

21. Learning to Be an Example to Others

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children grow to understand the great privilege that it is to have the opportunity to share the Word of God with others. We also saw that it is a great privilege to share with those who share the Gospel with others. Our topic today will build on that topic as we see that we want to show our children how to be an example to others.

When we saw in our last topic that we are to share with those who share the Gospel, we also saw that Paul had not done that when he was in the city of Corinth. Instead, he had worked to support himself by making tents. However, there were other people who did receive support from the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 9:12 says, “If others are partakers of *this* right over you, *are* we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.” Here, Paul points out the fact that other teachers had exercised their right to receive support from the Christians at Corinth. Some of these may have been true teachers of the Gospel and it is even possible that some false teachers had received support from the Corinthian Christians.

However, Paul made it clear that he and those who traveled with him had not exercised this right by asking the people who became Christians in Corinth to support them. Then, Paul explained why he and those with him had not asked the Christians to support them. Paul said that he and those with him had chosen to work and not ask for support so that they would not hinder the Gospel of Christ. Paul warned Timothy that there would be false teachers whose goal for teaching is getting money. 1 Timothy 6:3-5 says, “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, 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.” Paul did not want the Corinthians to think that he was just preaching the Gospel to them as a way of making money so he did not even ask for support.

That was the reason why Paul chose to make tents when he was at Corinth. Paul understood the principle of contentment. Paul went on to tell Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:6-8, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” Paul wanted his life to be an example to the Corinthians of the meaning of contentment. He spent enough time making tents to provide for the food and clothing that he needed. He showed the Corinthians by his example that he was content and thankful to God because he had the basics of food and clothing.

Paul went on to say in 1 Corinthians 9:13-14, “Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat *of the things* of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of *the offerings of* the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.” Paul used an illustration from the Old Testament to show that God had provided for the priests who served the Lord in the Old Testament. The priests were allowed to eat the holy things of the temple. Those who offered the sacrifices on the altar were allowed to eat part of the sacrifice

to provide them with their food.

In the same way, Christ had told the twelve when He sent them to share the Gospel in Luke 9:3-4, “And He said to them, ‘Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart.’” In that case, Christ wanted to show the disciples that he would supply their needs as they ministered and so he told them to take nothing but that the people to whom they ministered would supply their needs. Paul knew that Christ had given the disciples those instructions.

Paul had chosen not to receive anything from the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 9:15 says, “But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it *would be* better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.” Paul knew that the Lord would allow him to ask those that he led to Christ to help supply him with food and clothing. However, he chose not to ask the Corinthians for anything because he knew that they could misunderstand his purpose. Here, we see an important lesson for our own lives. There are certainly times when new Christians will misunderstand our purpose if we ask them for financial help. We want our lives to be an example to them and not a hindrance to them.

Paul later explained the principles that had guided his ministry when he talked to the elders of the church at Ephesus. Acts 20:33-35 says, “I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 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.'” Here, we see that Paul had also worked in Ephesus to supply his own needs and the needs of the men that were with him. In fact, Paul had even given the Ephesians an example by using some of the money that he earned to support the weak. He had shown the elders at Ephesus by his example that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive.

Paul also went on to tell the Corinthians why he preached the Gospel. 1 Corinthians 9:16 says, “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” Paul said that the reason that he preached the Gospel was because necessity was laid on him. The word that is translated “necessity” means *something that is placed on a person by circumstances or by the commandment of others*. Paul felt the necessity to preach the Gospel for several reasons. First, the Lord had called him to preach the Gospel. Acts 9:3-6 says, “As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord *said* to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’” Paul knew that he had been called to preach the Gospel by Christ because of the circumstances of his salvation.

In addition, Paul knew that every Christian is commanded to preach the Gospel. Mark 16:15 says, “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.’” Paul also

knew that we will all give an account to the Lord for what we have done. He later told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 5:10-11, “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. 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.” Paul wanted to give an account to the Lord for what he had done with joy. For these same reasons, we want to help our children learn to be an example to others by their desire to share the Gospel.

Paul went on to say in 1 Corinthians 9:17-18, “For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.” Here, we see some key parts of the example of Paul. Paul said that if he willingly preached the Gospel he could look forward to a reward. Years later, as Paul came to the end of his life, he said, in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” Paul did provide a faithful example right to the end of his life. As he neared death, he looked forward to the fact that he would receive the crown of righteousness.

Paul also said that a part of his reward was to preach the Gospel without expecting anything from the people to whom he preached. He considered it a privilege to be able to share the Gospel without expecting anything from those to whom he preached. In fact, Paul encouraged Timothy to tell others to focus on eternal rewards instead of material rewards. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:17-19, “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. *Let them* do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” Instead of looking for opportunities to receive from others, Paul encouraged Timothy to encourage others to be rich in good works and look for opportunities to share with others.

Paul encouraged Timothy to teach others to trust in the living God instead of uncertain riches. He encouraged Timothy to teach them to be rich in good works and focus on eternal rewards. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to become an example by their lives so that others will be drawn to Christ. As we show our children by our example that these are our priorities, they will be encouraged to trust Christ to use their example to help others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to become an example to others.