

Helping Our Children Develop Godly Boldness

**Growing Godly Families Series
Manual 5**

by

Duane L. Anderson

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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.

Protecting our Children From Another Gospel

Today, we are beginning a new series of topics. The purpose of these topics is to help our children develop godly boldness. Many Christians are controlled by fear in their lives. That is not the plan of the Lord. Instead, the plan of the Lord is to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be led by the Holy Spirit and to yield to the Holy Spirit so that their lives will be filled with boldness as they serve the Lord. We will be developing that topic in this series which will come from the book of Galatians.

In Galatians 1:6-9 we read, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." The Galatians had only been Christians a short time. However, we see here that false teachers were already coming along and trying to deceive them with another gospel. Today, we still have false teachers who will try to do the same with our physical and spiritual children.

The word that is translated "turning away" was the military word that was used to describe a person that deserted from the military. In the time of the New Testament, desertion from the military caused a person to receive the death penalty. As a result, Paul said that the new Christians were deserting the gospel of grace and were turning instead to a gospel that taught that people must earn their salvation by keeping the Jewish law. There are still many groups that have this same or a similar false teaching. That is why it is so important to help our children understand the dangerous consequences of being deceived by false teachers who teach a salvation based on works.

In Galatians 1:3-5 we see that Christ came to deliver us from this present age. Those verses say, "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." In order to deliver us from this present age, Christ gave Himself as the sacrifice for our sins. That message is designed to set our children and all others who accept that message free from the bondage of sin. That is why Satan works so hard to try and deceive young Christians with another gospel. For this reason it is important that we help every new Christian develop a clear understanding of the true Gospel.

Paul began the book of Galatians and many of the other books that he wrote by speaking of the grace and peace that the Father and the Son have given to us. Since Paul wanted to warn the Galatians about false teachers that were teaching another gospel, it was important for him to begin by speaking about the grace of God. Grace speaks of the loving-kindness and favor of God that caused Him to send Christ to die and pay the penalty for our sin so that God could freely forgive our sin. We want to help our children understand that we cannot earn our salvation by works or by the keeping of rules of some religion.

The false gospel that was being taught by the false teachers that had come to the area of Galatia was that salvation was received by being circumcised and keeping the Jewish law in addition to believing in Christ. Galatians 1:6-7 says, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ." These verses show us that adding anything to the message of repentance and faith perverts the gospel of Christ. Here, we

see that Paul said that he was very surprised that these new Christians would turn away from the grace of God and seek to add works as a part of their salvation.

Here, Paul wrote that adding anything to the grace of God changed the message and made it a different gospel. Paul said that in fact this false teaching was not another gospel at all. Instead, it was a perverted message that denied the gospel of the grace of God. Such a perverted message could never produce peace in the life of new Christians because their lives would continue to be driven by fear. That is why 1 John 4:17-18 tells us, “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. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” Every new Christian that is controlled by fear still lacks inner peace.

In order to help protect our physical and spiritual children from false teachers who will teach a false gospel, we need to help them clearly understand the true gospel. We help them begin to understand the true gospel as we memorize with them and then explain verses like Ephesians 2:8-9 where we read, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” These verses point out the fact that we are saved by grace. This happens through the fact that God gives us grace as a gift. These verses make it clear that works have nothing to do with our salvation. They also explain why many people want to include works in the message of salvation. The reason people want to include works is so that they can boast. The sin that caused Satan to rebel against God was pride. Satan tries to use that same pride to deceive people with a false gospel.

We also want to help our children understand the meaning of repentance. The statement in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 give a good summary of the meaning of repentance. Those verses say, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” True repentance means that we turn to God. It means that we turn from idols. Idols can include anything that was more important to us than God. As a result of true repentance, we see that we will also want to serve the living and true God and wait for Christ to return from heaven for us. We are also reminded that God raised Christ from the dead and He delivered us from the wrath to come.

Paul also warned that those who are preaching a false gospel are not Christians at all. Galatians 1:8 says, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” The word that is translated accursed meant something that was facing eternal destruction. Paul said that any person that would try to make certain works a part of salvation was still facing eternal judgment. He said that would be true even if the one teaching such a false teaching would be an angel. In fact, Paul said that if he started teaching such a false teaching that it would mean that he was still facing eternal judgment.

Then in verse 9, Paul pointed out the fact that he had already given the Galatians a warning about such false teachers. Since that warning is not in the first few verses of this book, it meant that Paul had given this warning to the Galatians when he had originally brought the true Gospel to them. Acts 14 records the visit of Paul to Galatia which was when Paul had shared the Gospel with the Galatians. Acts 14:2 tells what happened when many people had believed. That verse says, “But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.” Here, we see that the false teachers were unbelieving Jews. As we study the book of Galatians we will see that these unbelieving Jews were trying to teach the Gentiles that in addition to believing in Christ they needed to be circumcised and keep the Jewish law in

order to earn their salvation.

As a result, Paul had spent much time helping these new Christians grow so that they would not be deceived by these false teachers. Acts 14:21-22 says, "And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." We see three things that Paul had done to help these new Christians in their growth to help them be prepared for false teachers. Paul spent time strengthening the disciples. Paul spent time encouraging them to continue in the faith. Paul spent time preparing them for much tribulation.

These are the same three things that we need to do to help our physical and spiritual children be prepared to recognize false teachers so that they will not be deceived by another gospel. First, we need to strengthen them. To strengthen or confirm our children means to help them become more certain of what they believe by helping them to understand more and more of the teaching of Christ. Second, we are to encourage them to continue in the faith. To continue in the faith means to hold fast to the faith so that they will not be deceived by those who would try to add laws and rules in order to try to turn the new Christians from faith to works. Third, we are to prepare our children for tribulation because false teachers will turn against them when they do not accept the false teachings.

Here, we see that we protect our physical and spiritual children from another gospel by helping them to know the truth of the gospel. We help them to understand that we receive eternal life by grace and not by works. Salvation is a free gift that was paid for by the death and resurrection of Christ. As a result, salvation cannot be earned by any works. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to understand the true gospel.

Understanding the Gospel of Grace – Part 1

Many Christians are controlled by fear in their lives. That is not the plan of the Lord. Instead the plan of the Lord is to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be led by the Holy Spirit and to yield to the Holy Spirit so that their lives will be filled with boldness as they serve the Lord. In order to help our children grow in understanding and boldness, we need to help them understand the Gospel of grace. This will be our focus in this topic and in the next three topics.

In Galatians 1:10-14 Paul told how he had taught the Jewish religion before he had placed his trust in Christ. Those verses say, “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.” The first thing we see about the time when Paul taught the Jewish religion was that his teaching pleased the Jews. Paul said he could no longer seek to please people because he had become a bondservant of Christ.

This is an important difference to notice. As long as we seek to please people, we will be driven by fear. The reason for this goes right back to the third chapter of Genesis. In Genesis 3:7-13 we see that sin produced five changes in Adam and Eve that have affected every person since. They experienced separation from God. They experienced fear, guilt and shame within. Genesis 3:10 says, “So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” Then they began to blame. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. Those five changes have caused every person that has not placed their trust in Christ to be driven by fear. It is only as we help our children to put their trust in Christ and then grow in Christ that they learn to be led by the love of Christ.

Instead of trying to please people, Paul said that he was a bondservant of Christ. A bondservant is another word for a slave. When a person is a slave to another human being, that person is usually also controlled by fear. In contrast, when we become bondservants of Christ we begin to realize and understand the fact that Christ has set us free. John 8:36 says, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” As we grow in our understanding of this freedom, our lives become motivated by the love of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” We have a desire to live for Christ and serve Him because He has set us free from the bondage that came into the world as soon as Adam and Eve sinned.

Paul also said that the Gospel that he preached was not according to men. Any religion that is based on works in an effort to try and earn salvation will always come from people. Paul said that the Gospel that he preached had not been developed by any human person. Instead Paul defined the gospel that he preached in Romans 1:16 where we read, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Here, we see that Paul preached the Gospel of Christ. He said that the Gospel of Christ has its source in the power of God. As a result, the Gospel of Christ produces salvation for all those who accept that Gospel. This includes both Jews and Gentiles.

Paul also said that he had received the Gospel that he preached by direct revelation from Christ. Paul explained where he received this direct revelation in Galatians 1:15-17 where we read, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus." Here, we see that Paul did not learn the Gospel from the other apostles. Instead the Lord taught Paul for three years in the land of Arabia.

It was important for Paul to receive this personal training from the Lord because the Lord had called Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. If Paul would have learned the Gospel from the apostles, the apostles would have taught him how to develop good Jewish Christians that were zealous for the law. This is clearly seen by what the apostles said to Paul after he returned to Jerusalem after many years of sharing the Gospel with the Gentiles. Acts 21:19-21 says, "When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs." In this verse we see that the Jewish Christians were all zealous for the law because God had given circumcision to Abraham. Paul had to receive his instruction about the Gospel directly from the Lord or Paul would also have been zealous for the law and would have taught the Gentile Christians to follow the Jewish law.

However, because of the decision of the Jerusalem Council that is recorded in Acts 15, the leaders of the church at Jerusalem recognized that the Gentiles did not need to keep the Jewish law and all of the restrictions that went with the law. That was what made the Jews a separate people but that had nothing to do with the Gospel. In fact after telling Paul that the Jews were all zealous for the law, the leaders of the church at Jerusalem then reviewed the decision that had been made by the Jerusalem Council. Acts 21:25 says, "But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality." These four things were things that God said long before God called Abraham to become the father of nation of Israel. Notice when God spoke about these four things.

God showed the danger of making anything an idol when He did not respect the offering of Cain that was based on his own works. Genesis 4:4-5 says, "Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell." Abel brought a blood sacrifice as a covering for his sin because he had faith in the promises of God. Cain brought a sacrifice that was the result of his own efforts of tilling the ground. By this action Cain showed that his idol was the works of his own hands.

God also warned about blood and things strangled in the early chapters of Genesis. Right after Noah and his family came off the ark God said in Genesis 9:4-6, "But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man." Here, we see that Noah and his family were told not to eat blood or any animal that still had its blood in it. An animal that was strangled would not have had its blood drained out of it so that was why both blood and things strangled were to

be avoided.

The final prohibition for the Gentile Christians went clear back to the instructions that God gave to Adam and Eve when God brought Eve to Adam and performed the first marriage. Genesis 2:24 says, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." God said that in marriage two become one. They were not to violate this oneness by any form of immorality. God told Adam and Eve that people were to leave their parents and become one even though Adam and Eve had no human parents to leave. This shows that God established the principle of oneness that was not to be destroyed by any form of immorality.

Since most of the people of the world are Gentiles, it was important that Paul learned how to explain the Gospel to the Gentiles without adding any of the Jewish law to the Gospel. This is also important for us to understand as we teach our physical and spiritual children about the Gospel of grace. Today, many churches have added all kinds of rules and traditions to the Gospel of grace. As a result, many Christians end up in bondage to the rules of their church instead of enjoying the freedom that we have in Christ. That is why Galatians 4:30-5:1 says, "Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." Christ wants us to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to be set free from the law.

Galatians 5:13 tells us why we have been given liberty when it 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." We have been set free to serve one another in love. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn what it means to be free to serve one another in love.

3.

Understanding the Gospel of Grace – Part 2

In our last lesson, we saw that as Christians we have been set free from the Law. We have been given that freedom so that we can serve one another in love instead of being driven by fear and then driving others by fear. Today, we will learn how God kept Paul separate from the other Jewish Christians because they were all zealous for the law. The Jews were Jewish and the Jews were told to do certain things forever as a part of being Jewish. We saw in our last topic that the Gentiles were never under the Jewish law and they were not to be brought under that law as Christians. The only restrictions that the Lord gave to the Gentiles went back to the first chapters of Genesis long before God called Abraham out of Ur of Chaldees to become the father of the nation of Israel.

Galatians 1:17-20 tells about the first visit of Paul to the city of Jerusalem after he had spent three years in Arabia being taught the Gospel of grace by the Lord. Those verses say, “Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)” Here, we see that after the Lord met Paul on the road to Damascus that the Lord guided Paul to go to Arabia instead of Jerusalem so that the Lord could teach him the Gospel of grace.

It was only after Paul had been a Christian for three years that he made his first return trip to the city of Jerusalem. However, even on that trip Paul did not spend very long in Jerusalem. We see that Paul only spent fifteen days in Jerusalem. During that time the only two leaders of the church at Jerusalem that he saw were Peter and James, one of the half-brothers of Christ that was born to Mary and Joseph after the birth of Christ. This is the James that was a key leader in the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 and also the James that later wrote the book of James. On this trip, Paul did not see any of the other leaders of the church at Jerusalem. This was important because God wanted Paul to make a clear distinction in his own mind between being a Christian and being a Jew who was zealous for the Old Testament law.

In fact, the Lord even allowed opposition to Paul in order to get him out of the city of Jerusalem quickly. Acts 9:29-30 says, “And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.” Here, we see that Paul was forced to flee from Jerusalem because some of the Hellenistic Jews attempted to kill him. It was either get out of Jerusalem or die. As a result, some of the Christians helped him escape to Caesarea so that he could return to his home town of Tarsus.

Paul did not return to Jerusalem for his next visit to Jerusalem for eleven more years. Galatians 2:1 says, “Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.” The last of these eleven years was spent in the city of Antioch. Acts 11:25-26 tells us, “Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” Here, we see that Paul spent the next ten years after his fifteen day visit to Jerusalem in the area of his hometown of Tarsus.

This meant that the Lord gave Paul three years of personal instruction in the Gospel of grace in Arabia and then ten more years of development in his own hometown of Tarsus. There Paul

was able to spend that time explaining the Gospel of grace to his relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances in the area of Tarsus. Since Tarsus was also a university town, he probably had many opportunities to explain the Gospel of grace to people who were attending the university. This would have given him many opportunities to answer questions and learn to more clearly explain the Gospel of grace. The Lord was using this time to help Paul learn to explain the Gospel of grace clearly before he began his public ministry recorded in the book of Acts. This was followed by the year in Antioch and then the Lord finally led Paul back to Jerusalem for another short visit.

Galatians 1:21-24 tells us what Paul was doing during this eleven year period. Those verses tell us, "Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." And they glorified God in me." Antioch was the main city in the region of Syria and Tarsus was the main city Cilicia so Paul was able to share the Gospel of grace with many Gentiles.

Antioch was the second largest city in the Roman Empire and most of the people in that city were Gentiles. Acts 11:19-21 tells us, "Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord." Here, we see that it was at Antioch that the Gospel began to spread rapidly among the Gentiles.

The church in Jerusalem heard about these Gentiles in Antioch becoming followers of Christ and sent Barnabas to teach them. Since Barnabas and the other disciples in Jerusalem had been hearing about the ministry of Paul in Tarsus, Barnabas recognized immediately that he needed help to teach these new Gentile believers. He realized that Paul already had ten years of experience teaching Gentile believers in Tarsus and the surrounding region. As a result, that is why we read that Barnabas went immediately to Tarsus to get Paul to help him teach the new Gentile believers in Antioch.

One of the things that Paul taught other believers during this eleven year period was the way that Christ transforms our lives. This meant that the Gentile disciples had been learning about the freedom that they had in Christ and that Christ had set them free to serve one another in love. As a result of this transformation in the lives of the Gentile believers, the other people gave the believers a new name. Acts 11:26 says, "And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." The word Christians means "little Christs". This was probably a term to mock the new Christians. However, it was actually a compliment because it meant that the people recognized the transformation that had happened in the lives of these disciples.

The book of Acts also tells us why Barnabas and Paul made a good team to take the Gospel to the Gentiles in other regions. Acts 11:24 says, "For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord." Here, we see that Barnabas became very effective at sharing the Gospel of grace with the Gentiles. Paul later summarized his ministry in Ephesus when he said in Acts 20:20-21, "How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Barnabas was effective at explaining the Gospel. Paul was effective at helping new Christians come to a fuller understanding of the Gospel of grace as he took them with him and showed them how to answer the questions of both Jews and Greeks.

The result of this team ministry was the fact that many people became Christians and then became equipped to lead others to a full understanding of the Gospel of grace. These new Christians also realized the freedom that they had as new Christians to minister to others. Later Paul and Barnabas each became the leader of a team as they both trained others to share this Gospel of grace. We see the results of such team ministry in Acts 19:10 where we read, "And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." These new Christians realized that they had the freedom to share the Gospel of grace with the people of their own home areas.

Colossians 2:1-3 says, "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." Paul wrote this letter to Christians in the city of Colosse. Paul had never been to this city. Instead Epaphras realized that Christ had set him free and gave him a ministry and he took the Gospel back to his home area. Colossians 4:12-13 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. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis." In the same way we want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that Christ has set them free and they are now free to minister to others. The Lord will use them mightily as they grow to understand the Gospel of grace. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand that the Lord has set them free and given them a ministry that will help others to be set free.

4.

Understanding the Gospel of Grace – Part 3

In our last lesson we saw that the Lord gave Paul almost all of his training for ministry in areas that were primarily Gentile with only some Jews in those areas. As a result, Paul learned to explain the Gospel without adding anything from the Jewish culture that would have brought confusion to the Gentile Christians. However, that did not mean that some Jews did not come and try to deceive the Gentile Christians and bring them under the bondage of the Jewish law. As a result, today we will see that the Jewish leaders of the church in Jerusalem made it clear that they did not expect the Gentile Christians to also adopt the Jewish law. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to clearly explain the Gospel of grace so that they can develop an effective ministry of evangelism to non-Christians and effective ministry to new and immature Christians.

Galatians 2:1-2 says, “Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.” Here, we see that Paul made his second visit to Jerusalem fourteen years after he became a Christian. He and Barnabas went together to share with the leaders of the church in Jerusalem the Gospel of grace that they had been teaching to the Gentiles. In addition, they also took with them Titus who was a Gentile.

Paul said that they had gone up to Jerusalem by revelation. That revelation is explained in Acts 11:27-30 where we read, “And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit had revealed through Agabus the fact that there would be a famine. The Christians at Antioch understood the Gospel of grace and immediately saw this as an opportunity to minister to the Christians in Jerusalem which they did.

Paul also saw this as an opportunity to explain the Gospel of grace that he had been preaching to the Gentiles. He explained this privately to the leaders of the church at Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas gave the leaders of the church at Jerusalem the opportunity to discuss any questions with them that they might have about the message that Paul and Barnabas were preaching. Paul had recognized and understood the difference between Jewish culture and Christianity for many years. At the same time he recognized that the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were all zealous for the Jewish law.

We see that the leaders of the church at Jerusalem showed their response by their actions. Galatians 2:3 says, “Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.” Here, we see that Titus had accompanied Paul and Barnabas as they went to Jerusalem. Titus was a Gentile and had never been circumcised. The leaders of the church at Jerusalem showed that they agreed with the teaching of the Gospel of grace that Paul and Barnabas taught because they did not require Titus to be circumcised.

In contrast, at a later time, Paul chose to circumcise Timothy because he was half Jewish. Acts 16:1-3 says, “Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him

go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.” Paul recognized the Jewish background of Timothy and knew that he would not be effective in sharing the Gospel of grace with the Jews unless he was circumcised.

Paul explains why he did what he did in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22 where we read, “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” Here, we see that Paul wanted all people to really understand the Gospel of grace. He helped the Jews to realize that it was still all right to follow the instructions given to Abraham and circumcise their sons because that was required for all who were Jews long before the law was even given. Just as the Jews were not to require the Gentiles to be circumcised, the Gentiles were not to condemn the Jews for being circumcised. We want to help our children understand that both are right under Christian liberty.

Galatians 2:4-5 says, “And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” Here, we see that one of the things that Paul faced was Jews who claimed to be followers of Christ who were trying to make the Gentile Christians come under the Jewish law. Paul here described these Jews as false brethren. By trying to require the rules for a person to be Jewish to become a part of the requirements for Christianity, these false brethren were trying to change the Gospel of grace into a false gospel of works.

We see that these false brethren had come in to spy out the liberty that we have in Christ. It was their goal to bring Paul and all of the Gentiles back into bondage. The word spy spoke of a person that was a traitor to the enemy and was working to deliver people to the enemy so that they could be destroyed. Here, we see that false teachers are actually the spies of Satan who are working to deliver new and immature Christians from freedom and back into the bondage of Satan.

Perhaps it may be hard for some people to understand why it is so important to help our physical and spiritual children understand why it is important to recognize how to apply the Gospel of grace both to the Gentiles and also to the Jews. In the verses that we quoted earlier from 1 Corinthians 9, we see that Paul made it clear that he was willing to help both Jews and Gentiles understand the meaning of true Christian liberty. Today, more than half of all people that are alive in the world live in cities. Many of these cities include people from many different ethnic groups. Many of these cities also have both Jews and Gentiles. If our children are going to be effective in explaining the Gospel of grace in these cities, they must understand clearly what Christian liberty really means.

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 see that the true purpose of Christian liberty is to set us free to serve one another through love. The reason why many cults are so successful in the cities is due to the fact that there are few true Christians who are living in the cities so that they can serve one another through love. The lack of concern by Christians for people in the cities often means that few people in the cities are hearing the true Gospel of grace.

As a result, the cults offer a false love that is not love at all. Instead the real goal of Satan is to

keep non-Christians from hearing the true Gospel and to bring immature Christians back into bondage. Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” When we help our children to understand the true Gospel, we protect them from false teachers. We also equip our children to help set other Christians free from the yoke of bondage that Satan seeks to use to keep weak and immature Christians in bondage to fear so that they cannot serve others in love.

Paul said in Galatians 2:5, “To whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” Paul did not submit himself to any false brethren for even an hour because he realized that they did not teach the Gospel of grace. In the same way, we are to set an example for our children by showing them how to set others free from the bondage of human rules. Human rules will never help a Christian to become more godly. Instead human rules will hinder the growth of a Christian to maturity because such rules nearly always deal with outward actions or appearances and never touch the heart. In 1 Samuel 16:7 God said to Samuel, “But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” It is in the heart that we make the decision to serve others in love.

We should have the same purpose as Paul. That is to see the truth of the gospel continue to the next generation through our physical and spiritual children. This will happen best as they see how we help others learn to live in the liberty that Christ has provided for us. As they see our example our physical and spiritual children will become mature “adult sons and daughters” and partners with us in the ministry of helping other Christians learn to walk in the liberty that Christ provided us when He set us free from our sin. That is one of the keys to help our children learn to have lives that will have an eternal impact. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to help other Christians walk in liberty by serving others in love.

Understanding the Gospel of Grace – Part 4

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to clearly explain the Gospel of grace so that they can develop an effective ministry of evangelism to non-Christians and effective ministry to new and immature Christians. In our topic today, we will see that the leaders of the church at Jerusalem recognized that Paul and Barnabas had developed just such a ministry to the Gentiles because they were able to clearly define the Gospel of grace so that they had an effective message to both Jews and Gentiles. We also want to help our children develop an effective ministry.

In our last topic, we saw that Paul and Barnabas shared with the apostles in Jerusalem the message that they had shared among the Gentiles. The reason for their desire to share with the other apostles was to confirm to all Christians that they were preaching the same message of the Gospel of grace. This was not because they needed approval but rather to help others understand that God had appointed them to take the Gospel to the Gentiles just as the other apostles were appointed by God to take the Gospel to the Jews.

In fact Galatians 2:6 says, “But from those who seemed to be something--whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man--for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.” Some of the Christians felt that the original apostles were greater in the sight of God. Paul said that was not true because God does not show personal favoritism to any person. Paul had been called by God to be the apostle to the Gentiles but that did not make him either greater or less than the other apostles. In fact Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:11-12, “I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.” Paul said that they were all given the signs of an apostle but that did not make any of them greater than other Christians. Instead it meant that they had been given a particular ministry by the Lord.

It is important to help our children and all Christians understand that no ministry makes a person greater than any other person. We are all called to be bondservants of Christ. As bondservants we are all partners and laborers together even though the Lord has given each of us different ministries. Just after telling the Christians in Corinth that they were carnal, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6-9, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that the Lord has called and equipped each of them for a specific ministry and that we are all partners in ministry.

Paul illustrated the fact that God calls us to different ministries by what he said in Galatians 2:7-8 where we read, “But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles).” Here, we see that God had called Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles and He had called Peter to be an apostle to the Jews. However, the key is that God was working in both of them to help them be effective in the ministry to which the Lord had called them.

We also see that the other apostles also all recognized that Paul had been called to take the

Gospel to the uncircumcised (another word for the Gentiles). Here, we see another important lesson that we want to help our children understand. God may give them a ministry to a specific group of people. When the Lord does that, He may also give a special background to that person to prepare that person to work effectively with that specific group of people. This is why 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 first reason why God allows what happens in our lives is to conform us to the image of Christ. The second reason why God allows those things to happen is to equip us for the specific ministry that the Lord has for us.

We also see that God had worked effectively in both the life of Paul and the life of Peter. The word that is translated effectively is the word from which we get our word energy. Here, we see that God uses His power or energy to equip each Christian for the work to which the Lord has called that person. This same word is used in Ephesians 3:20-21 where we read. "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." In these verses we see that it is His power that works in us. We want to help our children understand that as they yield their lives to the Lord and allow His power to work in them that He will use them to do more than they could ever think of even image through their lives.

We also see the response of the other apostles as they heard how Paul and Barnabas had shared the Gospel of grace with the Gentiles. In Galatians 2:9-10 we read, "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do." James, Peter and John were recognized as three of the key leaders in the church at Jerusalem. James was the half-brother of Christ and by the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 had become the recognized leader of the church at Jerusalem. Peter and John were the two key apostles in the development of the church in Jerusalem.

These verses tell us that these were the three key men that recognized the grace that had been given to Paul. They recognized that it was the grace of God that had equipped Paul for the ministry of taking the Gospel to the Gentiles. Since these three men all had a key part in the development of the church in Jerusalem, they recognized that the Lord had been using Paul and Barnabas in the same way to develop the church among the Gentiles. The three recognized that Paul and Barnabas had preached the same Gospel of grace to the Gentiles that they had preached in Jerusalem. They realized that Paul and Barnabas had developed disciples among the Gentiles just as they had developed disciples among the Jews.

As a result, these three men took the leadership in extending the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas. This was a key action on the part of James, Peter and John. The extending of the right hand of fellowship was the way that people in that area made a vow of friendship. It also represented the fact that those who received the right hand were partners. In Acts 4:36 the apostles had changed the name of Joses the Levite to Barnabas. That verse says, "And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus." In this verse in Acts we see that Barnabas was recognized very early by the leaders of the church in Jerusalem as one who gave great encouragement to others. Now they were recognizing that he and Paul were full partners in the ministry of the Gospel of grace.

The apostles also recognized the particular call in ministry that the Lord had given to Paul and Barnabas. They recognized that the Lord had called Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles. This

call was also recognized by the leaders of the church at Antioch. Shortly after Paul and Barnabas returned from their visit to Jerusalem, Acts 13:1-3 says, "Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away." It was at this point that Paul and Barnabas began to expand their ministry to Gentiles in other regions.

Galatians 2:10 says, "They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do." Here, we see one other area of ministry where the apostles encouraged Paul and Barnabas as they expanded their ministry to the Gentiles. This is also an area that we want to encourage in the development of our physical and spiritual children as they develop their ministry. Christ said in John 12:8, "For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always." We need to help our children develop a great concern to share the Gospel with the poor.

As one of the pillars of the early church, James later wrote in James 2:5-7, "Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?" James made it very clear that God has a great concern for the poor. In the same way we should also have this same great concern as we help our physical and spiritual children in their spiritual growth. May the Lord richly bless you as you help you children develop their ministry both in their own culture and in other cultures as the Lord leads them.

Protecting the Gospel of Grace

In our last four topics we have seen that the Lord called Paul and Barnabas to take the Gospel of grace to the Gentiles. We have seen from their example how to help our children also learn to take the Gospel of grace to those to whom the Lord has called them. In our topic today, we are going to see how fear in the lives of strong Christian leaders can cause them to act out of fear instead of demonstrating the Gospel of grace in their daily lives. This will help us to understand why it is so important to help our physical and spiritual children see how easily it is even for strong Christians to waver in their lives and fail to practice the liberty that we have in Christ.

One day Peter came to visit the Christians in the city of Antioch. The church in Antioch had many Gentiles as well as Jews. Both Jews and Gentiles were a part of the leadership team of the church at Antioch. As a result, this church provided an ideal example of how people of different cultures can function in unity when the Christians are yielding their lives to the Holy Spirit. We see in Galatians 2:11-12 that the visit of Peter to the church in Antioch suddenly caused some problems in that church. Those verses say, "Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision." Here, we see that Peter suddenly became controlled by fear and his actions brought some division in the church at Antioch.

Here, we see that it became necessary for Paul to withstand Peter to the face. The word "withstand" means to oppose or set against. What Peter did was sin and so Paul opposed him. In Luke 17:3-5 we read, "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him." And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." In this case Peter had sinned against all of the Gentiles by his actions and so Paul rebuked him publicly. Paul did this because a very important principle that would affect the future unity of the church was involved.

Here, we see an important lesson that we want to help our children understand. There are times when it is necessary to be willing to rebuke another Christian in love in order to maintain the unity of the church. When Christ prayed for us in John 17:20-23 He said, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." Then Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:3, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We want to help our children realize the importance of working to maintain the unity of the body of Christ.

We see what Peter had done because of fear. Peter had come to Antioch and began eating with the Gentiles. Peter felt free to do this because God had shown him in the vision that caused him to go to the house of Cornelius that there was a great change from the previous pattern of the Jews toward the Gentiles because of Christ. Acts 10:28-29 says, "Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

Here, we see that Peter had been shown by God that it was right for him to eat with the Gentiles. That was why he started eating with the Gentiles in Antioch.

One day some other men arrived from Jerusalem that had come from James. This caused Peter to suddenly change what he was doing because of fear. He suddenly withdrew himself from eating with the Gentiles and separated himself from them. Since the Lord had given Peter very clear instructions in the vision, Peter showed that he was driven by the fear of people instead of being led by the love of Christ. When leaders in any church become driven by the fear of people instead of being led by the love of Christ, their actions will quickly produce conflict. That was exactly what happened at Antioch and that is why Paul withstood Peter to the face.

However, we see that the actions of Peter had also affected other Jewish Christians. Galatians 2:13-14 says, "And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?" Here, we see that all of the other Jews in the church at Antioch including Barnabas followed the example of Peter and stopped eating with the Gentiles. This could have easily led to the division of the church.

Here, we see how easy it is to cause divisions between Christians. Whenever a spiritual leader is driven by fear instead of being led by the love of Christ, that leader will lead other Christians to join him in his sin and the other Christians will also commit sin as a result. We see that is exactly what happened at Antioch and even Barnabas joined with Peter in committing this sin. James 2:8-10 says, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all." Then James 2:12 says, "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty." This reminds us again why it was so important for Paul to withstand Peter.

If Paul had not withstood Peter, the church would have experienced division. That same principle is why Paul warned the Galatians in Galatians 5:1, "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 it is very easy even for a person that is a strong Christian leader to become entangled with a yoke of bondage if that leader is driven by fear instead of led by the love of Christ.

We want to help our children develop a clear understanding of the law of liberty so that they understand the importance of helping other people learn to experience this liberty. James 1:25 says, "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." We want to help our children understand the law of liberty.

The Old Testament is summarized by the great commandment. When Christ was asked what was the great commandment of the law, He replied in Matthew 22:37-40, "Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Christ summarized the New Testament when He gave the new commandment 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." The law of liberty sets us free to love God with our whole heart, to love our neighbor

as ourselves and to love one another as Christ has loved us.

As we yield our lives to the Holy Spirit moment by moment and act in love, we are able to minister with boldness. This is due to the fact that the Holy Spirit is working in our lives and the love of Christ is flowing through our lives to others. That is why it is important to regularly remind our children of the importance of yielding their lives to the Lord moment by moment. Romans 6:16 says, "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?" We need to remind our children that life has choices and consequences. If they make the choice to yield to sin, they will find that choice is leading them to death. If they make the choice to yield to the Lord so that they have the strength to obey, that choice will lead to righteousness.

When the Christians in the early church yielded their lives to the Lord by asking Him for boldness, the Lord gave them boldness to share the Gospel of grace with others. Acts 4:29-31 says, "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 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." Because of the boldness of the early Christians, the Gospel of grace was able to spread rapidly.

Today, we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example that the Lord will also give them boldness to speak the Word of God with boldness as they learn to be led by the love of Christ instead of driven by the fear of people. Such boldness will give their lives a powerful impact. May the Lord bless you richly as you show your children how to serve the Lord with boldness as they yield to the Holy Spirit.

Learning to Live by Faith

In our last several topics we have seen that the Lord called Paul and Barnabas to take the Gospel of grace to the Gentiles. As people repented of their sin and placed their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ, the Lord set them free from the bondage of sin. Paul spent much time teaching these new Christians what it meant to be free from the law. Today, we will see that Paul wrote to help these new Christians learn to live by faith. That is something that is also important in our lives. We also need to help our physical and spiritual children learn to live by faith.

The Jews had been given the law by God. The Gentiles did not have the law. As a result, the Gentiles did not have the law to cause them to realize that they were sinners. Galatians 2:15-16 says, “We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” The Jews who had become Christians realized that the law had nothing to do with their salvation. It had only shown them that they were sinners.

However, the false teachers were telling the Gentiles that they had to keep the law in order to be saved and were bringing great confusion to the new Gentile Christians. That was why Paul explained to the Galatians that the Jews who had become Christians had been saved by faith in Christ Jesus. God had forgiven their sin and declared them righteous at the moment that they placed their faith in Christ. Since the Gentiles did not have the background of the Old Testament, these false teachers were trying to force the new Gentile Christians to believe that they had to follow the Jewish law in order to be saved. Paul wanted to make it clear that both Jews and Gentiles are saved by faith and not by the law.

This is important to help our physical and spiritual children understand because we want to help them understand that they are saved by faith and that they are also to live by faith. Ephesians 2:8-10 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” We need to help our children understand that they are saved by faith plus nothing. When Christ saved us by faith He made us a new creation. 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 now in Christ Jesus and that is what makes it possible for us to do good works as we depend on His strength instead of our own works.

This is an important thing to help our children understand because there are still many false teachers that teach that people are saved by their own works. This is why Paul said in the last part of Galatians 2:16, “that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” The works of the law have never saved any person. Throughout the Old Testament people were saved by faith in the promises of God and not by their own works. That is why Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” All Old Testament believers were saved by faith.

We need to help our children understand the importance of recognizing that salvation is totally by faith. Galatians 2:17 says, “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!” Paul taught that we are

justified (declared righteous in the sight of God) by faith. Since we are declared righteous by God, we are now saints instead of sinners. (That does not always mean that we act like saints.) However, if we are not saints then we are saying that Christ is a minister of sin. Christ said in John 17:23, "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." We want to help our children understand that we are saints in the sight of God because we are in Christ.

Before he put his faith in Christ, Paul had tried to be righteous in the sight of God by keeping the law. That is why he understood these false teachers so well. He had been one of them before Christ met him on the road to Damascus and he placed his faith in Christ. In Galatians 2:18-19 Paul went on to say, "For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God." Paul said been a leading teacher of Judaism. He had even persecuted the Christians. However, Paul says in these verses that when he placed his faith in Christ that he died to the law. The law no longer had any power over him. Instead he was now able to live to God because he was dead to the law.

It is very important to help our physical and spiritual children understand that when they placed their faith in Christ that they also died to the law. The law no longer has any power over them. Instead they are to learn to live to God. 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." We want to help our children understand that the law had completed its purpose when it showed them that they were sinners so that they were led to place their faith in Christ. Once we come to Christ by faith we are no longer under the law.

Since we are no longer under the law, God has given us a new way to live. This new way makes it possible for us to live to please God. 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." Here, we see that just as we were saved by faith that we are now to learn to live by faith. When Christ was on the cross, our sins were placed on Him. When He died, He paid the penalty for our sin. As a result, when we placed our faith in Christ, we were crucified with Him because the penalty for our sin was paid.

Romans 6:5-7 says, "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of *His* resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin." When we placed our faith in Christ, we were set free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:2-4 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Christ fulfilled the requirement of the law and we are now able to walk according to the Spirit.

That is why it is so important to help our children learn to live by faith. We want to help our children fully understand that because we are crucified with Christ that we can now live our new life by faith. We can live that new life by faith because of the fact that Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. He gave us the faith to believe and He now gives us the faith to walk the Christian life by faith.

Paul wanted to make it clear to the new Christians that those teachers who said that Christians had to keep the Jewish law and be circumcised were false teachers. In fact Paul said in Galatians 2:21, "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain." Paul said that if we could either be saved by the law or live by the law that the death of Christ would mean nothing because it would not provide salvation or spiritual growth. This is important to help our physical and spiritual children understand so that they can quickly learn to begin to live by faith soon after they place their faith in Christ. Many people who have been Christians for years are still struggling in their spiritual growth because they are trying to grow by the law instead of learning to live by faith.

The key for this new life is given in Galatians 2:20 in the phrase where we read that Paul said Christ lives in me. We want to help our children fully understand what it means when it says that Christ lives in them. That means that we do not need to live in our own strength. Instead as we yield to Christ moment by moment, John 15:5 says, "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." Here, we see that this new life in Christ means that we will bear much fruit as we learn to live by faith instead of trying to live the Christian life in our own strength. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." The Lord is able to do whatever He chooses through our lives as we learn to live by faith and yield to Christ moment by moment.

An example of this is given in Acts 4:13 where we read, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus." We want to help our children understand that effective ministry is not based on education or training. Effective ministry is based on walking with Jesus by faith. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to walk with Christ by faith by your own example.

Learning Why We Must Grow by Faith

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to live by faith. In order to live by faith, new Christians need to learn how to grow by faith. That is a very important lesson for every new Christian to learn because only as we learn to grow by faith will we experience spiritual growth. Many Christians say that living the Christian life is a struggle. That is because they are trying to live their Christian lives in their own strength instead of learning to grow by faith.

In Galatians 3:1-2 we read, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” The word that is translated foolish speaks of a lack of understanding. Paul had clearly explained to the Galatians as he shared the Gospel with them that Christ was crucified and that their sin had been fully paid by Christ. However, false teachers had come along and said that they had to be circumcised and keep the Jewish law in order to really be saved and grow spiritually. That was why Paul had written this letter to these Christians. This is a reminder to us that newer Christians can be easily deceived by false teachers and that is why we need to help them come to a clear understanding of books like Galatians so that they will not be deceived

Paul asked the Galatians a key question to help them understand that the teachers that had deceived them were false teachers. Paul asked them in verse 2, “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” Here, we see that Paul had helped the Galatians understand that they had received the Holy Spirit at the moment of their salvation. Ephesians 1:13-14 tells us that the Holy Spirit is the down payment and guarantee of our salvation when it 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.” The Galatians knew that they had received the Holy Spirit when they placed their faith in Christ. They had not received the Holy Spirit by following the law. In the same way, we need to help our children understand that they received the Holy Spirit at the moment that they placed their faith in Christ.

As we help our children understand that they received the Holy Spirit by faith, then we can also help them to understand how we grow in the Lord. This was why Paul said in Galatians 3:3-4, “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed *it was* in vain?” Here, we see that Paul helped the Galatians who had only been Christians for a short time to understand that God had worked in their lives through the Holy Spirit. He asked them what made them think that they could now grow to spiritual maturity by keeping the works of the law when it was not the law that had saved them. This is the same thing that we need to help our physical and spiritual children understand.

Paul told the Galatians that if they could grow to spiritual maturity by their works that they had suffered in vain for their faith in Christ. The world wants to base their spiritual life on their own works so the people of the world will not make people suffer for depending on their own works. Christ told the disciples in John 15:18-20, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates

you. “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” The very reason that the world hates Christians is due to the fact that we do not depend on our own works.

We want to also help our children understand exactly how Christ works in our lives. Galatians 3:5-7 says, “Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.” Christ is the One who gave us the Holy Spirit. Christ is the one who works miracles in our lives. Christ did not give us the Holy Spirit to us based on our works. He did not work miracles in our lives because of our works. He did these things because we placed our faith in Christ.

We want to help our children fully understand that the Holy Spirit is our source of power. Christ told the disciples 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.” It is the Holy Spirit that causes our growth as we learn to walk by faith. Galatians 5:16 says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Here, we see that as we learn to walk in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit is the One who gives us the power to have victory over the sinful desires of the flesh.

These verses also make a distinction between those who have true faith and those who have a false faith. Abraham gives us an example of an Old Testament believer that had true faith. Abraham believed God and placed his faith in what God had promised him. God put that faith of Abraham to his account as righteousness. Here in verse seven, we see that those who have faith are the true sons of Abraham. The Jews were physical descendants of Abraham. Those who have true faith are the spiritual descendants of Abraham. That is true both of those who had true faith in the time of the Old Testament and those who have true faith today. All those in the Old Testament that had true faith have eternal life. The same is true for all of us today that have true faith. We have that eternal life because of faith.

God looked forward to the fact that He was going to save the Gentiles by faith clear back at the time that He called Abraham. Galatians 3:8-9 says, “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” Here, we see that God told Abraham what He told him because of the fact that God was looking toward the future. God knew that it was His plan to save the Gentiles by faith. As a result, God gave the message of the Gospel to Abraham when He told Abraham that all of the nations of the world would be blessed through Abraham.

Here, we see an important reason why we also want to help our children develop a vision for the world. God promises that because of faith there will be people of all nations that will experience eternal life. Revelation 5:9-10 says, “And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.” We want to help our children learn to see the world as God sees the world. God says that He is going to develop people with faith among every group of people. It is His plan to have every tribe, tongue, people and nation represented in heaven.

In order for people of every tribe, tongue, people and nation to develop that faith, all nations must hear what Christ did to provide our salvation. As we help our children grow by faith, we want to help them develop the vision that God has for the world. The final words that Christ

spoke to His disciples before He returned to heaven are recorded for us in Acts 1:8 where we read, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” As we help our children grow by faith, we will show them by our example that we are developing the same vision for the world that the Lord has for the world.

It is interesting that just after speaking of the fact that in Abraham all of the nations shall be blessed that Galatians 3:9 says, “So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” In this verse we see that the people who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. This statement of blessing is directly related to the vision that the Lord has for the world. This indicates one reason why it is so important that we must grow by faith. Without growing by faith no one will develop the vision that the Lord has for the world.

Growth by faith caused the early Christians to develop just such a vision for the world. Acts 8:1, 4 says, “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. . . . Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” The apostles remained in Jerusalem but the other Christians had caught their vision for the world. Acts 11:19-21 says, “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” Here, we see that helping our children grow by faith will also expand their vision for the world. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children grow by faith and develop a vision for the spiritual needs of people throughout the world.

Learning Why Christ Took our Curse

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to grow by faith. In order for new Christians to learn to grow by faith, they need the example of other Christians that are growing by faith. As parents, we have the opportunity to provide that example to our physical and spiritual children to help them learn to grow by faith. We also want to help our children learn why Christ took our curse. That will be the focus of our topic today.

Many people depend on their own works to try and become right with God. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others that works will never save them. Galatians 3:10-12 says, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.” Here, we see that every person that is depending on their own works is under a curse. This curse is on every person that fails to obey even one single thing that is written in the law. Since all have sinned, the only way that anyone can be made right in the sight of God is by faith.

Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Before any person places his or her faith in Christ, that person is spiritually dead and separated from God. We want to help our children understand how to explain the fact that a person can only be made alive when Christ gives them life because their sins mean that a person has no spiritual life until Christ forgives the sins of the person because that person comes to Christ by faith. As Galatians 3 tells us, it is faith that gives us this life. No law has ever caused a person to do right. Instead the law shows people when they have broken the law. God’s law shows that all people are guilty before God. That is why every person has brought a curse upon themselves by their sin.

That is why Galatians 3:13-14 is so important for every person to understand. Those verses tell us, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” We want to help our children learn to explain the fact that Christ became a curse for us in order to set us free from the curse of the law. 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.” Christ was without sin. As a result, the Father was able to place our sin on Christ when Christ was on the cross so that Christ could pay the penalty for our sin. That is how Christ became a curse for us.

The fact that Christ took our sin on Himself and became a curse for us also meant that the Father was able to place the righteousness of Christ on us at the moment we placed our faith in Christ and chose to depend on His payment for our sin instead of our own works. This change in our lives immediately brought blessing on our lives. We want to help our children understand that this blessing included the promise that we would receive the Holy Spirit through faith at the moment of salvation. 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.” We want to help our children learn to explain to others the fact that Christ gave them the Holy Spirit at the moment

of salvation as the down payment and guarantee of their eternal salvation.

The fact that God placed the righteousness of Christ on us is also important for our children to understand. Christ was righteous which means that Christ is without sin. He has never sinned in the past and He will never sin in the future. That means that in the sight of the Father that Christ is without sin. That also means that when the Father places the righteousness of Christ on us that the Father can now see us as without sin even though we still commit sins. This is explained for us in more detail in 1 John 2:1-2 where we read, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” We can picture these verses like a courtroom.

We commit one or more sins. Revelation 12:10 says that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. As a result, Satan is our prosecuting attorney and he accuses us of our sins to the Father. These verses tell us that Christ is our Advocate or defense attorney when Satan accuses us. Christ says that He paid for our sin with His blood on the cross and that we accepted His payment by faith and placed our faith in what Christ had done to pay for our sin. The word propitiation means “that which satisfies”. When Christ says that He paid for our sin and we accepted that payment by faith, the Father says, “I am satisfied with the payment. Case dismissed.” This is the reason why Christ took our curse. He took our curse so that He could satisfy the requirement of a holy God that the penalty for sin must be paid. By taking our curse, the Father could freely forgive us at the moment that we placed our faith in Christ and the payment that He made for our sins.

It is important to help our children understand that the forgiveness of their sins had nothing to do with our own works. It had everything to do with the fact that Christ paid the penalty for our sin and the Father was satisfied with that payment. God made a covenant with Abraham to illustrate this fact in Genesis 15. That covenant is used to show why Christ’s blood was the payment for our curse and that we could do nothing to either earn our salvation or lose our salvation.

Genesis 15:5-6 says, “Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” Here, we see that God made a promise to Abraham. Abraham believed by faith and God put that faith to the account of Abraham as righteousness. When Abraham asked how he could know that God would keep His promise, God told Abraham to kill certain animals and birds, divide them in half and lay the halves of each far enough apart that someone could walk between the pieces. This was the way that they made a blood covenant in that day.

When it came time for God and Abraham to walk together between the pieces of the animals and birds, God put Abraham to sleep and then God went alone between the pieces of the animals. Genesis 15:17 says, “And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.” God went between the pieces in the form of a smoking oven and a burning torch. Since God was the only One that signed the covenant by going between the pieces, God was the only One that could break the covenant. The blood of the animals made this a blood covenant. A blood covenant is an everlasting covenant.

Galatians 3:15-18 helps us to understand why God went through those pieces alone. Those verses say, “Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though *it is* only a man’s covenant, yet *if it is* confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is

Christ. And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.” God made that blood covenant 430 years before God gave Moses the law. That meant that the law could have no effect on the blood covenant. God made that covenant with Abraham and His Seed. That Seed is Christ. This was actually a promise to mankind that the Seed (Christ) would be the payment that would satisfy the Father as the payment for our sin.

Just as Abraham did not sign the covenant with God by walking between the pieces of the animals, we did not sign the new covenant that Christ made when He shed His blood on the cross as the payment for our sin. We cannot sign the new covenant but we do remember that new covenant. 1 Corinthians 11:25-26 says, “In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” Every time we have communion we are remembering that Christ took our curse so that we could receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life as a free gift.

The law reminded us that we are under a curse because we are all guilty of sin. Grace and truth came by Christ because He set us free from the penalty of our sin at the moment we repented of our sin of unbelief and accepted His payment for our sin by faith. That is why Ephesians 2:8-10 tells us, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Christ completed the work that made our salvation possible and we can only accept what Christ did for us by faith. God now makes it possible for us to walk by faith. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children to understand why Christ took our curse to set us free from the penalty of our sin.

Learning the Purpose of the Law

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn why Christ took our curse. We saw that Christ took our curse so that He can place His righteousness on us at the moment that we accept the payment of Christ for our sin by faith. We saw that no one can pay the penalty for their own sin by their own works or by keeping the law. That raises the question, what is the purpose of the law then? That will be the focus of our topic today.

Since no person can be made righteous by the law, we need to help our children understand the purpose of the law. Galatians 3:19-20 says, “What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not *mediate* for one *only*, but God is one.” We saw in our last topic that God gave the law to Moses 430 years after He gave the covenant with the promise of Christ to Abraham. Since God did give the law to Moses, that means that God did have a purpose for the law. We want to help our children learn to explain to others that the purpose of the law was to show us that every person is guilty of sin. We want to help them understand that as we help people become aware of their sin, that knowledge is what gives some people a desire to receive forgiveness of sin by faith.

We also want to help our children understand that the law was given until the coming of the Seed. We saw in the last topic that the Seed is Christ. Before the coming of Christ, sin could not be removed. Hebrews 10:4 says, “For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” In contrast John 1:29 says, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Sacrifices could never take away sin so that was why it was necessary for Christ to come. Hebrews 9:12 says, “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” Christ offered Himself to take away sin which the law could never do. That was due to the fact that the purpose of the law was to show that all are guilty so that all will realize that they need to place their faith in Christ for their sin to be forgiven.

God is a holy God and cannot look at sin with favor. As a result, it was necessary for Christ to come as a mediator between God and man. 1 Timothy 2:5-6 says, “For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Since the law could not bring us back to God but only show that we are guilty of sin, Christ came to be our Mediator to bring us back to God.

That does not mean that the law is against the promises of God. Galatians 3:21-22 says, “*Is* the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” God makes it very clear that the law was not against His promises. We saw that the purpose of the law is to show us that every person is guilty of sin. The reason why the purpose of the law was to show that every person is guilty of sin so that all people will realize that they can have their sin forgiven by repentance of the sin of unbelief and faith in the fact that Christ shed His blood to pay the penalty for sin.

When God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, God told Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it

you shall surely die.” God told Adam that he was free to do everything except one thing. God said that the one thing would cause him to die the day that he did that one thing. Here, we see that man was given great freedom because he was free to do anything that he chose except one thing. Even though Adam and Eve had such great freedom, they chose to do the one thing that God had forbidden.

Romans 5:12 tells us, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” However, God had warned Adam in advance that the consequence of that one sin was death that very day. We want to help our children learn to explain the difference between physical death and spiritual death. Physical death is the separation of our soul and spirit from our body. Spiritual death is separation of man from God. The law helps people realize that they are separated from God. Adam and Eve experienced spiritual death, separation from God, the moment they committed sin.

In fact when man sinned, it changed his relationship with God, his relationship within and his relationship with others.

Relationship with God – separation

Genesis 3:8 – “And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

Relationship with himself – fear, guilt and shame

Genesis 3:10 – “So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid (fear) because I was naked (shame); and I hid myself (guilt).”

Relationship with others – blame

Genesis 3:12 – “Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

Those five things – separation, fear, guilt, shame, and blame – are the five things that have motivated every person since Adam.

Galatians 3:23 says, “But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.” The law is like a person guarding a prisoner. The law shows all people that they are guilty of sin and in bondage. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” However, most people do not realize that they have been controlled throughout their lives by that fear of death.

God wanted people to realize that they were in bondage through the law so that people would realize their need to turn to Christ in faith. 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.” Here, we see that the law is our tutor to bring us to Christ. The word that is translated “tutor” is only used three times in the New Testament. Two of those three times are in these two verses. As we help our children to grow in their understanding of how this word is used, this will help them to understand the freedom that they have received in Christ. This will help to prevent them from being deceived by false teachers similar to those who were trying to deceive the new Gentile Christians by telling them that they have to keep the Jewish law in order to be saved and in order to grow spiritually.

The third place that this word is used is in 1 Corinthians 4:15 where we read, “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.” In this verse we see that the word that is

translated “tutor” in Galatians 3:24-25 is translated “instructors” in 1 Corinthians 4:15. In the Greek culture an instructor was a slave in a rich family who raised a child for the father. Such an instructor raised a child by severe discipline instead of love. Paul was pointing out the fact that the law was the severe discipline that God had to use to cause people to realize their need for Christ.

The statement in Galatians 3:24-25 shows that the law has completed its purpose once the law has brought us to Christ. Once we come to Christ we see that we are justified by faith. The word “justify” means to declare righteous. Christ declared us righteous at the moment that we repented of our sin of unbelief and placed our faith in the fact that Christ paid the penalty for our sin by shedding his blood on the cross as a blood covenant. Since a blood covenant is an everlasting covenant, the righteousness that the Father places on us at the moment of repentance and faith is eternal.

One of the things that we see is that we are no longer under the law once we have received forgiveness of sin and eternal life from Christ. As a result, we need to learn how to live a completely new life. In the coming topics we will see that we cannot live this new life in our own strength just as we are cannot be saved by our own works. We will see that the Lord gives us Biblical principles that will transform our lives and fill us with boldness as we learn to yield our lives to the Holy Spirit so that He can work in our lives and through our lives.

The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ and He is the only One that can change and transform our lives and give both we and our children boldness to serve the Lord. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to experience this transformation in their own lives so that they can show others how to be transformed also. As our children learn how Christ transforms their lives, they will see that the Lord has uniquely designed their lives for the service that He has prepared for them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn how the Lord has prepared their lives to be led by the purpose that the Lord has for their lives.

Understanding Our Relationship as Children of God

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn the purpose of the law. We saw that the purpose of the law was to be our tutor to bring us to Christ. However, we also saw that once we come to Christ that we are no longer under the law. We entered into a new relationship when we placed our faith in Christ. In our topic today, we will be learning to understand our new relationship as the children of God.

In our last topic, we looked at Galatians 3:24-25 along with many other verses. Those two verses say, “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.” We want to help our children learn how to explain to those with whom they share the Gospel that when individuals come to Christ by faith that it changes their relationship with God. Many people do not really understand how this change affects their entire lives and this makes it difficult for them to grow in their spiritual lives.

In Galatians 3:26 we read, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” We need to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others all that it means to be children of God. John 1:12-13 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” The word that is translated “right” means the privilege of becoming the children of God. These verses also explain the process by which each person has received spiritual birth. This was not a birth by blood. It was not a birth based on the will of the flesh. It was not a birth based on the will of any person. Instead, spiritual birth is a birth that is based on the will of God.

It is important to help every new Christian understand that he or she has become a Christian because of the will of God. Romans 8:14-15 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” Here, we see that God brought us into His family by adoption. This means that we can have all of the freedom in a family that belongs to each child in that family. God gives each new Christian all of the privileges that go along with being a part of the family of God.

Romans 8:16-17 goes on to say, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 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.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit gives testimony of the fact that we have become the children of God. Many people grow up in life feeling that they have been rejected by one or both parents. Here, we see that the Holy Spirit testifies to the human spirit of each person that becomes a Christian that they are now a part of the family of God.

In addition to becoming a part of the family of God, God wants us to understand what that means as far as our future inheritance is concerned. As a child of God, we have become an heir of God. This means that we will share all that belongs to God. This verse also says that we become a joint heir with Christ. Here on this earth that may mean sharing some of the sufferings of Christ because of the fact that many people reject Christ and persecute those who follow Him. However, our time on this earth is just like a moment compared to eternity. When the Lord completes our life on this earth and calls us to heaven, we see that we will share with Christ for all eternity all of the things that the Father has given to Christ.

Galatians 3:27 gives us another wonderful promise about what it means to be children of God. That verse says, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” The word “baptize” was used to speak of dyeing a piece of cloth. If a person took a piece of white cloth and dipped it into a bowl of blue dye, the cloth came out of that dye with a new identity because it was now a piece of blue cloth. In the same way, we want to help our children learn to explain to others that at the moment that they become a Christian that they are given a new identity. We have been baptized into Christ and that has given us a new identity. This new identity means that we have been given a new nature and that new nature has a desire to do what is good and please Christ. As we yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit we also have the power to do those things that are good and pleasing to Christ.

The word that is translated “put on” means to put on clothing or to clothe one’s self. We want to help our children learn how to explain what it means that we have put on Christ. 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.” To be crucified with Christ means to be fully identified with Christ and share His identity. The word “Christian” actually means “little Christ” and was first used in an effort to mock the early Christians. In fact to be called a little Christ is a great compliment because it means that people now identify us with Christ.

Galatians 3:28 goes on to tell us another thing that happens in our lives at the moment that we repent and place our faith in Christ. That verse says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Here, we see that becoming part of the family of God has removed all racial distinctions. Ephesians 2:13-16 says, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” Here, we see that both Jews and Gentiles become one in Christ.

Then Philemon 1:15-17 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. If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would* me.” In Christ we are no longer slaves and masters. Instead we have become beloved brothers and sisters. We have become partners in ministry.

We also see that we are no longer male and female. Ephesians 5:21 says, “Submitting to one another in the fear of God.” Then verses 22-24 say that wives are to model this submission in the same way that the church is subject to Christ. Verses 25-33 go on to tell us how husbands are to model this submission. Ephesians 5:25-29 says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church.” Here, we see that as children of God both husbands and wives are to practice submission to one another.

Here, we see that all of our relationships are changed because of the fact that we have become the children of God. There has also been a change in our relationship with God. Galatians 3:29

says, “And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” In this verse we see that we want to help our children learn how to explain to new Christians the spiritual blessings that are a part of placing their faith in Christ. Here, we see that Christians become spiritual descendants of Abraham and can look forward to sharing the blessings that the Lord gave to Abraham.

Hebrews 11:8-10 helps us to understand the spiritual blessings that Abraham received. Those verses say, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.” Even though God took Abraham to the land of promise, that was not the land that Abraham was seeking. In fact we see that the land of promise was like a foreign country to Abraham. Instead the real place that Abraham looked for was, “The city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” In the same way we want to help our children learn to explain to others who become Christians the value of the spiritual reward that we seek that will last for all eternity.

When we became the children of God by repentance and faith in Christ, we entered a new relationship that is eternal. We became the children of God and have received an eternal inheritance. Just as we have received this eternal inheritance, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others how they can also share in this eternal inheritance. Truly we can look forward to great blessing along with our children. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children grow in their understanding of what it means to be the children of God.

Learning to Become “Adult Sons”

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn what it means to be the children of God. We saw that this new relationship has great blessings both for us and for all who place their faith in Christ. Today, we are going to see how we help children of God become “adult sons and daughters”. Our purpose is not just to lead people to Christ. Instead our purpose is to help our physical and spiritual children become “adult sons” who are mature reproducing Christians that have become full partners with us in the work of the Lord. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In Galatians 4:1-2 we read, “Now I say *that* the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.” In Galatians 3 we see that a person is under the law until that person comes to Christ. Once that person comes to Christ that person is set free from the law. In Galatians 4 we have this illustrated for us in a very interesting way. In the time when the New Testament was written, about half of the people in the Roman Empire were slaves. Here in the first two verses we see that a child was no different than a slave. In fact he was under the supervision of various slaves.

The child was the one who would one day receive the inheritance of the father. However, the father had set a time when his child would be considered an adult. Until the child reached that time, certain slaves served as his guardians to supervise and protect the child. Other slaves served as stewards to manage what would one day belong to the child. Finally the day would come that the father had set for that child to be recognized as an adult. Suddenly there was a great change. Instead of the slaves supervising the child, the child that had been recognized as an “adult son” was now over the slaves. The slaves would begin to carry out the will of the son as well as the will of the father. This is the illustration that we have in the first verses of chapter four.

Galatians 4:3 says, “Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.” Here, we see that before we became Christians that we were like children or slaves. Before we placed our faith in Christ, we were in bondage to the various elements or things of the world. Most people before they became Christians had been following some religion. Although the Jews had the Old Testament law whose purpose was to show people their need to come to Christ, most of the Jews had been controlled by the bondage of the law because they had tried to keep the law instead of coming to God by faith. In the same way all Gentile religions also had many rules. These rules also kept the Gentiles in bondage.

Galatians 4:4-5 says, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” God had given the law to show people that they were sinful. However, God had set the time when He would send His Son to this earth. According to the time that God had set, the day came when Christ was born. As we know from studying the Gospels, Christ was born when the law was in effect. As a Jewish boy and young man, Jesus also had to keep the Jewish law. However, there was one difference from every other person. Because Jesus is God, He was able to keep the law perfectly. That was necessary in order for Jesus to be able to pay the penalty for our sin. Each temptation where Adam failed, Christ had victory over Satan by quoting and obeying the Word of God.

We want to help our children understand that the perfect obedience of Christ was what made it

possible for Him to pay the penalty for our sin so that He could set us free. The word “redeem” means to buy back or deliver by paying a price and has three parts:

Christ bought us back from the penalty of sin.

Christ removed us from further sale.

Christ set us free.

It was necessary for Christ to redeem us from the slavery of sin because we were all under the bondage of the law. We had no power within ourselves to keep the law perfectly. As a result, we were slaves to sin until Christ bought us back and we accepted His payment for our sin by faith. In addition to making the payment for our sin, Christ also removed us from further sale so that we could not be delivered back into the bondage and penalty of sin again. Finally Christ set us free to live a new life and gave us a new nature with new desires to make it possible to live that new life. Then He gave us the Holy Spirit as the down payment and guarantee of our salvation.

Then Galatians 4:6 says, “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” The Holy Spirit is the One who gives us the power to carry out these new desires that Christ has given us. Christ told the disciples 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 want to help our children understand that the Holy Spirit is our source of power. At each moment that we are yielding our lives to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit gives us the power to say no to sin and to carry out the new desires that Christ has given us.

That is why Galatians 4:7 says, “Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” As Christians, we want to help our children realize that they are no longer slaves to sin. They have been set free from the bondage of sin. Now they are the children of God. As we have seen in the previous topic, this means that we will all share the inheritance of Christ throughout eternity. Since we want our physical and spiritual children to understand fully what this means we want to help them learn to become “adult sons”.

Christ showed us the process to help our children learn how to help others become adult sons. A group of fishermen had been following Christ for about a year. In Matthew 4:19 Christ said, “Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Then Matthew 4:23 tells what Christ did as He took those men with Him. That verse says, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.” Here, we see that Christ showed these men what to teach and what to do.

About nine months later Christ sent these men out to do what they had been watching Him do. Luke 9:1-2 says, “Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” Christ here began to give these men experience teaching what they had seen Him teach. Mark 6:30 tells us what happened when they returned. That verse says, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.” Christ had them explain what they had taught and the other things that they had done.

Christ then spent an additional 21 months taking the disciples with Him so that He could both show them and teach them how to become “adult sons” and partners in ministry. During that time He sent them out on at least one additional preaching trip along with a larger group of disciples. Luke 10:1 says, “After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.” Here, we see that Christ balanced instruction, example and on-the-job experience to train the

disciples to become “adult sons”.

Then the night before His crucifixion Christ said in John 15:15-16, “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” Here, we see that Christ elevated the disciples from servants to friends, said He had taught them all that He had heard from the Father, and told them what He had chosen them to do.

After the resurrection, in John 20:17 Christ called them brethren. Then He said to them in John 20:21, “So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” The final words of Christ to the disciples before He returned to heaven are recorded in Acts 1:8 where Christ said, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Here, we see that Christ had now made the disciples “adult sons” and full partners in ministry and told them to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

If we follow the example of Christ as we should, we will help our physical and spiritual children become “adult sons” and full partners in the ministry of the Lord. Every Christian is called to become a disciple and then make disciples. Matthew 28:19-20 says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.” Here, we see that we are to help our children become “adult sons” and equip them to become partners with us and make disciples of all of the nations. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to become “adult sons and daughters” and full partners in ministry who are equipped to Make Disciples.

Learning Why Some Fail to Become “Adult Sons”

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to become “adult sons and daughters” and full partners in ministry. We want them to be equipped to Make Disciples. As Paul wrote to the new Christians in Galatia, he realized that some of them were being deceived by false teachers who were teaching these new Gentile Christians that they had to keep the Jewish law in order to grow and become mature Christians. As a result, Galatians 4:8-20 will help us to understand why some Christians fail to become “adult sons and daughters”. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In Galatians 4:8-11 we read, “But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. 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? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.” Before the Galatians had become Christians, they had served false gods that were not gods at all. When the Galatians had come to God by placing their faith in Christ, the Lord had set them free from the bondage of their false religions.

However, after Paul had left the region of Galatia, Jewish false teachers had come to that area and told these new Christians that they had to keep the Jewish law in order to be saved or grow. The Galatians had just been saved from the rules of their false religion. Now Paul saw that they were turning to a new set of rules. This often happens with new Christians. False teachers are looking for new and weak Christians that they can deceive. Even many churches that preach the Gospel have added many rules that they try to force new Christians to practice. Ephesians 4:14 says, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” This verse shows us that it is easy for immature Christians to be deceived by those who teach rules and bring weak Christians back into bondage.

The Galatians had begun to observe the various Jewish feast days and the religious practices that went along with those days. These laws were for the Jews and had helped to keep the Jews a separate people but they were not for the purpose of either giving the Jews salvation or helping the Jews experience spiritual growth. Compare the following two verses. The leaders of the church at Jerusalem said in Acts 21:20, “And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, “You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.” Then they said in Acts 21:25, “But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written *and* decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.” All four things mentioned in verse 25 go back to the first nine chapters of Genesis long before Abraham was ever called to be the Father of the Jews.

Paul was greatly concerned to see the Galatians turning to the Jewish law after they had just been delivered from the bondage of their own false religion. Paul went on to remind the Galatians how they had received him. Galatians 4:12-16 says, “Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I *became* like you. You have not injured me at all. You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus. What then was the blessing you *enjoyed*? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” Before Paul became a Christian, he had been a proud Pharisee

that followed all of the rules of the Jewish religion. He had turned from his own efforts to Christ and he now encouraged the Galatians to follow his example and turn from those Jewish rules back to Christ.

Paul reminded the Galatians that they had not hurt him or committed any sins against him even though they were starting to follow the Jewish law. Instead Paul was concerned about the choices that the Galatians were making because he knew that those choices would hurt their own spiritual growth. When Paul had first taken the Gospel to the Galatians, he was experiencing some kind of physical infirmity. Since he mentions his eyes in verse 15, it is possible that he had caught some kind of disease that caused him to have severe problems with his eyes. He said that in spite of his physical problems, the Galatians had received him as an angel of God. They had accepted his message and begun to experience the blessing of God. Now Paul was asking them what had happened to that blessing that they had experienced when they first placed their faith in Christ.

Here, we see the bondage of following a set of rules and depending on those rules for spiritual growth after a person has become a Christian. Those rules cause a person to lose the blessing that they were experiencing in their new life in Christ. Colossians 2:6-8 warns, "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." When we are walking with the Lord by faith, we see that our lives will be filled with thanksgiving. When we turn to the human ideas and traditions of people, those philosophies and traditions cause us to lose that life of thanksgiving. We want to help our children fully understand this danger so that they can help new Christians avoid the danger of losing their thanksgiving. Paul even asked if he had become an enemy of the Galatians by warning them and telling them the truth.

Then Paul went on to tell why people teach a series of rules instead of showing new and weak Christians how to learn to walk by faith and yield to the Holy Spirit. Galatians 4:17-18 says, "They zealously court you, *but* for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you." The Judaizers that were teaching the Jewish laws were pretending to have a real concern for the Galatians. However, they did not have a genuine concern for the Galatians. They wanted to turn these new Christians from following Christ to following them.

Paul warned the elders of the church at Ephesus about two kinds of false teachers that would come and try to deceive the Christians at Ephesus after he left the area. Acts 20:29-31 says, "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." Paul said that there would be false teachers who would come from the outside and try to destroy the Christians. Paul also warned that there would be people who arise and speak perverse things (things that turn Christians from the truth to bondage). Paul said this second group would teach what they taught to gain disciples for themselves instead of disciples for the Lord.

Because of what had happened earlier in Galatia, Paul warned new Christians everywhere about those who would try to gain followers for themselves with a series of rules. Paul realized that the Judaizers were actually trying to gain followers for themselves instead of the Lord. These false teachers seemed eager to help the new Christians. However, their real goal was to try and exclude these new Christians so that they would not grow in Christ and become mature Christians. These false teachers knew that it would be easier to get people to follow them if the

people did not know and understand the truth of the Gospel of Christ. Paul explained the power of that Gospel when he said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." The Gospel of Christ sets people free while the rules of people bring a new form of bondage.

Paul said that it was his concern for these new Christians in Galatia that caused him to speak the way that he was speaking. Galatians 4:19-20 says, "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you." Paul viewed the Galatians as greatly loved spiritual children. He was willing to say or do whatever was necessary to try and help them grow and become like Christ. The desire of Paul was to see Christ formed in the lives of each of these new Christians. Here, we see that Paul had the concern of a spiritual parent.

In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children develop that same concern of a spiritual parent so that they will provide an example to help new Christians in their spiritual growth. This will also equip them to help struggling Christians so that they can grow and Christ can be formed in their lives. Paul said that he would like to be present with the Galatians to protect them from these false teachers. However, since he could not be with them at that time, he felt that he could write the letter of Galatians to help them realize that these false teachers were trying to bring them into the bondage of the Jewish law instead of helping them to experience the freedom that Christ has provided through His death and resurrection. As we equip our physical and spiritual children, we want to equip them to help others also. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children become equipped to protect new and weak Christians from legalism.

Learning the Difference Between Legalism and Liberty

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn why some Christians fail to grow and become “adult sons and daughters”. We saw that this happened in Galatia when false teachers came into the area of Galatia and started teaching the new Christians that they had to keep the Jewish law in order to be saved or to grow in Christ. Since many new Christians are still being deceived by people who try to add many rules about the way to live the Christian life, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain the difference between legalism and liberty to help new and weak Christians grow in their spiritual lives. That will be the focus of our topic today.

Paul asked the new Christians that were turning to the Jewish law a very important question in Galatians 4:21. Paul said, “Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?” Many Christians like to depend on the law because they have never learned to be led by the Holy Spirit. They just try to follow the law in their own strength. Some churches also set many rules for the people in those churches to follow. However, Galatians 5:18 says, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” We want to help our children learn to understand and explain to others that people are either driven by the fear that is the result of laws and rules or they are led by the Spirit. People are driven by fear because they fear what other people might say or think. Those who are led by the love of Christ do not fear other people.

The problem that people face when they try to follow the law is that they fail and sin. Romans 7:19-20 says, “For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” As a result of such failures, many of those who try to follow the law would summarize their Christian life in the words of Romans 7:24 which says, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” Here, we see that those who try to follow the law have many inner conflicts in their lives. That is why Paul asked if those who desired to follow the law really understood what they desired.

As a result, Paul used an illustration to give an example of the difference between legalism and liberty. Galatians 4:22-26 says, “For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.” When people try to follow the law, they are depending on their own efforts. That is why the bondwoman is compared to the flesh.

Abraham had one son that was born to a bondwoman or slave named Hagar. His second son was born to a freewoman, his wife, Sarah. Paul said that these two women were like the two covenants. The first covenant was like Mount Sinai which was the place where the law was given. Paul said that the law which was given at Mount Sinai produced bondage. The Jews in Jerusalem were trying to follow the law. Paul said that in their efforts to follow the law that the Jews were actually in bondage because they could not keep the law. In contrast, the second covenant pictured the heavenly Jerusalem where those who follow Christ will experience eternal life. Paul said that the heavenly Jerusalem pictures the liberty that we are to experience as we follow Christ.

We saw that Romans 7 pictures the results when Christians are depending on their own strength to live the Christian life. It produced fear and failure. In the first seven chapters of Romans the Holy Spirit is only mentioned once. In Romans 8 the Holy Spirit is mentioned 19 times. As a result, the final verses of Romans 8 picture the liberty that we have as we walk in the love that God showed us through the death and resurrection of Christ. Romans 8:37-39 says, "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Here, we see that we will get to know and understand the love of God for us as we learn to be led by the Holy Spirit. When we are led by the Spirit we see here that we are more than conquerors.

As a result, those Christians that are learning to experience the liberty that the Holy Spirit provides find that they begin to experience lives of joy and peace. Galatians 4:27-28 says, "For it is written: 'Rejoice, O barren, *You* who do not bear! Break forth and shout, *You* who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband.'" Now we, brethren, as Isaac *was*, are children of promise." Here, we see that the Lord gives great joy to those who are learning to yield to the Holy Spirit. That is the joy that we want to help new Christians experience as we show them how to be led by the Holy Spirit instead of being driven by the fear of people.

Paul wanted the new Christians in Galatia to understand that they did not need to continue to live in bondage to the law as these false teachers were telling them when they said that the new Christians needed to follow the Jewish law. Instead God wanted those new Christians to understand that they had been set free from the law. We want to help others understand the difference between being in bondage to the law and being set free from the law. This is exactly why we want to help our physical and spiritual children to understand Christian liberty so clearly that they can explain this liberty to new Christians. We want them to be able to help new Christians understand what it means to be the children of promise.

Paul realized that those who were teaching the new Christians that they had to be circumcised and follow the Jewish law were trying to bring those new Christians back into bondage. As a result, Paul said in Galatians 4:29, "But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, even so *it is* now." Those who are depending on the laws and rules of men are not happy to see those who are learning to enjoy the freedom that comes from being born of the Holy Spirit. That is why they first try to bring new Christians back under the bondage of the rules of men.

When those who are depending on laws realize that they cannot bring new Christians back under the rules of men, we see that then they begin to persecute those who have been born of the Holy Spirit. Paul had already spent time in Galatia preparing the new Christians for persecution. Acts 14:21-22 says, "And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.'" Here, we see that Paul and Barnabas realized that a key part of their ministry was to prepare the new Christians for the fact that they would experience many tribulations.

In the same way, a key part of our ministry to our physical and spiritual children is to prepare them for many tribulations. We also want to show them by our example how to help new Christians prepare for many tribulations. A key part of that preparation is to help younger Christians fully understand the difference between legalism and liberty. Paul told the Galatians in Galatians 4:30-31, "Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and

her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.” Here, we see that we want to help our children learn to set new Christians free from the bondage of the law. Our next several topics will help them learn how to help new Christians learn to be led by the Holy Spirit.

As Paul shared with the Christians in Galatia who were being confused by the false teachers, he reminded them that it was time to cast out the bondwoman and her son. Here, we see that it is time to show new Christians that they can never grow by the law just as they could never be saved by the law. Instead new Christians grow by having their whole way of thinking transformed by the Word of God. 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.” As the minds of new Christians are being transformed by the Word of God, they begin to view the things of the world from the viewpoint of God instead of the viewpoint of the world.

The Lord said in Isaiah 55:8-9, ““For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” We want to show our children how to think the thoughts of God instead of thinking the thoughts of the world. The thoughts of the world are based on the fear, guilt and shame that are the result of sin. The thoughts of God are much higher than the thoughts of the world. As a result as we help our children to learn, understand and apply the thoughts of God in their own lives, they are being equipped to help many others throughout their lives. The key is that we must help them to understand and apply the thoughts of God to their lives and not just learn them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand and apply the Word of God to their lives so that they experience true liberty.

Learning What It Means to be Called to Liberty

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn the difference between legalism and liberty. We saw that legalism is the result of trying to pressure people to follow the Old Testament law or to follow the rules of people. We saw that such teaching only brings new Christians into a new form of bondage. Instead we are to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in liberty as they learn to be led by the Holy Spirit in their lives. That will be the focus of the next several topics.

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.” We begin by seeing that Christ has made us free. This is not something that will happen in the future but is something that has already happened. In John 8:32 Christ said, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Then John 8:36 adds, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” The night before He was crucified Christ said that He is the truth in John 14:6. Later that evening He said in John 16:13 that the Holy Spirit would guide the believers into all truth. When we accepted the truth of the Gospel and placed our faith in Christ we were immediately set free. That is why we are told to stand fast in that liberty.

However, Galatians 5:1 warns that it is possible for a person to become entangled again with a yoke of bondage. That was exactly what had happened to part of the Galatians and that is the danger that faces every new or weak Christian. That is why it is so important to help our children learn how to help others grow in their spiritual lives so that they will not become entangled again with a yoke of bondage. In our last topic, we saw that the law can become a yoke of bondage to every new Christian. We saw a couple of topics earlier in Galatians 3:24-25 that the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ but after we came to Christ that we are no longer under the tutor.

The false teachers (Judiazers) were telling the new Christians in Galatia that they had to be circumcised and keep the Jewish law. Galatians 5:2-6 says, “Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” When a Gentile chose to be circumcised by the Jews, it meant that he was willing to join the Jewish religion and follow the Jewish law. Paul said that if they allowed the Judiazers to circumcise them and followed the Jewish law that Christ would profit them nothing because they were rejecting the death of Christ for sin.

Christ said that to accept circumcision from the Judiazers meant that they had not placed their faith in Christ and been set free from their sin. Such circumcision meant that they chose to make themselves a debtor to obey the whole law instead of putting their trust in Christ by faith. Paul said that such an action was really an attempt to be justified or made righteous by keeping the law. That would be a rejection of grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” The Judiazers were trying to earn their salvation by works and Paul said that would not provide salvation.

Paul pointed out that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision had any value. Instead the Holy

Spirit who came into our lives at the moment of true faith causes us to eagerly wait for the Lord because we know that we received His righteousness by faith. Paul said that true faith shows and reveals itself by love. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” We see that true faith is actually a response to the love of Christ. Because Christ comes into our lives at the moment of faith, our new nature is motivated by His love instead of the fear, guilt and shame that formerly controlled us. As a result, our lives will begin to show the love of Christ.

Galatians 5:7-9 says, “You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not *come* from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” The Galatians had started to grow in their new life in Christ until they had become confused by these false teachers. That confusion had hindered their spiritual growth and they had stopped obeying the truth. Today, many new Christians also stop obeying the truth. This actually happens for various reasons.

For many new Christians, they do not have a spiritual parent that helps them to understand the Word of God and provides them with an example to follow. 1 Corinthians 4:15-16 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. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.” Instructors gave people rules to follow. In contrast, fathers give their children their own lives to follow as an example. Paul continually invited new Christians to follow his example. In the same way, we want to be an example to our physical and spiritual children and equip them to be an example to others. Then they can see from our example what it means to be called to liberty.

The false teachers that had come into Galatia wanted to be instructors who told the new Christians what to do. In fact they were telling them that they had to be circumcised and keep the whole Jewish law. Paul said that such false teaching was just like leaven. You put a little leaven in one corner of your bread dough and it quickly spreads to the entire lump of bread dough. Paul said that the legalism that the Judiazers were teaching would quickly spread and would hinder many people from coming to Christ by faith. That was why Paul had spoken so strongly in Galatians 1:9 when he said, “As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Paul made it very clear that anyone who taught that salvation could be obtained by works was accursed and faced eternal judgment.

Paul felt that the Galatians had demonstrated true faith in Christ when he had preached the Gospel to them. That is why Paul went on to say in Galatians 5:10, “I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.” Because Paul had confidence in the fact that the Galatians had true faith in Christ, his real concern was for the fact that these false teachers were confusing the new Christians and hindering them in their spiritual growth. That is why he wanted them to realize that false teachers faced judgment because they were not true Christians at all.

The reason why Paul could have this confidence was due to the fact that he recognized that the Christians in Galatia had demonstrated true faith even though they were experiencing a period of struggle due to the false teachers. Here, we see one of the characteristics of a spiritual parent. A spiritual parent has spent enough time with new Christians to know that their faith is genuine. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9 tells us, “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might

not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.” Paul had spent much time sharing his life with the new Christians.

We also see that Paul warned that each false teacher would bear his judgment. The word that is translated “bear” means to carry on one’s self. Paul wrote this letter to stop each false teacher from having any further impact on these new Christians. In Galatians 6:7-8 Paul wrote, “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.” Paul knew that God was the One who would judge any false teacher.

In Galatians 5:11-12 Paul helped the Christians in Galatia to realize what it had cost him to preach the true Gospel. Those verses say, “And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!” Paul helped the new Christians to realize that he would not have suffered and been stoned in Galatia if he would have been teaching the Galatians that they could be saved by keeping the law. In fact Paul continued to suffer persecution wherever he went. Paul was able to do this with boldness even though it meant persecution because of the liberty that he had in Christ. He was motivated by the love of Christ instead of being controlled by the fear of those who were false teachers.

Paul said that the message of the cross is an offence to those who want to base their salvation on their own works. The cross is an offence because it leaves no room for the pride of man and his own self efforts. However, Paul was willing to preach the message of the cross even if it meant suffering. Truly Paul chose to use his liberty in Christ to serve others. In the same way we want to show our physical and spiritual children that we also want to use our liberty in Christ to serve others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children by your example how to serve other Christians in love.

Learning the True Purpose of Liberty

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn what it means to be called to liberty. We have been set free from the bondage of the law and have been called to enjoy Christian liberty. Our topic today will focus on the true purpose of liberty. True liberty is not the freedom to sin. Instead we will see that true liberty gives us the power to serve. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In Galatians 5:13 we read, “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.” The word that is translated “called” means to call with a loud voice or to call a person by name. Here, we see that every Christian has been called by name to liberty. The Lord has equipped every Christian with one or more spiritual gifts so that every Christian is able to serve the Lord effectively as we yield to the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 12:3 says, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” We want to help our children understand that God gives all spiritual gifts so we are not to boast but rather to serve in the power that the Holy Spirit gives as we yield to Him.

We also see that we are not to use this liberty as an opportunity to satisfy sinful desires. 2 Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Here, we see that the liberty that Christ has given us gives us the power to flee those things that are sinful and follow those things that bring glory to God. We are able to both flee and follow as we yield to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to give us His strength to flee the things that are sin and follow the things that are the result of having a pure heart.

We see that we have been given liberty so that we are able through love to serve one another. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Here, we see what makes it possible for us to serve one another in love. At the moment of salvation every new Christian is given one or more spiritual gifts. We are to be stewards of those gifts and serve the Lord by serving one another. If we have a speaking gift, we are to speak the Word of God. If we have been given a serving gift, we are to serve with the ability that God supplies. We want to help our children understand that as we serve in the strength of the Lord, He gives us the privilege of bringing glory to Him.

Galatians 5:14 goes on to say, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Here, we see that love fulfills the law. We see that the Lord gives us the power to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. One day a Pharisee asked Christ what was the great commandment. Christ answered in Matthew 22:37-40, “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ “This is *the* first and great commandment. “And *the* second *is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Christ said that these two commandments fulfill the entire Old Testament.

The night before Christ was crucified Christ gave the disciples a new commandment. John 13:34-35 says, “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 summarized the entire New Testament with one commandment. That commandment is to love one another as Christ has loved us. Since true liberty means that we are given the power so that by love we can serve one another, we see that the entire Bible is summarized by one word – Love.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37, we see that Christ was asked by a lawyer who is our neighbor. Christ told the parable of the Good Samaritan and then asked the lawyer a question. Luke 10:36-37 says, “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” By giving this answer, Christ showed that our neighbor is any person that needs help. As a result, we see that as we yield to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit gives us His power to:

Love God with our whole heart, soul and mind.

Love our neighbor (any person in need) as we love ourselves.

Love other Christians in the same way that Christ loved us.

Paul also warned what will happen if we do not use our liberty to serve one another in love. Galatians 5:15 says, “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” Here, we see that misusing our liberty to satisfy the evil desires of the flesh will destroy both ourselves and others. The word translated “bite” means to wound one another with words. The word translated “devour” means to make it a habit of wounding others with words. The word translated “consume” speaks of the last act of swallowing down and speaks of the fact that we will destroy one another with evil words. John 10:10 says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” Here, we see that the process of “bite-devour-consume” actually destroys one another.

That means that those who destroy one another are actually doing the work of the devil.

Galatians 5:19-21 says, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Those who practice the works of the flesh are following the devil and the works of the devil. The final result will be that they will share the judgment of the devil. John 16:13 says, “Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” The Holy Spirit convinces people of the fact that the devil has already been judged and this verse says that all those who continue to follow the devil will share in his judgment. We want to help our children learn to clearly explain to others the consequences of following the devil.

In order to help our children learn to experience the liberty that Christ has given us, we want to help them understand Galatians 5:16. That verse says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Here, we see the key that gives us the strength to carry out the true purpose of liberty. We see that we are to walk in the Spirit. A walk speaks of a continuous action. Nearly everything that we do in our daily activities involves walking at least a few steps. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Here, we see that God has prepared us to continue to walk through life doing the good works for which we have been prepared as Christians.

Those good works for which we have been prepared give us the opportunity to serve one another in love. Many Christians never see these opportunities to do good works as opportunities to serve others. That is why Galatians 6:9-10 says, “And let us not grow weary

while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Here, we see that we are to look for opportunities to do good to all. If we do not see opportunities to do good, we can pray and ask the Lord to help us see the opportunities that He has prepared for us. We want to help our children learn to look for opportunities to do good. The word that is translated “good” speaks of those things that are excellent, upright and produce joy in others.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to ask the Lord to show them opportunities to do good and the strength to do that good, they will begin to experience more and more joy in their lives. As a result, they will see the Lord do more through their lives than they could ever imagine. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” As we help our children learn to depend on the power of the Lord to work through their lives, they will be amazed as they see what the Lord chooses to do through them. They will realize that the Lord has given them the liberty to do more than they could imagine because they are yielding their lives to the Holy Spirit.

We will also be filled with joy as we see the Lord answer our prayers. In the previous verses Paul gives us an example of how to pray for our physical and spiritual children. Ephesians 3:16-19 says that we can pray for our children, “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand the true purpose of our liberty in Christ.

Learning to Bear the Fruit of the Spirit

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn the true purpose of liberty. We saw that true liberty gives us the opportunity to do good to all. We also saw that the Holy Spirit gives us the power to carry out those things that are good as we yield to Him. In this topic we are going to learn the results that the Lord will produce in our lives and the lives of our children as we yield to the Holy Spirit and give Him the opportunity to work through our lives.

Galatians 5:17 helps us to understand that it is not the natural response for a person to produce the fruit of the Spirit through their own efforts. Instead it is the other way around. The Holy Spirit bears fruit in our lives as we learn to yield to Him. Galatians 5:17 says, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” The natural response produces the works of the flesh. In contrast, as we make the supernatural response and yield our lives to the Holy Spirit, He will cause our lives to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

In Galatians 5:16 we read, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Then Galatians 5:18 says, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” In these two verses we see some key things that we want to help our children understand. As they learn to walk in the Spirit, God says that they will not satisfy the evil desires of the flesh. This is due to the fact that those who are led by the Holy Spirit are no longer under the law. Here, we see that the Lord describes two things that go together in our relationship to the Holy Spirit as we walk in the Spirit and are led by the Spirit.

To be led requires that there be a leader and a follower. Here, we see that the Holy Spirit is to be the leader and we are to learn to be the follower. Only as we learn this lesson for our own lives will we be able to show our children what it means to be led by the Spirit. Children often play the game of “Follow the leader.” As they play that game, one of the children is the leader and the others all follow that child and do what that child does. In the same way, we are to follow the Holy Spirit and do what He would have us to do and say what He would have us to say.

Romans 8:2-4 says, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Christ set us free from the law. That law is called the law of sin and death. It is called the law of sin because any law only has an impact when someone has disobeyed or broken that law. That is why Christ set us free from the law.

The law was weak because it could only condemn. In contrast, God sent Christ who perfectly obeyed the law. He also sent Christ as a man. As a man who was perfect and without sin, Christ was able to condemn sin in the flesh. That action by Christ meant that Christ fulfilled all of the requirements of the law for us and defeated sin and the penalty of sin. As a result, Christ made it possible for us to walk according to the Spirit. This made it possible for us to have true Christian liberty. As a result, that made it possible for to walk according to the Spirit instead of continuing to walk according to the flesh as we did before we placed our faith in Christ.

The result of what Christ did makes it possible for us to be led by the Spirit because we are no

longer under the law. As we yield to the Spirit, He gives us the power to avoid the works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21. Those verses say, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” We did practice some of these things before we placed our faith in Christ. Once we placed our faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit began giving us the power to avoid these works of the flesh as we learned to yield our lives to the Spirit. As a result, we no longer practice the works of the flesh in our lives.

Instead our lives began to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” This is best understood if we understand what it means to bear fruit. Christ explained this principle in John 15. In John 15:4-5 we read, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” In verse one Christ said He is the vine and we are the branches.

In these verses we see that a branch cannot produce fruit by itself. The branch can only bear what the root produces. John 15:6 says, “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.” Here, we see that when a branch tries to separate itself from the vine and produce fruit by itself, the branch withers and no fruit is produced. In fact such branches are cast into the fire and burned. In the same way, if we depend on our own strength we will not bear any fruit because without Christ we can do nothing.

The root determines the fruit. A bad root bears bad fruit. A good root bears good fruit. Since Christ is a good root, we will bear good fruit as we abide in Christ. John 15:7-8 says, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” Here, we see that as we abide in Christ and have His Word in our thoughts and hearts that the Lord will cause our lives to bear much fruit.

In Romans 15:26-28 we see that the fruit of a Christian is the result of our ministry for Christ. Those verses say, “For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.” Here, we see that the fruit that we bear as Christians is the fruit of the ministry that the Lord has given us. In addition, God will also cause our lives to bear the fruit of the Spirit. As Galatians 5:22-23 says, “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 the fruit of the Spirit is the inner attitudes that the Holy Spirit produces in our lives as we yield our lives to the Holy Spirit moment by moment.

Galatians 5:24 tells us, “And those *who are* Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Paul used the word “crucified” earlier in this book to the Galatians. 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.” In chapter two we see that Paul made the choice to yield to Christ as a

pattern of life rather than try to be in control himself. Here in chapter five we see that if we make that same choice to yield to Christ as a pattern of life that He will work in our lives and through our lives.

That is why Galatians 5:25 says, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Christ put the Holy Spirit in our lives at the moment that we placed our faith in Christ. At that moment we were made alive. Ephesians 2:1-6 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 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, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus.” We were given spiritual life and an eternal inheritance in Christ through the Spirit which makes it possible for us to live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit.

However, it does not allow us to boast because this has all happened in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. That is why Galatians 5:26 says, “Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that the changes that have happened in our lives have nothing to do with our own strength. Instead these changes have happened as we make the choice moment by moment to yield to the Spirit and let His power work in our lives. If we allow pride or conceit to come into our lives, that conceit will cause us to either challenge one another or envy one another. Such attitudes do not cause anyone to bear the fruit of the Spirit. That is why we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example the blessings of yielding to the Spirit so that our lives bear the fruit of the Spirit. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example how their lives will bear the fruit of the Spirit.

Learning to Bear One Another's Burdens

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how their lives can bear the fruit of the Spirit. We saw that will usually only happen as we provide an example of what it means to yield to the Spirit so that He causes our lives to bear the fruit of the Spirit. We saw that these are the attitudes that the Holy Spirit produces in our lives as we yield to Him. We also saw that Christ will cause our lives to bear fruit as we abide in Him. That fruit is our ministry for Christ as we minister in His strength. In this topic we will look at some examples of the way that the Lord causes our ministry to bear fruit that brings glory to Him.

One of the ministries that the Lord may give to us is the ministry of restoring a fellow Christian that has been overtaken in a trespass. 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." The word that is translated "trespass" means a deviation from uprightness and truth. It is used six times in Romans 5 to speak of the sin of Adam. It is the word that is used in the prayer we call the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6. It is used twice in Ephesians 2 to speak of the fact that we were dead in trespasses and sins. In this verse it is talking about a fellow Christian that is caught in the very act of committing a sin. The word that is translated "overtaken" speaks of a person that is caught before he can flee or conceal his crime.

However, even when a person is caught in the very act of committing sin, we are not to condemn or judge that Christian. A person that would judge such a Christian actually shows that the one doing the judging is carnal. 1 Corinthians 3:1 says, "For you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere men*?" Romans 14:12-13 says, "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in *our* brother's way." Instead we are to seek to restore our fellow Christian.

To restore means "to mend, to repair, or to make perfect what is lacking". It speaks of helping a Christian that has committed sin learn how to deal with that sin and restore his fellowship with Christ. It can also talk about helping young Christians grow in their faith. An example of this use is found in 1 Thessalonians 3:9-10 which says, "For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?" Since the Christians in Thessalonica had only been Christians for a very short time, Paul and the team with him realized the need to bring the faith of the Thessalonians to maturity and that concern caused them to pray for the Thessalonian Christians night and day.

This verse also says that this ministry of restoration is for those who are spiritual. The reason why it needs to be a spiritual Christian that restores another is the fact that a carnal Christian will be judgmental and will condemn rather than restore. A spiritual Christian is one that is yielding to the Holy Spirit so that he or she is filled and guided by the Holy Spirit. Such a Christian will be effective in restoring a brother or sister that is guilty of a trespass because the person will restore the guilty person with a spirit of gentleness. That spirit of gentleness is important for both people. It is important to the one being restored because that person will feel accepted. It is important to the one who does the restoring or the person doing the restoring will open their own life to pride and temptation.

Another ministry that God gives us that bears fruit is the ministry of bearing the burdens of another person. Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." The word that is translated "burden" speaks of a heavy weight or load. People often have to deal with difficult problems or other difficulties in their lives. Mary and Martha experienced a great burden when their brother died. John 11:33-36 says, "Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, 'Where have you laid him?'" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" Here, we see that Jesus was bearing the burden of the death of their brother with Mary and Martha.

In Acts 15:28-29, we see that the early church leaders at the Jerusalem Council talked about a different kind of burden. Those verses say, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." Here, the apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem were shown by the Lord that the Jewish law would be a great burden to the Gentile Christians. Instead of adding that burden to the Gentiles, they chose to make it clear that the Gentiles were not under the burden of the Jewish law.

We see that as we help our physical and spiritual children learn to bear the burdens of others that we are actually helping them learn how to fulfill the law of Christ. The law of Christ is the new commandment that Christ gave in John 13:34-35 when He said, "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." In fact this is part of the reason why we are called to liberty. 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." We are called to liberty so that we are able to serve one another in love.

Galatians 6:3-4 says, "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." We also see the attitude that we should have as we serve the Lord by ministering to others. We need to avoid thinking that we are something or a person of importance. That is an attitude of pride. Instead Philippians 2:3-4 says, "*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." Here, we see that as a part of our ministry that we want to help our children learn from our example how to focus on the needs of others. We want to show them by our example how to notice the needs and interests of others so that they can minister to others by meeting those needs.

In order to avoid deceiving ourselves, we are each to examine our own works. Some of our works only have earthly value and others have eternal value. That is why 1 Corinthians 3:12-14 says, "Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward." Our works that have only earthly value are like wood, hay and stubble. When such works are tested by fire, they burn up quickly. In contrast, some works have eternal value. They are like gold, silver and precious stones. Fire had a very different affect on them. Fire only burns out the specs of dirt so that the gold and silver and precious stones shine in all of their beauty.

Here, we see that any of our ministries for the Lord that have eternal value will be rewarded. That is why we will be able to rejoice because of the opportunities that the Lord gave us to

carry out ministries that have eternal value. We will be able to rejoice because the Lord has chosen to work through our lives. 2 Corinthians 10:12 says, “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” Here, we see that we are not to think our works are better than others. In contrast, 2 Corinthians 10:17-18 says, “But “he who glories, let him glory in the LORD.” For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.” Here, we see that we are to bring glory in the Lord and have an attitude and thankfulness for the fact that the Lord chose to work through our lives.

Galatians 6:5 says, “For each one shall bear his own load.” The word translated “load or burden” is the ministry that the Lord has given to us as individuals. The Lord wants us to help our physical and spiritual children understand the difference between the burdens of the world or the burdens of the law and the opportunities that the Lord gives us for ministry. Luke 11:46 tells us about the burdens of men when it says, “And He said, “Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.” In contrast, Christ gives us opportunities to serve Him. Matthew 11:29-30 which says, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. “For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” Here, we see that the load or opportunity that the Lord gives us is light. In fact Christ gives us opportunities to serve Him that bring joy to our lives. We can help our children realize that they can be filled with joy as they see how the Lord works through their lives to minister to others.

It is a great privilege to have the opportunity to serve the Lord and carry out ministries that have eternal value. Both our physical and spiritual children will be filled with joy as they see how the Lord chose to work through their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to experience that joy.

Learning to Look for Opportunities to Minister

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to bear the burdens of others. We saw that bearing burdens can include restoring those who are caught in any trespass. It can include helping those who are struggling with any kind of a heavy burden such as the death of a loved one. It can include helping young Christians grow in their faith. It can include many other things. In this topic we will focus on how we help our physical and spiritual children learn to look for opportunities to minister to others with their lives.

There are many different ways that we can serve others and minister to them. Galatians 6:6 says, "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches." One "who is taught" is a person that has received instruction directly from another Christian. Here, we see that the one who is teaching is sharing the Word of God with the other person to help the other person in their spiritual growth and understanding. In Luke 1:3-4 we read, "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed." Luke knew that Theophilus had been taught the teachings of Christ by listening to others who told him what Christ had said and done. However, Luke was led by the Lord to give that teaching to Theophilus in written form so that he could know with certainty the things that he had heard from the words of others.

The last part of the verse speaks of "him who teaches". In 1 Corinthians 14:18-20 Paul uses the word in this way. Those verses say, "I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature." Paul said that if he spoke to the Corinthians in another language or tongue that they did not understand that it would mean nothing to them. He said it was more important to speak five words that would teach them than to speak ten thousand words that they could not understand. As a result, we see that the purpose of teaching is to help people gain understanding of the Word of God so that they can apply the Word in their daily lives. The purpose of teaching is to give understanding that will produce spiritual maturity.

In this verse we see that sharing is to go both ways. The word that is translated "share" means to become a sharer or a partner. In some situations this means that two people discuss the Word of God together and learn from each other. In other situations it may mean that people share financially to help those who are teaching them. Philippians 4:15-16 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." In these verses we see that Paul had shared the Word of God with the Philippians and the Philippians had later shared their finances with Paul to help him take the Gospel to other places.

In Romans 15:26-27 we see that the Christians in Macedonia had shared in a similar way with the Christians in Jerusalem. Those verses say, "For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things." Here, we see that the Christians in Macedonia heard about the poor among the saints in Jerusalem and so they sent a gift to help them with their physical needs. As a result, we see that we can share with one

another in many different ways as a part of our ministry to others.

We also see that ministry can bring spiritual rewards. Galatians 6:7-8 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.” Those who choose to sow to the flesh instead of the Spirit will reap corruption. In contrast, those who choose to sow to the Spirit will reap everlasting life and eternal rewards.

We are warned that people can deceive themselves so that they think that they will receive eternal rewards even though they are sowing to the flesh. However, God says that He will not be mocked. Even David learned that he would reap what he had sown to the flesh. 2 Samuel 12:13-14 says, “So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. “However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die.” David made a choice to sin and he reaped the consequences of that choice. The child that was born as a result of that sin died and brought great sorrow to the life of David. That is why we want to help our children learn the importance of sowing to the Spirit instead of the flesh.

That is why Galatians 6:9 goes on to say, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” To grow weary means to become exhausted or to be totally spiritless. Paul gave us an example of one who did not grow weary in ministry for the Lord. 2 Corinthians 4:1-2 says, “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” Paul did not grow weary or lose heart even though it meant suffering but continued to minister because he understood the mercy that the Lord had shown to him. In 2 Corinthians 4:16 he added, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.” Paul understood the fact that the Lord renewed his spirit daily even though his physical body was wearing out.

Paul also encouraged the Christians in Thessalonica not to become exhausted doing good. 2 Thessalonians 3:13 says, “But *as for* you, brethren, do not grow weary *in* doing good.” The Thessalonians had only been Christians for a fairly short period of time so they were all fairly new Christians. As a result, Paul encouraged them to continue doing good and not to grow weary as they did good. In the same way we need to continue to encourage our physical and spiritual children to do good at every opportunity that the Lord opens for them to do things that have eternal value.

We see that was the same encouragement that Paul gave to the Christians in Galatia even though they were also fairly new Christians. Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” The word that is translated “opportunity” means a fixed and definite period of time. That fixed or definite period of time is the time that the Lord has given each one of us to live on this earth. Here, we see that as long as the Lord has given us life and left us on this earth that He still has ministry for each Christian to do. That is why Ephesians 5:16 says, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Here, we see that we are to make the best use of the time that the Lord has given to each of us individually because we are living in evil days.

Colossians 4:5-6 tells us how to redeem or make the best use of the time that the Lord has given to each one of us as individuals. Those verses say, “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 we are to use the opportunities that the Lord gives us to share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians. We are to walk in wisdom toward them. This means that we are to look for every opportunity that the Lord opens for us to share the Gospel. Each time those opportunities come we are to share the Gospel with grace.

We are also to let our words be seasoned with salt. Salt causes thirst, preserves and purifies. Here, we see that we are to share the Gospel in such a way that it causes people to want to hear more about Christ. Then 1 Peter 3:15 says, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” As we share in such a way that people want to hear more about what Christ did to provide forgiveness of sins and eternal life, we are told to pray that the Lord will give us the particular words that we need to answer each question. This is how we show our children how to do good to all people.

We see that we are to also show our children how to look for opportunities to do good to those who are of the household of faith. The household of faith refers to all Christians. The Christian life is a shared life and we are to look for opportunities to share our lives with other Christians so that we can help them become more effective in the ministries that the Lord has given them. That is why Christ said in Mark 10:43-45, “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.” We are to follow the example of Christ and show our physical and spiritual children how to give their lives for the sake of others. The Lord will work as we serve. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to look for opportunities to minister to both Christians and to those who are not yet Christians.

Learning to Glory in the Cross

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to look for opportunities to minister to others. We saw that the Lord has given each person a certain period of time in which to serve Him. As Christians each of us are to use that time to serve one another and to serve those who do not yet know Christ. This ministry for Christ is what gives our lives meaning and purpose and we want to help our physical and spiritual children live a life that has great meaning and purpose. In this topic we are going to see that we also want to help our children learn to glory in the cross.

Paul said in Galatians 6:11, “See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!” We saw in an earlier topic that Paul had some kind of a physical infirmity when he visited the Galatians. In Galatians 4:15 we read, “What then was the blessing you *enjoyed*? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.” This statement would possibly indicate that the physical infirmity was a problem related to his eyes. Here, we see that Paul used large letters as he wrote this letter. Since the parchments on which they wrote letters in that day were very expensive, this would indicate again the possibility of eye problems or disease. However, we see that Paul was ready to suffer with physical problems in order to share the Word of God with others.

Paul was concerned about what the false teachers that had come to Galatia were teaching. Galatians 6:12-13 says, “As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these *would* compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.” Here, we see that the false teachers were like the hypocrites about whom Christ warned people. Matthew 6:5-7 says, “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. “But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. “And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.” We see that the hypocrites loved to try and impress people. Here, we see that these false teachers were doing the same thing.

The false teachers wanted to force the new Christians to become circumcised and keep the Jewish law so that they could boast that these new Christians were following their teachings. These false teachers had developed this false religion because they chose not to follow Christ and suffer persecution for His sake. Here, we see that false teachers often have somewhat of an understanding of Christianity but are unwilling to follow Christ. Instead they choose to develop a religion of works that will cause others to be controlled by fear and follow them. Paul described such false teachers in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 where we read, “For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” Their end will be according to their works because all nonbelievers will be judged according to their works according to Revelation 20:11-15.

These false teachers had the same goal as the scribes and Pharisees. In fact they could even have been scribes or Pharisees. Matthew 23:15 says, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make

him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” Here, we see that the goal of the scribes and Pharisees was to get people who would follow them and their teachings. These false teachers wanted to boast that they had persuaded some of the Christians to follow their false teachings and keep the Jewish law. At the same time these false teachers did not obey the law themselves. It is common that false teachers do not follow their own teachings but try to get others to follow what they teach.

Paul said that it was not his desire to boast that people were his followers. Instead Paul described his desire in Galatians 6:14-15 where we read, “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. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.” Here, we see a goal that we have for our children. If they are going to boast about anything, we want to help them boast about the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. That will only be the focus of our children if that is our focus. Paul described the goal of his life in Philippians 1:21 when he said, “For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.” Our children will only develop that as a goal for their lives if they see that it is the goal of our life.

Paul said that the world had been crucified to him and he to the world. In Galatians 2:20 Paul said, “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.” If we glory in the cross, we will have this same attitude. We will realize that we have been crucified with Christ and now live the life that we live by faith. We will have that attitude as we grow in our understanding of the love of Christ that caused Him to give Himself for us. Our children will develop that attitude as they see it modeled in our lives.

Many people want to make rules for people to follow. For the Jewish false teachers, their key goal was to get people to be circumcised and agree to keep the Jewish law. Paul explained to the new Christians in Galatia that circumcision meant nothing. In the same way, uncircumcision meant nothing. Once we come to Christ, the same thing is true for us in our lives. 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 law showed us that we were sinners that needed to come to Christ. However, once we came to Christ we are no longer under the Jewish law. That is why no Christian can ever grow in their spiritual life by trying to keep the law. We now have a life of faith because we have been set free from the law.

Because of the fact that we have been set free from the law, we are a new creation. 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 because our sins have been blotted out and we have been given a new nature with new desires. Acts 3:19 tells us that our sins are blotted out at the moment of repentance. That verse says, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Then 2 Peter 1:4 says, “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.” Because we now have the divine nature in our lives, that new nature has given us the desire to please the Lord by the things that we do.

We see that the new nature has also given us the strength to walk in a new way as we yield to the Holy Spirit. Galatians 6:16 says, “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God.” We have seen that the new commandment is to love one another as Christ has loved us. Ephesians 5:1-2 says, “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.” We are able to walk in love as we imitate God because 1 John 5:8 says that God is love. We also have been given an example of that love because of the fact that Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice to show us that love.

As we show our children by our example how to walk in this new way, we see that they will experience the peace and the mercy of God. This is another reason why we want to show our children how to glory in the cross. Philippians 4:6-7 says, “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.” We can glory in the cross because the cross is what made it possible for both we and our children to experience the peace of God in our hearts.

Paul was so thankful for the cross that he counted it a privilege to bear the marks of suffering in his own body. Galatians 6:17-18 says, “From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.” Paul so chose to glory in the cross that he counted it a privilege to suffer for Christ. This was also true of the apostles. Acts 5:40-41 says, “And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” As we understand the love of Christ for us, we also realize that it is a privilege to suffer for Christ.

The Lord will bless your physical and spiritual children as they learn to glory in the cross of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you show them by your example what it means to glory in the cross of Christ.