

Helping Our Children Learn to Handle Opposition

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 9**

By

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Growing Godly Families Series

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1.

Learning to Deal With Suffering

Today, we are beginning a new series of topics that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and apply in their lives from the book of 2 Corinthians. Paul wrote this book to the Christians in Corinth at a time when many of them were rejecting his ministry to them. As a result, Paul teaches us many lessons about the way to deal with suffering and rejection in this book. This is one of the things that we want to help our children learn to understand and know how to deal with if they are going to become godly, reproducing Christians.

Paul began this letter by saying in 2 Corinthians 2:1-2, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Here, we see that Paul was an apostle because that was the will of God. In 1 Corinthians 15:8-9, Paul said, “Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” Paul realized that he was an apostle by the will of God even though he did not meet all of the qualifications. The Lord also chooses to work through our lives even when we do not feel qualified. Timothy joined with Paul in sending this letter to the Corinthians.

This letter was sent to the church at Corinth and to all of the Christians that lived in Achaia or what is today southern Greece. Here, we see that Paul and Timothy focused on the whole region and not just the city. This is an important lesson for us also. We need to learn how to minister to a region in the same way. Wherever we are, the Lord wants to work through our lives to reach out to the whole surrounding region. Paul and Timothy wanted all of the Christians to experience both the grace and the peace of the Lord.

As we begin the first chapter of this book, we see that Paul and Timothy were going through a time of tribulation and suffering. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” The word that is translated “tribulation” speaks of going through a time of pressure, distress or oppression. However, instead of complaining, Paul and Timothy looked at what God was doing in their lives through this tribulation.

God understood the pressures that they faced in their lives because He is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. God had provided comfort to them in this time of tribulation. However, they explained what the Lord was doing in their own lives during this difficult time. They were experiencing the comfort of God, but they also realized that the Lord was equipping them to comfort others as they went through times of suffering. Here, we see a key lesson about suffering. The Lord allows suffering in our lives to prepare us for ministry to others during their times of suffering. This is why James 1:2 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.” The Lord is working through the trials that we experience in our lives to equip us to share the comfort that God has given us. As a result, we can have joy even in times of suffering.

2 Corinthians 1:5-7 says, “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, *it is*

for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you *is* steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also *you will partake* of the consolation.” A key thing to notice here is that the word translated “comfort” in verses 3 and 4 is the same word that is translated “consolation” in verses 5-7 so that word is used six times in these verses.

The word that is translated “consolation” or “comfort” means *a calling near for help or that which provides encouragement, comfort or refreshment*. Paul and Timothy were experiencing suffering for the sake of Christ. However, at the same time, Paul and Timothy saw that the Lord was giving them strength and boldness even in the middle of their suffering. Here, Paul makes it clear that the Lord is allowing them to suffer these things so that they can provide encouragement and comfort to the Christians in Corinth and other places. In 2 Corinthians 7:6-7, Paul and Timothy wrote, “Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.” Paul and Timothy had experienced comfort both from the coming of Titus and from the report that he gave about the church at Corinth.

At the same time, Paul and Timothy said that if they were comforted, it was for the encouragement and salvation of the Christians at Corinth. Here, we see that just as the message from Titus brought encouragement to Paul and Timothy, they wanted the Christians in Corinth to experience this same encouragement. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 8:16-17, Paul wrote that Titus had developed this same concern for the Christians in Corinth. Those verses say, “But thanks *be* to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.” Here, we see that Paul also realized that many of the Corinthian Christians were also suffering for their faith.

That is why 2 Corinthians 1:7 says, “And our hope for you *is* steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also *you will partake* of the consolation.” Here, we see that Paul and Timothy were concerned as they heard about the suffering that the Christians in Corinth were experiencing. We see that Paul and Timothy wanted to be a help and encouragement to these Christians that were suffering by bearing their burdens with them. Galatians 6:2 says, “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Paul and Timothy wanted those who were suffering to know that their hope for the Corinthian Christians was steadfast. The word that is translated “steadfast” means *firm or sure*. Here, we see that Paul and Timothy wanted the Corinthians to know that they had a firm desire for God to give the Christians the same comfort and encouragement that they were experiencing.

Paul went on to explain more about the deliverance that they had experienced in Asia. 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 says, “For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver *us*, you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift *granted* to us through many.” Here, we see that they had experienced great suffering and trouble in Asia.

Paul said that they were burdened beyond measure. The problems they experienced were so difficult that they even wondered if they would survive. Paul said that it seemed like it could become more than their strength could even bear. They felt that they would not even escape with their lives because these problems were so difficult. Paul even said that they had the sentence of death in themselves. Here, we see Paul felt that they had a death sentence from which there was no escape through their own efforts. Paul had written earlier to the Galatians

in Galatians 2:20 which 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.” Paul knew that they could not depend on themselves but had to live by faith in Christ.

As a result, Paul realized that they could not trust in themselves but had to trust in God. Here is a key lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand when they are going through difficult situations and problems. At that point, our children need to be reminded that they serve the God who raises the dead. Paul had reminded the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:56-57, “The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We want to remind our children that we serve the One who raises the dead.

Paul went on to speak of the way that the Lord delivers us from death. Paul said that the Lord had delivered them in the past. Paul said that the Lord delivers us day by day. Paul said that as a result we can trust the Lord to deliver us from whatever may come in the future. We want to remind our children of this same thing when they are suffering or going through very difficult periods in their lives.

Paul also reminded the Corinthians that they had a part in this deliverance through their prayers for Paul and Timothy. Here, we are reminded of the power of prayer. Philippians 4:6-7 tells us, “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 also want to help our children learn to pray with thanksgiving. As they learn to give thanks for the way that the Lord will answer their prayers, they will experience the peace of God in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children look to the Lord who raises the dead when they suffer.

Learning to Help Others Become Fellow Workers

In our last topic, we saw how to help our physical and spiritual children when they are going through times of great suffering in their lives. We want to remind them that they serve the God who raises the dead and as a result, He is the One that has the power to go with them through any time of suffering. Today, we want to focus on another key lesson as we encourage our physical and spiritual children. We want to help them learn how to become fellow workers and partners with us in ministry. In addition, we also want to help them learn how to help others learn to become full partners in ministry.

In 2 Corinthians 1:12-14, we read, “For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you. For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end (as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also *are* ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.” The word that is translated “boasting” means *the act of glorying*. When we use this word in talking about what we do, it is pride. When we use this word to describe what the Lord is doing in our lives, it means to give glory to the Lord. 2 Corinthians 7:3-4 says, “I do not say *this* to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. Great *is* my boldness of speech toward you, great *is* my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.” Here, we see that Paul was telling others about the way that the Lord had worked in the lives of the Corinthian Christians.

In verse 12, Paul was talking about the way that the Lord had worked in his life. He said that he had a clear conscience because of the fact that God had worked in his life in such a way that his actions were carried out with humbleness and godly purity. Paul knew that he had not depended on human wisdom. Paul had shown humbleness both to those who were not Christians and to those who were Christians. Paul said that he chose to write with words that they could read and understand. Paul also said that he and Timothy were the reason the Corinthians could boast just as the Corinthians were the reason that they would be able to boast when we all stand before the Lord. The reason that they could boast or rejoice in each other was due to the fact that they would be in heaven together.

We saw in the previous topic that Paul and Timothy had been fearful for their lives in Asia. In addition, they felt the pain of being misunderstood and falsely accused by part of the Corinthian Christians. That is why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:15-16, “And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit--to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea.” Here, we see that Paul had wanted to visit Corinth twice, once on the way to Macedonia and then again a second time on the way from Macedonia to Judea. Paul wanted to have the opportunity to have two visits to give encouragement to the Corinthian Christians. Here, we see the great love that Paul had for the Corinthians even though some of the Christians were making false accusations against Paul. In 1 Corinthians 4:13-14, Paul had written, “...being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*.” We see that Paul had the love of a father for his children in spite of false accusations.

It had become necessary for Paul to change his plans and not visit Corinth on the way to Macedonia. As a result, those who were against Paul in Corinth had told the other Christians

that they could not trust Paul. That is why 2 Corinthians 1:17-20 says, “Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? But *as God is faithful*, our word to you was not Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us--by me, Silvanus, and Timothy--was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” Some of the Corinthians said that Paul had shared his plans lightly or without really meaning what he said.

Others said that Paul just made his plans according to the flesh. By this, they meant that Paul did not even seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in his planning. Paul wanted to make it clear that when he said yes that he meant yes; when he said no that he meant no. Here, we see that there were people in Corinth that were accusing him of making promises that he did not mean. Acts 20:1 says, “After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to *himself*, embraced *them*, and departed to go to Macedonia.” Here, we see that Paul had actually been forced to leave Ephesus quickly when they wanted to kill him and that was why he had to escape by going immediately to Macedonia because there was not time to wait for a boat going from Ephesus to Corinth.

There are also times in our lives where people, even other Christians, make false accusations against us or against our physical and spiritual children. We need to help our children be prepared to know that what they have done is right before the Lord even when people are accusing them falsely. Paul said that he knew that God was faithful. God knew that the accusations from some in Corinth were false. God knew that Paul did not say yes when he really meant no. Paul said that the message that he, Silvanus and Timothy had preached was not a yes and no message. They had preached about the Son of God, Jesus Christ and the message of Christ is unchangeable. Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Here, we see that Paul realized that those who were accusing him were actually trying to say that his message about Christ was a false message.

Paul then referred to the promises of God. Paul said that every promise of God is yes in Him. Every promise that God made can be concluded with an Amen. When people say “Amen”, it means *Let it be so*. When God says “Amen”, it means *It is and it shall be so*. Paul had shared many promises from the Old Testament during his time in Corinth. Paul said that God will keep every promise that He has made because His promises are unchangeable. When our children are accused falsely, we need to just encourage them to remember that the promises of the Lord are unchangeable. We need to pray with them that the Lord will give them His strength to turn any false accusations over to the Lord so that they can experience His peace.

As our children make the choice to ask the Lord for His strength, we need to remind them of the promise in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. Those verses say, “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” In these two verses, we see that God establishes us in Christ. We also see that God has sealed us and given us the Holy Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. This promise is also given in Ephesians 1:13-14 where we read, “In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Here, we see that God has placed the Holy Spirit in our lives as His seal of the fact that we are His children. The Holy Spirit is also the guarantee of our salvation and eternal inheritance until we enter into that eternal inheritance.

We also need to help our children understand another key ministry of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:15-16 says, “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.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with

our spirit that we are children of God.” We want our children to understand why they do not need to be fearful when people make false accusations against them. We see that the Holy Spirit adopted us into the family of God and the Holy Spirit continues to testify to our human spirit that we are the children of God. We can choose to listen to false accusations of others or we can choose to rest in the fact that the Holy Spirit reminds our human spirit that we are the children of God.

2 Corinthians 1:23-24 says, “Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.” Here, we see that Paul said that another reason he did not come immediately to Corinth was to spare them. In a topic on chapter seven, we will see that the people of Corinth had repented of their sin. Paul could now come with joy because of their repentance instead of having to remind them of their need to repent. He also reminded them that he did not have dominion over their faith. He said his ministry was not to rule over their faith.

Instead of ruling over their faith, Paul said that the Christians in Corinth were fellow workers in the work of the Lord. Here, we see that the goal of Paul was always to help others become “adult sons and daughters” and full partners in ministry. We do the same thing as we help our children learn to take responsibility for their own choices and help others learn to do the same. Paul said in Philemon 1:15-17, “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.” Paul treated Philemon as a partner in ministry and explained to him the importance of helping Onesimus become a beloved brother and partner in ministry. Even when some of the Corinthians spoke against Paul, he still treated them as partners in ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children mature and become full partners in ministry.

3.

Learning to Restore Those Who Sin

In our last topic, we saw that Paul and Timothy had faced false accusations from some of the Christians in Corinth. Instead of trying to exercise his authority as an apostle, we saw that Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth that he did not have dominion over their faith. Instead, he reminded them that they were fellow workers and partners in the ministry of the Lord. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children become fellow workers and full partners in ministry. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul had treated them as partners by reminding them that it was their responsibility to discipline a brother that was living in open sin in their church. In our topic today, we are going to see that the sinning brother had repented and Paul now tells them how to restore the brother.

In 2 Corinthians 2:1-2, we read, “But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me?” Paul had determined within himself that he would not come to visit the Corinthians in sorrow. The word that is translated “determined” here is most frequently translated “judged”. It means *to judge or to pronounce an opinion about what is right and wrong*. Paul used this word a total of 9 times in 1 Corinthians 5 and the first six verses of chapter 6. In those two chapters, he pointed out that Christians are to exercise discipline when a Christian is living in open sin. However, they are not to judge those who are unbelievers. Here, Paul said that he had reached the conclusion within himself that he would not come to visit the Corinthians in sorrow. Paul realized that when he had written to them about the need to discipline the sinning brother, he had caused them sorrow. Now, he wanted to come in joy.

Paul had written previously to the Corinthians with great sorrow. 2 Corinthians 2:3-4 says, “And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is *the joy* of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.” Paul describes what he felt within himself as he wrote to them about the brother that they needed to discipline. Paul wanted to experience joy when he came to visit them this time. He had confidence that the joy that he had was the joy of all of the Christians in Corinth. The word translated “confidence” means *to persuade or be persuaded*. Paul was persuaded that the Corinthian Christians were also filled with joy about the man that had repented of his rebellion after living in open sin.

Paul said that he had written out of much affliction and anguish of heart. He said that he wrote with many tears. He said that he had written to them because of the great love that he had for them. Here, we see that Paul shows again the great concern of a spiritual parent. In 1 Corinthians 4:15-17, Paul had written, “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. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” These verses were written just a few verses before he wrote about the need to discipline the Christian living in open sin. In these verses, we see that Paul had written with a heavy heart because of the love that he had for the Corinthian Christians. Now, he was filled with joy because he could write to the Corinthians to help them understand how to restore another.

The church had exercised discipline and this had caused the brother that had been living in open sin to repent. Now, Paul wanted to help the Christians in Corinth learn what it meant to forgive and restore the brother to the fellowship of the church. 2 Corinthians 2:5-7 says, "But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent--not to be too severe. This punishment which *was inflicted* by the majority *is* sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you *ought* rather to forgive and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow." Paul realized that the sinning brother had caused the Christians in Corinth to experience grief. The word translated "grief" means *to make sorrowful or to cause to be sad*. The church in Corinth had experienced sorrow as they had followed the instructions of Paul and exercised discipline toward the sinning brother.

Paul wanted the church to realize what they were to do now that the man had repented of his sin. Paul did not want the church to be too severe in their discipline. The discipline of the majority of the church had accomplished its purpose. Hebrews 12:11 says, "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness." (NASB) Discipline is always painful. However, here, we see that godly discipline done in a godly way will produce a harvest of righteousness. This means that godly discipline will lead to repentance instead of causing a person to feel rejected. It will also produce an inner peace in the lives of each of those who have been affected by the discipline.

Paul said that the punishment that had been inflicted by the majority was sufficient for the man. We notice two things in this statement. First, not everyone in the church had participated in the discipline. Some of the people had ignored the action of the church. However, we do see that a majority of the people did participate in the discipline. Second, we see that Paul said that the discipline was sufficient and it was now time to restore the man since he had repented. Galatians 6:1 tell us that if someone is caught in a sin, someone who is spiritual should restore him gently. The goal of any church discipline is restoration of the person that is living in open sin. This is to be done with gentleness. Otherwise, those involved in the action will be tempted to sin themselves.

As a result, the church was now to do two things. They were to forgive the man and also to comfort or encourage him. This was necessary so that he would not be destroyed by sorrow. The word that is translated "forgive" means *to pardon or let go*. This word is used twice in Ephesians 4:32 where we read, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." We see that we forgive others because of the fact that Christ has forgiven us. We also see that we are to encourage the person that we forgive.

Part of the ministry of encouragement to a person that has been disciplined by a church is to restore that person to the full fellowship of the church. 2 Corinthians 2:8-11 says, "Therefore I urge you to reaffirm *your* love to him. For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. Now whom you forgive anything, I also *forgive*. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." Here, we see how to restore a person.

The first thing to do to restore a person to the fellowship of the church is for the church to reaffirm the love of the church for that person. The word that is translated "reaffirm" means *to confirm publicly*. The word that is used for love is the word that speaks of the love that Christ has shown to us. In Luke 15, we are given three illustrations of great rejoicing when a lost person repents. In the same way, a church should have a time of great rejoicing when a person that has been disciplined repents.

Paul also explained the reason why he had written to the church. He said that he had written to the church to put them to the test and see if they would be obedient. The word that is translated “test” means *approved or tested character*. Paul used this word to describe Timothy in Philippians 2:22 where we read, “But you know his proven character, that as a son with *his* father he served with me in the gospel.” Here, we see that Paul pointed out the fact that by taking action to discipline the sinning brother than the church had shown their godly character. Now, Paul was asking the church to show its obedience by fully restoring the brother that had been living in open sin.

Paul also said that whoever they forgave, he also forgave. Paul said that he had forgiven that person in the presence of Christ. Here, we see that Paul recognized all that he did was done in the sight of Christ. He wanted the church to know that he had fully forgiven the sinning brother and that Christ could give testimony of that fact. Here, we see that restoration involves full forgiveness because we want to please Christ.

We also see a final reason for fully restoring a person that has sinned. We recognize that it is important to fully restore so that Satan will not take advantage of us. John 10:10 tells the goal of Satan when that verse 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.” The goal of Satan is always to steal, to kill and to destroy. We need to realize that he will try to destroy the peace and unity of both the person that repented and also of the whole church if he can destroy that peace.

Paul said that we know Satan will try his best to take advantage of us because we are not ignorant of the way that Satan works. The word that is translated “devices” speaks of *the evil purposes of Satan or the way a person thinks*. One of the ways that Satan will try to work in our lives is to cause us to keep thinking evil about the person that has been restored. We want to help our children understand that true forgiveness means we will no longer hold past sin against that person. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to restore a person that has lived in open sin.

4.

Learning to Triumph in Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we are to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to restore a person that has been disciplined by the church as a result of living in open sin. We also saw why it is important to restore such a person and reaffirm our love to that person. Today, we are going to see that Christ wants us to help our children learn how the Lord works in each of our lives to cause us to triumph as we serve Him.

After Paul left Ephesus to travel to Macedonia and later to Corinth, he traveled through the city of Troas. There he had the opportunity to share the Gospel before he traveled on to Macedonia. 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.” We see that some important things happened while Paul was in Troas.

When Paul came to Troas, we see that the Lord opened a door to make it possible for Paul to preach the Gospel in Troas. We want to help our children understand that the Lord is the One who opens doors and closes doors for us. Acts 16:6-9 says, “Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’” Here, we see that on an earlier trip the Lord had closed certain doors for Paul. When Paul had come to this same city of Troas, the Lord had shown Paul that He was going to open a door for him to share the Gospel in Macedonia.

In Colossians 4:2-3, Paul asked the Colossians to pray for him. In those verses, he said, “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains.” Here, we see that Paul asked the Christians in Colosse to pray that the Lord would open the door for him to share the Gospel. Here is an important lesson that we need to explain to our children. We need to encourage them to pray that the Lord will open the door for them to share the Gospel. When the Lord opens the door, we will see the Lord work in the lives of the people with whom we share the Gospel.

Paul did not have rest in Troas as he was preaching the Gospel, because he was eagerly waiting for the return of Titus from the city of Corinth. As a result, when Titus did not come to Troas, Paul left Troas and went to Macedonia to find Titus. When he got to Macedonia, Titus had not yet arrived there. 2 Corinthians 7:5-7 says, “For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside *were* conflicts, inside *were* fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.” Here, we see that when Titus did arrive in Macedonia, he had a good report about what the Lord had done in the city of Corinth. As a result, this good report brought great encouragement to Paul. Here, we are reminded that even leaders need encouragement.

The coming of Titus brought such joy to Paul as he remembered the arrival of Titus that 2 Corinthians 2:14 says, “Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.” Here, we see that Paul was

filled with joy both because of the arrival of Titus and also because of the good report that he brought about the Christians in Corinth. In the city of Rome, when a Roman general would return after a great victory, there would be a great parade called the Triumph to honor the general. Paul was illustrating the fact that God also causes us to experience victory through Christ.

During the parade, the flowers that were thrown in the streets ahead of the parade would give off a wonderful smell or fragrance as the horses stepped on them. Paul was showing us that God uses us to help people clearly understand the Gospel and that message is like the wonderful smell of the flowers as the knowledge of God spreads to every place where we share the Gospel. This is a beautiful illustration of the way that the Lord uses the ministry of any person that shares the Gospel with others. In the sight of God, our ministry is like the wonderful aroma of flowers with a beautiful smell. Here, we see a real picture of the desire of God for the message of the Gospel to be spread in every place. We want to help our children understand how God views their ministry as they share the Gospel with others.

In 2 Corinthians 2:15-17, we read, “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.” Here, we see the great beauty that God sees as the knowledge of the Gospel is spread abroad. God says that our message is the fragrance of Christ. The beauty of the message of Christ is described in Isaiah 52:7 where we read, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good *things*, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” The message of salvation is good news to all who will hear and receive it.

However, we are reminded of the fact that those who hear that message will respond to that message in two different ways. Some will hear that message and it will be a message of salvation and to others it will be a message of judgment. In the parade of triumph in Rome, it was the aroma or smell of death to the enemy that had been defeated. In the same way, to those who reject the message of the Gospel it is an aroma of death. This is the choice that every person must make. Moses warned the people of Israel that they also faced this same choice. Deuteronomy 30:19 says, “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.” In the same way, we want to help our children realize the importance of encouraging others to choose life.

We see that the message of the Gospel is the fragrance of life to those who choose to place their faith in Christ. Christ said in John 10:10, “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.” We see that the goal of Satan is to destroy people by encouraging them to reject the message that we share. In contrast, the goal of Christ is to give life to all who will come to Him to receive that abundant life.

This message is such an important message that it is important that we depend on the Lord to give us His strength to share the message clearly instead of trying to share it in our own strength. We are not sufficient in our own strength to share such a message. However, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” As we yield our lives to the Lord, He is able to work through our lives to defeat every thing that exalts itself against God

and cause others to bring their thoughts into obedience to Christ. That is why Ephesians 6:17-18 tell us that our only offensive weapons in this battle are the Word of God and prayer.

Paul also contrasted his teaching with the teaching of the false teachers that were present in Corinth and most of the other cities where the Gospel was being shared. Paul said that he and those with him were not like so many who were peddling the Word of God. The word that is translated “peddling” means *to make money*. A person who is peddling the Word of God is a person that is corrupting and changing the message of the Gospel for their own personal gain. This is why false teachers teach what they teach. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of evil*, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Here, we see that false teachers are controlled by their love for money. Paul also described the character of such teachers a few verses earlier when he said in 1 Timothy 6:5, “Useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of gain*. From such withdraw yourself.” Here, we see that those who change the Gospel for personal gain are corrupt and lack the truth.

In contrast, Paul said that he and those with him were sharing the Gospel out of a heart of purity. They were not seeking personal gain for themselves. Instead, they were seeking to please God in all that they taught. Here, we see an important lesson that we want to model for our physical and spiritual children in our own lives. We want them to see that our whole goal is to please the Lord as we share the Gospel. As our children observe our lives, they can see that we are motivated by the love of Christ as we share the Gospel with others. In this way, we show them how to share the Gospel out of a pure heart by our example. In doing that, we are showing them how to triumph in their own lives as they serve the Lord and share the Gospel with others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to triumph in Christ.

Learning Why the Spirit Gives Life

In our last topic, we saw that God causes us to triumph as we share the Gospel with the right motive. We saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example how to share the Gospel to please Christ and not for self-gain. In our topic today, we are going to see why others learn about the power of Spirit of the living God as they see us yield our lives to the control of the Holy Spirit.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, he asked them two questions. Those questions are given for us in 2 Corinthians 3:1 where we read, “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you or *letters* of commendation from you?” The word that is translated “commend” means *to present, to introduce or to place together*. It can be used in either a good sense or a negative sense. In 2 Corinthians 10:12, we read, “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.” We see in this verse that “commend” is used in a negative sense to talk about those who are trying to make themselves appear good to others. In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul is asking if he and those traveling with him needed letters of introduction to the Corinthians.

Some false teachers would bring letters that they said were from one of the apostles or another leader in the church to give the appearance that they were true teachers. Such false teachers had probably written the letters themselves. Paul said that he and those with him did not need to write such false letters for themselves. Paul then asked if the Corinthians felt that they needed to have letters of commendation about Paul and those who traveled with them. He asked if they needed letters from them in order to be accepted by them. Here, we see that Paul is making it clear that they already knew Paul and his traveling companions.

That is why 2 Corinthians 3:2 says, “You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men.” Paul said that the Christians in Corinth were the only letter that he needed. Paul said that the Corinthians were written in the hearts of Paul and his companions. This meant that they were loved and close to the hearts of Paul and his companions. It also meant that Paul prayed for them without ceasing. Ephesians 3:16-19 gives us an example of how Paul prayed for Christians in other areas. Those verses say, “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.” Here, we see five things for which we should pray for Christians in other areas even though we do not see them regularly. As Paul prayed for other Christians, he prayed that:

1. God would grant them according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.
2. Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith.
3. They would be rooted and grounded in love.
4. They would be able to comprehend the width, length, depth and height of the love of Christ which passes knowledge.
5. They would be filled with all the fullness of God.

We see why Paul could say that the Corinthian Christians were written in their hearts because they prayed for them continually. Paul said that the lives of the Corinthian Christians were the

most important letter that could be written. The other people of Corinth knew the Christians. They knew how the Lord had transformed the lives of the Christians. Paul said that the changed lives of the Corinthian Christians were the most important introduction for Paul and the team with him. Everyone could see that their lives were changed by the message of Christ that Paul and the team had shared with them. In the same way, the lives of our physical and spiritual children are the best testimony of the effectiveness of our lives.

Paul described the changed lives of the Christians in Corinth when he said in 2 Corinthians 3:3, “Clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart.” Paul said that their lives were a letter of Christ. However, they were not a letter that was written with ink. Instead, they were a letter written by the Spirit of the living God. Here, we see that the Holy Spirit is the one who changes and transforms our lives as we yield our lives to the Holy Spirit moment by moment. The Old Testament law was written by God on tablets of stone and given to Moses. In contrast, the lives of the Christians in Corinth had been changed and transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the same way, our physical and spiritual children are the letter that we have written in our lives and ministry. 1 Corinthians 4:17 says, “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” Timothy was a spiritual son of Paul. Paul said that Timothy was a faithful and beloved son. He said that Timothy would remind the Corinthians of the ways of Paul in Christ. Here, we see that that his example and his words were in agreement because he taught the same things and lived the same life wherever he went.

During the time of the early church, false Jewish teachers were trying to tell Gentile Christians that they also had to keep the Jewish law in order to be saved. Such false teachers were trying to keep the Law of Moses written on pieces of stone in their efforts to try and earn their salvation. In contrast, Paul said that true Christians are those who have the Holy Spirit living in their hearts. 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.” We have been set free from the Law of Moses and have been given spiritual life because the Holy Spirit has come into our human spirit and given us spiritual life.

We go on to read in 2 Corinthians 3:4-6, “And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” The false teachers thought that trying to keep the law was sufficient to make them acceptable to God. Paul made it clear that he did not try to depend on his own efforts to serve the Lord. In John 15:5, Christ told the disciples the night before He was crucified, “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.” Even as Christians, we will always fail if we try to depend on our own strength.

The word that is translated “sufficient” means *to have the ability to do what we do*. We do not have any ability to do the work of the Lord in our own strength. That is why 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 must have our sufficiency from God in order to have the power to do the work of the Lord. Here, we see that God has made us sufficient ministers of the new covenant. The old covenant was the law and

could only bring death because the law showed that we are all guilty of sin and that there is nothing we can do in ourselves to change.

In contrast, the Holy Spirit was given as our down payment and guarantee of the eternal life that we received by faith in Christ. 2 Corinthians 1:22 says, "Who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." However, the Holy Spirit is more than just the guarantee of our eternal life. Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure." We must realize that our sufficiency comes from 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." As we yield our lives to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit works in us. As a result, God makes it possible for every Christian to be sufficient as ministers of the new covenant.

The law kills because it shows that we are guilty of sin. In contrast, the Holy Spirit gives us life and power to serve the Lord. 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." God works in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit to cause change to happen in our lives. That change begins as the Holy Spirit comes into our human spirit. Because of the change in our human spirit, the Lord is able to transform our soul which includes our mind, emotions and will. Then, the Lord is able to carry out His work through our body because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit. 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." The Holy Spirit gives both we and our children life and the power to carry out the work that God has for each of us. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand that the Spirit gives life.

Learning the Glory of the New Covenant

In our last topic, we saw that the Holy Spirit gives us life. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God makes our lives sufficient. We saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the fact that God created us for good works. It is the new covenant that was made available by Christ shedding His blood for our sins on the cross that makes us sufficient. As a result of the fact that God has made our lives sufficient, we are able to be ministers of the new covenant. In our topic today, we will see that the Lord wants us to help our physical and spiritual children understand the glory of this new covenant.

In 2 Corinthians 3:7-8, we read, “But if the ministry of death, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?” The law which was written by God on the pieces of stone showed us that every person is guilty before God. Romans 3:19-20 says, “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.” The law (old covenant) could never make a person right with God. It could only show that every person was guilty before God.

However, even the law revealed the glory of God. This was clearly seen when Moses came down from the mountain with the law written on pieces of stone. Exodus 34:29-30 says, “Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony *were* in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.” Here, we see that the glory of God was reflected by the face of Moses. It was so great that the people were afraid to even come close to Moses.

Since even the old covenant that brought death had glory, Paul asks the question, “Will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?” Paul then answered that question in 2 Corinthians 3:9-11 where we read, “For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away *was* glorious, what remains *is* much more glorious.” The law was glorious even though it showed that every person was guilty of sin. Here, we see that the message of the new covenant is much more glorious than the old covenant. The reason that is true is because the message of the new covenant tells people how to have forgiveness of sin with the result that a person will also receive eternal life.

Moses was the only person whose face revealed the glory of the Lord when he brought the old covenant down from the mountain. In contrast, every Christian is called to have a part in the ministry of righteousness as we share with others how they can have forgiveness of sin and eternal life. The law has a purpose but its purpose is temporary. 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 purpose of the law was to bring us to Christ. Once we come to Christ, we are no longer under the law. In contrast, the ministry of righteousness is eternal because all who place their faith in Christ receive eternal life.

Because the ministry that the Lord has given to each one of us as Christians is so great, Paul gives us an example of the way that we should share the message of the forgiveness of sin through the death and resurrection of Christ. 2 Corinthians 3:12-15 says, “Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech--unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.” We want to be an example to our children of the way to share this message since we have this great hope in our lives.

Paul gave us an example of how to share this message. We see that he used great boldness of speech. The word that is translated “boldness” means *freedom in speaking, fearless confidence or cheerful courage*. This word is used three times in Acts 4. Acts 4:13 says, “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.” Peter and John had this boldness because verse 8 says that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit. We see that we can also have the same boldness as we pray as the early church did in Acts 4:29 where we read, “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word.” Here, we see that we need to pray that the Lord will give us boldness to speak His Word. The way the Lord answered that prayer is seen in Acts 4:31 where we read, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” We need to show our physical and spiritual children by our example the importance of praying for courage to share the message of the Gospel with boldness.

Paul also gave the Christians a specific prayer request as he asked them to pray for him in Ephesians 6:19-20, “And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” We also need to ask our children to pray that we will continue to speak the Gospel with boldness because the message of Christ’s death and resurrection is such a glorious message.

Moses put a veil over his face so that the people of Israel could not see the glory on his face as it faded away. Because Moses had a veil over his face, the people could not understand his words clearly as he spoke to them. However, we see that the people of Israel have a greater veil than the veil over the face of Moses. Paul said that the Jews still had a veil over their hearts. This veil over their hearts causes their minds to be blinded when the Old Testament is read. We see that the only One that can take away this veil over their hearts is Christ. As a result, they cannot understand the fact that the Old Testament continually points forward to the glorious ministry of Christ.

However, 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 tells us what happens to every person that turns to Christ and places his or her faith in the death and resurrection of Christ as the payment for their sin. Those verses say, “Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Here, we see that the Lord takes away the veil for everyone that turns to Him. As a result, we are able to see the glory of Christ throughout the Old and New Testaments.

We read that the Lord is the Spirit and that He gives us liberty. The word that is translated “liberty” speaks about the true liberty and freedom that we have to live as we should because of the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. 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.” Here, we see that the perfect law of liberty makes it possible for us to be obedient to the Word of God. Then, Galatians 5:13 further explains, “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 liberty gives us the freedom and the power to serve one another in love. This is due to the fact that we are now led by the love of Christ instead of driven by the fear of people.

The Holy Spirit helps us to see Christ as we study the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” The Holy Spirit helps us to understand and see Christ as we study the Word of God. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” As Christ lived on this earth, the disciples saw the glory of Christ.

Because the Holy Spirit now lives in our hearts, we see this same glory as the Holy Spirit gives us understanding of the Word of God. As we see this glory, it is like we are looking into a mirror. We see the glory of Christ. As we look at Him, He is changing us and our lives are being transformed. As a result, our lives also begin to reflect the glory of Christ. Just as the people of Israel saw the glory of God reflected on the face of Moses, the people around us begin to see the glory of Christ reflected in our lives. As we take root in Christ and His love, others see the love of Christ in our lives. As we yield to the Holy Spirit, others see the Holy Spirit work through our lives. As we provide an example for our physical and spiritual children, they also are being shown how their lives can reflect the glory of Christ as He works in them. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to reflect the glory of Christ.

Learning to Bring Glory to Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to glory in the new covenant. We saw that the Holy Spirit gives us liberty. That liberty gives us the freedom to serve others with the love of Christ. That liberty also makes it possible for us to be transformed in our lives so that our lives begin to reflect the glory of Christ. Today, we are going to build on that topic to see how we help our children learn to bring glory to Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 4:1, we read, “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.” Paul knew that he had received the mercy of God because he had been a persecutor of Christians before he became a Christian. However, we realize that every person who has become a Christian has received the mercy of God. As a result of the fact that we have received mercy, we also want to carry out the ministry that the Lord has given to us. When we go through trials or difficult times, we want to remind ourselves of the words in 1 Peter 1:7-9, “That the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of *your* souls.” Here, we see that we can rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible even in the middle of trials.

Just as Paul said of his own life, we do not want our children to lose heart when they go through trials. 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.” Instead of losing heart and becoming exhausted, we want to show our children that we want to look for opportunities to do good to others. The Lord has promised us that we will reap a reward if we do good instead of losing heart.

In order to be effective and bring glory to God, we follow the example of Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:2. That verse says, “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.” The word “renounce” means *to give up or put away*. First, we see that if we want to bring glory to God that we will give up the hidden things of shame. Hebrews 12:2 says, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Christ was willing to take our shame as he hung on the cross for us. As a result, He gives us the strength to give up the sins that will bring shame to our own lives. We want to give our children an example to follow by giving up such things.

Second, if we want to bring glory to God we will not walk in craftiness. The word that is translated “craftiness” means *to deceive others or to teach a false wisdom*. 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.” Here, we see that false teachers try to deceive weak Christians with their false teaching and worldly wisdom. If we are going to bring glory to God, we will help our children to learn the wisdom of God. In this way, we provide an example and we also equip them to share the wisdom of God with others.

Third, if we want to bring glory to God, we will not handle the Word of God deceitfully. The word that is translated “handle deceitfully” means *to corrupt or to tamper with*. The Jewish false teachers that were trying to deceive the new Christians during the development of the early church were trying to teach the Gentiles that they had to follow the Jewish law in order to be saved. They were corrupting the Word of God by their false teaching. We want to provide an example for our children by accurately explaining the Word of God to them so that they will not be deceived or try to deceive others.

Fourth, if we want to bring glory to God, we will clearly reveal the truth of the Word of God. Ephesians 4:15 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.” In order to clearly reveal the truth of the Word of God, we see that we are to do two things. We are to speak the truth and we are to speak the truth in love. We are either driven by the fear of man or we are led by the love of Christ. If we are controlled by fear as we speak the Word of God, we may twist the meaning of the Word of God because of our fear of people. In contrast, if we speak the Word of God in love, we will seek to speak it in a way that will be both accurate and done with love. That kind of speaking the Word will bring glory to God.

Not everyone will understand even when we speak the Word of God accurately and in love. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 says, “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” In our last topic, we saw that Paul said the Jews had a veil on their hearts so that they did not understand that the Old Testament spoke about Christ. Here, we see that all people that have not placed their faith in Christ have their minds veiled. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” Here, we see that the person without Christ cannot understand the Word of God because they do not have the Holy Spirit to give them understanding.

We also see in these verses that the god of this age has blinded those who do not believe the gospel. The god of this age is Satan. He does everything possible to keep people in spiritual darkness. That is why Matthew 5:16 tells us, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” We are to help our children see how to let our light shine through our good works. At the same time, we are also to pray and ask God to draw people to Christ. In John 6:44, Christ said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” We need to realize that it is the Father that draws people to Christ and pray that the Father will work in their lives.

In Hebrews 1:2-3, we read that God, “Has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Here, we see that Christ is the express image of the Father. He is also the One who upholds all things by the Word of His power.

As we go on to 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 we read, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Here, we see another key lesson to model by our example if we want to show our children how to bring glory to Christ. Paul and Timothy did not preach about themselves. They did not boast about what they had done. Instead, they preached and taught that Christ Jesus is Lord. In the same way, we provide an example for our children as we continue to preach and teach that Jesus Christ is Lord.

As Paul and Timothy said, we need to be an example of the fact that we are bondservants for Jesus' sake. The word that is translated "bondservants" means *one who gives up himself to the will of another*. Christ is our example of what it means to be a bondservant. Christ said in John 6:38, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." As we choose to be bondservants of Christ, we are choosing to do His will instead of our own.

God is the One who gave the command that created physical light. Genesis 1:3 says, "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light." Here, we see that God is also the One who gives spiritual light. In Colossians 1:12-13, we read, "Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love." God is the One who made it possible for us to become saints who are in the light. He did this by delivering us from the power of darkness. God caused that light to shine out of darkness and caused us to come to that light.

The light that God has given to us as Christians when He caused the light to shine into our hearts is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. In 1 John 1:6-7, we read, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Here, we see that those who walk in darkness do not have the light yet. In contrast, as we learn to walk in the light we have fellowship both with God and with one another. We want to show our physical and spiritual children how to bring glory to God by walking in the light. As they see our example, they will grow in their own understanding of the fact that God has shown His light into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God. We are now able to reflect that light and bring glory to God. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to bring glory to God in their lives.

Learning to Deal With Suffering in Ministry

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to bring glory to God in their lives. We help our children the same way that Paul and Timothy helped the Corinthians. They helped the Corinthians by providing their own lives as an example so that they could see how to bring glory to God. However, Satan is not happy when our lives bring glory to Christ. As a result, we can expect opposition from Satan. As a result, in our topic today, we will learn how to deal with suffering as we minister and serve the Lord. This will also give our children an example to follow.

In 2 Corinthians 4:7-10, Paul and Timothy wrote, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. *We are* hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” Here, we see that Paul and Timothy give us an example to follow when we suffer. The message that we share is a treasure. However, Paul and Timothy point out the fact that we have this treasure in earthen vessels. Earthen vessels speak of the clay pots that were used to hold the garbage. Since a clay pot held the garbage, if it broke, you just replaced it with another clay pot because the pot was not important. Paul and Timothy used this illustration to show that we are not the important thing. The message is the important thing because God can use any person to share the message.

God actually shows His greatness by allowing people like us who have no importance to share a message that is so valuable. God uses people like us because it shows the fact that the message of God is so powerful that God can use any person to deliver His message. In fact, Numbers 22:28-30 shows that God even used a donkey to deliver His message. We want to show our children our thankfulness to the Lord for the fact that He chooses us to deliver His message.

Paul and Timothy described the suffering that they experienced as they delivered the message that the Lord gave to them and gives to us. They received pressure from every side but they were not crushed. They often did not know what to do but they did not feel like they had been abandoned. They were forced to flee but they were not destroyed. Their bodies continually showed the marks of beatings and other forms of suffering. They realized that these attacks were really against Christ so they did not take it personally. Just as Acts 5:41 says about the apostles, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name,” Paul and Timothy rejoiced for the privilege of suffering for Christ. Here, we see an example for our own lives when we suffer. We can show our children how to be thankful for the privilege of suffering for Christ.

Paul and Timothy went on to say in 2 Corinthians 4:11-15, “For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed and therefore I spoke,’ we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present *us* with you. For all things *are* for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.” Here, we see that Paul and Timothy had chosen to follow the example of Christ.

Paul and Timothy said that they were delivered to death for Jesus' sake. The word that is translated “delivered” means *to deliver up a condemned person to death*. It is used of Christ in

Matthew 27:2 where we read, “And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.” In fact, Paul often faced what looked like certain physical death. He said that when that happened it provided an opportunity for others to see how Christ had responded when he was delivered to death. Paul and Timothy viewed suffering and death as the way that the Lord had chosen them to show to others what it meant to have life through Christ. Paul and Timothy were filled with joy because their choice had resulted in the salvation of the Corinthian Christians.

Paul and Timothy quoted from Psalm 116:10 which says, “I believed, therefore I spoke, ‘I am greatly afflicted.’” David wrote this Psalm at a time when he was suffering and David had looked to the Lord in faith for either present or future deliverance. Here, we see that Paul and Timothy looked at the example of David and it gave them an example for their own lives. In the same way, we can look to the example of Paul and Timothy when we experience suffering or persecution. As we have our faith in the Lord when we go through such difficult times, we are also providing an example for our children.

The reason that David, Paul and Timothy could have such a great peace even in the middle of suffering was due to the fact that they knew by faith the One who had raised Christ from the dead. They knew that they could also look forward to resurrection even if they were killed for following the Lord. That is why Paul had written the Corinthian Christians earlier in 1 Corinthians 15:57-58, “But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” We can have peace and continue to serve the Lord in persecution because we know that Christ had victory over death.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children develop this same confident assurance so that whatever persecutions they may face in their lives, they will be able to look to the One who raised up Christ from the dead. We can share the hope that we have in our lives that is described in Titus 2:13-14 which says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.” We want to show our children that we can rejoice even in suffering because of the confident hope that we have that Christ will come one day to take us to heaven to be with Him for all eternity. In the same way, we can help our children to develop that same confident hope in their lives as they see our example. In this way, we show our children that we can give thanks to the Lord because our response to suffering is bringing glory to God.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 goes on to say, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.” Here, we see why we do not need to get discouraged and give up when we go through difficult times in our service for the Lord.

It is true that our physical body is getting old and wearing out. The day will come when this physical body will go to the grave if the Lord does not come first. However, we see just the opposite for our inward man. Here, we are reminded that our entire inward man, including both our soul and our spirit, is being renewed day by day. Isaiah 40:31 says, “But those who wait on the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” We see that the Lord is continually renewing our spirit and giving us inner strength as we yield to Him moment by moment.

Romans 12:2 tells us, “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.” Here, we see that Christ also renews and transforms our souls as we learn to renew our mind through the Word and ask the Lord to give us His strength to carry out His will. As this continual renewing is happening in our inner man, our emotions are motivated by the love of Christ and 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 tells us that this makes it possible for us to live for Him who died for us. As we practice this daily renewing in our inner man, we also give our children an example to follow in their own lives.

As Paul and Timothy were experiencing this continual renewing of the inner man, they looked at their suffering as light affliction which only lasts for a moment. In the same way, we are able to provide an example for our children when we understand that any present suffering is only for a moment. There is no comparison between this light suffering and the eternal life to which we look forward. Instead of looking at the problems that we see in our daily life, we look forward to the things which are not seen. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk by faith and not by sight as we provide an example for them to follow.

We are reminded that the things that we see are only temporary. The things that are not seen are the things that are eternal. Romans 5:3-5 says, “And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” We help our children learn to deal with suffering in their ministry for the Lord by reminding them that the suffering will produce perseverance, character and hope in their lives because their lives will experience the love of God being poured out in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to rejoice in suffering.

Learning to Look Forward to the Judgment Seat of Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to deal with suffering as they serve the Lord. We saw that even when we experience suffering in our physical body, the Lord is renewing our inner man day by day. This inward renewal helps us to look at things from an eternal viewpoint instead of a physical viewpoint. As we show our children how to look at the eternal viewpoint while they live their lives on this earth, we are also preparing them for the time when they will stand before the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ. In our topic today, we will see how to help our children understand that they can look forward to the time when they stand at the judgment seat of Christ.

We begin 2 Corinthians 5 by seeing that our physical body is compared to a tent. 2 Corinthians 5:1 says, “For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Our physical body will die one day if the Lord does not come first. If the Lord comes before we die, we see that our physical body will be changed at that moment. 1 Corinthians 15:52 says, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Either way, our physical body is like a tent that will not last.

That is why we read that when our tent is destroyed, “...we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Here, we see that our new body will not be like the temporary tent that is used to describe our physical body. Instead, our new body will be permanent. It will be a body that is created by God. It is a body that is not made with hands. Finally, it is a body that will be eternal in the heavens. Here, we see that God makes it very clear that the physical body we presently have and the eternal body that we will have in the future are very different.

2 Corinthians 5:2-4 says, “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in *this* tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.” Paul and Timothy said that they groaned in their physical bodies. They both looked forward eagerly to the time when they would have their eternal bodies that the Lord has prepared for them and for each one of us who have placed our faith in Christ.

Paul had earlier described to the Corinthians the changes that will be made in our new bodies. 1 Corinthians 15:54 says, “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’” Paul wanted to make it clear to the Corinthians that God will give us a new eternal body. This physical body that we now have causes us to groan because it is controlled by the effects of sin. We experience various kinds of sickness; as we grow older, our physical body does not improve with age. As a result, we have no desire to live in our present physical body with all of its problems for eternity. We looked forward to the fact that we will be clothed with a new body that will not die. Instead, our physical mortality (the fact that we die) will be swallowed up by life. Our eternal body will never die or experience the physical problems that we face today.

We are also told why we can know that we will have this new body that will be eternal. In 2 Corinthians 5:5-8, we read, “Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also

has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” Here, we see that the One who has prepared us for this purpose is God. God plans for us to experience our eternal life in a new body.

We also see that God has given us the Holy Spirit as our down payment and guarantee of the eternal life that we have been promised. 2 Corinthians 1:22 says, “Who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” The Holy Spirit is the down payment on the fact that we have been given eternal life. Since God has already given us the down payment, we know that He will complete what He has begun and will give us eternal life along with the new body that He has promised to us.

As a result of the fact that we have already received the down payment, we see that we can always be confident about the future. The word that is translated “confident” is a word that means *to be bold or to be of good courage*. Hebrews 13:5-6 says, “*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’*” Here, we see why we can have such great confidence and boldness. The Lord has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us. This is a promise that is good for all eternity.

We are reminded that as long as we are living in this human body with all of its limitations that are the result of sin, we are absent from the Lord. However, that will change very suddenly. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 says, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” Once the Lord takes us home, we will be with the Lord for all eternity. The earth is the temporary place that we live in a temporary body. Heaven is our eternal home where we will have a new body that is an eternal body.

As a result, that is why while we are here on this earth, we walk by faith and not by sight. Romans 8:23-25 says, “Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.” Since we have already received the firstfruits, the Holy Spirit in our life, we eagerly wait for the day when we will be given our new body.

We are confident about the future. In fact, we are looking forward to the day when we will leave this present human body and go to be present with the Lord. That is why Paul said in Philippians 1:21-24, “For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.” Here, Paul said that the reason why the Lord even leaves us here on this earth is due to the fact that He still has more work for us to do here. We want to help our children understand that the reason why Christ leaves them on this earth is to help others and that when their work is complete the Lord will take them to heaven.

This means that we want to please the Lord by whatever we do. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 says, “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in

the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” Here, we see why we want to do whatever we do to please the Lord. We know that the day will come when we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

The word that is translated “judgment seat” was the raised platform where the athletes that had been victorious in the Isthmian Games or the Olympic Games went to receive their crowns for their victories in those games. As a result, the judgment seat of Christ is the place where we will receive our eternal rewards for the things that we have done on earth as Christians. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 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. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” Here, we see that our works will be tested by fire before we stand at the judgment seat of Christ.

As Christians, some of our works are works that have eternal value. Other works are of no eternal value. Those works that are of eternal value are like gold, silver and precious stones. The fire that tests our works will burn out any impurities and the result will be like pure gold, silver and precious stones. Those are the things for which we will receive our rewards as we stand at the judgment seat of Christ. Those works which we have done that have no eternal value are like wood, hay and stubble. When those works are tested by fire, they will be removed and there will be no reward for those works. The Christian that does few or no works of eternal value will receive eternal life. However, there will be little or no reward since most or all of the works of that person will be burned. We want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example that our desire is to do works of eternal value that are purified when they are tested by fire. We also want to help them understand what works do have eternal value and equip them to do those works so that they can also enjoy eternal rewards. May the Lord richly bless you as you prepare your children to look forward with joy to the judgment seat of Christ.

Learning to Be Motivated by the Love of Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we will all stand at the judgment seat of Christ to receive our rewards. Any works that have eternal value will be rewarded. Any works that only have earthly or temporary value will be burned. We saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to do those works that have eternal value so that they can rejoice and be filled with joy as they stand at the judgment seat of Christ. However, there are many people who are not Christians. Instead of standing at the judgment seat of Christ to receive rewards, those people will stand at the great white throne judgment described in Revelation 20:11-15 to be judged for their sin. Then, they will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where they will experience eternal judgment for their sins.

In 2 Corinthians 5:11, we read, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.” The word that is translated “terror” means *fear or reverence*. Notice the way this word is used in Hebrews 2:14-15 to refer to those who are not Christians. Those verses say, “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.” The unbeliever is held in bondage by the fear of death. In contrast, Ephesians 5:21 uses the word to speak about reverence for God. That verse says, “Submitting to one another in the fear of God.” In reverence to God, we submit to one another with godly reverence. Paul used this word the second way in this verse because he was persuading the people in Corinth to view the integrity in his life because he knew that God saw his integrity.

That is why Paul goes on to say in 2 Corinthian 5:12-13, “For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have *an answer* for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. For if we are beside ourselves, *it is* for God; or if we are of sound mind, *it is* for you.” Paul did not need to boast about himself as the false teachers were doing in that time. Instead, he was telling the Corinthian Christians how to answer those who were boasting about themselves instead of serving the Lord from the heart. Apparently, these false teachers had said that Paul was insane. That did not surprise Paul because those against Christ said the same thing about Christ. John 8:48 says, “Then the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?’” Paul told the Corinthians that they knew him well enough to know that he served the Lord from the heart.

Paul then went on to tell why he served the Lord from his heart. 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.” Instead of self-glory, which is the goal of false teachers, Paul said that he was motivated by the love of Christ. The word that is translated “compels” means *to hold completely or to hold something together with a hand*. Acts 18:5 says, “When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus is the Christ*.” In Acts 18:5, we see that Paul was held completely or compelled by the Holy Spirit. Here, we see that Paul was held completely or compelled by the love of Christ. That was what motivated the life of Paul because it made him realize why Christ had died for him.

Paul realized that Christ had died on behalf of every person because every person is spiritually

dead. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Paul said that the fact that Christ died for us was motivated by His love for us. Paul said that should give us the desire to no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died for us. Peter expressed a similar thought when he said in 1 Peter 2:24. “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.” The fact that we have died to sin makes it possible for us to live for righteousness. The Lord gives us the strength to live a righteous life as we yield to Him moment by moment. This is a wonderful fact that we want to help our children fully understand.

That is why 2 Corinthians 5:16 says, “Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer.” Here, we see that Paul shows us that once we are motivated by the love of Christ, we will view other people differently. We will not view them by their appearance, their money or any other thing. Instead, we will see their spiritual need. This happens because of the fact that we look at Christ differently. In Matthew 1:21, we read, “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” We look at Christ as the One who saved us from our sins and so we want others to know this same good news.

In fact, we have been totally changed. 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.” At the moment we placed our faith in Christ, He made us a new creation. We now have both physical life and spiritual life. John 3:6 says, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Here, we see that we received physical life when we were conceived by our physical parents. We receive spiritual life at the moment we are born of the Holy Spirit. We are immediately made a new creation and we now have a desire to live for the things that are eternal instead of just living for the things of this world. That means we now have a desire to do what is right instead of a desire to do evil. The Holy Spirit also gives us the power to do what is right at every moment that we are yielding to His power.

That is why 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 says, “Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” The word that is translated “reconciled” means *to bring back together those who have been separated*. This word is used six times in the New Testament – three here in verses 18-20. It is also used in 1 Corinthians 7:11 to talk about a husband and wife being reconciled. Then, it is used twice in Romans 5:10 where we read, “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” The death of Christ made it possible for us to be brought back together with the Father. Now that we have been saved by His death, Christ is certainly able to keep us by His life.

Paul described the things that happened in His life and also happen in our lives because God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ. First, we see that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. The word “ministry” means *service*. Here, we see that every Christian has been commissioned to serve those who are not yet Christians by helping them to understand how they can be brought back to God through Christ. In John 20:21, we read, “So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’” We have been sent to share the message of reconciliation with others.

Second, we have been given the word of reconciliation. The “word of reconciliation” means that *the message we have been given to share is trustworthy* and will transform the lives of

those who respond to the Word of God by placing their faith in Christ. We do not share our own opinions or even our own convictions. Instead, we share the message of reconciliation from the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Word of God will reveal his or her own heart to each person. Our opinions or convictions cannot touch the heart.

This ministry that is given both to Paul and to us is described in 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 where we read, “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” An ambassador is one who speaks for another and delivers the message of that person. Paul said in Ephesians 6:19-20, “And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Paul asked for prayer because he wanted to be a faithful ambassador for Christ and deliver the message that Christ gave him to deliver. We need to pray the same prayer so that we can share the message of Christ boldly with others as a faithful ambassador.

Our message is summarized in verses 21. We see that Christ did not have any sin. However, He took our sin on Himself as He hung on the cross. He did this so that the Father could place the righteousness of Christ on us at the moment that we repented of our sin and placed our faith in the death and resurrection of Christ as the payment for our sin. It is the love of Christ for us that motivates us to share this message with others so that they can also experience the love of Christ in their own lives. As we show our children how we carry out this ministry by sharing the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians, we are equipping our children to carry out that same ministry. As our children watch us share the Gospel, they learn how to share the Gospel. This helps them to understand how to share the Gospel with others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example what it means to be motivated by the love of Christ.

Learning to Please the Lord as We Serve Him

In our last topic, we saw that one of the privileges that we have as Christians is to show our physical and spiritual children what it means to be motivated by the love of Christ. We have been called to the ministry of reconciliation and have been given the message of reconciliation. We saw that this means that we are called to serve those who are not yet Christians by telling them how they can have forgiveness of sins and receive eternal life. We have also been given the Word of God as our message of reconciliation so that our message has the power of God instead of just our own opinions. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to please the Lord as they serve Him.

In 2 Corinthians 6:1-2, we read, “We then, *as* workers together *with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.” In these verses, we see that Paul described his ministry to the Corinthians. We want to help our children learn from the example of Paul how to please the Lord as we serve Him. Paul pointed out that as Christians we are workers together with Christ. Paul had said this same thing in 1 Corinthians 3:9 where we read, “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, *you are* God’s building.” What a great privilege we have to be chosen by the Lord to help Him in His work.

Paul pleaded with the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. We need to help our children understand that there are people who claim to be Christians that have never placed their faith in Christ. Many of these people are depending on their own works for salvation. Galatians 5:4 says, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” In addition, there are people who have become Christians but are now trying to grow by keeping the law. Romans 7:19 says, “For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice.” Those who depend on their own efforts to live the Christian life will continue to experience this failure and miss the blessings of the grace of God.

Paul and Timothy had a great concern to see the Christians in Corinth learn to respond to the grace of God which they had received. They also wanted the Corinthians to become fellow workers with them in sharing the Gospel with others. We should have the same concern for our physical and spiritual children. We want them to become workers with us in sharing the message of salvation with those who do not yet know Christ as seen in 1 Corinthians 3:9 above. Now is the day when people can hear and respond to the Gospel. The day will soon come when others will die and then they will have no more opportunity to receive salvation. As a result, we want to help our children learn to become God’s fellow workers with us.

As we finished our last topic, we saw that we are ambassadors for Christ and are called to share the ministry of reconciliation with others. Now 2 Corinthians 6:3-5 says, “We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings.” We want to help our children learn to have the same attitude that Paul and Timothy had as they shared the Gospel. That means that we must model that attitude by our example. Here, we see that we do not want to give offence in anything as we share the Gospel. We want to give our children an example by the way that we respond even to those who reject the Gospel.

In our topic that included 2 Corinthians 3:1, we saw that the word translated “commend” means *to present, to introduce or to place together*. We saw it can be used in either a good sense or a bad sense. Here, we see that Paul and Timothy introduced themselves as the ministers or servants of God. One of the evidences of the fact that they were servants of God was the way they responded in difficult situations or in suffering. We also want to show our children how to respond with patience even when they experience opposition or suffering. In Philippi, Paul and Silas were beaten and put in stocks in the inner prison. Acts 16:25 says, “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Even in the middle of their suffering, they were praying and singing to the Lord.

Our children watch closely how we react when we experience rejection or suffering from others. We will have a great impact on the lives of both our physical and our spiritual children if they see that we respond to rejection or suffering with much patience. In Romans 5:3-4, we see that tribulation produces perseverance. Then, James 1:2-4 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” As our children see how the Lord gives us joy when we share the Gospel, even when we experience rejection, they will see by our example how to please the Lord as they serve Him.

Paul and Timothy also provide us with an example of the way that the Lord works in our lives as we are faithful in sharing the Gospel with others. 2 Corinthians 6:6-7 says, “By purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit works in our lives and helps us mature so that we are an example to our children. As we learn to be led by the Spirit, He develops purity in our lives. He helps us to grow in the knowledge of the Lord and His Word. The Holy Spirit also causes our lives 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.” As the Holy Spirit causes our lives to bear the fruit of the Spirit, our lives become a witness to everyone including our children.

Paul and Timothy also provide us with an example of the way to speak to others. We see that they spoke the truth. In Ephesians 4:15-16, we read, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” We speak the truth as we share the Word of God. We speak the true in love as we depend on the power of the Holy Spirit instead of our own strength. We see that the result of speaking the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit is the fact that we help each person in the body of Christ including our children to learn how to serve the Lord effectively. They are shown by our example the importance of speaking the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit instead of in their own strength.

We also want to show our children how to serve the Lord in all spiritual battles with the armor of righteousness. In Ephesians 6:12-13, we read, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” The armor of righteousness given in the following verses (14-17) includes several defensive pieces of armor: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation. We are given only two offensive weapons as we stand against the powers of Satan. Our two offensive weapons are the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God and prayer. As we show our children how to use both the defensive and offensive weapons by our example,

they are learning how to fight spiritual battles in a way that brings glory to God.

As we show our children how to please the Lord as we serve Him, we can expect two different kinds of responses. In 2 Corinthians 6:8-10, we read, “By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and *yet* true; as unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and *yet* not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things.” Here, we see that those who respond to the Gospel by placing their faith in Christ will respond in a different way than those who choose to reject Him. We will receive honor from some and dishonor from others. Some people will give an evil report about us while those who turn to Christ will give a good report. Some will call us deceivers while others will recognize that we are telling the truth.

In many cases, we will be unknown by the world. At the same time, we will be well known by those whose lives are changed by the Lord as a result of our faithful ministry and service for the Lord. We are dying to self but we are experiencing genuine life. 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.” Even though people may make us suffer for Christ, we cannot be killed because Christ has given us eternal life.

We can rejoice even in times of sorrow. We may not have much of earthly value but we are able to share with others the riches of eternal life. In fact, we may have nothing in this world but we are joint heirs with Christ and will share all things with Him for eternity. As we provide an example of our values by our lives, our physical and spiritual children will develop these same values because they see our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to please the Lord as you serve Him.

Learning to Live a Holy Life

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our children by our example how to please the Lord as we serve Him. We saw that will include showing them how to suffer when opposed by those who choose to reject the Gospel. As we show them how to respond when we suffer, we are preparing them to become workers together with God in His work. They will experience great joy in their lives as they learn to become workers together with God. In order to be effective as workers together with God, the way they live their lives must be in agreement with their words. As a result, in our topic today, we want to help our children learn how to live a holy life that will draw others to Christ.

Paul and Timothy shared their hearts with the Christians in Corinth. 2 Corinthians 6:11-13 says, “O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your *own* affections. Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.” We have seen that part of the Christians in Corinth acted as though they rejected Paul even though he had brought the Gospel to them. However, Paul did not return that rejection by rejecting them. Instead, we see that Paul and Timothy spoke openly with the Corinthian Christians.

Paul and Timothy said that their heart was wide open. The word that is translated “wide open” in these verses means to be enlarged in heart or to welcome and embrace a person in love. Here, we see that regardless of whether the Corinthians accepted them or rejected them, Paul and Timothy continued to have love that came from their hearts for the Christians in Corinth. Paul had shown that same love when he wrote 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 4:14, we read, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*.” We see that Paul considered the Corinthian Christians his beloved children. We want to show that same attitude to both our physical children and to our spiritual children.

Paul said that the Corinthian Christians were restricted by their own choice. The word that is translated “restricted” means *to be in a narrow place or to be compressed or cramped*. Here, we see that it was in their own hearts that they felt compressed. The word that is translated “affections” means *the place in our heart where we have the tender emotions such as kindness, compassion, mercy, affection or tenderness*. In Philippians 1:8, Paul wrote, “For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.” Paul and Timothy felt great compassion and tenderness toward the Corinthians but those Christians had not opened their hearts with the same love toward Paul and Timothy. Many times, weak or struggling Christians have to be shown how to love others by the love and tenderness that we show to them. This can be especially true when we have spiritual children that have never known godly love before meeting us.

As a result, Paul and Timothy invited the Corinthian Christians to learn to be open with them. Since Paul and Timothy treated the Corinthian Christians with the same love that loving parents show to their children, Paul and Timothy invited the Corinthians to respond to that love by showing love in return. Sometimes, as our physical and spiritual children grow, they go through periods in their lives when they do not return our love as parents. When that happens, Paul and Timothy show us by their example how to continue to show love to our children. In 2 Corinthians 12:15, Paul expressed the love that he continued to show to the Corinthians when he said, “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.” Regardless of how the Corinthians responded, Paul said he would continue to love them.

Paul and Timothy knew that the false teachers did not show that kind of love to the Corinthians. As a result, they wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’” Paul and Timothy realized that the false teachers were the ones who were actually causing the Corinthian Christians to lose their love for Paul and Timothy.

Paul and Timothy used an Old Testament illustration to warn the Christians in Corinth about joining together with false teachers. Deuteronomy 22:10 says, “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.” The Jews were told not to place different kinds of animals in the yoke together to pull the plow because that would be an unequal yoke. Here, Paul and Timothy used that as an illustration to show what happens when Christians try to work together with false teachers that reject salvation by grace through faith in Christ. A Christian cannot have fellowship and work together with a false teacher to do the work of the Lord when that person rejects the salvation that Christ provided by His death and resurrection. A righteous person and a lawless person cannot have fellowship because they are walking two very different directions. In the same way, you cannot have light and darkness in the same place at the same time.

“Belial” was a name for Satan that meant *the totally worthless one*. In contrast, Christ is the One whose life has infinite value. Since Satan is totally opposed to Christ, it is impossible for Satan and Christ to work together. Amos 3:3 asks the question, “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” Of course the answer to that question is no. As a result, false teachers who reject Christ cannot work together with followers of Christ whose greatest desire is to be faithful in their service for Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Paul had earlier written the Corinthians, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” Here, he reminded them again that as Christians we are the temple of the living God. Since our bodies are the temple of the living God, it is impossible for us to have agreement with idols.

As Christians, the Holy Spirit came into our lives at the moment that we became Christians. Romans 8:8-9 says, “So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” Those who are false teachers and still in the flesh cannot please God. In contrast, we have the Spirit of God living in our lives from the moment that we become a Christian. In fact, if we do not have the Holy Spirit in our lives, that would be clear evidence that we do not belong to Christ.

Christ placed the Holy Spirit in our lives as the down payment and guarantee of our eternal salvation at the moment we placed our faith in Christ. As a result, that also means that God dwells in us. Our body is the temple of the living God. God has chosen to walk among us so that we can begin to experience a little of the fullness of life with Christ even while we are here on this earth. God has promised to be our God. He has also called us to be His people. As we learn to walk in fellowship with the Lord, our lives are being transformed into the image of Christ.

That is why 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 says, “Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a

Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.” Here, we see that Paul and Timothy told the Christians in Corinth to separate themselves from false teachers that were trying to lead them astray. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the importance of separating themselves from false teachers and their teachings. Paul illustrated this principle in Acts 19:9 where we read, “But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.” Here, we see that Paul separated the disciples from those who did not believe.

The word that is translated “unclean” means *something that is unclean in thought and life*. In the New Testament, this word is used most commonly to speak about unclean spirits or demons. Acts 8:7 says, “For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.” In the verses from 2 Corinthians above, we see that Paul and Timothy wrote the Corinthian Christians to separate themselves from the teachings of false teachers because the source of false teaching is demonic. In the same way, we want to help our children separate themselves from all teachings that are demonic in their source.

God gives a wonderful promise to all those who separate themselves from false teachers. God says that He will be a Father to them. God also says that all those who place their faith in Christ and follow Him will be His sons and daughters. Romans 8:16-17 says, “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.” We want to help our children come to a full understanding of what it means to be the children of God. In these verses, we see that God gives us His Spirit to bear witness to us that we are His children. In addition, we also become heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that this means that we will share the inheritance of God throughout all eternity. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to live a holy life as children that will share God’s eternal inheritance.

Learning to Be Encouraged by Others

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children recognize the importance of separating themselves from false teachers and their teachings. This is important if our children want to learn to live a holy life that is pleasing to the Lord. We want to help our children understand that our ministry for the Lord will only be truly effective when our lives agree with the words that we speak. Today, we are going to see that Titus provided great encouragement to Paul during a difficult time. We want to show our children by our example how they can be an encouragement to others including other Christian leaders.

In 2 Corinthians 7:1, we read, “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Chapter six concluded by saying in verses 17-18, “Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.’” God gives us a wonderful promise about His relationship to each one of us as Christians. Because of those promises, we want to show our children the importance of cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit.

Here, we see that we want to help each of our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of moment-by-moment cleansing from sin. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We show our children that our responsibility is to confess our sins to the Lord as soon as we realize that we have sinned. Then, the Lord does the cleansing in our lives. The word that is translated “filthiness” means *defilement*. This is the only time this word is used in the New Testament. However, it is used three times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to speak about religious defilement with idol feasts, idols, sacrifices to idols and defilement with temple prostitutes of idols. That kind of defilement has a great impact on both our human spirit and our body.

Instead, we are told that we are to be perfecting holiness in the fear of God. The word that is translated “perfecting” means *to complete or bring to an end*. Our goal in life is to see our lives become more and more like Christ because of the reverence that we have for God. Paul expressed his desire to become like Christ when he said in Philippians 3:10, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” Here, we have an example for our own lives as we grow and become an example to our children.

We go on to see the invitation that Paul and Timothy gave to the Christians in Corinth. 2 Corinthians 7:2-3 says, “Open *your hearts* to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one. I do not say *this* to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.” Here, we see that Paul and Timothy invited the Corinthian Christians to open their hearts to Paul and Timothy. In our last topic, we saw that Paul and Timothy had open hearts to the Christians in Corinth. We saw that meant that Paul and Timothy had a great love for the Corinthians whether the Corinthians returned that love or not.

Paul and Timothy gave three reasons why the Corinthian Christians should also open their hearts in return. First, they had not wronged anyone in Corinth. The word that is translated “wronged” means *to act unjustly to hurt or wrong*. Second, they had not corrupted anyone in

Corinth. The word that is translated “corrupted” means *to destroy or to corrupt a Christian from true faith*. 2 Corinthians 11:3 says, “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” Paul and Timothy carefully avoided doing or saying anything that would corrupt the faith of the Corinthians. Third, they had cheated no one. The word that is translated “cheated” means *to take advantage of another for self-gain*. 2 Corinthians 12:17 asks the question, “Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you?” Paul made it clear he had not cheated them in any way.

Paul and Timothy went on to say that they were not writing to condemn the Corinthian Christians. They had already told the Corinthians that they were in their hearts. We have seen in other topics that Paul considered the Christians in Corinth his beloved children. That is why he did not say what he said to condemn them. Instead, he had the attitude that he mentioned in 1 Corinthians 4:14 where we read, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*.” In contrast, after Christ warned Peter in Mark 14 that he would deny him, Peter declared that he would die with Christ before he would deny him. (Mark 14:31) We know that Peter failed because he depended on his own strength. However, we see that Paul and Timothy were willing to die for the sake of the Corinthians. In the same way, they were willing to make sacrifices in their daily lives for the sake of the Corinthians.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:4, “Great *is* my boldness of speech toward you, great *is* my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.” The word that is translated “boldness” means *to have freedom when speaking or to be confident in our speech or actions*. 1 John 4:17 uses this word as that verse says, “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” Paul spoke with confidence about what the Lord was going to do in the lives of the Corinthian Christians. He knew that the Lord would continue to work in their lives. This confidence caused him to be filled with comfort as he thought about the Corinthians. This confidence also filled Paul and Timothy with joy even though they were going through a period of tribulation.

Paul explained how they had experienced both outward and inward conflicts while they came to Macedonia. 2 Corinthians 7:5 says, “For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside *were* conflicts, inside *were* fears.” We saw in an earlier topic in 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 that they had an open door in Troas but left Troas because of their concern about the Christians in Corinth. They came to Macedonia hoping to hear from Titus what was happening to the Corinthians. When they arrived in Macedonia, they did not find Titus. As a result, that is why this verse says that their bodies had no rest. They were experiencing outward conflicts from the people who were in opposition to the Gospel. At the same time, they were experiencing inward fears because of their concern for the Christians in Corinth. Here, we see again that Paul and Timothy had a very great concern for the Corinthians.

However, we see that Titus did arrive in Macedonia after Paul and Timothy had been there for a short time. We see that the Lord used Titus to provide great encouragement to Paul and Timothy when he met them in Macedonia. 2 Corinthians 7:6-7 says, “Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.” Paul described his attitude as downcast at the time that Titus arrived in Macedonia.

The word that is translated “downcast” can mean *not rising far about the ground, humble in spirit or those who are humiliated*. It is used here in this verse of those who are humiliated.

Paul used this word the same way again when he wrote in Romans 12:16. In that verse, he said “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion” to speak of those who are socially, emotionally or financially low or humiliated. We might say that Paul and Timothy felt like they were emotionally drained because of their concern for the Christians in Corinth.

God used the coming of Titus to bring great comfort to Paul and Timothy. Here, we see that there was great encouragement in having a person come and visit them during this time when they were emotionally drained. The same is true today. We can show our children the great value of visiting people who are going through a difficult time in their lives. We can show by our example that this is a very important ministry to others.

However, Titus then brought additional comfort by the message that he had about the Christians in Corinth. The word that is translated “consolation” is used several times in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. We saw in our topic on those verses that it means *a calling near for help or that which provides encouragement, comfort or refreshment*. Here, we see that Titus had received encouragement from his visit with the Corinthians. What he said also brought encouragement to Paul and Timothy. Titus said that the Corinthians had a great desire to see Paul again and to again enjoy fellowship with him.

The Corinthian Christians were also filled with sorrow because of their sin and showed an attitude of true repentance. They wanted Paul to know that they had a love or zeal for Paul that had caused them to defend Paul from the attacks by false teachers. Paul and Timothy wanted the Corinthians to know that they had been filled with joy by this encouragement about the changes in attitude by the Corinthians. Here, we see a key lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand. We want them to realize that people will change even their negative attitudes if our children will continue to return love to others even in times when others are rejecting them. That is why they do not need to take rejection personally. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to minister to those who may reject them for a time.

Learning the Meaning of True Repentance

In our last topic, we saw that the relationship between Paul and Titus meant that Titus was an encouragement to Paul as well as Paul being an encouragement to Titus. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to encourage others as well as be encouraged by others. One of the things that brought great encouragement to Paul was to hear about the repentance of their sin by the Christians in Corinth. As a result, Paul used that repentance to explain the meaning of true repentance. That explanation will be a part of our topic today.

In 2 Corinthians 7:8, we read, “For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while.” Paul realized that the letter that he had written to the church in Corinth had caused the people to have sorrow. As he thought about the final result of that letter, he said that now he did not regret the fact that he had sent the earlier letter. He said that for a time he did regret sending that letter. However, now that Titus had come Paul realized that the letter had brought them to a point of true repentance and so their sorrow had only lasted until they repented.

Paul then used their repentance to explain the difference between false repentance and true repentance. This is a key lesson that we really want to help our children understand so that they can help others. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 says, “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” Paul was filled with joy because he saw that the sorrow of the Corinthians had led them to true repentance.

Paul went on to explain that there is both a godly sorrow and a worldly sorrow. The word that is translated “repentance” means *a change of mind which causes a person to turn from sin and restore their relationship with God*. That is why the two key words that we want to help a non-Christian understand are repentance and faith. Repentance for the non-Christian is turning from sin and turning to God. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 says, “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.” Faith is essential because a person must come to God through Christ. The non-Christian must believe that Christ shed His blood and died for his sin of unbelief and that God showed He was satisfied by the payment that Christ made by raising Christ from the dead. When a non-Christian repents of the sin of unbelief and turns to God through Christ, that person becomes a child of God and receives eternal life as a gift.

Repentance from sins is necessary for a Christian to walk in fellowship with the Lord. Repentance for a Christian means that Christian has realized that he or she is not walking in fellowship with God, because self-will led him or her to commit sins that have broken that fellowship. In 1 John 1:9, we see that when a Christian has a change of mind and turns from those sins because of repentance, their fellowship is restored. That verse says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Repentance for the Christian results in cleansing from the sins that have hindered fellowship with the Lord. For the Corinthian Christians, their godly sorrow caused them to restore their fellowship with the Lord.

In contrast, we see that the sorrow of the world produces death. The world experiences sorrow, along with fear, guilt and shame when they sin and get caught. However, this sorrow does not

cause them to repent and turn from their sin of unbelief and turn to God through Christ. Instead, the world continues to live in their sin. They continue to experience fear, guilt and shame in their lives. This means that they do not experience inner peace and joy in their lives on this earth. Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” In this verse, we also see that it means they experience judgment and eternal separation from God at death.

Paul was filled with joy because the Christians in Corinth had confessed their sins and restored their fellowship with the Lord. As a result, 2 Corinthians 7:11-12 says, “For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, *what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication!* In all *things* you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter. Therefore, although I wrote to you, *I did not do it* for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you.” Here, we see that Paul pointed out to the Corinthians that they had showed godly sorrow that did lead to repentance.

Here, we see some of the results of godly sorrow in the life of a Christian. The word that is translated “diligence” means *earnestness or eagerness*. The Corinthian Christians were now eager to maintain that fellowship with the Lord. The word that is translated “clearing of yourselves” means *a clearly thought out statement*. The Christians wanted others to know that they had repented of their sins. The word that is translated “indignation” means *anger at their own sin*. The Corinthians did not want to repeat that sin again. The word that is translated “fear” means fear that produces a reverence for God. Now, their desire was to please the Lord. The word that is translated “vehement desire” means *longing*. The Christians had a longing to again enjoy fellowship with the Lord. The word that is translated “zeal” means *to love so much that it causes one to defend a person*. They wanted to serve the Lord instead of hurting Him any longer by their sins. The word that is translated “vindication” means *a desire for justice*. The Christians wanted to be right with the Lord even if it meant the discipline of God in their own lives. The word that is translated “clear” means that *a person wants to be cleansed from all carnality or sin*. They wanted to be cleansed of their sin.

Paul did not write this letter to the Corinthians to punish the one who had done wrong. He did not write the letter for the sake of the one that had suffered because of the wrong that had been done. Instead, Paul wrote so that the Christians in Corinth would know and understand the great care and concern that Paul had for them. As 1 Corinthians 4:14 says, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*.” Paul showed the genuine concern of a parent for his spiritual children. This is the same concern that we need to show for our physical and spiritual children.

That is why Paul and Timothy went on to write in 2 Corinthians 7:13-16, “Therefore we have been comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I am not ashamed. But as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting to Titus was found true. And his affection is greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. Therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything.” Here, we see that Paul and Timothy go on to express the comfort and joy that they felt because of the godly sorrow of the Corinthian Christians.

They were especially rejoicing because of the joy that they saw in the life of Titus when he came to them from Corinth. We see that Titus was filled with rejoicing. His spirit had been refreshed or given rest by the changes that he had seen in the attitudes of the Corinthians. Paul said that he had boasted about the Corinthians to Titus. Here, we see that Paul had told Titus

that he was confident that the Corinthians would repent of their sin. Now that Titus had come from Corinth, he was able to tell Paul that he had been right about the choice that the Corinthians would make when they read the letter from Paul.

Here, we see that Paul gives us another important example. We need to trust the Lord to work in the lives of others when we have to deal with sin in their lives. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Here, we see that even when a person is caught red-handed in a sin, our goal is always to restore and not to condemn. This will only happen if our own attitude is right with the Lord. Then, we will seek to restore that person in a spirit of gentleness. When we have a genuine love for others, we will know that the Lord will work in their lives.

Titus was excited because he had also had the opportunity to see how the Lord had worked in the lives of the Corinthians. He had developed an even greater kindness and compassion for the Corinthians because of what he had seen the Lord do in the lives of the Christians. He remembered their obedience to the Lord when they heard the letter from Paul. They had received Titus with godly fear and trembling that produced true repentance. Here, we see that one of the ways that we help our physical and spiritual children in their growth is to give them the opportunity to participate in the ministry so that they can see for themselves how the Lord works in the lives of people.

Paul was filled with joy as he saw how the Lord had worked in the lives of the Corinthians. The word that is translated “confidence” means *to be of good courage or to be bold*. Here, we see that Paul had courage to be bold in writing to the Corinthians and the Lord had rewarded his courage by giving Titus the opportunity to see how the Lord worked in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how the Lord works to bring repentance in the lives of others.

Learning to Follow the Example of Christ

In our last topic, we saw how to help our children understand the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. We saw that godly sorrow will produce true repentance in the life of a person. In contrast, the sorrow of the world will produce sorrow that the person got caught in sin but it will not result in repentance. Instead, the person will continue to live with fear, guilt and shame. Today, in our topic we want to help our children learn to follow the example of Christ who gave Himself for us.

The churches in Corinth and the surrounding area were rich churches. In contrast, the people in the churches in the region of Macedonia lived in poverty. 2 Corinthians 8:1-2 says, “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.” Paul said that he wanted the Christians in Corinth to know about the way that the grace of God had worked in the lives of the Christians in Macedonia.

Paul said that the churches of Macedonia had been greatly tested by oppression and pressure in their lives. Many wars had been fought in the area of Macedonia and the people had been left with very little. Some things had been taken by those fighting the wars and other things had been destroyed in those wars. As a result, many of the people of Macedonia lived in deep poverty. The meaning of deep poverty is described in this chapter. In verse 9, we read, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” Christ left the riches of heaven. He was born into poverty. Soldiers gambled for his few earthly possessions, as he died on the cross, and He was buried in a borrowed tomb. Here, we see that Christ ended His physical life with nothing of physical value. However, he provided us the riches of eternal life. Paul used the example of Christ to help the Corinthians understand the poverty of the Christians in Macedonia.

In spite of their deep poverty, Paul said that the Christians in Macedonia were filled with an abundance of joy. The word that is translated “abundance” means *excess or surplus*. Here, we see that the Christians in Macedonia had so much joy that they did not even think of their deep poverty. In fact, their attitude was like the attitude of the widow in Luke 21. Luke 21:2-4 says, “And He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, ‘Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.’” Here, we see that this widow was thankful for the fact that she had two mites to give to the Lord. That was the attitude of the Christians in Macedonia. They were so filled with joy that they could give to the Lord that they just abounded in their generosity as they gave to the Lord.

We go on to read about the way that the Macedonian Christians gave to the Lord in 2 Corinthians 8:3-5 where we read, “For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability, *they were* freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and *then* to us by the will of God.” The word that is translated “ability” is the word that is also translated “strength, power or ability”.

First, we see that they gave according to their ability. It is interesting that it does not say that they gave a tithe. Tithing is only mentioned two times in the New Testament and they both refer to the same statement by Christ. Matthew 23:23 says, “Woe to you, scribes and

Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” Instead, we see that the Macedonians gave according to their ability.

Second, we see that they gave beyond their ability. Their giving was sacrificial. They gave more than what they could afford, based on their ability. It is no wonder that Philippians 4:19 says to one of the churches in Macedonia, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” The Macedonians gave even beyond their ability like the widow in Luke. As a result, Paul said that they could trust the Lord to supply all of their needs.

Third, we see that they gave freely. In fact, verse four shows us how freely they gave when it says, “Imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.” The word that is translated “imploring” means *to ask or to beg*. Here, we see that the Macedonian Christians literally begged Paul and Timothy to receive their generous gifts so that they could share in the ministry to the needy saints in Jerusalem. They were more concerned about the needs of the Christians in Jerusalem than they were about their own needs because they wanted to give to the Lord in thanks for all that the Lord had done for them.

We see that they used these three principles in their giving to the Lord because they first gave themselves to the Lord. They recognized what it meant to make Christ the Lord of their lives. They understood what Christ meant when He said in Matthew 6:24, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” They realized that they had given the control of their lives to the Lord and they showed by their giving that they recognized that whatever they had on the earth belonged to the Lord. They wanted to give freely even beyond their ability because they had chosen to make Christ the Lord of their lives.

One of the things that Paul had encouraged Titus to do was to encourage the Christians in Corinth to also share with the needy Christians in Jerusalem. 2 Corinthians 8:6-8 says, “So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. But as you abound in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us--*see* that you abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.” Paul had written to the Corinthians about the way to give. 1 Corinthians 16:2 says, “On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” Here, we see that Titus had encouraged the Corinthians to give to help the needy in Jerusalem. Now he had asked Titus to complete this ministry by having the Corinthians finish preparing their gift for the saints in Jerusalem before Paul arrived at Corinth.

The report of Titus to Paul made it clear that the Corinthian Christians were growing in their spiritual lives. Paul wanted the Corinthians to also learn to abound in their giving to the Lord. The word that is translated “abound” is the same word that is used in verse 2. In that verse, we see that the Christians in Macedonia had abounded in their giving. They gave much more than anyone would expect since they were living in great poverty. Paul wanted to encourage the Corinthian Christians to also learn to give abundantly. The growing maturity of the Corinthian Christians did mean that they had learned to abound in many areas of their lives.

In fact, Paul said that their faith had really grown and become much stronger. Their speech, as they spoke about the Lord to others, had also really grown because they had grown greatly in their understanding and knowledge of the teachings of Christ. They had also grown in diligence. We saw in chapter seven that this spoke of the fact that they had grown in their

eagerness to be obedient to the Lord. In addition, Paul and Timothy were very thankful because they heard how the Corinthian Christians had grown in their love for them. As a result, they felt very free to encourage them to abound in their ministry of giving to the Lord. In this particular case, that ministry would be to also have a share in helping the needy Christians in Jerusalem.

Paul went on to write in 2 Corinthians 8:8-9, "I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." Here, Paul made it clear that he was not commanding the Corinthians to give. That would mean that they would give from duty instead of giving freely and joyfully from a heart of love. Paul was only letting them know what the Macedonians had done to give them an example for their own lives.

However, he also reminded them of the One who showed a much greater example of giving out of love as he reminded them of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the Creator of the universe, all things belonged to Christ. Christ chose to set aside all that He had and humbled Himself by choosing to be born into poverty. His parents even had to offer the sacrifice of the poor when they dedicated Christ in the temple in Luke 2:23-24. Then, Christ chose to accept the worst form of death as He was crucified on the cross to pay for our sins. Since He had no tomb, He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea according to Matthew 27:57-60. Christ was willing to live in poverty so that he could share with us the riches of eternal life. We are some of those who have benefited from the ministry that Christ completed through His death and resurrection. As a result, we want to show our children the importance of sharing both our physical riches and our spiritual riches with others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to follow the example of Christ by the choices you make in your own life.

Learning to Minister to the Needs of Others

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to follow the example of Christ. We saw that one of the things that Christ showed us was what it meant to sacrifice for the needs of others as He gave His life to meet our need for forgiveness of sins. He became poor so that He could freely give us eternal life and the riches of heaven. Today, we are going to build on that topic to see how we can show our children how to learn to minister to the needs of others.

In 2 Corinthians 8:9-11, we read, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; but now you also must complete the doing *of it*; that as *there was* a readiness to desire *it*, so *there also may be* a completion out of what *you have*.” After reminding the Corinthians of the example of Christ becoming poor so that the Corinthians could receive eternal life and share the riches of heaven, Paul went on to give the Corinthians some advice.

The advice that Paul gave to the Corinthians was to complete what they had begun a year earlier. A year earlier, they had begun collecting an offering for the needy Christians in Jerusalem. At that time, they had a real desire to share in meeting the needs of the needy Christians. Apparently, their desire had not resulted in continuing action. As a result, Paul now encouraged them to complete what they had said they wanted to do. Here, we see an important lesson that we want to help our children understand. It is one thing to talk about helping others. However, the important thing is to actually do what we have talked about doing and actually get involved in helping other Christians.

The desire of Paul was not to command the Christians or tell them how much to give. Instead he wanted to give them advice and encouragement so that they could carry out their plans and not just talk about them. 2 Corinthians 8:12-15 says, “For if there is first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to what one has, *and* not according to what he does not have. For *I do not mean* that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may supply* their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack--that there may be equality. As it is written, ‘He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.’” Paul wanted the Christians to know that the thing that God really desires is a willing attitude and His concern was not the amount of money that they would give.

Paul wanted to make it clear what he meant so that what he was saying would not be misunderstood. Paul said he did not mean that the Christians in Corinth should place a heavy burden on themselves so that the Christians in Jerusalem could just rest. Instead, Paul wanted all Christians to be concerned about helping to meet the basic needs of others. The new Christians in Jerusalem had originally sold their possessions so that they could share with the new Christians from other places who were in Jerusalem at the time the church began. Acts 2:44-45 says, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” This had made it possible for these Christians from other areas to stay in Jerusalem and learn more about Christ before they returned to their homes.

The word that is translated “equality” means *that which is fair*. The only other place this word

is used in the New Testament is Colossians 4:1 where we read, “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” Paul told the masters in Colosse to give their bondservants what was just and fair. Here, Paul is encouraging the Christians in Corinth to share with the needy in Jerusalem what is just and fair. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:8, “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” From this verse, we see that his encouragement to the Corinthians was to share with the Christians in Jerusalem to meet basic necessities. The Christians in Jerusalem had shared to spread the Gospel to many places. Now, Christians in other places had the opportunity to share with the needy in Jerusalem.

Paul then quoted from Exodus 16:18 which says, “So when they measured *it* by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.” By quoting from this passage, Paul showed that a Biblical principle for us as Christians is to recognize when other Christians have basic needs and to share with them. We want to help our children see by our example that we look for opportunities to meet the basic needs of others and share with those Christians to meet those basic needs.

Paul also wrote about the love that Titus had for the Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 8:16-17 says, “But thanks *be* to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.” Here, we see that the Lord had also placed a real concern for the Corinthians in the heart of Titus. The word that is translated “earnest care” here is the same word that was translated “diligence” in verses 7 and 8. We saw that the word spoke about the eagerness of the Corinthians to be obedient to the Lord. Here, we see that Titus had this same eagerness as he encouraged the Corinthians. Because Titus had the Corinthians in his heart, it was his choice and desire to go to the Corinthians.

Paul sent another brother with Titus to help him prepare the offering of the Corinthians for the needy in Jerusalem. 2 Corinthians 8:18-21 says, “And we have sent with him the brother whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches, and not only *that*, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and *to show* your ready mind, avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us--providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” The brother that came with Titus was well known to all of the churches. In addition, he had been the one chosen by the churches of Macedonia to travel with Paul and Timothy to take their gift to the church at Jerusalem.

Here, we see that Paul and Timothy were very careful to make certain that they did things in such a way that no one would think that they were gathering the money for themselves. This brother had been chosen by the churches to help take the gift to Jerusalem so that no one could question the integrity of Paul, Timothy and Titus. As a result, he was a part of the team that would carry out this service of the churches of Greece as they all helped to serve the church in Jerusalem in its time of need. Paul wanted everything that was done to be done in such a way that no one would question his motives. He wanted to do things in a way that brought honor to the Lord and was honorable in the sight of people. This is an important principle to help our children understand. We want to show them how to function as leaders in a way that will make it impossible for anyone to question their integrity so that their lives will be a godly example for others to follow.

Paul further explained in 2 Corinthians 8:22-24, “And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which *we have* in you. If *anyone inquires* about Titus, *he is* partner

and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren *are inquired about*, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. Therefore show to them, and before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.” Paul and Timothy had sent this brother along with Titus because everyone knew that he had a good reputation among the churches and that he was very diligent. People knew that they could trust him to serve them by being on the team that took the gift to Jerusalem.

Paul and Timothy had great trust in the Corinthian Christians. They knew that they would want to share in the gift that was being sent to the churches in Jerusalem. As a result, they knew that this brother would be an encouragement to the church in Corinth just as he had been an encouragement to the churches in Macedonia. Paul also used two words to describe Titus. First, Paul said that Titus was his partner. Here, we see a key to the effectiveness of the leadership of Paul. He had helped Titus as a spiritual son to grow to spiritual maturity and become a full partner in ministry. As a spiritual father, we see that Paul had helped Titus to become an “adult son” and partner in ministry.

Second, Paul called Titus his fellow worker. In 1 Corinthians 3:9, we read, “For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building.” In that passage, we see that Paul had viewed Apollos as an “adult son” and fellow worker in ministry. This is exactly what we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn. We want to help them become “adult sons and daughters” and full partners and fellow workers in ministry.

As Titus and these other brothers went to the church in Corinth, Paul encouraged the Christians in Corinth to show their love to these brothers. The Corinthians already knew the character of Titus and had shown their love to him. Now, Paul encouraged them to show the same love to the other brothers that came from Macedonia. Here, we see that Paul also worked to build relationships between the Christians in various churches. These brothers would not exercise any control over the Corinthians but would serve the church in Corinth just as they had served the churches in Macedonia. We want to help our children learn to build relationships between Christians in various churches in the same way. We do this as we show them that we serve the churches and do not try to control the churches. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to serve others and minister to their needs.

Learning How God Rewards Us

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to minister to the needs of others. Paul and Timothy had encouraged the churches in Corinth and Achaia by sharing with them the example of the way that the churches in Macedonia had given to help meet the basic needs of the needy Christians in Jerusalem. In our topic today, we will see that Paul and Timothy continued to share about the topic of giving to the Lord. As a part of what they said, they explained how God rewards us for our giving. This is an important lesson that we want to help our children understand.

In 2 Corinthians 9:1-5, we read, “Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; lest if *some* Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which *you had* previously promised, that it may be ready as *a matter of* generosity and not as a grudging obligation.” Here, we see that Paul wanted to give the Christians in Corinth and the surrounding area an opportunity to prepare their gift for the needy in Jerusalem in case they had not yet finished preparing that gift.

Paul had recognized the fact a year earlier that the Corinthians were eager to give to help the needy Christians in Jerusalem. In fact, they had been so excited that they had caused many other Christians to become excited and have a great desire to help the Christians in Jerusalem also. However, Paul realized that false teachers had accused him of trying to get the money for himself. As a result, Paul realized the need to remind the Corinthians of their earlier desire so that they would not be unprepared in case some of the other Christians from Macedonia came with Paul when he came to Corinth. Paul said that if such a thing happened that both he and the Christians of Corinth would be ashamed.

That was the reason why Paul had decided to send the brother mentioned in the previous chapter along with Titus when Titus returned to Corinth since they knew and had great trust in that brother. Since that brother was one of the men that was going to help take the gift of the churches in Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem, Paul thought his words of encouragement would be a great blessing to the Christians in Corinth. Paul liked to remind Christians of the words that Christ spoke about giving. Acts 20:35 says, “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'” Paul knew that the Christians would experience a great blessing if they gave a generous gift to help the needy. At the same time, he wanted them to give because of the generosity in their hearts instead of feeling like they had to give to the Lord from an attitude of obligation.

As a part of his encouragement to give to the Lord for the needy in Jerusalem, Paul reminded the Christians of the way that God rewards us for giving. 2 Corinthians 9:6-9 says, “But this *I say*: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. *So let* each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: ‘He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures

forever.” In these verses, we are reminded that we reap as we sow. If we choose to sow very little, we will reap very little. The word that is translated “bountifully” comes from the word which means *to give a blessing*. If we sow generously, we can look forward to reaping a great blessing.

We also see that Paul told the Corinthians that giving was to be based on the attitude in their hearts. The word that is translated “purposes” means *to plan in advance in our heart*. Giving is not to be grudgingly. This means that it is not to be done with sorrow or grief. Giving is not to be of necessity. This means that it is not to be done because of the pressure of other people to give. Instead, God loves a cheerful giver. The word that is translated “cheerful” means that we *give with an attitude of joy*. We want to show our children by our example that it is a privilege to give to the Lord because of what He has done for us.

Paul also wrote that God was able to make all grace abound toward the Corinthians. This means that God was able to reward them for their giving by continuing to give to them so that they would have enough to continue giving to the Lord. Paul quoted Psalm 112:9 to remind them of the way that the Lord gives. That verse says, “He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted with honor.” God supplies the needs of the poor who trust in Him. Then, in Luke 6:38, we see how Christ said that He gives when we give to Him with a joyful heart. That verse says, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” Here, we see that we cannot out-give the Lord. He will always supply our needs when we give with a joyful heart.

Paul went on to say in 2 Corinthians 9:10-11, “Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have *sown* and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while *you are* enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.” Here, we see that we need to make God our source. He is the One who provides the seed for those who plant crops. He is the One who provides bread for food. This is actually a quotation from Isaiah 55:10 where we read, “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, But water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater...” In the same way, God will supply what we need.

God will also multiply our gifts that we give back to Him. Paul told the Corinthians that God will increase the fruits of our righteousness. In Galatians 6:7-10, we read, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” When we sow to the Spirit, we reap everlasting life. That is why we want to show our children by our example that we are looking for opportunities to do good to others, especially other Christians.

We also see that God enriches us in everything. This means that the Lord gives us spiritual blessings as well as supplying our physical needs. 2 Corinthians 9:12-15 says, “For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal sharing with them and all *men*, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks *be* to God for His indescribable gift!” Our service for the Lord is a part of our worship of Him. Paul said that this worship was a way that other Christians could supply

the needs of the saints in Jerusalem.

This would cause those saints to give thanksgiving to the Lord for supplying their needs. At the same time, the Corinthians could also be filled with thanksgiving because of the blessings that the Lord would bring in their lives. This is also true for our lives today. As a result, we can be filled with thanksgiving to God for the way that He is working in our lives. Ephesians 5:20 says, "Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." We also can thank the Lord for the blessing of sharing with others.

Paul said that this collection for the saints in Jerusalem was also a proof of their spiritual life in Christ. In addition, their giving would also cause the needy saints in Jerusalem to give glory to God for the way that the Lord had worked in the lives of the Corinthians. 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." The fact that the Corinthians had a desire to do good works by helping the needy saints in Jerusalem was an evidence of the fact that the Lord had worked in their lives.

We also see that the ministry was mutual. As the Corinthians shared their finances to help the needs of the Christians in Jerusalem, the Christians in Jerusalem would be giving prayers of thank for the Christians in Corinth. Paul said that the Christians in Jerusalem would have a strong desire to get to know the Christians in Corinth because of their gifts. This reminds us of the fact that in heaven we will all be eager to meet Christians from other areas of the world because they have ministered to us as we have ministered to them. This concern for one another is the answer to the prayer of Christ in John 17:21 where we read, "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." As we help our children understand how God rewards our service to Him and to one another, our children will grow to understand our unity in Christ. Truly we can thank God for His indescribable gift. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand how God rewards us.

Learning How to Respond When Others Reject Us

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our children learn how the Lord rewards us for our service to Him. We saw that we actually experience great blessing when we give to the Lord. We also saw that we will experience blessing throughout eternity as we see how the Lord used us to serve others. Others will also be blessed because they served us. However, we also have times in our lives here on this earth when people reject us because we follow Christ. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to respond when others reject them because they follow Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 10:1-2, Paul wrote, “Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--who in presence *am* lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you. But I beg *you* that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.” Apparently, some of the Christians still continued to reject Paul because of the words of the false teachers that had come to Corinth. As a result, Paul now began to respond to those who continued to reject him. The word that is translated “meekness” means *gentleness or mildness*. 2 Timothy 2:25 says, “In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.” Here, we see that meekness is a humble attitude when correcting others which does not try to get even.

The word translated “gentleness” is translated “courtesy” the only other time that this word is used in the New Testament. Acts 24:4 says, “Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.” A gentle person is one that does not get even but treats others with respect and courtesy. Christ always demonstrated a humble and courteous attitude. This was the attitude that Paul had shown when he was with the Corinthians. As a result, Paul felt that he needed to write to the Corinthians with boldness in case some had interpreted his humility as weakness. However, this was not the boldness of one who was depending on his own strength.

Paul went on to explain what gave him boldness. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.” Paul said that he did walk as a human or physical person. However, he did not fight spiritual battles in human strength. This is a key lesson that we also want to show our physical and spiritual children by example. We will only be effective in our service for the Lord if we fight spiritual battles with the spiritual weapons mentioned in Ephesians 6. There, we see that our only offensive weapons are the Word of God and prayer.

The Word of God and prayer are powerful weapons because we are praying that the Lord will use His Word to complete His purposes. Corinth, like most cities in ancient times, had a fortress or stronghold on the top of a hill where the people could flee when an enemy came against them. As we speak the Word of God and pray that the Lord will work through His Word to accomplish His purpose, we will see the Lord defeat all of the attacks of Satan. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Word of God will examine the inner thoughts and plans of the heart of any person.

Here, we see that the Word of God is able to cast down all the arguments and ideas that false teachers and people without Christ try to bring against the Gospel. The ideas of people or even those ideas that are demonically inspired cannot stand against the Word of God. We want to help people learn to turn from human wisdom to godly wisdom. James 3:14-17 says, “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” As we help our children learn to share the Word of God with a humble and gentle attitude even to those who reject, they are actually learning to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ because they are bringing others the light of the Gospel which defeats spiritual darkness and sets free those who place their faith in Christ.

Some of the Christians in Corinth had listened to the false teachers that had come to that city. As a result of his concern for these struggling Christians, Paul said that he was ready to punish all disobedience. The word that is translated “to punish” means *to protect or defend a person from another*. In this verse, it meant to defeat the message of false teachers with the Word of God and protect the struggling Christians from these attacks on their faith. This would make it possible for them to act in obedience to God.

Paul went on to say in 2 Corinthians 10:7-11, “Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he *is* Christ's, even so we *are* Christ's. For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed--lest I seem to terrify you by letters. ‘For *his* letters,’ they say, ‘*are* weighty and powerful, but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.’ Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *we will* also *be* in deed when we are present.” The word that is translated “outward appearance” is usually translated “face” and was sometimes used to speak about what a person thought. By that word, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to look at the obvious facts that they could see.

If those who were false teachers thought that they belonged to Christ, then it should be obvious that Paul also belonged to Christ. Paul had suffered and risked his life many times to tell others about Christ. He had planted churches everywhere he went that now continued to teach about Christ. Those facts were very obvious because Paul had spent many years of his life doing those things. In 1 Corinthians 9:22-23, Paul had written, “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. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with *you*.” The Corinthians had seen the example of Paul and knew that he was willing to do whatever it took to share the Gospel with others.

Paul said that he could boast about his authority. In fact, he mentioned his authority as an apostle in 2 Corinthians 12:11-12 where we read, “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 had also seen Christ on the road to Damascus and probably while he was out in the desert of Arabia. However, Paul explained why he was called to be an apostle.

The Lord had called Paul so he could edify Christians like the Corinthians. He had not called Paul to destroy them. In 2 Corinthians 12:19, Paul wrote, “Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But *we do* all things, beloved, for your edification.” Here, we see that Paul had one goal in his relationship with the Corinthians. He

did all that he did in order to edify or build up the believers. Here, we have a key example for our own lives. In order to help our physical and spiritual children become all that God has planned for them, our goal should be to do all that we do to edify them so that they are strengthened in their spiritual lives.

Paul did all that he did to build up others. As a result, he did not want to terrify them with the letters that he wrote to them. In fact, Paul had said earlier in 1 Corinthians 4:14, "I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*." In the verse that we quoted in the previous paragraph, we see that Paul again called the Christians in Corinth "beloved". Paul wanted the Corinthians to think about the differences between his example and that of false teachers. They could see from the example of Paul the great love that he had for them. In contrast, false teachers sought (and still seek) their own benefit.

The false teachers said that Paul acted one way when he wrote letters from a distance and acted a different way when he was present with them. The false teachers recognized that the letters of Paul were weighty and powerful. In contrast, they also said that when Paul was present with them that he was physically weak. They said that his speech was worthless and of no benefit. Paul had written in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Paul did not try to be eloquent like the Greek philosophers. Instead, he chose to speak with words that presented the Gospel clearly. This is also the example that we should give to our children.

Paul said that the way he wrote in his letters, when he was absent, was the way he would be when he came to visit them and was present with them. Here, we see that Paul also gives us an example for our own lives. We want to be a consistent example that our physical and spiritual children can follow. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how you respond when people reject you.

Learning to Glory in the Lord

In our last topic, we saw how to show our physical and spiritual children how to respond when others reject us. Some of the Corinthians had rejected Paul because of the false teachers. Paul made it clear that he had a great love for the Corinthians and continued to love them even if some of them chose to reject him. He would continue to pray for those who rejected him. We are going to see in our topic today from the example of Paul that we should not even try to compare ourselves with false teachers who might speak against us. Instead, we want to show our children how to glory in the Lord.

In 2 Corinthians 10:12, we read, “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.” The word that is translated “dare” means *to deal boldly with other people*. As a result, Paul is saying that he would not even think of classing himself or comparing himself with those who commend themselves. The phrase that is translated “to class ourselves” means *to judge worthy to be admitted to a certain class of people*. Here, we see the humility of Paul. He did not even want to try to compare himself with the false teachers who talked about themselves.

The word that is translated “to commend” means *to stand with others so that we can show or prove that we are as good as they are*. Paul was only concerned about the approval of one person. 1 Corinthians 4:4 says, “For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.” Here, we see that Paul was concerned about the approval of the Lord but he did not care if people gave their approval to him. We also want to show our children by our example that our only concern is the approval of the Lord in the things that we do.

Paul said that those who measure themselves by themselves or compare themselves among themselves are not wise. That was exactly what the false teachers were doing. When people compare and measure themselves by others, it will produce one of two responses. Some people pick out the things that they do right and compare them with the things that other people do wrong. Such people will always win in their own eyes. Other people will do the opposite. They will pick out the failures in their own lives and compare them with the successes of others. These people will always feel like failures in their lives. Paul said that both groups lack understanding. Romans 14:4 says, “Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.” We want to show our children how to live to please the Lord realizing that He is the One who is able to make them stand.

Paul gives us an example of true humility. He did not live to try and please others. As a result, he went on to write in 2 Corinthians 10:13-16, “We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us--a sphere which especially includes you. For we are not overextending ourselves (as though *our authority* did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; not boasting of things beyond measure, *that is*, in other men's labors, but having hope, *that* as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, to preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment.”

Paul and Timothy said that they would not boast about their accomplishments. Instead, they said that they would continue to work within the sphere to which God had appointed them. In

Galatians 2:9, we read about the sphere that God had given to Paul. That verse says, “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.” Here, we see that God had called Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul wanted the Christians in Corinth to realize that they were a part of that sphere because the city of Corinth was a Gentile city.

Paul and those who traveled with him were not overextending themselves when they went to the city of Corinth. The word that is translated “overextending” means *to extend beyond the prescribed bounds*. Instead, they were being obedient to the Lord. Here, we see that the only concern of Paul was to bring glory to the Lord by being obedient to Him. That was why he had been obedient to the Lord and had brought the Gospel to the city of Corinth. Earlier in the trip when Paul came to Corinth, the Lord had closed the door to Asia and Paul had been obedient. Acts 16:6-8 says, “Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.” Here, we see that Paul and Timothy wanted the leading of the Lord wherever they went.

Paul and Timothy also did not want to boast or take any credit for anything that some other person had done. Here, we see a key principle that we want to demonstrate to our physical and spiritual children. Those who have an attitude of pride want to boast about their accomplishments. In contrast, those who have a humble attitude choose to be obedient to Christ so that all glory will go to Christ. In fact, they also had confidence that as the Christians in Corinth continued to mature, they would also become partners in ministry with Paul and Timothy.

Paul and Timothy looked forward to the fact that the Corinthians would become partners with them in taking the Gospel to other areas. That would continue to expand their outreach to areas that had not heard the Gospel. The next immediate place Paul wanted to go, after going with those who took their gift for the needy in Jerusalem, was Rome. Acts 19:21 says, “When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome.’” Paul knew that Rome was the key city to reach out to the entire Roman Empire and so he looked forward to the opportunity to serve the Lord in that city which was the largest city in the Roman Empire.

However, Paul had a desire to reach even further than the city of Rome. In Romans 15:24, Paul wrote, “Whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your *company* for a while.” Paul explained why he wanted to go to Spain in Romans 15:20-21 where we read, “And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written: ‘To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand.’” Paul just wanted to bring glory to God by being obedient to Him by taking the Gospel to those who had not heard.

Then, Paul explained why he did not want to be like the false teachers who were commending themselves by comparing themselves with others. Paul explained his attitude in 2 Corinthians 10:17-18, where we read, “But ‘he who glories, let him glory in the LORD.’ For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.” Paul did not want to glory or boast about what he had done for the Lord.

Instead, Paul wanted to talk about what the Lord had done for him. Paul expressed this attitude

so well in a letter that he wrote to Timothy. In 1 Timothy 1:12-15, Paul wrote, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Paul looked back at his own life and realized the great mercy that the Lord had shown to him. He realized that there was nothing in his life about which he could glory. He was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man. Christ had taken his life and had transformed him.

As a result of what the Lord had done for him in his life, Paul realized why we should give thanks to the Lord in everything. Paul encouraged others to have the same attitude that he had. That is why he wrote in Ephesians 5:20, “Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In the same way, we want to show our children by our example that we want to give glory for what the Lord has done in our lives and not what we have done.

Like Paul, we need to look forward to the day when the Lord gives his approval for our ministry and not spend our time here on earth talking about what we have done. As Paul came to the end of his life, he wrote in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” Here, we see that Paul had one goal in his life. That was to please the Lord when he stood before the Lord. Paul gave us an example as he looked forward to hearing the words of the Lord. In Matthew 25:21, we read, ““His lord said to him, “Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.””” These are the words Paul desired and will hear from Christ. As we show our children by our example to learn to glory in what the Lord has done in our lives, they will also learn to glory in what the Lord has done in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example what it means to glory in the Lord.

Learning How to Recognize False Teachers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our children learn to glory in what the Lord has done in their lives. We saw that Paul did not even want to compare himself with any person especially with a person that was a false teacher. Paul knew that some of the people in Corinth were being influenced by false teachers. As a result, he wanted to help them learn how to recognize those who were false teachers so that they could avoid them and not be influenced by their false teaching. We also want to help our children learn how to recognize false teachers and avoid them.

In 2 Corinthians 11:1-4, Paul write, “Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly--and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it!” Here, we see that Paul had a great concern for the Christians in Corinth.

He said that he was jealous with a godly jealousy. Here, we see that there are two kinds of jealousy. Worldly jealousy is described in 1 Corinthians 3:3, where we read, “For you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?” Worldly jealousy produces envy, strife and divisions. In contrast, Paul said that he had a godly jealousy. Godly jealousy is a zeal for the things that are right in the sight of God. This is the word that is used for Christ when he cleansed the temple in Jerusalem. John 2:16-17 says, “And He said to those who sold doves, ‘Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!’ Then His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.’” Christ was holy and could not look at sin with approval.

Paul said that He had betrothed them as a pure virgin to Christ. The word “betrothed” means *to join together or to betroth a daughter to a man*. Paul had led the Corinthians to Christ and had joined them to Christ. Now, he was concerned, because their minds were being deceived by false teachers who were corrupting their minds just as Satan corrupted the mind of Eve. The word that is translated “corrupted” means here *to lead away a church from the truth in Christ*. 1 Corinthians 15:33-34 says, “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’ Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame.” Paul was telling the Christians in Corinth that false teachers also destroy the simplicity that is in Christ.

Paul warned that false teachers may come preaching about a different Jesus. They may depend on a different spirit (a demonic spirit as we will see in verses 13-15). They may preach a different Gospel. Paul realized that at least some of the Corinthian Christians might accept the lies of these false teachers. Today, we live in a day when we have many false teachers about whom these same things are true. We want to help our children learn to recognize why they are false so that it will both protect them and help them to protect others from their false teachings.

Paul went on to write in 2 Corinthians 11:5-12, “For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. Even though *I am* untrained in speech, yet *I am* not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things. Did I commit sin in humbling

myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches, taking wages *from them* to minister to you. And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep *myself*. As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows! But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast.” Paul did not consider his message or the way he delivered that message inferior to false apostles who depended on eloquent speaking.

Paul recognized that he had not been trained in the Greek way of speaking that was very important to the Greeks. He said that in spite of his lack of training in eloquent speaking, he did not lack in knowledge of the Gospel. Galatians 1:12 says, “For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught *it*; but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Paul had received his knowledge of the Gospel directly from Christ. The ministry of Paul had become well-known during the time he was in Corinth. Then, Paul asked the question, “Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge?” The Greeks thought that the importance of a speaker was determined by how much money he charged to speak to them. Paul had worked to support himself in Corinth and did not change anything.

Paul had also received gifts from churches in other areas so that he would not need to depend on the people in Corinth to support him as he shared the Gospel. In particular, Paul had received gifts from the very poor churches in Macedonia while he preached the Gospel in the rich city of Corinth. Paul did not tell the Corinthians when he lacked money because he did not want to be a burden. Instead, when he had lacked, the Lord had led the churches in Macedonia to send a gift to help Paul in his ministry in Corinth. Paul had seen how God had supplied his needs through the church at Philippi and the other churches of Macedonia. That is why he later wrote them in Philippians 4:19, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Paul knew the Lord would supply their needs just as the Lord had used them to supply his needs.

Paul said that he had never been a burden to the rich Christians in Corinth. In fact, he did not plan to ever become a burden to them in the future by charging them when he shared the Word of God with them. He did not want to let the Christians in Corinth or the whole region of Achaia have any excuse to condemn him for being a burden to any of them. Paul said that such refusal did not show that he did not love them. Instead, his refusal to accept money from the churches in Corinth and the region of Achaia was to make it impossible for the false teachers to have an opportunity to say that Paul was only teaching them to gain riches for himself which was what the false teachers were doing.

Paul went on to describe the false teachers that were making such false accusations against him. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 says, “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.” Here, we see that Paul now gives a summary of the way to recognize when a person who claims to be an apostle or teacher is false.

First, we see that false teachers are deceitful workers. In Galatians 1:8-9, Paul said that all who teach a false Gospel are deceitful workers. Those verses say, “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.” Paul said that if he changed the Gospel, it would mean that even he was a false teacher.

Second, we see that false apostles or teachers transform themselves into the apostles of Christ. The word that is translated “transform themselves” means *to change or transform*. In Philippians 3:20-21, we read, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” We must be transformed by Christ working in our lives. That is why Paul said false apostles and teachers try to transform themselves by their own efforts. That is evidence that they are not true apostles or teachers.

Third, they follow the example of Satan who transforms himself as an angel of light. Here, we see that a characteristic of Satan is that he works to deceive people by transforming himself so that he appears to be an angel of light. In John 10:10, Christ said, “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 true character of Satan is always to steal, kill and destroy and he is not light.

Fourth, false teachers transform themselves and claim to be ministers of righteousness. Here, we see that false apostles and teachers claim to be ministers of righteousness. “Righteousness” means *that which is acceptable to God*. Isaiah 64:6 says, “But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” False teachers claim to serve God but their works and lives are not acceptable to Him.

Fifth, their works do not agree with their words and they will be judged according to their works. Revelation 20:12 says, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.” Here, we see that all unbelievers will be judged according to their works and face eternal judgment. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to recognize false teachers.

Learning to Rejoice in Suffering

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our children learn to recognize false teachers. We saw that false teachers try to transform themselves by their own efforts. As a result, there is no change in their hearts. We concluded that section by seeing that they will be judged according to their works. Paul then began to talk about the suffering that he had experienced as he served the Lord. As a result, in our topic today, we are going to learn about some of the suffering that Paul experienced. We are also going to see that Paul gives us an example when he suffered so that we can show our children how to rejoice even when they experience suffering.

The false teachers that came to Corinth had boasted about many things that they could do. As a result, Paul chose to respond to their boasting by sharing about his sufferings. Before speaking about his sufferings, he said in 2 Corinthians 11:16-21, “I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little. What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. For you put up with fools gladly, since you *yourselves* are wise! For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes *from you*, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. To *our* shame, I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold--I speak foolishly--I am bold also.” Paul said that he could also choose to boast if that was what the Corinthians desired.

Paul told the Corinthians that he could act like a fool and boast about what he had experienced. In Proverbs 26:5, we read, “Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.” Paul knew that he needed to apply that verse in this situation. In these verses, we see that Paul told the Corinthians that what he was going to say was not according to the Lord. Instead, he was going to speak like a fool and boast like many of the false teachers were boasting. Paul did this to show the foolishness of boasting. He said that many boast according to the flesh. The word translated “flesh” speaks about the human nature. “To boast about the flesh” means *to boast about what we can do through our own efforts or through our human strength*. In contrast, Paul boasted about his weakness.

Paul said that, by their choices, the Corinthians who were choosing to follow false teachers were showing that they were glad to put up with fools. Those particular Corinthians thought that they were wise. However, Paul said that those false teachers were actually bringing them into bondage. Paul had experienced similar false teaching in the region of Galatia. 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.” Paul was willing to stand strongly against any false teachers because he knew that their goal was to bring new Christians into bondage.

Paul went on to give several things that false teachers do to bring people into bondage. They devour you (take your money for themselves). They take advantage of you. They exalt themselves and boast about the things that they have done. They humiliate you to lift up themselves. Paul said that he was too weak to take advantage of the Corinthians like that. Paul said that he would now speak boldly about what he had suffered.

We go on to read about those sufferings in the following verses. 2 Corinthians 11:22-29, “Are they Hebrews? So *am* I. Are they Israelites? So *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So *am*

I. Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I *am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness--besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?" Paul said that like the false teachers he was a Hebrew. He was from the nation of Israel. He was a descendent of Abraham. He did serve Christ.

However, Paul was also very different than the false teachers. The false teachers were taking advantage of the Corinthians. In contrast, Paul was suffering for Christ. Paul worked long hours. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:9, "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 worked night and day to share the Gospel.

Paul also experienced physical suffering. He had been beaten with 39 lashes five different times by the Jews. Three other times he had been beaten with rods. One time, he had been stoned. Acts 14:19 says, "Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul *and* dragged *him* out of the city, supposing him to be dead." Three different times he had been shipwrecked. One of those times, he had been in the water for a night and a day before he was rescued. He spent much of his time traveling from place to place to take the Gospel to others.

The word that is translated "perils" means *danger*. That word is used nine times in the New Testament and eight are in these verses. The one other use of peril is in Romans 8:35 where we read, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Here, we see that danger cannot separate us from the love of Christ. Paul had often experienced the danger of drowning. He often faced danger from robbers as he traveled. Paul often was in danger as other Jews tried to kill him. Paul also was often in danger from Gentiles like the silversmiths in Ephesus that wanted to kill him. Paul was in danger in many different cities. He was often in danger when he was in the wilderness. He also often faced danger as he traveled by sea.

Paul also experienced much physical discomfort as he served Christ. He experienced sorrow and hardship. He often did not get enough sleep because of his concern for the Christians. He often experienced hunger and thirst. He often spent time in fasting so that he could use that time to pray for the needs of others. It was during one such time of fasting and prayer that the Lord called Paul to go from Antioch to other Gentile cities. Acts 13:2-3 says, "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." Paul also had times when he was cold because he lacked adequate clothing.

In addition to these physical troubles, he continually had the pressures that were a result of a deep concern for all of the churches. This was clearly shown by his prayer life for all of the churches. Ephesians 3:14-19 says, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 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.” Many times in the letters that Paul wrote to the churches, he told the Christians that he prayed for them without ceasing. Paul also had a great concern for each Christian that was weak. He was filled with indignation when someone caused a weak Christian to stumble.

Paul went on in 2 Corinthians 11:30-33 to say, “If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.” Paul said that if it was necessary for him to boast that he would boast about the things that caused him to be weak.

In these verses, Paul gave one additional illustration to show why he was often weak and without strength. When Paul was in Damascus, the Jews became very angry because Paul preached the message of the death and resurrection of Christ. Acts 9:23-25 says, “Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let *him* down through the wall in a large basket.” Here, we see that the Jews become so angry that they persuaded the ruler of the city to arrest Paul. The Lord protected Paul as the Christians helped him to escape from the ruler of the city.

In spite of all that Paul suffered, he continued to rejoice in the Lord. After being beaten and thrown into the inner prison at Philippi, Acts 16:25 says, “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Then, from imprisonment in Rome, he wrote to the Philippians in Philippians 4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” Paul modeled for the Christians what it meant to rejoice in suffering. In the same way, we want to model for our physical and spiritual children what it means to rejoice when we suffer. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to rejoice when they suffer by your example.

Learning to Be Strengthened in Weakness

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our children learn to rejoice even when they may suffer for Christ. We saw that we help them learn to rejoice in suffering as we give them an example to follow by the way that we respond when we suffer for sharing the Gospel with others. Because the false teachers had boasted about what they did in their own strength, Paul had chosen to answer what they had said by boasting also. However, Paul chose to boast about his weakness instead of his strength. As a result, we are going to see in our topic today how to show our children how to receive the strength of the Lord at the very time that they are experiencing weakness.

In 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, Paul wrote, “It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” Paul had received a number of visions from the Lord. In fact, six of those visions are recorded in the book of Acts.

The first vision is recorded in Acts 9:11-12 where the Lord spoke to Ananias and told him about the vision that Saul had seen. Those verses say, “So the Lord *said* to him, ‘Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for *one* called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting *his* hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.’” God had given Paul a vision that Ananias would come and restore his sight to him. Since six visions are recorded, it is possible that Paul had several others as well.

Paul also received various revelations from the Lord. In Galatians 1:12, Paul said that he received his message by revelation. That revelation is explained in Galatians 1:15-18 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. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.” Paul spent three years in Arabia where he received by revelation the message that he was to preach among the Gentiles.

As a result, Paul could have boasted about many different visions and revelations. However, he chose to talk about the one that God had specifically spoken in inexpressible words that it was not lawful for man to speak. That particular vision had happened fourteen years earlier. Many people think that Paul may have had this vision at the time that he was stoned in Acts 14:19 where we read, “Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul *and* dragged *him* out of the city, supposing him to be dead.” Whether at that time or some other, that vision is recorded here in 2 Corinthians.

Paul explains this vision as one seen by a man fourteen years earlier. That man could have been in his body or he could have been taken out of his body. Since Paul knew the man had been stoned and those who stoned him thought he had died, that is why many think that Paul speaks the way that he speaks here. Paul said that the person was caught up into the third heaven: the first heaven is the atmosphere above us where the birds fly; the second heaven is where the sun,

moon and stars are located; the third heaven is where the throne of God is located. Notice that the third heaven is also called Paradise. There, the man heard words that he was not allowed to tell anyone. As a result, Paul does not tell what that man learned at that time or boast about what he had heard.

Instead, 2 Corinthians 12:5-6 says, “Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me *to be* or hears from me.” Here, we see that Paul said that the only thing that he would boast about was his infirmities. His desire was not to boast but only to speak the truth that Christ had told him to speak. Here, we see that Paul had no desire to bring glory to himself because he wanted all of the glory to go to God.

Paul went on to write about his infirmities. The word that is translated “infirmities” usually speaks of weakness in the body or the soul. That is the way it was used in the previous chapter. That is also the way it was used in 1 Corinthians 2:3 where we read, “I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.” Then, Romans 8:26 says, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” Paul made it clear that he would only talk about his weaknesses. He did not want to say anything that would exalt himself. He understood what it meant to have physical fears. He also understood that he did not always know how to pray for others. These things spoke of the weakness of his body and soul. Paul knew that everything in his life of any value came from the Lord.

That is why Paul went on to say in 2 Corinthians 12:7-8, “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.” Paul had received much revelation from the Lord. In fact, most of the things in the books of the New Testament that he wrote had probably been received by revelation. At the same time, the Lord chose to keep him dependent upon the Lord so that he would not be tempted to boast in his own strength. As a result, the Lord gave him a thorn in the flesh so that he would be constantly dependent upon the Lord.

The word that is translated “messenger” is the word that is nearly always translated “angel”. We see that one-third of the angels followed Satan and became fallen angels. As a result, this was probably a demon that God allowed to buffet Paul similar to the way that Satan was allowed to buffet Job. The word “buffet” means *to strike with the fist or to mistreat in other ways*. In the case of Job, Satan was allowed to touch the possessions, the family and the health of Job but not his life. We know that Paul had certain physical infirmities. Galatians 4:13-15 says, “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.” Here, we see that he had some kind of physical infirmity that greatly affected his eyes. In addition, this demon may also have buffeted him in other ways.

Paul prayed on three different occasions asking the Lord to remove this thorn in the flesh from his life. We see the answer of the Lord and the response of Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 where we read, “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” Instead of removing the thorn in the flesh, the Lord told Paul that His grace would be sufficient for Paul.

The Lord told Paul that the Lord's strength is best revealed when it is revealed through the life of a person that has to depend on the Lord for strength because his or her life is controlled by weakness. The word that is translated "weakness" is the word that was translated by the word "infirmities" in verse five and twice more in these verses. We saw in verse five that the word that is translated "infirmities" usually speaks of weakness in the body or the soul. Paul certainly experienced much weakness of both body and soul as we see the way that he suffered both physically and emotionally in chapter eleven.

As a result of the fact that the Lord told Paul that His grace was sufficient for Paul, we see that Paul said that he was very glad to boast in his infirmities because it was a constant reminder to him that the power of Christ was resting on him. In fact, Paul was well-pleased to experience other things in his life in addition to infirmities because of the fact that the grace of God was sufficient. The word that is translated "reproaches" spoke of the insults that came from the pride of those who were false teachers. The word that is translated "needs" speaks of the calamities that it was necessary for Paul to go through to carry out the ministry that the Lord had given to him. Paul was also glad to experience any persecution that came into his life as he carried out the ministry that the Lord had given to him. Paul was even willing to go through the extreme affliction that he experienced for the sake of Christ.

Paul gave us the key to experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit working through our lives in these verses. He said that when he was weak, then he was strong. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that our own weakness is what causes us to depend totally on the Lord for His strength. When we serve the Lord in His strength, instead of our own weakness, then the Lord is able to do much more than we could ever imagine through our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to serve in the strength of the Lord instead of in your own weakness.

Learning to Suffer to Help Others Grow

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our children learn to serve in the strength that Christ provides instead of trying to serve the Lord in their own weakness. We saw that when we realize our own weakness, we realize that we must serve the Lord in His strength instead of our weakness. We have also seen the way that Paul suffered. In our topic today, we are going to see what it means to learn to show our physical and spiritual children what it means to suffer to help others in their spiritual growth.

In 2 Corinthians 12:11-13, we read, “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. For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!” Paul said that he had become a fool to boast even though he chose to boast about his infirmities. He said that the Corinthians had forced him to boast about his infirmities to show the difference between himself and the false teachers that had come to Corinth.

Paul said that he should actually have been commended by the Christians in Corinth. The Corinthians should have stood with Paul instead of joining the false teachers who were speaking against Paul. Paul was not inferior to the other apostles like Peter and John. Like the other apostles, Paul realized that he was nothing in himself. All of the apostles recognized the fact that they were totally dependent upon the Lord for strength because in themselves they knew that they were all weak. We also need to realize the same thing is true in our own lives. We have no strength in ourselves so we must depend on the power of Christ to work in our lives.

As an apostle, Paul had been given the signs of an apostle. Hebrews 2:3-4 says, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” Here, we see that God had confirmed the ministry of the apostles by giving them the power to do signs, wonders and various miracles. Paul had been able to do the same signs, wonders and miracles that were done by the other apostles. In Acts 19:11-12, we read, “Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.” As a result, the Corinthians knew that the Lord had given Paul the signs of an apostle to confirm his message about the death and resurrection of Christ.

The love of Paul for the Corinthians had not changed even though part of them had rejected Paul. 2 Corinthians 12:14-15 says, “Now *for* the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.” Paul was coming to visit the Corinthians for a third time. However, he said that he would not be a burden to them. By this, he meant that he had no intention to ask them for money or any other help when he came to them.

Paul did not seek the things that belonged to the Corinthians. Instead, he wanted the Christians in Corinth to know his love for them. Paul viewed the Corinthians as his spiritual sons and

daughters in the faith. He did not expect them to support him. Instead, he wanted to share his love with them just as a father shares his love with his children. Paul said that he would gladly spend and be spent for their souls. He was willing to use any money that he had to help the Christians in Corinth. In addition, he was willing to give his very life if that was what it took to help them in their spiritual growth. However, the more they saw his love for them, the less they seemed to love Paul.

Paul went on to write in 2 Corinthians 12:16-19, “But be that *as it may*, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning! Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you? I urged Titus, and sent our brother with *him*. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did *we* not *walk* in the same steps? Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But *we do* all things, beloved, for your edification.” Regardless of whether the Corinthians loved Paul or not, he had determined that he would not be a burden to them.

The false teachers had apparently accused Paul of being crafty and deceitful, saying the offering Paul was collecting for the needy Christians in Jerusalem was actually a way to get part of that money for himself. That is why Paul mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8:18, “And we have sent with him the brother whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches.” The brother who Paul sent with Titus to Corinth was a brother that was known and respected by the Christians at Corinth. Paul knew that they would trust him.

As a result of the false accusations by the false teachers against Paul, he asked the Corinthians several questions. Paul asked them if any of the people who he had sent to Corinth had taken advantage of them by requesting money from them. Paul asked if Titus or the brother with him had taken advantage of them when Paul sent Titus to them. Paul said that all of the people he had sent to Corinth had the same spirit that Paul had. Each of them also had a great concern for the spiritual growth of the Corinthian Christians. Paul had told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 4:16-17, “Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” Paul and all of the men who served with him had shown the same consistent example at whatever church they established or visited again.

In verse 19, Paul said that he was not trying to defend himself or those that he had sent to the Corinthians. Instead, he said that they would all give an account for what they had said and done to God rather than man. Paul made it clear that the things he, and the others he sent to minister in Corinth, had done were to build up the spiritual lives of the Christians in Corinth. Paul and the others did what they had done because of the great love they had for the Corinthian Christians. Here, we see the concern that we should have and pass on to our physical and spiritual children. Our concern should also be to build others up in their spiritual lives. It should be our desire to see our children develop this concern from a heart that is motivated by the love of Christ for those that they have led to Christ and helped in their spiritual growth.

Paul was concerned about the attitudes and actions that he might find among the Christians when he reached the city of Corinth. 2 Corinthians 12:20-21 says, “For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and *that* I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest *there be* contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced.” When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he said in 1 Corinthians 3:3, “For you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?” They were still acting like immature Christians when he had made his second visit to the city. Now, he was concerned

that he might find the same attitudes and actions when he reached Corinth this third time.

“Contentions” mean *strife or arguing*. “Jealousies” mean *an envious rivalry between the people*. “Outbursts of wrath” means *anger which boils up and spills over by becoming angry words when spoken of people*. “Selfish ambition” means *a desire to put one’s self forward*. “Backbiting” means *evil speaking that tears down the character of others*. “Whisperings” means *secret slandering of others*. “Conceits” mean *pride which causes a person to puffed up and proud*. “Tumults” mean *instability, disturbance and confusion*. Here, we see that Paul was concerned that the Christians in Corinth would still be acting like they were not even Christians yet.

Paul said that if he found such actions present when he reached the city of Corinth that before God their actions would humiliate him because there had not been spiritual growth in their lives. Paul also said that he would be filled with great sorrow because of the fact that many of the Christians in Corinth were continuing to live in sin and had not repented of their sins. Here, we see that unconfessed sin in the lives of children will bring great sorrow to those parents if they are providing a godly example to either their physical or spiritual children. This is one reason why it is important to provide our children with an example of godly living so that they have an example to follow. We also need to take the time to show them how to obey the Word of God in their daily lives.

Paul mentioned three kinds of actions that Christians in Corinth had been committing. “Uncleanness” speaks of wild living based on impure motives. “Fornication” speaks of any kind of sexual sin. “Lewdness” speaks of uncontrolled and shameless living. Here, we see that there were many of the Christians in Corinth that continued to practice some of the sins from their former lives. That is why it is important to show our children how to follow the example of Paul even if it means suffering to help others grow. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example of being willing to suffer to help others grow.

Learning to Receive Rejection with Gentleness

In our last topic, we saw that we wanted to show our children by our example that we are willing to suffer if necessary to help struggling Christians in their spiritual growth. There are many lessons that can only be learned through example. Learning to suffer for the purpose of helping others grow is an example of one lesson that can only be learned from the example that others model. One of the ways that our children can experience suffering can be rejection by others. In our topic today, we are going to see how to show our physical and spiritual children how to learn to receive rejection with gentleness.

In 2 Corinthians 13:1-4, we read, “This *will be* the third *time* I am coming to you. ‘By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.’ I have told you before, and foretell as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare--since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.” Here, we see that Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth again that his coming visit would be his third visit to the city of Corinth.

Paul quoted from Deuteronomy 19:15 to point out that he would deal with the Corinthians biblically when he came to Corinth. That verse says, “One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.” Paul had heard several reports of the presence of unrepentant Christians being present in the church at Corinth. However, if he saw that there was a need for Biblical discipline, Paul would follow the Biblical principles in the application of that discipline. He had told the leaders in Corinth on his second visit that they needed to exercise discipline toward those who were continuing to live in unrepentant sin and had not exercised that discipline himself so that the leaders could have time to follow his instructions.

However, since the leaders had not disciplined some of the unrepentant who were living in sin in the church, Paul said that he would not spare when he came the third time. The false teachers had said that Paul was not an apostle of Christ. Some of the Corinthians wanted proof that Christ was speaking to Paul. Paul reminded them that Christ is not weak. In fact, Christ had worked in a mighty way in the lives of the Corinthians to give them salvation. Some people thought that Christ was weak because He allowed Himself to be crucified. However, Paul reminded the Corinthians that Christ had been raised from the dead and was alive by the power of God. As we saw in an earlier topic, Paul had been told by the Lord that when he was weak that then he was strong. As a result, Paul would come to Corinth the third time in the power and strength of God and not in his own strength. He would discipline rebellious Christians if that was necessary.

As a result, Paul told the Christians that were living in sin in 2 Corinthians 13:5-6, “Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.” Here, we see a key lesson that we need to help our children learn how to explain to others. If a person claims to be a Christian and continues to live in open sin and rebellion against the Lord, such an individual needs to be encouraged to examine his or her life to make certain that he or she has a true faith. At the same time, we want to remind our children what Galatians 6:1 says about the way to speak to such a person, “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.” They are to speak to the sinning Christian in a spirit of gentleness.

Paul asked the rebellious Christians, Don’t you know that Christ is in you, unless you never experienced true repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? Paul had not had to ask a question like that of the Thessalonians. Instead, he was able to say in 1 Thessalonians 1:8-9, “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. 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.” The Thessalonians had turned to God from idols (true repentance) and they were serving the living and true God (true faith had produced a changed life). Paul wanted to see the rebellious Christians in Corinth also give evidence of true repentance and faith.

As a result, Paul concluded his letter to the rebellious Christians in Corinth with a gentle plea. 2 Corinthians 13:7-10 says, “Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete. Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.” Here, we see that Paul continued to pray for the rebellious Christians. His prayer for them was that they would choose to avoid evil.

Paul did not pray that they would avoid evil for his sake. Instead, he wanted them to do what is honorable. The word that is translated “honorable” means *that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects*. Paul had a great concern for the Corinthians to learn to live godly lives. He did not care if they personally rejected him but he did want to see every Christian grow to spiritual maturity. In Colossians 1:28-29, Paul wrote, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” The goal of Paul was always to help every Christian become mature in Christ. That was his goal and purpose as he served others because of the way that the Lord was working in his life. That should be the same purpose that we have in our lives as we give our children an example to follow.

Paul made it clear that he did not want to do anything that would be against the truth. Instead, he wanted the truth of the Gospel to be clearly seen in his life so that others could follow his example. That is why he had earlier told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.” As a result, Paul told the Corinthians that he was glad to be weak if that would help the Corinthian Christians become spiritually strong. Paul said that it was his prayer that the Christians in Corinth would be complete. Again, he points out the fact that his prayer was for the maturity of the Corinthian Christians. Paul had written this letter to make sure that he avoided speaking with sharpness when he got to Corinth. He wanted to use the authority that the Lord had given him as an apostle to build up the Christians and not to destroy them. Here, we see a great example for our own lives.

As Paul concluded his letter, he said in 2 Corinthians 13:11-14, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.” Here, we see that he said for a final time that he wanted to see them become mature in their spiritual lives. He begged them to experience the comfort and encouragement of

the Lord.

He also encouraged them to be one of mind. This was an encouragement to them to learn to be in agreement and unity. A short time later, he wrote the same thought to the church in Rome. Romans 12:16 says, “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.” Then a few years later, Paul wrote the same thing to the Philippians. Philippians 2:2-4 says, “Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *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.” As we look at these verses, we see that Paul had a great concern for Christians to grow to maturity so that they would be able to function together in unity.

Paul also wanted the Christians in Corinth to live in peace so that they could experience the love and peace of God in their lives day by day. Here, we see some goals that we have for both our physical and spiritual children as we help them grow to spiritual maturity. We want them to learn to live in agreement and unity in their relationships with other Christians. Then, we want them to experience the love and peace of God in their lives as they continue to grow in fellowship with the Lord. That will happen as they see us respond to them with gentleness even when they have wrong attitudes at those times when they are trying to do things in their own strength.

As this book concludes, Paul reminded the Corinthians of the fact that the Trinity wanted them to experience the blessing of the Lord. We want the same thing for our children. We want them to experience the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in their lives. We want them to grow in their understanding of the love of the Father for them. We want them to experience the fellowship that happens as we yield moment by moment to the Holy Spirit. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to receive rejection with gentleness so that they can enjoy the peace of God in their lives.