy it meant that they viewed Christ as their Master and were His willing servants in spreading the Gospel. Several of the other New Testament writers also use this word to describe their ministry.

We see that this letter was written to all of the saints in Christ Jesus who lived in Philippi. The word that is translated “saints” is much more frequently translated by the word “holy”. In Ephesians 1:4 we read, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” Here we see that Christ chose all Christians to be saints or holy ones. A saint is any person who has accepted the payment of their sins by Christ through repentance and faith. As a result, every true Christian is also a saint or holy one. That does not mean that we do not sin. Instead it means that our sins were placed on Christ and He paid the penalty for them.

We see that the letter is also to the bishops and deacons. In Acts 20:17 we see that Paul called the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus so he could talk with them. Then in Acts 20:28 we read, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” In this verse, the word translated overseers is the word that is translated bishops in every other usage. The word that is translated “shepherd” is also used in 1 Peter 5:2 when Peter is talking to the elders. Then Titus 1:5 uses the word elders and 1:7 uses the word bishops. We see that elders, bishops, overseers and shepherds are the same and used interchangeably because all of these terms are used to speak of the leaders of a local church.

The word that is translated deacons speaks about those who assist the leaders. It is most commonly translated ministers or servants. Colossians 4:7 says, “Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.” In this verse, we see that the word is translated minister. In Romans 16:1 we read, “I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea.” In this verse, we see the word is translated servant. As a result, we also see that the words ministers, servants and deacons can be used interchangeably because they assist those who are the leaders of each church. Paul reminded the Philippians that we have grace and peace from the Father and from Christ. Grace means that we have spiritual life from God because of the loving-kindness of God. That grace causes us to have peace with God because our sin has been paid for and removed.

Philippians 1:3-7 says, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ; just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace." Here we see that Paul continually gave thanks to God every time that he prayed for the Philippians. In fact he was filled with joy as he prayed for them. The word translated "joy" speaks of the gladness and inner joy that we have because of our right relationship with the Lord. Here Paul was filled with joy because of the spiritual growth of the Christians in the church at Philippi.

Paul had great joy every time that he prayed for the Philippians because he remembered their fellowship or participation together with him in the Gospel from the day that they became Christians up to the moment when he was writing this letter. This participation in the spreading of the Gospel caused Paul to be very confident as he thought about the Philippians. The word that is translated "being confident" means to be persuaded. 2 Thessalonians 3:4 says, "And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you." Paul was persuaded that both the Philippians and the Thessalonians would do what the Lord commanded them to do.

Paul had this confidence because of what God had begun in the lives of the Philippians when they placed their faith in Christ. He knew that the Lord would continue to carry out the good work that He had begun in their lives at the time of salvation. 2 Corinthians 8:6 says, "So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well." Just as Paul was confident that Titus would complete what Paul had asked him to do, Paul was even more confident that Christ would complete the good work that the Lord had started in the lives of the Philippians.

Paul said that he had the Philippians in his heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life." Here we see that the heart is our inner being. Here we see that Paul is expressing the deep love that he had for the Christians in Philippi. Paul had this great love for the Philippians because they had been a part of his life and ministry at many of the critical times in his ministry. In fact in the last part of chapter two of Philippians we see that they had sent Epaphroditus to help Paul with his needs while he was in prison in Rome. They had also sent financial gifts to help Paul at various times in his ministry. In this way they were sharing in his imprisonment and in his defense of the Gospel before the Roman emperor.

Paul went on to say in Philippians 1:8-11, "For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." Here we see the great love that Paul had for the Philippians. The word that is translated "affection" is a word that was used to speak of the inner organs of a person. As a result, it became the word that people used to speak of the great love that they had for a person because it was like saying that this love came from the deepest part of the inner person.

Paul also told the Philippians about the things that he prayed as he prayed for them. First, we see that he prayed that their love would continue to grow. Paul wanted them to come to a full knowledge and understanding of the love of Christ. 2 Peter 1:5-8 says, "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness,

and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here we see that a full knowledge of the love of Christ will guide us in everything that we do.

Second Paul prayed that they would approve the things that are excellent. The word that is translated “approve” means to test something to make certain it is genuine. Galatians 6:4 says, “But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. In this verse, the word is translated examine. As a result, we are to test our own works to make certain that they are genuine. The word that is translated “excellent” in this verse means to test and to examine things that are different to determine the things that are truly important. We also need to pray that our children will be able to determine the things that are really important.

Paul also prayed that they would be sincere and without offence. The word that is translated “sincere” means pure. The word that is translated “without offence” means not led into sin or blameless. Paul used this word of his own life in Acts 24:16 where we read, “This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.” Paul wanted his conscience to be without offence or blameless in all that he did. Finally, Paul prayed that their lives would be filled with the fruits of righteousness. Proverbs 11:30 says, “The fruit of the righteous *is a* tree of life, and he who wins souls *is* wise.” Here we see that the fruit of the righteous causes us to become a tree of life. That means that our lives draw others to Christ so that they can have eternal life. Just as Paul wanted the Philippians to live lives that were pure and blameless so that they would be fruitful, we should have the same desire for our physical and spiritual children. Then they can have lives that are filled with joy. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children develop lives that are pure and blameless so that you can have confidence that the Lord will continue to work in their lives.

Learning How God Can Work Through All Situations

In our last topic, we saw that we want to follow the example of Paul and pray for our physical and spiritual children. We also need to pray that the love of our children will continue to grow. We also want to pray that they will determine the things that are really important in their lives. Then we want to pray that their lives will be pure and blameless. We also need to pray that their lives will bear the fruit of righteousness or righteous living. In our topic today, we are going to learn that God can work to accomplish His purpose through every situation that we face in our lives.

Philippians 1:12-14 says, “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” Paul looked at the things that happened in his life in a very different way than most people. His great concern was how those events affected the spread of the Gospel. He was filled with joy because of the fact that his imprisonment actually was helping the Gospel to spread.

It was through the imprisonment of Paul that the Gospel had spread to the whole palace guard. These were the men who had to guard Paul day and night. Acts 28:30-31 says, “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.” Instead of being in a prison, Paul was able to stay in his own rented house. This made it possible for him to teach all who came to him to learn more about Christ. The palace or imperial guards were the ones who had to guard Paul in his house. As a result, each guard that guarded him heard him teach the Word of God to those who came. As a result, they heard the Gospel and what Paul taught about Christ whether they wanted to listen or not. This was in addition to the people in Rome that came to hear Paul teach.

Everyone that heard Paul realized that he was not a criminal. They realized that he was a prisoner because he taught about Christ. The great concern of Paul was to use every opportunity to speak the Word of God with boldness. In fact Paul gave a personal prayer request to the Ephesians in Ephesians 6:19-20 where he asked them to pray, “And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Paul wanted boldness to continue to share the Gospel at every opportunity while he was in prison in Rome.

The fact that Paul was witnessing with boldness even though he was a prisoner also had a great impact on the rest of the Christians in Rome. The other Christians became persuaded that if Paul could continue to speak about Christ even though he was a prisoner that they did not need to be fearful because the Lord would use them just as He was using Paul. As a result, most of the Christians in Rome had become very bold about sharing the Gospel with others. The word that is translated “without fear” is also used in Luke 1:74-75 where we read, “To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.” In this verse, we see that Zacharias realized the importance of being delivered from our enemies so that we can serve the Lord without fear.

We see that there were some who were preaching the Gospel with wrong motives but most were preaching with right motives. Philippians 1:15-18 says, “Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.” Here we see that it is possible for some people to preach the Gospel with wrong motives.

We see that there was a group of people who were preaching the Gospel from envy and strife. We see that they were controlled by selfish ambition. In 1 Corinthians 3:3 Paul was talking about those who were spiritually immature and wrote, “For you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?” Here we see that envy and strife are the result of spiritual immaturity. The word that is translated “selfish ambition” means to put oneself forward. James 3:14-16 says, “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.” In these verses, the word is used twice and is translated self-seeking. Those who were preaching the Gospel for this reason certainly had wrong motives.

In contrast, we see that most of the Christians in Rome were sharing the Gospel from good will. The word that is translated “good will” means by choice with a desire to do good. Philippians 2:12-13 says, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.” In these verses, the word is translated good pleasure. God works in our lives because it is His choice to do good in our lives. We see that these people were motivated by love. The word that is translated “appointed” was the word that was used when a soldier was placed on duty. Paul felt that he had been placed where he was so that he could carry out the ministry that the Lord had given him. That ministry was the defense of the Gospel.

Paul did not care whether some people preached the Gospel out of pretence. The word that is translated “pretence” means the reason people say they do something to cover up their real reason for doing it. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record what the scribes did to cover up the fact that they were stealing the houses of widows. Mark 12:40 says, “Who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.” Here we see that the scribes prayed long prayers to cover up the fact that they were actually stealing. Those who were preaching the Gospel out of envy and strife were using their preaching as an excuse to cover their selfish ambition. Even if some had a wrong motive, Paul was still filled with joy because the Gospel was preached.

Paul went on to say in Philippians 1:19-21, “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.” Paul expected the Lord to work through the prayers of the Philippians and others to complete the will of God in his life. Here we see that Paul expected their prayers to be answered in the way that God chose. That could mean his death which would take him to heaven. However, what he said in the following verses indicates that he thought God would answer by his eventual release from prison.

The word that is translated “earnest expectation” means to eagerly wait to see what the Lord is going to do in the future. Paul was eagerly waiting to see how the Lord was going to work in his life. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in Romans 8:19 where

we read, “For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.” In this verse, we see that the creation is eagerly waiting to find out each person that will become a child of God. Paul also had a great hope. Titus 2:13 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Paul knew that regardless of what happened to him personally that He could eagerly wait for the coming of Christ.

The one goal that Paul had for his life was that he would not do anything that would cause him to be ashamed. That is why he wanted to speak the Gospel with boldness at every opportunity. 1 John 4:17 says, “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” Love caused Paul to witness with great boldness because he looked forward to the day when he would stand before the Lord to receive rewards for his ministry on this earth. Because of that confident assurance about the future Paul was eager to glorify the Lord by whatever the Lord had for him in the future. If he was set free, he wanted to glorify Christ by his life. If he was killed, He wanted to glorify Christ by his death. Here we see that Paul was filled with joy because his concern was to glorify Christ.

Paul had one goal in his life. That goal was to live for Christ. As a result, he had no fear of death. In fact Paul knew that he could look forward to death. 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 says, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.” Paul knew that Christ was with him as long as he was on this earth. He also knew that he would be with the Lord eternally when the Lord took him from this earth. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand and have this inner peace so that they can look forward to either life or death with joy. That will happen as they make it their goal to live for Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn that God can work through every situation that they face.

3.

Learning Why We Do Not Need to Fear Death

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that God can work through every situation that they face in their lives. Paul knew that the Lord was working through his life even though he was a prisoner. The fact that he was a prisoner being guarded by the imperial guard meant that all of the soldiers that guarded the Roman emperor heard about the Gospel. Paul had only one goal in his life and that was to live for Christ. Paul knew that when he died that he would be with Christ for all eternity. As a result, Paul was eager to glorify Christ either by life or by death.

We see the attitude of Paul in Philippians 1:21-24 where we read, “For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.” Paul was eager to live for Christ as long as he lived. Paul knew that when he died that he would actually gain because he would be with Christ forever.

Paul also realized that if it was the plan of Christ for him to continue to live on this earth that the Lord would give him fruit from his labor. The word that is translated “fruit” can mean the fruit of trees, vines, or children. It can also speak of spiritual fruit and that is the way that it is used in this verse. That is the way Paul used this word in Romans 1:13 where we read, “Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.” Paul wanted to have spiritual fruit wherever he went. This should also be our desire and the desire for our children.

Although Paul knew that there would be more fruit as he continued to serve the Lord on this earth, Paul did not want to make the choice for his own benefit. Instead he wanted God to choose what he did. The word that is translated “hard pressed” means to press you in on every side. Luke 8:45 says, “And Jesus said, “Who touched Me?” When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, “Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’” Here we see that Christ felt the pressure of the crowd on every side. In the same way, Paul felt pressed on two sides. On one hand, he wanted to go to heaven right away to be with the Lord. On the other hand, Paul understood that the Lord still had work for him to do on the earth. As a result, Paul was prepared to remain on the earth as long as the Lord needed him to minister to the Christians in the various churches.

Because Paul understood that the Lord still had ministry for him to do, Philippians 1:25-26 says, “And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.” The word that is translated being confident means “to believe or to be persuaded”. Philippians 1:6 says, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.” Just as Paul was persuaded that the Lord would continue to work in the lives of the Christians in Philippi, Paul was also persuaded that the Lord still had more ministries for him to do on the earth.

That is why Paul said that he would remain and continue on the earth for the present. We see that Paul realized that the Lord had some specific things for him to do. Paul knew that the Lord wanted him to continue to help the Christians with their progress. The word that is translated “progress” means continuing growth in learning or understanding. 1 Timothy 4:15 says,

“Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.” Paul realized that part of his ministry was to help Christians continue to grow in their understanding.

Paul realized that the Lord was also leaving him on the earth to help the Christians grow in their joy of faith. Paul understood the principle that increasing faith produces greater joy. This is clearly seen in 1 Thessalonians 1:6 where we read, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” As the Thessalonians grew in the Lord even though they were going through a difficult time they continued to experience the joy of the Holy Spirit. Paul knew that this was also true for the Philippian Christians. The Philippian Christians would be able to rejoice because of the way that they saw the Lord work in their life and through the life of Paul. Paul expected the Lord to work in his life so that he would be set free to make one more visit to the Philippians.

Paul went on to write in Philippians 1:27-28, “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.” The word that is translated “conduct” means the way a person lives who lives according to the law. The word is only used one other time in the New Testament. That is in Acts 23:1 where we read, “Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” Here we see that Paul had lived in such a way that he did not break the Jewish law in order to reach Jews for Christ.

In the same way we see that we are to live our lives as Christians in a way that will bring honor to the gospel of Christ. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Here we are reminded that we are to live our lives in such a way that the Lord will be honored because we are serving one another in love. Paul said that it was his desire to hear that the Philippian Christians were walking that way whether he came to visit them or if he heard that report from other Christians that had visited Philippi.

The word that is translated “stand fast” means to stand firm or to persevere. In Galatians 5:1 we read, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Here we see that the Galatians were to stand firm in their liberty and not to become entangled again in a yoke of bondage. In 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 we read, “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all *that you do* be done with love.” In these verses, we see that we are to stand fast in the faith and do everything that we do in love. When we stand fast in liberty and do everything that we do in love we see that we will be one in spirit and in mind. That is due to the fact that our human spirits will be led by the Holy Spirit and we will allow the Word of God to guide our thoughts and actions.

The word that is translated “striving together” means to be working together. The only other place where this word is used is in Philippians 4:3 where we read, “And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.” Here we see that these women had worked together with Paul in sharing the Gospel. In the same way we are to work together to make certain that others have the opportunity to hear the Gospel clearly so that they can come to faith in Christ.

When we work together under the leadership of the Holy Spirit to share the Word of God, Acts 4:31 tells us, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was

shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” We see that unity under the direction of the Holy Spirit will give us boldness to speak the Word of God and share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians. As a result of that boldness we will not be terrified by our adversaries. When Christians suffer for the Gospel, that attitude causes those who reject Christ to realize that the message is true and that they are facing judgment. Acts 5:41-42 says, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.” The fact that the apostles were willing to suffer caused the Jewish religious leaders to realize that their faith was genuine.

While the Gospel is a warning of coming judgment to those who reject, it is a message of salvation to those who believe. That is why Philippians 1:29-30 goes on to say, “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me.” Here we are reminded of the fact that it is a great privilege to both believe and suffer for the sake of Christ. The word that is translated “granted” comes from the word for grace and means to give with grace and kindness or to forgive another person. 1 Corinthians 2:12 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” This verse reminds us that the Holy Spirit helps us to understand the things that are freely given to us by God.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that just as God gave us many things freely that as Christians we can now give to others freely. Paul knew that the Philippians were suffering just as they had seen him suffer. Now they were having that same privilege of sharing in that ministry for the sake of others. This is also a great privilege for each of us. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn why they do not need to fear death and also enjoy the privilege of suffering for Christ.

4.

Learning to Have the Mind of Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that they do not need to fear death. Paul gave us an example by his life because he was ready to serve Christ either through life or through death. His concern was to do what the Lord wanted him to do. We also saw that it is a privilege to suffer for Christ because Christ works through that suffering to draw others to Himself. In our topic today, we want to learn how to help our children learn to have the same attitudes in their lives that we see in the life of Christ.

Philippians 2:1-2 says, “Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.” The word that is translated “consolation” means to call someone near for help. The word can also be translated by such words as encouragement or comfort. 2 Thessalonians 2:16 says, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace.” Here we are reminded that Christ does come alongside us to encourage us. In addition to encouraging us, Christ also gives us a message of love to comfort us.

The word that is translated fellowship can be translated by either fellowship or communion. In 2 Corinthians 13:14 we read, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.” In this verse, we are reminded of the fact that each member of the Trinity ministers to us in our lives. The word that is translated “affection” speaks of love that comes from the heart. In Philemon 1:7 we read, “For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.” In this verse, the word is translated by the word hearts. As a result, we are reminded of the fact that God has a heart of mercy for us.

As we come to verse two Paul told the Philippians that his joy would be complete if the Philippians developed these same attitudes toward one another. The word that is translated like-minded is also the word that is translated one mind at the end of the verse and also in verse five. As a result, Paul said that three things would make his joy complete. First, it was his desire that they would have the same love that Christ has for us. Christ said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Second, it was his desire that they would be of one accord (one-souled). Paul wanted the Philippians to have the same will (desires), the same emotions (passions) and the same way of thinking (goals). Third, it was the desire of Paul that they would have the same purpose of heart.

Philippians 2:3-4 goes on to tell us how these attitudes will change our actions when these verses say, “*Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” When we have attitudes in our heart that bring glory to God it will change two negative attitudes. We will not have actions based on selfish ambition. James used the word translated selfish ambition twice in James 3:14 and 16 where we read, “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth...For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.” From these verses we can see that selfish ambition speaks about those who want their own way. In addition, we will not speak words based on conceit. Galatians 5:26 says, “Let us

not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” Here we see that we are to speak nothing that would be based on conceit or pride.

Instead we see the attitudes and actions that the Lord wants us to have in our lives. The word that is translated “lowliness of mind” means humility. Colossians 3:12 says, “Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.” Here we see that we are to put on humility. When we have an attitude of humility, we will esteem or think of others better than self. This means that we will place a high value on each person. We will seek to do what is best for that person in his or her spiritual growth and development. Here we see that since we are bondservants of Christ that we want to show our children by example what it means to highly value other people and do the things that are needed to first help them come to repentance and faith and then help them to grow in Christ.

We go on to read about the example that Christ gave us to follow in Philippians 2:5-7 which says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.” We saw that the word translated mind was used twice in verse 2. In that verse we saw that Christ wants us to develop certain attitudes in our lives. The way that we develop these attitudes is by yielding our human spirit to the Holy Spirit so that He can develop those attitudes. Christ gave us the example by yielding Himself to the Father.

The word that is translated “form” speaks of the unchanging character or what Christ is in Himself. This same word is used both in verse six and again in verse seven. As a result, we see that Christ is in the exact image of the Father. This helps us to understand that Christ is unchanging and has the same character as the Father. When God appeared to Moses in the Old Testament at the burning bush, Exodus 3:14 says, “And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.’” In the book of John we see that Christ repeatedly called Himself, I am. In John 11:25 Christ told Martha, “Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.’” In this one verse we see two of the “I am’s” that Christ called Himself. Then Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.” The New Testament makes it very clear that the Father and Christ have the same form.

Christ knew that He and the Father were One and that they were equal. Christ said in John 10:30, “I and *My* Father are one.” However, Christ did not cling to that fact that He was equal with the Father. Instead Christ willingly set aside the privileges and rights that He had for a time so that He could come and pay the penalty for our sin. John 17:4-5 says, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” Here we see that as Christ prayed the night before His crucifixion that once He had completed paying the penalty for sin that the Father would restore those privileges and rights that He had set aside in order to pay for our sins.

Christ was equal with God so He did not feel that it was something that He had to take or seize by robbery. The word that is translated “equal” means the same in quality, character, size and quantity. The Jews also recognized that was what the word meant. That is why John 5:18 says, “Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” In this verse, we see that the Jews really wanted to kill Christ because He had said that He was equal with the Father.

The word translated “made of no reputation” means to make empty. Here, we see that Christ chose to lay aside that equality with God for a time so that He could pay the penalty for our

sins. Instead Christ chose to take the form of a bondservant for that period of time. The word translated “bondservant” means a slave or one who has given himself up to do the will of another. Christ chose to completely submit Himself to the will of the Father. In fact Christ said in John 6:38, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” Christ chose to set aside His privileges as God such as His glory to carry out the will of the Father. Instead he took the form of a true bondservant.

In taking the form of a true bondservant, Christ took on all of the characteristics of man except sin. In Luke 2:52 we read, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” The reason for this is explained in Hebrews 2:17 where we read, “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” Here we see that Christ became totally man in order to satisfy the requirements of God in order to pay for our sin. Christ is 100% God and 100% man.

Christ became a real human. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” However, Christ further humbled Himself by taking terrible abuse and finally going to the cross. There He was obedient and carried out the will of the Father by crucifixion which was the worst form of death the Roman government could devise for their worst criminals. As we help our physical and spiritual children understand what Christ did for us to pay the penalty for our sins, we see that He gave all of us an example to follow. Christ esteemed us better than Himself as He came, suffered and died for us in our place. In the same way we want to provide a model for our children of what it means to be a bondservant who is submissive to the will of the Lord. As our children see our example, they will have an example to follow in their own lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example of what it means to have the mind of Christ.

Learning to Let God Complete His Will in Us

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to have the mind of Christ. We saw that Christ wants us to esteem others more than self. That means that we have to choose to humble ourselves. Christ gave us the greatest example of what it means to humble ourselves when He humbled Himself and became obedient to death on the cross. In our topic today, we want to learn how to help our children learn to let God complete His will for their lives.

Christ humbled Himself and suffered the most brutal death that the Romans could devise. He did that to pay the penalty for our sins. As a result, we see the response of the Father to Christ. Philippians 2:9-11 says, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This exaltation was based on the fact that Christ had become 100% God and 100% man. As the God-man who had lived on the earth with mankind Christ is now able to pray for us as our High Priest.

We see the Father has exalted Christ and given Him a name that is above every name. The day will come when every knee will bow at that name. This will include those in heaven, those that are on the earth and those who have gone to eternal judgment. 1 Peter 3:18-19 and 22 says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison...who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him." Here we see that even those in rebellion will be forced to bow before Christ and admit that He is Lord even though they experience eternal judgment because they chose to reject Jesus Christ as Lord.

The day will also come when every tongue will confess and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. This will also bring glory to the Father who has exalted Christ by giving Him a name that is above every name. Jesus was the name that was given to Christ at his birth. Matthew 1:21 says, "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." Lord was the name that was given to Christ when He rose from the dead. In the Old Testament the Father is called Lord. Psalm 2:11-12 says, "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish *in* the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him." Here in Philippians we see that the Father gave the name Lord to Christ as He exalted Him.

We see that the fact that the Father has exalted Christ and given Him a name that is above every name will bring glory to the Father. The Father personally exalted Christ several times while He was on this earth. The first time was in Matthew 3:17 where we read, "And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." However, we also see that Christ will exalt the Father. 1 Corinthians 15:28 says, "Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." Here we see that Christ will also give glory to the Father.

Philippians 2:12-13 goes on to say, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure."

Paul had a great relationship with the Christians in Philippi. They had listened to him and had followed his instructions in the past both when he was present and when he was in other places. After giving the example of Christ giving Himself for the sake of others, Paul now returns to the topic of how the Philippians can complete the will of God for their lives.

First, Paul reminded the Philippians to work out their own salvation. He reminded them that they were able to do this because they had the power of God working in their lives. The word that is translated “work out” means to continually work to achieve what God had designed their lives to do. We can also accomplish what God has designed us to do because He has worked in our lives and is continuing to work in our lives. 2 Corinthians 5:5-7 says, “Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight.” God is working in our lives and through our lives to prepare us for our eternal life. A few verses earlier in 2 Corinthians 4:16 Paul wrote, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.” Here we see that the Holy Spirit renews us day by day so that we can do the ministry that God has prepared for each one of us.

Philippians 2:14-16 says, “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” Second, we see the attitude that the Philippians and we are to have as we work out our salvation. We are to do all things without complaining and disputing. The word that is translated “complaining” means to grumble or complain in a low voice. The word that is translated “disputing” means to question, criticize or argue. These are normal characteristics of people who are not Christians so we are to become something different. The word “become” speaks of the process that is involved in changing from our former attitudes to new attitudes as we grow in Christ.

As we develop new attitudes we see what the Lord is helping us to become. The word that is translated “blameless” means a life that cannot be criticized by others. Paul used this same word in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 where he said, “So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” God is the One who gives us His strength to develop lives that are holy. The word that is translated “harmless” means a mind that is innocent and free from evil. Here we see that we are to develop a life that is pure in both actions and thoughts. The word that is translated without fault is used one other time in the New Testament. 2 Peter 3:14 says, “Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.” Here the word is translated blameless or without blemish.

As our lives are being transformed by the Lord, we realize that our lives are becoming very different from the world around us. We see that the world around us is described as crooked and perverse. The word that is translated “crooked” means curved, wicked or evil. The word that is translated “perverse” means one who turns aside or who opposes the purposes and plans of God. The word is used in Acts 13:8 where we read, “But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.” Here the word is translated to turn away. As a result, we see that the world around us is evil and many work hard to oppose the purposes of God.

The darker and more sinful the world becomes, the brighter our lights will shine. Matthew 5:16 tells us, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Even a small light will shine brightly when it is very dark. We also see how we shine as lights. We are to hold forth the Word of life. 1 Peter 2:9 says, “But you *are* a

chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” The Word of life is the message of the Gospel. We are to hold out or share that message with the people of the world around us so that they will have the opportunity to come to Christ who is the true Light. Paul told the Philippians that as they held out the Word of life to others and gave them the opportunity to come to Christ that he would know that his effort and hard work in sharing the Gospel had not been in vain. The same is true in our own lives as we help our children learn to share the Word of God effectively.

Philippians 2:17-18 says, “Yes, and if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.” Paul viewed his life as a drink offering. In the Old Testament a drink offering was poured on top of a sacrifice and the liquid would rise in steam to God. Paul said that he wanted his life and ministry to be a sacrifice to God which made it possible for other Christians to carry out faithful service to the Lord. Paul said that his life would be filled with great joy if the Lord chose to use his service in that way.

Paul also wanted the Philippians to be glad and rejoice with him because the Lord was allowing his life to be such a sacrifice. Here we see the attitude that the Lord wants each of us to have as we help our physical and spiritual children learn how to serve the Lord effectively. We can be filled with gladness and rejoicing for the fact that the Lord has chosen us and allowed us to have the privilege of equipping our children to serve the Lord effectively. We also want them to be able to rejoice with us as they learn to share the message of the Gospel. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to let God carry out His will through their lives.

Learning How God Works Through Other Christians

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand how to let God complete His will in our lives and through our lives. We saw that Christ carried out the will of the Father and that the Father has called Christ Lord. We also saw that the Lord works in each of our lives as Christians to equip us to carry out His will and learn to share the Gospel with those who have not placed their faith in Christ. In our topic today, we are going to see how Paul shared with the Philippians the way that God was working through the lives of other Christians.

Philippians 2:19-21 says, “But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.” First Paul began by talking about the way that the Lord had worked in the life of Timothy. Timothy had traveled with Paul to many different cities. As a result, he knew many of the Christians in those cities. In addition, we see that Timothy had developed a love like Paul for these Christians. Paul said that he would soon send Timothy to Philippi so that Timothy could give him a report about the way that the Lord was working in the lives of the Philippian Christians.

We learn several things about the character of Timothy. The word that is translated “like-minded” in this verse means having the same soul or one-souled. The soul is the mind, emotions and will. As a result, Paul was saying that Timothy had the same thoughts, emotions and desires for the Philippians that Paul had. 1 Corinthians 4:17 says, “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” Paul knew the concern that Timothy had for the Christians in every city. Paul knew that Timothy had a genuine concern for these Christians.

In contrast, Paul said that others had a different attitude. Paul said that many were seeking things that would benefit themselves instead of the things that would further the work of the Lord. Paul later wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:15, “This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.” Here we see two individuals mentioned who were more concerned about protecting their own lives than they were about serving the Lord. Since Paul uses the word *all* there were also others who had left Paul to protect their own lives.

Philippians 2:22-24 goes on to describe Timothy further when it says, “But you know his proven character, that as a son with *his* father he served with me in the gospel. Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.” Paul said that the Philippians knew the proven character of Timothy. The word that is translated “proven character” means one whose character had been tested and had stood the test. Paul explained in Romans 5:3-4 how such proven character develops when those verses say, “And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Here we see that godly character is developed through tribulation and perseverance. Endurance through very difficult problems is one of the key things that the Lord uses in our lives to develop proven character.

In addition to proven character, Paul said that Timothy had also served with him in the Gospel

as a son does with a father. In 1 Timothy 1:2 Paul wrote, “To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.” In 1 Corinthians 4:17 quoted in the third paragraph we see that Paul calls Timothy his beloved and faithful son in the Lord. In 2 Timothy 1:2 Paul calls him my dearly beloved son. Paul knew that he could always count on his spiritual son, Timothy. They had faithfully served the Lord together for many years.

Paul also said that he hoped to send Timothy in the near future as soon as he knew what was going to happen in his own life. Paul had appealed his case to the Roman emperor. As a result, Acts 28:30-31 says, “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.” Paul knew that the Roman emperor would soon make a decision on his appeal. At that time Paul expected to be released and then he planned to send Timothy to Philippi to visit the Christians in that city. Paul also hoped that once he was released by the Roman emperor that he would also be able to come to Philippi to visit the Christians there one more time and encourage them in their faith.

However, Paul also had another concern. The church at Philippi had sent Epaphroditus to Rome to help Paul while he was imprisoned. While there Epaphroditus had become very sick. As a result, Paul had sent him to take this letter to Philippi. Philippians 2:25-28 says, “Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.” Here we see that the Lord had worked through the life of Epaphroditus and he had been a great help to Paul for a period of time.

Paul teaches us a great lesson about leadership by the titles that he gave to Epaphroditus. Paul called him my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier. Here we see that Paul followed the example of Christ and he had helped Epaphroditus become a full partner in ministry. In John 20:17 Christ told Mary, “Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’” In John 15:15 Christ had changed the status of the disciples from servants to friends and here he calls them his brethren. In the same way Paul now called Epaphroditus his brother or partner.

Paul also called Epaphroditus his fellow worker. Twelve different times Paul uses the word translated fellow worker to describe those who ministered with him. One example is found in Romans 16:3 where we read, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.” This was a couple that had ministered with Paul in Corinth, then in Ephesus and who had gone to Rome where they started a church in their house. Paul also used the word fellow soldier to describe Epaphroditus. Paul used both of these words in Philemon 1:1-2 where we read, “Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy *our* brother, To Philemon *our* beloved *friend* and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus *our* fellow soldier, and to the church in your house.” Paul was continually recognizing others as full partners in ministry.

The church at Philippi had sent Epaphroditus to Rome to help Paul with the various needs that he had. Philippians 4:18 tells us, “Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.” Epaphroditus had originally brought a money gift from the Philippians and then had stayed to assist and help Paul. However, while in Rome he had become very sick. In fact he had nearly died.

Paul said that God had shown mercy both to Epaphroditus and to Paul by causing him to recover from his illness. Paul recognized that he was longing for his fellow Christians in Philippi and became distressed when they heard that he was sick. As a result, that was the reason that Paul decided to send him back to Philippi with this letter after he recovered. Paul said that it would have greatly increased his sorrow if Epaphroditus had died while he was in Rome. As a result, Paul wanted to send him back to Philippi so that the Christians in Philippi would be able to see how God had shown mercy to both of them. As a result, Paul quickly sent him back to Philippi once he had fully recovered. He knew this would bring great joy to the Philippians when they saw how the Lord had worked in the life of Epaphroditus.

As a result, Paul also said in Philippians 2:29-30, “Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.” Here we see that Paul told how the church at Philippi should respond to Epaphroditus and others like him. The word that is translated “receive” means to accept and take to yourself. The word is used in Romans 16:1-2 where we read, “I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.” Here we see that we are to accept and take to ourselves those who have ministered faithfully for the Lord in other places. They were to receive Epaphroditus back with great joy.

The word that is translated “esteem” means to hold in honor. We are also to honor and respect those who have faithfully served the Lord. Here we are reminded that Epaphroditus nearly died in order to serve the Lord faithfully. That happened because he had chosen to faithfully serve the Lord by assisting Paul. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to serve the Lord faithfully because the Lord wants to work through their lives also. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand how God works through other Christians.

Learning From the Example of Paul

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how God works through the lives of others. As they hear about the way that the Lord works through the lives of others, they realize that the Lord can work through their lives also. Younger Christians need to be regularly reminded that the Lord wants to work through their lives just as he is working through the lives of others. In our topic today, we are going to see that we can also help our children to learn many lessons for their own lives from the example of Paul.

In Philippians 3:1-2 we read, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!” As Paul moved on to a new topic in his letter, he reminded the Philippians again to rejoice in the Lord. In Philippians 1:28 Paul had written to warn the Philippians about those who opposed them. That verse says, “And not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.” Here we see that Paul wanted to remind them one more time about false teachers.

Paul was warning about false teachers that were trying to get the Christians to follow them. Paul described these false teachers (Judaizers) in three ways. The word translated “beware” means to see and understand. First, the Philippians were to understand that these false teachers were like dogs. In the time of Paul dogs often went in packs and were almost like wild animals. The Jews would even call the Gentiles dogs because of their sinful and impure lives. Here Paul is saying that the Jewish false teachers were the ones who were like dogs. Revelation 22:15 says, “But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.” This verse talks about those who will not have eternal life.

Second Paul called these false teachers evil workers. These false teachers thought that they were righteous because they were trying to get the Christians to follow the Jewish law. Paul said they were evil workers because they were depending on works instead of coming to Christ by faith. Third, Paul said these false teachers practiced mutilation. Jews used the word circumcision which means to cut around. Here Paul used the word which means to cut off instead because they were trying to cut off the Gentiles from God.

Philippians 3:3-6 goes on to say, “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” Paul said that the true worshipers of God are those who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in their lives. They have placed their faith in Christ and they do not depend on physical circumcision to try to work their way to God. These are the people who are the true circumcision.

Paul understood these false teachers because at one time he had tried to depend on circumcision and keeping the law to be right with God. He went on to give several reasons why he had tried to depend on the flesh before the Lord stopped him on the road to Damascus. Paul had been circumcised on the eighth day. He was from the nation of Israel. He was from the tribe of Benjamin. Paul had been born to Hebrew parents and continued to maintain the Hebrew traditions even though his family lived in Tarsus. Paul was a Pharisee who tried to keep the

law. He was a man with a great zeal and showed it by persecuting the church because he thought that the Christians were wrong. Paul really worked to keep the law and so others saw him as blameless. Here we see that the reason Paul understood the false teachers was due to the fact that he had been one of them.

However, Philippians 3:7-9 goes on to say, “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.” Here we see that Paul uses two accounting terms to explain what happened in his life. He was trying to make a profit through his own self efforts. Instead when Christ changed his life he realized that all of those things were actually a loss and meant nothing.

Once Christ got the attention of Paul, he wanted to get to really know Christ as we will see in verse ten. The word that is translated “know” in that verse is the same word that Christ used in John 10:27 which says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” Paul wanted to know Christ in the same way that Christ knew him. As a result, Paul counted all of his self effort as loss because he wanted that full relationship that comes from sharing our lives with Christ and not just knowing about Him. In 1 John 1:3-4 we read, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” John wanted Christians to share their lives with Christ. That was also the goal of Paul.

The word that is translated “excellence” means that which surpasses or is superior. Paul knew that the knowledge of Christ (the shared life with Christ) was far superior to any of his previous efforts to try and keep the law. Paul used this same word in Philippians 4:7 where we read, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” The peace of God was beyond all understanding. In contrast, all of his efforts had been only loss. In fact he said that his efforts were like manure or garbage. The thing that Paul wanted to gain was the approval of Christ and to enjoy fellowship with Him.

Paul knew that He was in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Paul understood the reason why he was in Christ. He was not in Christ because of his own efforts to try and be righteous. That was what he had tried to accomplish when he tried to follow the law. Instead Paul fully understood that the righteousness that he had was due to his faith in Christ. That righteousness is given to each one of us by God at the time we place our faith in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Here we see that God placed our sin on Christ and made Him sin for us. Then at the moment that we place our faith in Christ the Father places the righteousness of Christ on us. That is why no one can gain righteousness through their own efforts.

Paul went on to write in Philippians 3:10-11, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Although Paul had followed Christ and known Him for many years, Paul wanted to get to know Christ even better. That should also be our desire and the desire for our children. We saw in verse eight that Paul wanted to get to know Christ in the same way that Christ knew him. We saw that Christ said in John 10:27 that He knows His sheep. Christ knows everything about us and still He loves us with an infinite and immeasurable love.

Paul wanted to know and understand the power of the resurrection of Christ. Christ demonstrated His power by raising Himself from the dead. Romans 1:3-4 says, “Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, *and* declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” The resurrection demonstrated that power in a way that nothing else could demonstrate it.

In order to know Christ as He knows us, Paul said that he wanted to understand the fellowship of His sufferings. We only really begin to understand the love of Christ as we have the opportunity to share in his sufferings. That had happened to Paul and Silas when they were in Philippi. In Acts 16 they were falsely accused and beaten with many stripes with rods by the Romans. Then they were placed in stocks in the prison. Acts 16:25 says, “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” Paul certainly understood some of the sufferings of Christ.

Paul also said that he wanted his life to be conformed to the death of Christ. Here we see that Paul was very willing to give his own life for the same purpose as Christ. He was willing to die to take the message of the Gospel to others. That is why Paul said in Philippians 1:21, “For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.” Paul had as his goal to live for Christ as long as he lived and he was ready to die for Christ when that time came in his life. In fact Paul did not really care how he died. Instead the thing that he looked forward to was the fact that he would be raised from the dead by Christ.

Paul gives us a tremendous example for our own lives. We want to show our physical and spiritual children that same attitude by our example. As they see that we are willing to suffer and even die for Christ if that is what the Lord chooses, they will grow in their understanding of what it means to follow the example of Christ and Paul. That will also help them to want Christ to use their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn important lessons from the example of Paul.

Learning to Keep Our Eyes Focused on the Goal

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn many lessons from the example that Paul gave in his life. Paul wanted to grow in his understanding both of the power of the resurrection of Christ and in his understanding of the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. In the same way we want to help our children grow both in their understanding of the power of the resurrection of Christ and the fellowship of His sufferings. Our children will grow in that understanding as they see how the Lord teaches us those lessons in our own lives. In our topic today, we want to show our children how to keep our eyes focused on the goal that Christ has for our lives.

Philippians 3:12-14 says, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Paul did not feel that he had already reached the goal. He did not feel like he had already brought to completion the ministry that that Lord had for him. Instead Paul planned to continue to press on. The word translated “press on” means to continue to run quickly to reach the goal in a race. Here we see that Paul felt as long as he had life he was going to continue to work to become more like Christ in his life. Paul truly wanted to become like Christ.

Paul knew that he had not yet become all that God wanted him to be as Romans 8:28-29 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” The goal of Paul was to become conformed to the image of Christ. He knew that God was using everything that happened in his life to help him become more like Christ.

Paul said that he was forgetting the things that had already happened in his life to help him become more like Christ. Some Christians have a hard time no longer caring about the things that they have done for the Lord in the past. Other Christians have a hard time no longer caring about the sins that they have committed in the past. Paul had both kinds of things happen in his past but he was not going to let those things control his future. This is one of the most common struggles that growing Christians face in their lives. As Christians, we need to fully understand Philippians 4:13 which says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Nothing in our future will be too difficult for the Lord to choose to do as He works through our lives. Everything from our past has been forgiven because Christ wants to work through our lives to accomplish what He has planned for our lives.

We said that the word that is translated “press on” was used to speak of a person that ran as fast as possible to reach the goal. Paul had such a goal for his life. His goal was the reward that Christ has for godly character that we will receive when the Lord calls us to heaven. As Paul neared the end of his life he said in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” Paul was looking forward with great eagerness to the crown of righteousness.

Based on his own goal, Paul encouraged the Christians in Philippi to have the same goal.

Philippians 3:15-16 says, “Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.” In addition to the Philippians Paul here encouraged all mature Christians to have this same attitude. For Christians who were still thinking about their past, Paul reminded them that God would reveal to them what they had not realized about their own lives. Here we see that as we pray and ask the Lord to give us His understanding that He will help us to understand that the past is past.

The word that is translated walk means to walk in a straight line like a group of soldiers. Paul used this word in Galatians 5:25 where we read, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” To Christians who were growing in their spiritual lives, Paul encouraged them to keep walking as they had been walking because they were walking in the Spirit instead of their own strength. The word that is translated mind is the same word that was used twice in Philippians 2:2 and once in Philippians 2:5. In those verses we saw that the word talks about the attitudes of our heart. Here we see that we are to have the attitude of walking to please the Lord as we grow and become more like Christ.

In Philippians 3:17-19 we read, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.” The word that is translated “following my example” means to imitate me. Paul also encouraged them to carefully look at the example or progress of others like Timothy and Silas. Paul said that he and these other men provided a pattern or an example to follow. In fact Peter also said that this is how all spiritual leaders are to walk. 1 Peter 5:2-3 says, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” All godly leaders are to lead younger Christians by their example.

Paul warned the Christians in Philippi that there were many who pretended to be Christians but were actually false teachers because they walked in a different way. In fact Paul said that they were enemies of the cross of Christ. James wrote in James 4:4, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” Here we see that there are many people who claim to be followers of the Lord who want to be friends with the world. James said as Paul did that these are enemies of God. We see several things about these false teachers.

First, we see that they are not true Christians because their end is destruction (eternal judgment). Second, their god is their own inner desires. Third, the very works in their lives that they boasted about brought shame to them. Jude described this shame as he described false teachers in Jude 1:11-13 where we read, “Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving *only* themselves. *They are* clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” Here we see that such false teachers who boast about their works are actually only serving themselves. Fourth, such false teachers have set their minds on earthly things. James describes their teaching and wisdom when he says in James 3:15, “This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.” Here we see that their earthly wisdom is sensual and demonic in its source.

In contrast, Paul went on to say in Philippians 3:20-21, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from

which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” Paul and all those who provide godly examples do not look for their rewards on this earth. Instead true teachers provide godly examples because they realize that their citizenship is in heaven. The word that is translated “citizenship” means the country where a person has their citizenship. Another form of this word is used in Philippians 1:27 where we read, “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” In this verse, the word is translated conduct which demonstrates where we have our citizenship.

Since our citizenship is in heaven, Paul said that is why we are eagerly waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We look forward to the fact that Christ is going to change and transform our bodies when He takes us to heaven. The body that we have now is described as a lowly body. When the Ethiopian eunuch was reading from Isaiah when Philip met him, the part he was reading is quoted in Acts 8:33 where we read, “In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.” In this verse, the word translated lowly in Philippians is translated humiliation in Acts. Christ had a humble body on this earth and so do we. When Christ takes us to heaven we will have a glorified body like the body that Christ had after His resurrection.

Here we see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that when we are true followers of Christ we can look forward to the fact that Christ will so completely transform us so that even our bodies will be like the body of Christ when we get to heaven. Christ is going to so change and transform our bodies so that they will be able to last for all eternity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to learn to focus on the goal that Christ has for each of our lives.

Learning How to Experience the Peace of God

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to focus on the goal that Christ has for their lives. That goal is to become more and more like Christ as we grow and mature in our spiritual lives. We saw that Paul encouraged the Christians in Philippi to follow his example. In the same way we want to encourage our children to follow our example. In order for us to provide an effective example that means that it must be our goal to become more and more like Christ. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to experience the peace of God.

In Philippians 4:1-3 we read, “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.” As we begin this chapter we are reminded again of the great love that Paul had for the Christians that lived in Philippi. Paul had a great love as he thought about these Christians. Paul longed to see them again because of this great love that he had for them.

Paul said that the Christians in Philippi were his joy and crown. Here we see that these Christians brought great joy to the life of Paul. Other Christians also brought great joy to his life. 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 says, “For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.” Paul had great joy because he knew that the Christians in these cities would stand with him in the presence of the Lord. The word that is translated “crown” was used to describe the wreath that was given as a prize and was placed on the heads of those who had won a race. Peter said in 1 Peter 5:4, “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” Paul would have that crown of glory given to him because of his faithful leadership to the Christians at Philippi and in other places. As a result, Paul encouraged the Christians at Philippi to stand firm in the Lord just as a soldier stood guard at his post.

Next Paul spoke to two of the women in the church at Philippi. Paul appealed to these two women to have the same mind or to have peace with one another. It may be possible that these two women had some kind of a personal conflict between themselves that was having a negative effect on the church. By the way, this is the only problem that is mentioned about the church at Philippi. Paul had said earlier in Philippians 2:3-4, “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Paul knew that if these two women would each esteem the other person better than themselves that would solve their conflict and would prevent their conflict from having a negative impact on others.

The word that is translated “true companion” means one that is yoked together. It can also be translated as the name Syzygos. Whoever this person was he had worked closely with Paul when he was in Philippi. Now Paul encouraged him to assist or help those women who had worked with him in the Gospel when he was in Philippi. Acts 16:13 says, “And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met *there*.” Since these women and especially Lydia are mentioned in Acts, it is possible that these were the women who had worked closely with Paul. Paul also encouraged this companion (Syzygos?) to help Clement and the other fellow workers

that helped Paul when he was in Philippi. These fellow workers all had their names written in the Book of Life.

Philippians 4:4-7 goes on to say, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” The word “rejoice” is used in every chapter in the book of Philippians. After the apostles were beaten in Acts 5, Acts 5:41 says, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” We see that the apostles rejoiced for the privilege of suffering for Christ. Here in Philippians we are reminded that it is the Lord who makes it possible to rejoice even in very trying times because He is working in our lives.

In addition to rejoicing, Paul also gave several other instructions. The word that is translated “gentleness” means gentle and fair. The inner attitude that produces gentleness is an attitude of humility. In the other four places where this word is used it is translated gentle. James 3:17 says, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” Paul, James and Peter all wrote about the importance of a gentle spirit.

The word that is translated “be anxious” means to be troubled and worry about the things that are happening in our lives. Matthew 6:34 says, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.” When we worry about any situation, we are showing a lack of trust in the Lord to work through every situation. As a result, we are told not to worry. However, we are also told what to do instead of worry. We are to have a time of prayer. As we pray, we are to bring our requests to the Lord. We are to include thanksgiving with those requests. When we have an attitude of thanksgiving, it shows our thankfulness to the Lord and recognizes that He will do what is best to accomplish His will regarding those requests.

When we come to the Lord with thanksgiving as we make our requests, we see that the Lord will give us His peace. The word that is translated “surpasses” means that which is superior or greater. The peace that the Lord gives us is greater than those who do not trust Christ can even imagine. God says that this peace will guard our hearts and minds. The word that is translated “guard” is a military word. 1 Peter 1:3-5 says, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Here we see that our hearts and minds are kept by the power of God through faith.

Philippians 4:8-9 goes on to say, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.” In order to have peace we need to choose to think about the things that will produce that inner peace. We see that we are to think about the things that are true. Christ said in John 14:6 that He is the way, the truth and the life. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth in John 16:13. John 3:33 says, “He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.” In John 17:17 Christ said as He prayed, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” As a result, we are reminded that God and His Word are the source of all truth.

We are also to think on the things that are noble. The word that is translated “noble” means that which is respected and honorable. The word that is translated “just” means those things that are righteous and approved of God. The word that is translated “pure” means those things that are clean and free from sin. The word that is translated “lovely” means those things which are acceptable, pleasing and kind. The word that is translated “good report” means those things which are highly respected. Psalm 19:14 says, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.” These words help to remind us that what we think determines what we become.

However, Paul did not just tell the Philippians to think about these things. In addition, he also reminded them that he had taught and modeled these things by his example. The word that is translated “learned” means to learn by use and practice. Paul illustrated this from his own life when he said in Philippians 4:11, “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.” Here we see that Paul had himself learned to be content because he practiced working to become content. We also teach our children by the lessons that we are learning in our own lives.

The word that is translated “received” means to take to one’s self. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” The Philippians had applied the teaching of Paul to their own lives. They had been able to take the instruction of Paul and apply it to their lives because they had both heard him teach and seen him apply what he taught in his own life. Paul told the Philippians that if they would practice the things that they had learned through him from the Word of God that they would experience the God of peace in their lives. In the same way we want to help our physical and spiritual children also experience the peace that comes from having the God of peace in their lives. That will happen as we show them how to apply the Word of God to their lives by our own example. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to experience the God of peace in their lives.

Learning to Trust God to Supply All of Our Needs

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to experience the peace of God in their lives. We saw that the way to experience the peace of God in our lives was to make the choice to rejoice in all things. Then we need to bring our requests to the Lord with thanksgiving because thanksgiving shows our faith in the Lord. The third thing that is needed in order to enjoy the peace of God is to learn to change our thoughts so that we think about the things that come from the Lord instead of thinking about the things that come from the world. As we do these three things we will experience the peace of God and show our children how to experience that peace. Today, we want to help our children learn to trust God to supply all of their needs.

Philippians 4:10-14 says, “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.” In these verses, we see some lessons that Paul had learned in his life as he had followed the Lord.

Paul had learned to experience joy as a key part of his life. The reason is given here because Paul tells us that he rejoiced in the Lord. This is a reminder that the Lord is the One who is the source of joy. Here we see that the Lord had used the Christians in Philippi to cause him to rejoice. We saw in chapter two that Epaphroditus had come from Philippi to Rome to help Paul with his daily needs since Paul was a prisoner. The church at Philippi had also sent a financial gift with Epaphroditus for Paul. Here we see that Paul rejoiced because the Philippians had shown their care for him again as they had done in the past. They had not been able to show that care in the recent past. The Romans had kept him in prison in Caesarea for two years and then had sent him to Rome so the Philippians had not known for a period of time where Paul was located.

The gift was not the primary cause of his joy because Paul had learned to be content regardless of how much or how little he had. Instead Paul rejoiced in the Lord because of the love that the Philippians had shown by sending Epaphroditus to help him and the financial gift was just another evidence of their love. The word that is translated “content” in this verse means to be satisfied in whatever situation a person finds himself. Hebrews 12:5 says, “*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*” Paul was content with whatever the Lord supplied for him.

As a result, Paul had learned to be content when he was abased (had very little). Paul was also content when the Lord caused him to abound (to have more than enough). Paul had joy when there was adequate food to supply his needs. Paul was still filled with joy even when there were times that he had to go hungry. Paul had learned to have strength in every situation because he knew that the Lord was the One who gave him the strength that he needed. As a result, he had the strength that he needed even when he suffered from hunger. At the same time Paul wanted the Philippians to know that He greatly appreciated their help in his time of tribulation due to the fact that he was a prisoner.

Paul went on to commend the Philippians for their faithful ministry. Philippians 4:15-17 says,

“Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.” Paul reminded the Philippians that they had been the only church that had shared (become a partner with him by sharing) at an earlier time. When Paul was at Thessalonica the Christians at Philippi had sent a gift to help him with his needs. Then they had sent another gift to him at that time. Here we see a church that had a concern to minister to the needs of Paul as he ministered to people in other cities. This was a church that gave an example to follow.

Paul also pointed out another reason why he had such great joy about the giving of the church at Philippi. He was not seeking the gift for his own benefit. Instead the Philippians were actually storing up spiritual treasure in heaven. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Paul was rejoicing for the fact that by their giving that they were storing up treasures in heaven. However, even more important, Paul rejoiced because it showed that the desire of their hearts was to serve the Lord.

Paul was not concerned about his own needs because he knew that the Lord would supply them. However, he was very thankful for the Philippians. Philippians 4:18-19 says, “Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Here we see that Paul expresses his appreciation for the gift that Epaphroditus had brought to him from the church at Philippi. Paul said that this gift was more than enough to supply the needs that he had as a prisoner in Rome. Paul said that the Lord had used the Philippians to abundantly supply his needs.

However, Paul also gave them three thoughts to help the Philippians to understand how God viewed their gift. First, Paul said that their gift was a sweet-smelling aroma to God. This word is used in Ephesians 5:1-2 where we read, “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” In these verses, we see that the offering of Christ as a sacrifice for our sins was a sweet-smelling aroma to God. Paul is certainly pointing out that God was joyful about their gift.

Second, Paul said that their gift was an acceptable sacrifice to God. Acts 10:35 says, “But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.” In this verse, Peter told those gathered at the house of Cornelius that God accepts people from every nation that fear Him and work righteousness. Paul is making it clear that God accepted the gift of the Philippians in the same way that He accepted the faith of the people that were gathered in the house of Cornelius. Third, Paul said that their gift was well pleasing to God. This same word is used in Colossians 3:20 where we read, “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.” Again this verse makes it clear what pleases God. As a result, Paul used three different expressions to help the Philippians understand that God was very pleased with their gifts.

Based on the fact that God was well pleased with the gifts of Philippians, Paul could say that he knew that God would supply the needs of the Philippians. The word that is translated “needs” speaks of the basic things that the Philippians needed for their lives. Just as the Lord had used their gifts to supply the basic things that Paul needed in Rome, Paul knew that God would supply their needs. We also see the way that God would supply their needs. Paul said that God

would supply according to His riches. Christ said in Luke 6:38, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” Here we see that Christ told the people that they would receive just as they had given to others. That is why Paul could say that he knew that the Lord would supply the needs of the Philippians.

The word that is translated “supply” means to fill up or to supply liberally. It is translated that you may be filled in Colossians 1:9 where we read, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Here we see that Paul prayed that the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of the will of God, that they would be filled with all wisdom and that they would be filled with spiritual understanding. In Philippians 1:11 Paul prayed, “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Paul knew that God was able to give spiritual blessings generously. He also knew that God would supply the physical needs of the Philippians because they gave generously to help others.

Paul also encouraged the Philippians to greet one another. Philippians 4:21-23 says, “Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” Here we see that Paul wanted his spiritual family in the city of Philippi to understand the importance of greeting one another. This is one of the things that helps other Christians to feel accepted. As a result, Paul encouraged them to greet every saint in Christ Jesus. Paul also sent greetings from those who were with him. This including the people that ministered with him. This greeting also included all of the saints that were in the city of Rome. This greeting especially included those in the household of Caesar that had become Christians. Here we are reminded that the Lord had used Paul to spread the Gospel into the very household of Caesar. In the same way we want to encourage our physical and spiritual children to learn to greet others and make them feel accepted. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand that they can trust God to supply all of their needs as they serve Him.

Learning How to Pray for Others

We are beginning a new series of topics today about the lessons that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn from the book of Colossians. Our children will learn these lessons best as we teach them and then illustrate what we are teaching by our own example. Our children carefully observe how we put what we teach into practice by the way that we live. If we provide a good example of what we teach then it will help them grow to spiritual maturity because of the fact that they have seen how these lessons have changed and transformed our own lives.

Paul began this letter as he did most other letters with a personal greeting. Colossians 1:1-2 says, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul realized that the only reason that he was an apostle was due to the fact that it was the will of God that he be an apostle. Timothy joined with Paul in sending this greeting to the Christians that were in the city of Colosse. Paul rejoiced in the fact that the saints in Colosse were also faithful. We see that Paul wanted them to experience both grace and peace from the Father and also from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul wanted the Christians in the city of Colosse to know that he continually prayed for them. Colossians 1:3-6 says, "We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as *it has* also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth." Here we see that Paul was very thankful for the way that the Christians in the city of Colosse had become Christians and had grown in the Lord. We will see that Paul had not personally met these Christians but that he continually gave thanks for them.

As Paul gave thanks and prayed for the Christians in Colosse, there were three things for which he was especially thankful. We see that he gave thanks for their faith, love and hope. Here we see that these were healthy growing Christians. They had placed their faith in Christ. They had developed a love for all of the saints. And they were filled with hope and confidence as they looked forward to the day when they would be in heaven with the Lord. 1 Corinthians 13:13 says, "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love." We see that these were healthy Christians because all three of the things that abide were present in their lives. When we know that we are saved by faith and learn to walk by faith, we have a strong trust in the Lord. As we think of the fact that Christ paid the penalty for our sins and that He is coming back to take us to heaven, we have a strong hope. However, love is greater than even these two because these two will be completed when Christ takes us to heaven. However, the love of Christ for us and our love for God and for others will last for all eternity.

The Colossians had these three things because they had responded to the truth of the Gospel. The Gospel means good news. The Greeks had previously used the word to speak about good news when they heard word of a victory that their armies had won in a battle. However, Christianity gives the word a much fuller meaning. The Gospel is the good news that Christ defeated Satan by His death and resurrection. Through that death He paid the penalty for sin. Through His resurrection Christ defeated the power of death. 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 says, "'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'" The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord

Jesus Christ.” The Colossians knew that they had victory through Christ.

The Gospel had come to the Colossians just as it had come to people in many other places. We also see that everywhere the Gospel went that it was bringing forth fruit. Romans 7:4-5 says, “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another--to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.” Before we placed our faith in Christ our lives were bearing fruit that produced death. Once we came to Christ we are now able to bear fruit to God. Everywhere the Gospel was shared it was bringing forth fruit to God.

We also see how the Gospel was brought to the people in Colosse. Colossians 1:7-8 says, “As you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.” In Colossians 4:12 we see that Epaphras was originally from Colosse. That verse says, “Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Epaphras had apparently met Paul when Paul was in the city of Ephesus. Acts 19:10 says, “And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” After becoming a Christian and learning from Paul in Ephesus, Epaphras had returned to his home town of Colosse to share the Gospel in that area of Asia. The result was that people believed and a church was formed.

We see two key characteristics of Epaphras. Paul called Epaphras a fellow servant. The word that is translated “fellow servant” is from the word that means bondservants who both serve the same master. Here we see that Epaphras considered himself a bondservant of Christ. Epaphras was also a faithful minister of Christ. 1 Corinthians 4:2 says, “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” Epaphras was faithful in his service for the Lord. When Epaphras arrived in Rome he told Paul about the love that the Colossians had because they were learning to be led by the Holy Spirit. This good report about the Christians at Colosse caused Paul to be very thankful for them.

We go on to read the prayer of Paul for the Christians in Colosse. Colossians 1:9-12 says, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” We see that from the time that Paul heard about the salvation of the Christians in Colosse that he began to pray continually for them. He prayed for several specific things as he prayed for them.

First, Paul prayed that they would be filled with the knowledge of His will. The word translated “knowledge” means a deep or complete knowledge. Colossians 3:10 says, “And have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.” Here we see that as we are being renewed in knowledge so that we come to a real understanding of the will of God. Second, Paul prayed that the Colossians would be filled with wisdom and spiritual understanding. Wisdom is received from the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:13 says, “These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” The Holy Spirit will give us wisdom and spiritual understanding as the Holy Spirit teaches us to compare spiritual things with spiritual.

Third, Paul prayed that they would walk worthy of God being fully pleasing to Him. The word that is translated worthy speaks of walking in a way that is pleasing to God. Paul prayed the same thing for the Thessalonians when he said in 1 Thessalonians 2:12, “That you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” Paul wanted all Christians to learn to walk in a way that was pleasing to God. Fourth, Paul prayed that they would be fruitful in every good work. Timothy was instructed in 1 Timothy 6 to tell people not to depend on their uncertain riches. Instead 1 Timothy 6:18 says, “*Let them* do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share.” We want to help our children understand that Christ calls us to be known for good works.

Fifth, Paul prayed that they would be increasing in the knowledge of God. Increasing means to grow in our knowledge of the Word. Peter told new Christians in 1 Peter 2:2, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” In fact every Christian needs to be growing in their knowledge and obedience to the Word of God. Sixth, Paul prayed that they would be strengthened with might according to His glorious power. The word that is translated might is most commonly translated power. Christ used that word when He told the apostles in Luke 24:49, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” We pray our children will depend on the power of the Spirit.

Paul also gave thanks to the Father because He has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints. Here we see that Christ so changes our lives that He makes us qualified to share in all that God has for us. Romans 8:17 says, “And if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children also learn to pray for these same things for others.

Learning to Explain Why Christ is Superior to All

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to pray for others. Paul gave an example about the way to pray for others by the six things that he prayed for the Christians in the city of Colosse. As we study the different prayers of Paul for Christians in the various cities, we are given many examples for our own lives to help us know how to show our children how to pray for others. Today, we are going to see that Paul showed us how to help our children understand that Christ is superior to all.

We saw in our last topic that Paul prayed for the Christians in Colosse. Here we see that he goes on to tell what God did for us. Colossians 1:13-14 says, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." The word that is translated "delivered" means to rescue. The word is used three times in 2 Corinthians 1:9-10 where we read, "Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver *us*." We see that we were rescued or delivered from the power of darkness. God removed us from the power of darkness and moved us into the His kingdom. As a result, we now enjoy fellowship with the Son of His love (Christ).

It is through Christ that we have received redemption. The word "redemption" has three parts. It means to buy back, to remove from further sale and to set free. Christ paid the price to buy us back from sin. He removed us from the bondage of sin. He set us free so that we do not need to ever fear the eternal consequences of sin again. The price that Christ paid to redeem us and buy us back from sin was His own blood. That is why He died for us. The Father showed that He was satisfied with the payment by raising Christ from the dead. As a result, when Satan accuses us of sin, 1 John 2:1-2 says that Christ is our Advocate or defense attorney who tells that Father that He paid for our sin and that we accepted the payment by coming to Him in faith. The Father will always answer regardless of how many times Satan accuses us that He is satisfied with the payment so the case is dismissed. Forgiveness means that God no longer holds our sin against us.

Colossians 1:15-18 says, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." The word that is translated "image" means the exact image or likeness. Christ used a coin to illustrate the meaning of image. Christ said in Luke 20:24-25, "Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?" They answered and said, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Christ is the exact image of the Father because He is God and has the exact form of God.

We see in verse 15 that Christ is the firstborn over all creation. In verse 18 Christ is called the firstborn from the dead. Here we see that Christ is the firstborn in rank or position. This same word is used in Romans 8:29 where we read, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." The Father determined before He ever created the world to conform us to the image of His Son so that Christ would continue to have the preeminence over all of us because He is the first in

rank even though we are conformed to His image.

In addition to being in the very image of the Father, it was by Christ that all things were created both in heaven and in earth. John 1:1-3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." Then John 1:14 tells us that Christ is the Word when it says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Many false teachers try to deny that Christ is God. Since Christ created all things both in heaven and earth, it is impossible for Him to create Himself. In addition, these verses tell us that Christ was in the beginning with God. That is why 1 John 2:22 says, "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son." We want to help our children recognize that a person is a false teacher if that person denies the Father and the Son.

When Christ created all things in both heaven and earth, we see that He created both the things that are visible and the things that are invisible (the physical world and the spiritual world). Then we are given four different ranks of angels: thrones, dominions, principalities and powers. Here we see that Christ was the Creator of all of the angels including both the good angels and the fallen angels. Both the physical world and the spiritual world were created by Christ and for Christ to bring praise and glory to Him. Psalm 150:6 concludes the book of Psalms by saying, "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!"

Christ is also before all things and by Him all things consist. Christ is before all things because He is the Creator of all things. Christ made it very clear that He is eternal when He said to the Jews in John 8:58, "Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." The word "consist" means to hold together. Here we see that Christ is the one who holds everything together by the power of His Word. Hebrews 1:3 says, "Who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Because Christ is the One who holds everything together, He sits in the position of authority at the right hand of the Father.

In addition, Christ is the head of the body, the church. Ephesians 4:15-16 says, "But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Christ is also the head of the church because He gave His life for it. Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." In fact each husband is told to follow the example of Christ and show our submission to our wife by giving our self for her.

We also saw in verse fifteen that Christ is the firstborn from the dead and is over all creation. It has always been the plan of the Father that Christ would have the preeminence in all things. The word that is translated "preeminence" means the one who is first in all things. The Father chose to raise Christ as the first One who rose with a glorified body to emphasize the fact that He is the firstborn from the dead and has defeated death. As 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 says, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming." Christ was the first to defeat death. However, He will also raise us from the dead at His coming.

Colossians 1:19-20 goes on to say, “For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.” Here we see that the Father takes pleasure in the fact that all the fullness is in Christ. Colossians 2:9-10 says, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” Christ possesses all of the things that are a part of the divine nature so that He is God just as the Father and the Holy Spirit are God. At the same time Christ is also unique. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Here we see that Christ is the God-Man because He also took on flesh and lived among us.

Christ became the God-Man so that He could reconcile all things to Himself. The word translated “reconcile” means to bring back to a former state of harmony. In the New Testament it means that Christ changed our relationship to the Father. Instead of any longer being sinners, at the moment that we repent and place our faith in Christ we are made saints who are restored to a right relationship with the Father through Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” We have now been made righteous because we are in Christ.

As a result, all who place their faith in Christ now have peace with God through the blood that Christ shed on the cross. As Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is a great privilege that we want to help our physical and spiritual children fully understand. This is why they do not need to have fear any longer because the blood of Christ has blotted out their sin and they have peace with God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the importance of this peace with God.

Learning to Explain the Unity of the Church

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Christ is superior to all. We saw that He possesses all of the fullness of the Godhead. At the same time He is unique because He took on human flesh and became the God-Man. As the God-Man He shed His blood on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin and make it possible for us to be reconciled to God. As a result, we now have peace with God. Today, we are going to see how this peace with God also makes it possible to experience unity in the church.

Colossians 1:21-23 says, “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight--if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.” Here we see that we are reminded of what we were like before we were reconciled to God by the blood of Christ. The word that is translated “alienated” means to be shut out from fellowship with God. In fact we see that we were enemies of God. The word that is translated “enemies” means hateful or opposing God in our mind (understanding). In the past we were hateful toward God because we loved the evil works and sins that we were committing.

In contrast, at the moment of salvation we were reconciled to God through the death of Christ on the cross. Romans 5:9-10 says, “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” God was satisfied with the blood of Christ as the payment for our sins and so He could immediately have fellowship with us again.

However, we see that the payment of Christ did more than just make the payment for sin. Christ is now able to present us to the Father as holy, blameless and above reproach in His sight. We are holy because the righteousness of Christ has been placed on us. We are blameless because there are no longer any sins on our account. We are above reproach because no one can successfully bring any charge of sin against us. (Satan is the accuser of the brethren but God always answers that He is satisfied with the payment of Christ for our sin and the charge against us is dismissed.) That is why Romans 8:33 says, “Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies.” Satan may bring a charge against us but it will always be dismissed.

Paul said that this promise is true for every person who continues in the faith. Romans 11:22-23 says, “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in *His* goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.” Those who continue in the goodness of God can look forward to eternal blessing. Those who continue in unbelief can look forward to experiencing the severity of God throughout eternity.

All those who have been reconciled to God will continue in His goodness because they have been given a new nature and have been sealed with the Holy Spirit as their down payment on their eternal life according to Ephesians 1:13-14 where we read, “In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Paul prayed for the

Christians in Ephesians 3:17, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love.” When we place our faith in Christ we are grounded on placed on the foundation of His love. Steadfast means unmovable. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” We can stand fast in the goodness of God because our hope is in Christ. This was the message that Paul shared wherever He took the Gospel.

As we come to Colossians 1:25-27 we read, “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.” Even though Paul was a prisoner for sharing the Gospel, he was filled with joy that he could suffer for the sake of Christ. He realized that Christ was allowing him to suffer for Christ’s sake. Like the other apostles, Paul could say in the words of Acts 5:41, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” Paul counted it a privilege to share the afflictions of Christ.

Paul had the opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ because He was suffering for the body of Christ which is the church. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:10, “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” Paul viewed himself as a bondservant of Christ and a minister or servant of the church. He said that being a servant of the church was the stewardship that God had given to him. The word translated “stewardship” means one who has the management of something that belongs to his master. The Lord had called Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, develop godly leadership in each city and appoint them to carry on the leadership of each local church. Paul had been faithful in carrying out this ministry.

The church had been a mystery that had been hidden in previous times and former generations. While Christ was on the earth Christ revealed that He was going to build His church. In Matthew 16:18 Christ told Peter, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Christ later told the apostles that they were to take the Gospel to every person of every nation. In the church Christ brought Jews and Gentiles together. Ephesians 3:5-6 says, “Which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.” Here we see that the Gospel brought the Jews and Gentiles together in the church and made us one in Christ.

In addition, God had not revealed that Christ would send the Holy Spirit to live in the life of every believer whether we are Jews or Gentiles. Ephesians 3:8-9 says, “To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ.” In addition, Ephesians 1:13-14 says, “In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” From these verses and others we see that every Gentile has the Holy Spirit living in our lives from the moment of salvation and He gives us the guarantee of our future glory with Christ in heaven.

Colossians 1:28-29 goes on to say, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every

man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” Paul was very thankful that Christ had given him the opportunity to share with the Gentiles the hope that we now have in Christ. The word that is translated “warning” means instruction that is primarily a warning. Paul used this word in 1 Corinthians 4:14 where we read, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*.” As a result, some of the teaching of Paul included a warning. The word translated “teaching” means to teach or explain. Sometimes Paul gave warnings and sometimes he explained what needed to be explained.

Whichever way he taught, Paul wanted to help each Christian to gain godly wisdom. The goal that Paul had was to present every Christian perfect in Christ. The word that is translated “perfect” means mature or full grown. Ephesians 4:13 says, “Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” The goal of Paul was to help every Christian grow and become like Christ. That should also be our goal as parents. We want to help our physical and spiritual children become like Christ.

We also see what Paul did in order to help Christians become like Christ. The word that is translated “labor” means to work to the point of exhaustion. The word that is translated “striving” was the word used to speak of putting forth every possible bit of energy to win in an athletic event. At the same time Paul knew that the Lord was working in his life with great power. Philippians 2:13 says, “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.” We can also know that the Lord will work in our lives with great power as we yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit moment by moment. We want to help our children understand that the Lord wants to work in the lives with great power also. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children grow and become more and more like Christ.

Learning Why We Are Complete in Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical children learn to understand and be able to explain the unity that we have in Christ. We saw that it is possible to have that unity because every Christian receives the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. As we grow and become spiritually mature, we learn to yield to the Holy Spirit. We will have unity with other Christians that are also yielding to the Holy Spirit because of the fact that the Holy Spirit is working in each of our lives. In our topic today, we are going to learn why we are complete in Christ.

In Colossians 2:1-4 we read, “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.” Here we see that Paul had a great concern for the Christians in Colosse, Laodicea and for all other Christians who had never met him personally. In an earlier topic we pointed out that Epaphras had probably learned about the Gospel in the city of Ephesus and had taken the Gospel to Colosse and the surrounding cities.

The word that is translated “conflict” in this verse is the root word of the word that was translated “striving” in Colossians 1:29. There we saw that Paul used a word that was talking about putting forth every possible bit of energy to win in an athletic event. Paul was doing everything that he could to help the Christians at Colosse and Laodicea grow to spiritual maturity. In fact Paul was making this same effort to help every Christian that he had not met face to face. At the end of his life Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” The word that is translated fight is the same word that is translated conflict here. Paul never slowed down in his ministry because he wanted to please the Lord in all that he did.

Paul wanted the Christians in these other places to experience several things in their spiritual growth. First, Paul wanted their hearts to be encouraged. Second, Paul wanted them to be knit together in love. The word that is translated “knit together” is also used in Ephesians 4:15-16 where we read, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Here we see that the various parts of the body are joined together and all receive their instruction from the head who is Christ. That will help Christians in any place to grow and mature.

Third, Paul wanted all Christians to come to a full assurance of understanding of the Gospel. The word that is translated “understanding” is the word that was used of Christ when he spoke to the religious leaders in the temple at the age of twelve. Luke 2:47 says, “And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.” Christ had the understanding that resulted from spiritual maturity even though he was young in physical years. Paul wanted every Christian to have that same mature and full understanding of the Gospel so that each Christian would come to a full assurance of salvation that the Father and Christ have provided. It is in Christ that all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for every Christian to gain this wisdom and knowledge because He teaches us all things. Paul knew that he needed to give this instruction because he knew false teachers

were trying to deceive the Christians with false teachings about Christ.

Colossians 2:5-8 says, “For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.” Paul could not go to the Christians in Colosse to encourage and teach them because he was a prisoner of the Roman government. However, he had the same concern that he would have if he were present. Paul said a similar thing when he wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica as we read in 1 Thessalonians 2:17, “But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.” Paul might not be physically present but he had a deep concern for every Christian whether it was possible to be with them or not.

Paul was filled with joy as he thought of the Colossians. Since good order and steadfastness are both military terms, Paul saw that the Colossians were standing for Christ like an orderly army that was following its leader. This was due to the fact that they had a strong faith in Christ even though false teachers were trying to deceive them. As a result, Paul gave them several instructions about the way to walk as they followed Christ. First, he encouraged them to become rooted and built up in Christ. In Ephesians 3:17 Paul wrote, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love.” As a part of his prayer for the Ephesians Paul prayed that they would be rooted and grounded in love. Here Paul prayed that they would be rooted and built up in Christ. To be rooted means to cause a thing to be strengthened with roots into the thing in which they are rooted. Paul knew that as the Colossians continued to take deeper root in Christ and His love that they would strengthened (built up) in Christ.

Paul also encouraged the Colossians to become established in the faith. The word that is translated “established” means to confirm or make firm. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 says, “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” Here we see that Christ, the Father and the Holy Spirit are all involved in the process of establishing us in the faith. In addition, Paul encouraged the Colossians to abound in the faith with thanksgiving. As we help our children learn to develop a strong faith that is solidly based on God and His Word our children will have a great reason for thanksgiving.

Paul knew that there were false teachers who were trying to destroy the faith. That is why Paul told the Christians in Colosse to beware (see and understand) so that they would not be robbed of their freedom by false teaching. The words that are translated “philosophy and empty deceit” spoke of ideas that were intended to deceive by those who claimed a higher knowledge. These teachings replaced the Word of God with the traditions of people. Proverbs 16:25 says, “There is a way *that seems* right to a man, but its end *is* the way of death.” Instead of leading people to follow God, human traditions lead to bondage and death. These traditions actually teach the principles or ideas of the world. Galatians 4:9 says, “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?” These elements or traditions produce spiritual bondage.

Colossians 2:9-10 says, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” Although Christ came to this earth in a human body, He possessed the attributes and divine nature of God in all of its

fullness. As a result, we are complete in Christ. 2 Peter 1:3-4 says, “As His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.” Christ is the One who is the head over all principality and power. As a result of our faith, we have also become partakers of the divine nature and are complete in Him.

Colossians 2:11-12 says, “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” In the Old Testament the Jews were give the sign of circumcision. However, many Jews did not understand the purpose of circumcision. Romans 2:29 says, “But *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.” In this verse, we see that what God really wants is circumcision of the heart. At the moment of salvation our sins are forgiven and we become saints instead of sinners. That is due to the fact that all of our sins, past, present and future, were placed on Christ and His righteousness was placed on us at the moment of salvation.

Baptism is a symbol of the fact that we are buried with Christ by baptism so that we can be raised to walk a new life. Romans 6:4 says, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Here we are reminded of the fact that Christ has given us His power to walk with a new life. Just as the Father raised Christ from the dead He also raised us from spiritual death because of our faith in Christ. This is a very important thing that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand. This means that because Christ lives in us that as we yield to Him that He has the power to make it possible for us to walk in that new life. We are complete in Christ now and not just when we get to heaven because His power began working in us at the moment of salvation. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand why we are complete in Christ.

Learning How to Recognize False Teachings

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to be complete in Christ. We saw that Christ gave us a new nature and that we are able to walk in newness of life as we yield to Him. We have also seen in other topics that Christ gave us the Holy Spirit to teach us all things. In our topic today, we are going to see that Christ wants to help every Christian recognize teachings that are false so that we will not be deceived by them and led into bondage to those false teachings.

Colossians 2:13-15 we read, “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” Before we placed our faith in Christ we were spiritually dead. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” At the moment of salvation God gave us spiritual life and so we are alive together with Christ. It was necessary for God to give us that life because a dead person is totally unable to help himself. At that moment all of our sins were also forgiven.

The word that is translated “having wiped out” meant to blot out, erase or wash away. The word that is translated “handwriting” is the paper that a person signed when he borrowed money from someone else. The paper told how much the person owed and when that amount was due. The word translated “requirements” spoke of the penalties that the Old Testament had for those who disobeyed the Ten Commandments. When we put these words together we see that when Christ forgave our sins that He blotted them out so that they will never be held against us. Those sins were all placed on Christ when He was nailed to the cross. There Christ paid for them by shedding His blood to pay for them. That is why they were blotted out at the moment we placed our faith in Christ.

By His death on the cross Christ also disarmed all principalities and powers. The phrase “principalities and powers” is also used in Ephesians 6:12 where we read, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.” Here we see that we are in a spiritual conflict with Satan and his fallen angels (demons) but this verse tells us that they have already been disarmed. At the time that Paul wrote this letter the Roman generals who conquered another nation would bring the soldiers of the conquered nation to Rome and make them march through the streets of Rome in chains to show that they were totally defeated. We want to help our children understand that Satan and all of his demons have already been defeated because Christ won the victory over them when He defeated death and rose from the grave.

Colossians 2:16-17 says, “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” Here we see that the false teachers were trying to force the Gentile Christians to keep the Jewish laws. The writer of Hebrews explained this very clearly to the Jewish Christians when he said in Hebrews 9:9-10, “It *was* symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience--*concerned* only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.” Here we see that the writer of Hebrews made it very clear that these things could never provide salvation.

These rules were imposed on the Jews until the time of reformation. The word that is translated “reformation” means to make something straight that was broken or misshaped. Food, drink, festivals, new moons and Sabbaths were all like a shadow to guide the Jews. In these verses in Colossians we see that these things were a shadow of things to come. A shadow is not the real thing but only shows that a real thing exists which is causing that shadow. Here we see that Christ is not the shadow but the substance. The substance or body was used to speak of the thing that was causing the shadow. Galatians 3:24-25 says, “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” The rules imposed on the Jews were the shadow or tutor but Christ is the real thing. Christ is the only One who could take away sin and provide forgiveness.

That is why Colossians 2:18-19 goes on to say, “Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God.” The false teachers that had come to Colosse wanted to cheat the Christians. 2 John 1:7-8 says, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward.” Many false teachers try to deceive Christians by false teachings. Such teachings can only cause people to lose their spiritual freedom which hinders their ministry and will prevent them from receiving a full reward.

Then we have some of the false teachings that were being taught to the Colossian Christians by false teachers. Two things that these false teachers taught were a false humility and worship of angels. Satan even tried to deceive Christ with a similar temptation. Matthew 4:8-10 says, “Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” Here we see that Satan tried to get Christ to worship him. These false teachers were trying to tell the people to show their humility by worshiping angels instead of Christ.

These false teachers said that God had shown them these teachings by dreams or visions. This is a common characteristic of false teachers. Paul said that such false teachers are only puffed up (made proud) by their sinful minds. Such minds are described in Ephesians 4:17-18 where we read, “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” We see that we also had such thoughts before Christ brought us into the light. Now we are to hold to Christ because He is the Head. Christ is the One who provides our nourishment. Christ is the One who joins all Christians together in one body. Christ is the One who causes us to grow with the true growth that comes from God.

Colossians 2:20-23 goes on to say, “Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using-- according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.” We saw in our last topic that we died with Christ and have been raised to newness of life. As a result, we are not to place ourselves under the religious rules of people.

Three common rules of false teachers are, Do not touch, do not taste, and do not handle. Here we see that some religions tell people that they are not to touch certain things. They tell people that they are not to eat certain foods. They tell people not to handle certain things. All of these things will soon pass away because none of them are eternal. That is why we are to realize that these are the commandments and doctrines that have been added to religions by the leaders of those religions.

The real reason why people make such rules was explained by Christ in Matthew 6:16-18 where we read, “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” Here we see that such people adopt these rules to try and show others by outward actions that they are religious. Christ said that those who do such things are hypocrites. Their only reward is the praise of people for their religious activities.

These rules do not have any value against the indulgence of the flesh. Here we see that the rules that people establish and try to follow have no value. The reason that they have no value is due to the fact that they may change some outward actions of a person but they do nothing to change the heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life.” Then Jeremiah 17:9 adds, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that the attitudes of the heart are the things that lead their lives. A godly heart will lead to a godly life that will have a great impact on the lives of others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to avoid false teachings and learn to develop a godly life.

Learning to Put Off the Deeds of the Old Man

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to recognize false teachings. The goal of those who teach these false teachings is to cause Christians to lose their spiritual freedom and blind those who are not Christians so that they do not come to the truth. The goal of false teachers is to bring people into bondage to the rules of people instead of learning to be led by the Lord. In order to be led by the Lord, we need to learn to put off the deeds of the old man and learn to put on the new man. Those two actions will be the focus of our next two topics.

In Colossians 3:1-2 we read, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” When we placed our faith in Christ we were given spiritual life. Romans 6:3-4 says, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Here we see that Christ raised us to resurrection life. This resurrection life makes it possible for us to walk in newness of life.

Since we have been raised with Christ, we have been given new desires. Those new desires cause us to seek those things which are above. The word that is translated “seek” means to greatly desire or to crave. Christ said in Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” When we seek the things that are above, we are seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. As we are seeking the things that are above, we are reminded that Christ is sitting on the right hand of the Father. Here we see that Christ sits in the place of authority and there He speaks for us to the Father. Romans 8:34 says, “Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” As Christ speaks to the Father for us, we know that the Father continues to work in our lives.

We also see that we are to set our mind on the things that are above. The word that is translated “set your mind” means to think, to have understanding or to be wise. Romans 8:5 says, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” Here we see that we are either living according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. The way that we live our lives is determined by the way that we think. If we set our minds on the things above we will live to please the Lord. That is also why we are told not to set our minds on the things of this earth. 1 John 2:17 says, “And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” The earth and the desires of this earth will soon pass away. In contrast, when we set our minds on the things above we will desire to do the will of God and that will produce eternal results.

Colossians 3:3-4 says, “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Here we see that we died which means that it is something that happened in the past. Galatians 2:20 says, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” For all people who place their faith in Christ, they have been united with Christ. That means that when Christ died on the cross that we died with Him because the penalty for our sins was paid. Galatians 6:14 says, “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus

Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” As a result of our death with Christ, the world has lost its power over us.

That is also why we have risen with a new life. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” We are a new creation with a new nature and new desires. Our life is now hidden with Christ in God. The completeness of this new creation is explained in 2 Peter 1:3-4 where we read, “As His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.” We are no longer slaves to sin because we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Like Adam and Eve before they sinned, we can now choose to sin or we can choose to please God. Galatians 5:13 says that we are to use this freedom to serve one another in love.

The day is coming soon when Christ will appear. As Christians we can eagerly look forward to that day. In 1 John 3:2 we read, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” All Christians can look forward with eagerness to that day because of the fact that in that day we will be like Christ and never sin again. 1 Peter 5:4 adds, “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” Here we see that godly leaders can look forward to that day because we will be rewarded with a reward that does not fade away. In addition we are also promised that we will appear with Christ in glory.

Based on the fact that Christ is coming for us, Colossians 3:5-7 says, “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.” Before we came to faith in Christ, we used the members (parts) of our bodies to commit sin. Now Romans 6:19 says, “I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness.” Here we are encouraged to make the choice to put the sinful actions or deeds of the flesh to death so that we can live our lives to bring glory to the Lord.

The word that is translated “fornication” speaks of any form of sexual sin. The word translated “uncleanness” refers to thoughts about any form of sexual sin. The word translated “passion” speaks of sexual sin with a person of the same sex. The word is used in Romans 1:26 where we read, “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.” The word translated “evil desire” means a craving for anything that is forbidden. The word that is translated “covetousness” means a greedy desire to have more. Christ warned in Luke 12:15, “And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” God says here in Colossians that this desire to have more is actually idolatry.

The sons of disobedience speaks of all those who are in opposition to God and face eternal judgment. Ephesians 5:6 says, “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” We walked in that same disobedience until we came to Christ by faith. Ephesians 2:2 says, “In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.” We walked in disobedience to God because we were under the control of our sin nature until the day that we placed our faith in Christ.

As a result, we are also to put off the attitudes of the old man. Colossians 3:8-9 says, “But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.” Our old man died with Christ when we accepted the payment of Christ by faith for all of our sins. However, we are instructed here to put off the attitudes of the old man. These inner attitudes determine the words that we speak as well as the sinful actions that we commit. The word that is translated “anger” speaks of the inner attitude of an angry person. It is translated wrath twice in James 1:19-20 where we read, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” Here we see that such anger does not produce the righteousness of God. The word translated “wrath” here speaks of anger that boils up and usually soon subsides.

Malice speaks of a desire to hurt others especially with words. 1 Peter 2:1-2 says, “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” Blasphemy when it refers to people speaks of slander. Filthy language speaks of language that is obscene. We are also told that we are not to lie to one another. The reason that we are to be an example ourselves and help our physical and spiritual children learn to avoid the attitudes that cause these kinds of words is the fact that we have put off the old man. We want to show our children by our example that we have put off the old man with his actions, attitudes and words at the moment that we placed our faith in Christ. In our next topic we will see how to help our children learn what it means to put on the new man in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to put off the deeds of the old man.

Learning to Put on the New Man

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to put off the deeds of the old man. We saw that those deeds actually include actions, attitudes and the words that come from those attitudes. We were in bondage to sin until the day that we placed our faith in Christ. At that very moment the bondage to sin was broken. We are now free to choose to sin or choose to practice righteousness. It all depends on whether we are yielding ourselves to sin or yielding ourselves to righteousness. Most of us did not understand that we had a choice at the time of our salvation. In our topic today, we want to learn how to put on the new man so that we can experience joy in our own lives and help our children learn to experience the joy of salvation in their lives.

In Colossians 3:10-11 we read, “And have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.” At the moment that we placed our faith in Christ our old man was crucified with Christ as we saw in our last topic. Here we see that our new man is now alive because we are in Christ. Christ told Nicodemus in John 3:6-7, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'” We received physical life at the time that we experienced physical birth. In the same way we receive spiritual life at the moment that we are born of the Holy Spirit. As a result, we are told to put on the new man.

We see that the new man is renewed in knowledge. The word that is translated “renewed” means to be changed into a new kind of life instead of the old sinful life. The only other place where this word is used in the New Testament is in 2 Corinthians 4:16 where we read, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.” Here we see that our inward man which includes our soul and spirit is being renewed day by day. This happens as our minds are being transformed. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Christ is transforming our lives as our thoughts, attitudes and actions are becoming more like those of Christ.

As a part of this process we see that Christ changes our relationships to one another in the body of Christ. As Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) we become one body in Christ. Ephesians 3:6 says, “That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.” In the body of Christ there is no distinction between those who are circumcised and those who are not circumcised. The word “barbarian” was developed by the Greeks to speak about those who lacked Greek education and culture. The Scythians were considered the most brutal people of all those who were called barbarians. Christ changed the relationship between these groups and also made them one in Christ. Christ also breaks down the barriers between those who are slaves and those who are free. We are all one in Christ and He is sufficient for all.

Colossians 3:12-14 says, “Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.” We also see three things that God has done for all Christians. First, we are the elect or chosen ones of God. Second, God has made us holy and without sin because all of our sins were paid for by Christ

on the cross. Third, God calls us His beloved. 1 John 3:1 says, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.” Because God did these three things for us when He made us a new man, He now calls us to develop the attitudes that go along with such a wonderful calling.

From the time of physical birth, we began to grow physically. In the same way from the time of spiritual birth we are to grow spiritually. We have been given a new nature that makes it possible for us to put on the attitudes of Christ as we yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit. We are to put on tender mercies or a heart of compassion. In Matthew 9:36 we read, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” We are to develop that same compassion for one another and for those who do not yet know Christ.

Next we are told to put on kindness. In Galatians 5:22-23 we read, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” Here we see that kindness is one of the nine things that are listed as the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit bears this fruit in our lives as we yield to Him. As a result, as a Christian learns to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit his or her life will begin to bear the fruit of the Spirit. We are also to put on humility which means to have a humble opinion of self. This word is translated lowliness of mind in Philippians 2:3 where we read, “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” Here we see that we will place a greater value on others than self.

We are also told to put on meekness or gentleness which is another of the nine things that is listed under the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 quoted in the previous paragraph. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Here we see that if another Christian is caught in an act of sin that we will seek to restore with an attitude of gentleness rather than condemn. Longsuffering or patience is also listed under the fruit of the Spirit. James 5:10 says, “My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.” We see that the Old Testament prophets give us an example of patience.

We are also to put on or learn to bear with one another. “To bear with” one another means to suffer with another person or hold another person up. Ephesians 4:2 says, “With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.” Here we see that we will suffer with and hold up those who are weak or who struggle in their spiritual lives. We also see that we are to learn to forgive one another. We see how to apply this in our life when we have a quarrel or complaint against someone else that might cause us to blame them. Instead of blaming, we see that we are to forgive one another. Our supreme example of what it means to forgive is to remember that Christ forgave us all of our sins and so we are to learn to follow His example.

However, most important of all we see that we are to put on love. Christ said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Here we see that Christ commanded us to follow His example and put on love. It is this love of Christ that binds us together as Christians so that we can be one in Christ.

Colossians 3:15-17 says, “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,

teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” When we put on the things mentioned in the previous verses we see that the peace of God will rule in our hearts.

Philippians 4:7 says, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” This peace is so great that no one can fully understand it. God wants the whole body of Christ to both experience this peace and to learn to give thanks.

We are to let the Word of Christ dwell in us. The word that is translated dwell in this verse is also used in Romans 8:11 where we read, “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” We have the Holy Spirit living in our lives. We see here that we are also to have the Word of God dwelling abundantly in our lives. That combination will produce several results. We have the Holy Spirit to give us all wisdom from the Word. We will be teaching and admonishing one another and helping one another to grow. We will be sharing Psalms with one another. We will share hymns of praise to God. We will sing songs that express what the Lord has done in our lives.

In fact putting on the attitudes mentioned in the previous verses will totally affect and change our lives. These attitudes will change the way that we speak. These attitudes will also change the way that we talk. Instead of saying and doing the things that we say and do to bring glory to self, we will make it our goal to do all that we do in the name of Christ so that our words and actions will bring glory to Him. At the same time we will be giving thanks to the Father through Christ. As we practice these things in our lives, we give both our physical and our spiritual children an example to follow. They will see our lives changing as we continue to grow and they will realize that the Lord will change their lives also as they learn to put on the attitudes that are mentioned in these verses. Then they will also experience His peace. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to put on the new man.

Learning to Walk With New Actions

In our last two topics we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to put off the old man and put on the new man. At the moment of salvation we received a new nature which gave us new desires. Those new desires gave us a desire to put away the sins of the past and learn to live in a way that is pleasing to God. We saw that putting on the new man means to grow to spiritual maturity as we learn to yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit develops these new attitudes in our lives, we see that we will also want to learn to walk with new actions in our relationships with one another. That will be the focus of our topic today.

Ephesians 5:21 says, “Submitting to one another in the fear of God.” Then we are given instructions about six different situations in which we are to submit to one another. These include: wives to husbands; husbands to wives; children to parents; parents to children; servants to masters; and masters to servants. We are given a shorter summary of submission in each of those relationships in the verses we will be studying today. In Colossians 3:18-19 we read, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.” To submit means to place your full potential at the disposal of another. As Christians, we want to see how making our full potential available to one another in each of these relationships will make it possible for us to experience the peace and joy of the Lord in our lives.

First, we are told how wives show their submission to their husbands. The word that is translated “submitting” means to willingly place yourself under some one or some thing. In so doing we will place our full potential at the disposal of another. Christ gave us the example and submitted Himself to the Father. Philippians 2:8 says, “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.” Here we see that Christ willingly gave His full potential to the Father by being obedient to the Father even though it meant death on the cross. The Father and Christ are equal but Christ willingly chose to place Himself under the will of the Father.

In the same way husbands and wives are equal but here we see that God says that one of the new actions of a godly wife is to submit to her husband by placing her full potential under his leadership. The word that is translated fitting is also used in Philemon 1:8-9 where we read, “Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, *yet* for love's sake I rather appeal *to you*--being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” Paul could have given Philemon a command but he chose to show his love for Philemon but appealing to him in love instead. In the same way a submissive wife is showing her love to her husband.

Second, we are told how husbands are to be in submission to their wives. Husbands are to show their submission to their wives by loving them. The word that is used here for love is the same word that Christ used for love when He gave the new commandment in John 13:34-35 where we read, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” One of the ways that husbands are commanded to show this love is by stop being bitter against their wife. The word that is translated “to be bitter” means to be angry or irritated. Here we see that husbands are to show their submission by stop being angry or irritated at their wives.

Colossians 3:20-21 says, “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” Third, we are told how children are to be in submission to their parents. Here we see that children are to show their submission by being obedient to their parents. The word that is translated “to obey” means to be obedient to a command. The word that is translated well pleasing or acceptable is used in Romans 14:17-18 where we read, “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things *is* acceptable to God and approved by men.” As our children grow in the Lord, we as parents want to show our children how to do the things that demonstrate righteousness and cause our children to experience peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, we are told how parents are to be in submission to their children. Although this word is usually translated fathers, in verses like Hebrews 11:23 it is used to speak of the parents of Moses. We see that parents show their submission by not provoking their children. The word that is translated “provoke” means to stir up or irritate. The reason why parents are to submit to their children by not stirring them up or irritating them is due to the fact that such treatment will cause children to become discouraged. The word that is translated “discouraged” means to cause them to become broken in spirit. Proverbs 15:13, 17:22 and 18:14 all talk about the wounded or broken spirit. Proverbs 18:14 says, “The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?” Here we see that a broken spirit is much worse than even severe sickness in the life of a child so loving parents will submit by avoiding stirring up or irritating.

Fifth, we are told how servants are to be in submission in to their masters. Colossians 3:22-23 says, “Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.” The word that is used for servants here is the word that spoke of a person that was a bondservant or slave. In the time of the New Testament about half of the people in the Roman Empire were slaves and had no rights. Here we see that a Christian slave was to have a very different attitude than a slave that was not a Christian. Today, in most countries we would talk about employees instead of slaves but the same principles apply.

The word for obey is used for servants is the same word that was used for children in an earlier paragraph. We see that servants are to be obedient to the commands of their human masters. However, they are not to be obedient just when their master is watching in order to please him. Instead they are to be obedient to their masters from a heart that does not have hypocrisy just as they would be obedient from the heart to please God. If a servant is working to please the Lord and not just a human master, that servant will choose to do the best job possible. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” It will change the inner attitude of any worker if that worker is working to please the Lord and not just a human master.

We are also given the reason why any of us who are working for someone else should work to please the Lord and not just the person for whom we are working. We see that the Lord will give us an eternal reward if we faithfully do our work to please the Lord and not just a human master. Galatians 6:7-9 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” If we are just working to please ourselves or to please a human master, we will receive any reward that we receive on this earth. In contrast, if we choose to work to please the Lord in all that we do we

can look forward to receiving the reward that the Lord has planned for us. That is due to the fact that we are actually working to please the Lord whether our master notices or not.

At the same time, those people who choose to act sinfully instead of in obedience to their master should be prepared for the judgment that they will receive. As the verse in the previous paragraph says, God will not be mocked. If a person chooses to satisfy the evil desires of the flesh as he works that person can expect to receive the judgment that he deserves. God will not be mocked. God does not show partiality. The word that is translated partiality is also used in Romans 2:11 where we read, "For there is no partiality with God." God does not play favorites. He rewards those who have a proper inner attitude and he judges those who have a sinful inner attitude.

Sixth, we are told how masters are to be in submission to their servants. Colossians 4:1 goes on to say, "Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." Here we see that masters are to do two things as a part of their submission to their servants. First, they are to give their servants what is just. The word that is translated just or righteous means to treat others in the same way that God would treat them. It is the word that is used in 1 John 1:9 where we read, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It is right for God to forgive and cleanse us when we place our faith in Christ because Christ paid for all of our sins and we accepted His payment in our place and for our sins. Second, masters are also to treat their servants with fairness or equality.

We are also given the reason why masters should show their submission to their servants by these two things. All Christian masters need to remember that they also have a Master in heaven. The way that earthly masters treat their servants shows the way that they want the Lord to treat them when they stand before Him. As you help your physical and spiritual children learn to fully understand submission, they will learn to walk with new actions in whatever situation they are placed by the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by example what it means to walk with new actions.

Learning to Minister to One Another

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk with new actions. We saw the importance of helping them learn to submit to one another in the various relationships that we have in our lives. This includes wives and husbands, children and parents and servants and masters. As we learn to walk with these new actions as Christians, we see that our lives will become an example for others to follow because we are showing how to treat one another with love and respect. In our topic today, we are going to see how to minister to one another as Christians.

Colossians 4:2-4 says, “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.” Here we see that a key way to minister to one another is through prayer. The word that is translated “to continue earnestly” means to continue all of the time and not quit. In Acts 2:42 it says about the early church, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In Acts 6:4 the apostles told the church, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” In both passages we see that the early Christians gave us an example to continue in prayer at all times and not quit.

As we minister to one another in prayer, we are told to be vigilant in it with thanksgiving. The word that is translated “be vigilant” means to stay alert or pay close attention. We are to pay close attention and pray about specific needs as we pray. The word is also used in 1 Peter 5:8 which says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” When we pray about the specific needs of people we are helping to protect them from the adversary. At the same time we are to pray with thanksgiving because we realize that the Lord has all power and has already defeated Satan.

Paul also asked the Colossians to pray for him personally. Paul asked them to pray that God would open a door of opportunity for him to share the Word of God so that he could share about the mystery of Christ. That mystery was explained in Colossians 1:27 where we read, “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Christ revealed that mystery to His disciples the night before He was crucified when He said that He would send the Holy Spirit so that He could dwell in them. Paul was a prisoner of Christ because he had faithfully shared the Gospel. He wanted them to pray that he would continue to teach others at every opportunity. Paul knew that continuing to teach others was what the Lord wanted him to do at every opportunity.

After telling the Colossians how to minister on his behalf, Paul began to give them instructions about ways to minister to others. Colossians 4:5-6 says, “Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. *Let* your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Here we see that Paul gave instructions about how to minister to those who are not Christians. The word that is translated “walk” speaks about the way that we carry out the daily activities in our lives. Paul wanted the Colossians to seek the wisdom of God about the way that they walked so that their godly lives would produce many opportunities to share the Gospel with those who were not Christians. We also want to help our children learn to walk so that they will have many opportunities to share the Gospel.

Part of that walk is the way that we talk. Paul urged the Colossians to make sure that their speech was always with grace. To speak with grace means to speak with love, kindness and sensitivity and to make certain that we always speak with truthfulness. Our speech is to be seasoned with salt. This word for salt is used eight times and the other seven are all in the same basic context in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Salt is used twice in Matthew 5:13 where we read, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” The words that we speak are to have a purifying and preserving influence in the lives of others. As a result, we need to pray continually that the Lord will give us His wisdom to answer the questions of others.

In Colossians 4:7-9 we read, “Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They will make known to you all things which *are happening* here.” Here we see that Paul had sent Tychicus and Onesimus to minister to the saints that lived in the city of Colosse. We will focus on Tychicus here and learn more about Onesimus in the next two topics. Paul described Tychicus in three ways. First, he was a beloved brother. Paul considered Tychicus a full partner in ministry and often sent him to other places when Paul was unable to go.

Second, Tychicus was a faithful minister. The word minister means a servant or deacon. Paul considered himself a servant of the Lord to the Gentiles. Ephesians 3:6-7 says, “That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.” Here we see that Tychicus was a faithful minister who was carrying out the work of the Lord by delivering this letter, the letter to Philemon and the letter to the church at Ephesus. In each situation he would also be faithful to encourage and strengthen the Christians. Third, Tychicus was a fellow servant in the Lord. Paul and Tychicus were both servants of the Lord who were serving the Lord together.

Paul also told why he was sending Tychicus to the Colossians with this letter. Paul said that Tychicus was coming to see how things were going for them in their spiritual growth and also to comfort their hearts. The word that is translated “comfort” means to call to one’s side to encourage or strengthen. Paul realized that the false teachers that had come to Colosse could cause discouragement to the Christians. They needed a brother who would come and encourage and strengthen them. Onesimus was also traveling with Tychicus and Onesimus was originally from Colosse. Paul said that these two men would let the Colossians know what was happening in the life of Paul.

Paul also sent greetings from some of the other Christians that were in Rome. Colossians 4:10-15 says, “Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), and Jesus who is called Justus. These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that *is* in his house.” Here we see that Aristarchus was a fellow prisoner. He, Mark and Justus who were fellow Jews wanted to send their greetings to the Christians who were in Colosse. These men had provided comfort and encouragement to Paul.

One of the other men that was in Rome with Paul was Epaphras. Here we see that Epaphras was originally from the city of Colosse because he was one of them. We see that he also considered himself a bondservant of Christ. We see how he ministered to the Christians in Colosse even though he was in the city of Rome at that time. First, he sent greetings to the Christians in Colosse. Second, he was continually praying for the Christians that were in Colosse. We see that he prayed for two specific things as he prayed for the Christians in Colosse. He prayed that they would stand perfect. These two words when placed together mean that Epaphras prayed that the Christians in Colosse would grow to full spiritual maturity. He also prayed that they would be complete in all the will of God. Here we see that Epaphras prayed that they would become mature in knowing and doing the will of God.

Paul also describes the character of Epaphras. Paul said that he had a great zeal for the Christians in Colosse, in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. It is probable that Epaphras had helped start the churches in all three of these cities. We see that Epaphras has a great zeal or great concern for the Christians in all three of these cities. He was from this region and had brought the Gospel to Colosse and the region around it. Here we see that he had the same concern for these Christians that Paul had for all Christians. 1 Corinthians 4:15 says, "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." Epaphras had the concern of a spiritual parent for the Christians in these three cities.

Paul also sent greetings from Luke and Demas to these Christians. As a final encouragement to these Christians, Paul said in Colossians 4:16-18, "Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." This salutation by my own hand--Paul. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen." We want to help our physical and spiritual children develop a concern for other Christians also. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to minister to one another.

Learning to Request Instead of Demand

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to minister to one another. We also saw that Tychicus was the one who delivered the letter to the church in Colosse. He also delivered another letter while he was at Colosse. That was a personal letter to Philemon who had one of the churches in that area meeting in his home. We saw in the last topic that Onesimus traveled with Tychicus to deliver the letter to the Christians in Colosse. Paul also described Onesimus as a faithful and beloved brother. We will see in our topic today that had not always been true of Onesimus but the Lord had changed and transformed his life.

Paul began this letter by sending a greeting to Philemon and his family as well as a greeting to the church that met in his house. Philemon 1:1-3 says, “Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy *our* brother, to Philemon our beloved *friend* and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Here we see that Paul began this letter by stating that he was a prisoner of Christ Jesus. This is a different word of introduction than the letter to the Colossians which was delivered at the same time. Colossians 1:1 says, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother.” In the letter to the church Paul called himself an apostle. In this personal letter he called himself a prisoner of Christ Jesus. Here we see that Paul clearly understood that it was the plan of Christ for him to be a prisoner.

We see that Timothy is also included with Paul in the sending of this letter. This would show that Timothy had probably met Philemon possibly at the same time that Paul had met him. This probably happened during the time that Paul and Timothy were in the city of Ephesus. Paul called Timothy *our* brother which indicates that Paul considered both Timothy and Philemon brothers in Christ. This talks about the family relationship that we have with all other Christians. Paul describes Philemon as our beloved friend and fellow laborer. Here we see that Paul had a close relationship with Philemon. Paul also called Philemon a fellow laborer. Paul used the word that is translated “fellow laborer” in 1 Corinthians 3:9 where we read, “For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building.” In that verse Paul was talking about the fact that he and Apollos were fellow workers in spreading the Gospel.

Paul also sent greetings to Apphia and Archippus. These two were probably the wife and son of Philemon. Archippus is also called a fellow soldier. The only other place this word is used is in Philippians 2:25 where we read, “Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need.” Paul considered Epaphroditus a fellow soldier since they were ministering together in Rome at that time. In addition, Paul sent greetings to the church that met in the home of Philemon. For the first 300 years after Christ the churches did not have their own buildings but met in a home or a public building that happened to be available. An example is found in Romans 16:5 where Paul sent greetings to the church that met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla. That verse says, “Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.” Philemon probably had a larger home so the church met in his home. Paul gave a greeting as he did in each letter of grace and peace.

Philemon 1:4-7 goes on to say, “I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing

which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.” Here we see that Paul gave thanks as he prayed for Philemon. We also see that Paul regularly included Philemon as he prayed for Christians in other areas. Our prayer life for others who serve the Lord in other places probably tells us a lot about our own spiritual maturity. Paul prayed for the Christians in every city where he had taken the Gospel over the years. Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 1:3, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.” This is a great example for us and our children.

Paul also tells us that he regularly asked others about the Christians that these other people knew. As a result, Paul could say that he heard about the love and faith that Philemon had for the Lord and for all of the other Christians. Here we see a real picture of the concern that Paul had for other Christians. That concern included both a personal interest and continual prayer for other Christians. Their love and faith was not just directed toward the Lord. Their love and faith for the Lord also caused them to have a strong love and faith for other Christians. In John 15:12 Christ said, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” Philemon certainly demonstrated this love for other Christians.

The word that is translated “sharing” is usually translated fellowship. That is the way this word is translated in 1 John 1:6-7 where we read, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” True fellowship with Christ will also cause us to have fellowship with one another and share our lives with one another. The word that is translated effective is translated by the word powerful in Hebrews 4:12 where we read, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Since Paul was going to ask Philemon to forgive Onesimus, he knew that the action that he was going to request of Philemon would send a powerful message to the entire church.

Here we are reminded that our actions often say much more than our words. The word that is translated “acknowledgement” is usually translated knowledge. Colossians 3:10 says, “And have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.” As a result, this word speaks of full knowledge of the truth. Paul was offering Philemon an opportunity to show his understanding of the Word of God by the way that he would choose to act on the request of Paul. Paul had received great joy and encouragement by the love that Philemon had shown in the past. Paul said that was true of many other saints who had received great encouragement from the love of Philemon. We want to help our children understand that love has a great impact.

Philemon 1:8-11 says, “Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, *yet* for love's sake I rather appeal *to you*--being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ--I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten *while* in my chains, who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.” Paul knew that he could command Philemon to do what was right. However, in order to show true Christian love, Paul chose to appeal to Philemon instead of command him. Here we see a very important key that we want to help our children clearly understand. A command often causes people to feel like they are being driven. An appeal is a request and so those who respond to such a request respond because they are led by the love shown by the way that the request is made. Christ said in John 10:3 that He calls His sheep by name and leads them out. We are to follow the example of Christ and lead by love instead of drive by fear.

Paul did several things to make it clear that his appeal was an act of love. He stated that he

made the appeal for love's sake. He said the appeal came from Paul the aged. He said that he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He stated that his appeal was for his son Onesimus. Onesimus was not a physical son but had become a spiritual son to Paul while Paul was a prisoner. As Paul talked to Christians throughout the Gentile world, he consistently spoke of the spiritual father-spiritual son relationship that he had with Christians that he led to the Lord and helped them in their spiritual growth. 1 Corinthians 4:15 says, "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." Here we see what should be one of the key things in our own spiritual life as we lead people to Christ and help them grow to spiritual maturity. We want to lead them with the love and example of a godly father. Our goal is to help them become spiritual "adult sons" and full partners in ministry.

Paul said that at one time Onesimus had been unprofitable to Philemon. Now because of the changes that the Lord had made in the life of Onesimus Paul said that he had become profitable both to Paul and to Philemon. As a slave Philemon had stolen money from Philemon and run away to the city of Rome. That was why he had been unprofitable. Now as one that Paul had led to Christ in Rome and helped to grow Paul called him his spiritual son and said that he was now profitable to both Paul and Philemon. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Instead of an unprofitable thief and slave, Onesimus was now a beloved brother in Christ. As we help our physical and spiritual children in their spiritual development, we want to help both them and those that they influence see that as Christians that their lives are now profitable. We also want to help our children learn to follow the example of Paul as he appealed to Philemon rather than commanded him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to have a much greater impact through their lives as they learn how to act in love to others.

Learning How to Help Others Become Useful

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to make requests instead of demands. We saw that Paul demonstrated that action by making an appeal to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. We saw that Onesimus had been an unprofitable slave who had stolen money from Philemon and run away to the city of Rome. There he somehow met Paul and became a Christian. We saw that Paul called Onesimus his spiritual son and appealed for Philemon to forgive him. Today, we are going to see how the Lord used Paul to change Onesimus from an unprofitable thief and slave to a full partner in ministry for the Lord. We also want to learn how to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to help others become useful.

We see that Paul had sent Onesimus back to Philemon along with Tychicus and this letter. In Philemon 1:12-14 we read, "I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary." Here we see that Paul explained why he sent Onesimus back to Philemon. The word that is translated "to receive" means to accept, to take as one's companion or to take as a friend. The word is used twice in Romans 15:7 where we read, "Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." As a result, we see that Paul is asking Philemon to accept Onesimus in the same way that Christ accepted Philemon when he placed his faith in Christ.

In fact Paul asked Philemon to receive or accept Onesimus just as he would accept Paul. Paul said that he actually wished that he could keep Onesimus with him. As we have mentioned Paul was a prisoner in Rome for the sake of Gospel. In fact we saw that he considered himself a prisoner of Christ. The Romans did not provide meals and other services for their prisoners. As a result, relatives or friends of a prisoner had to go to the marketplace each day, buy food and then prepare that food for the prisoner so that the prisoner would not starve to death. Onesimus could have stayed in Rome and continued to help Paul in this way but Paul did not want to force Philemon to help him in this way without his consent.

The word that is translated "good deed" means that which is good, right and honorable. It speaks of something that is good in its character and beneficial in its effects. Galatians 6:10 uses this word when it says, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." Paul did not want Philemon to be forced to serve him by keeping Onesimus as a helper. Paul only wanted a person to help him because it was his own personal will. Here we have an example for our children to follow as they do things to benefit others. We want to show them by our example that we look for opportunities to serve the Lord and others and that our service is voluntary.

Philemon 1:15-16 says, "For perhaps he departed for a while for this *purpose*, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave--a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord." The word that is translated "departed" means to separate. In several places in the New Testament it is used to talk about a husband and wife separating. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 says, "Now to the married I command, *yet* not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from *her* husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife." By running away, Onesimus had separated himself from his master for a period of time. Paul said that the purpose of this separation was so that Philemon could receive him forever. Here

we see that Paul was humbly requesting Philemon to fully forgive Onesimus and receive him forever. This gives us an example of the meaning of true forgiveness.

However, Paul said that there would be a change in the way that Philemon would receive Onesimus. He had left as a runaway slave. We see that he now returned as a beloved brother in Christ. Paul said that they now had a new relationship that was eternal. They were now fellow Christians and both now had eternal life. Paul had called Onesimus his son in the faith in verse 10. However, Paul said that Philemon had an even greater relationship with Onesimus than he did. In the flesh Philemon and Onesimus had a master and slave relationship. In Christ they also have a beloved brother relationship. As a result, Philemon and Onesimus had both a physical and a spiritual relationship.

Paul went on to say in Philemon 1:17-19, "If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would* me. But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay--not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides." The word that is translated "partner" means a companion or one who shares together in anything. In Luke 5:9-10 we read, "For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also *were* James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." Here we see that James and John were fishing partners of Peter. As a result, Paul was saying that he was a partner in ministry with Philemon. Since Onesimus was now a partner of Paul in Christ, Paul encouraged Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul.

However, Paul did even more. Since Onesimus had stolen money when he ran away from Philemon, Paul told Philemon to put anything that Onesimus owed him on the account of Paul. Here we see that Paul chose to follow the example of Christ. Christ took our sins on himself so that we could be reconciled and brought back to God. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 says, "Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation." God took our sins and put them on Christ so that Christ paid the price that made it possible for us to be reconciled to God. Here Paul said to put the debt caused by the money that Onesimus stole on his account so that Philemon could be reconciled to Onesimus. Philemon understood what Paul meant because Paul had led him to faith in Christ and Philemon could never repay that debt.

Philemon 1:20-22 says, "Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord. Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you." Paul again referred to Philemon as a brother in Christ. He now requested that Philemon would let him have joy from him in the Lord. In Philippians 2:2 we read, "Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind." Philemon and Onesimus were going to be in the same church. As Christians, we do not need to feel guilty before God because our sins were placed on Christ. In the same way since Paul said to put the debt on his account. That way Onesimus would not have to feel guilty as he and Philemon served the Lord together because his account was paid in full. Paul said that his own heart would be refreshed also because of the unity that would be present in the church.

Paul could also say that he had great confidence that Philemon would obey and do what he requested. The word that is translated "obedience" is used twice in Romans 6:16 where we read, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's

slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?” In this verse, we are reminded that we are all slaves to whatever we choose to obey. If we choose to obey sin, that choice leads to death. If we choose to obey the Lord, that choice produces righteousness. Paul had great confidence that Philemon would make the choice to show the love of Christ and establish a beloved brother relationship with Onesimus.

In fact Paul said that he knew that Philemon would do more than he had requested. As fellow Christians Philemon and Onesimus would now be able to serve the Lord together as a team. 1 Corinthians 7:20-22 says, “Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called *while* a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use *it*. For he who is called in the Lord *while* a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called *while* free is Christ's slave.” It did not matter if one was a slave and the other was the master. As brothers in Christ they were now both servants of Christ and were able to serve him together. Here we see an important lesson that we want to help our children understand. We do not need a title to serve the Lord. Those who do have titles are fellow servants with us of Christ. That also makes it possible for us to serve together as a team.

Paul also asked Philemon to prepare a room for him as he hoped to be released from prison by the Romans. If he were released we see that Paul was going to use that freedom to visit the churches and Christians in the various places where he had ministered. Paul also sent greetings from the others who were in Rome with him. Philemon 1:23-25 says, “Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, *as do* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.” Paul began with Epaphras because he and Philemon were both from the city of Colosse. The name Onesimus actually means useful. Here we see that Paul had taken a formerly useless slave and helped him develop into a useful servant for Christ. In the same way we want to help each of our physical and spiritual children learn how to become useful for Christ and help others become useful. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to help others become useful.