

4. Helping Faith Stand in the Power of God

In our last topic, we saw that God does not choose people in the same way that the world chooses people. In fact, we see that God determined before the creation of the world to choose people for different reasons than the reasons people choose others. We also saw that God did more for us than just provide salvation. Today, in our topic we want to focus on how to help our physical and spiritual children stand in the power of the Lord instead of standing in human strength. This is essential if we are going to help our children develop an effective ministry for the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 2:1-2, we read, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Paul had brought the Gospel to the city of Corinth. We see that he did not depend on his speaking ability or even his wisdom as he brought the message of forgiveness of sins to the people of Corinth. The word that is translated “excellence” speaks of superiority or elevation. As a result, Paul is saying that he did not use words that would make him sound superior or better than the people of Corinth. Instead, he spoke with a humble attitude. Here, we see that his attitude was in direct contrast to the Greek philosophers.

Paul also said that he did not depend on human wisdom as he spoke to the people in Corinth. Paul knew that the wisdom of God is much greater than the wisdom of people. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “‘For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’” Here, we see that Paul chose to share the Word of God instead of the words of people. In the same way, we want to show our children by our example how to speak with a humble attitude and to speak the Word of God instead of our own words.

As Paul spoke to the people of Corinth, he shared the testimony that God had given about His Son. The word that is translated “determined” means *to resolve, to determine or to pass judgment*. Paul had come to Corinth from Athens. He had seen the desire of the people there to want to discuss various ideas about philosophy and religion. Paul did not desire to judge the people of Corinth. Instead, he wanted them to have the opportunity to hear about the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul understood the meaning of 1 Corinthians 1:18 that says, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” He knew that they had not yet heard the Gospel. He knew that some would reject but that others would respond to the power of God working in their lives. We want to help our children realize the importance of focusing on the message of the death and resurrection of Christ when they are talking to people who have not yet placed their faith in Christ.

Paul did not depend on his own strength as he came to share the Gospel in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 2:3-5, we read, “I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” Paul may well have had reasons why he came to them in weakness. He had recently been beaten in

Philippi, forced to flee from Thessalonica and Berea and mocked while he was in the city of Athens. However, the things that had happened to him in the previous few months did not hinder or stop him from sharing the Gospel with the people of Corinth.

We also see that Paul did not depend on the persuasive words of human wisdom as he preached the Gospel to the Corinthians. Instead, Paul clearly and simply explained the Gospel. Acts 18:4 says, “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.” Paul did not try to convince people to place their faith in Christ by using human wisdom or human arguments. Instead, Paul depended on the Holy Spirit to demonstrate His power by working in their lives. This is an important lesson that we want to help our children understand so that they will not depend on their own speaking ability to change people. Instead, we want to help them understand the importance of allowing the Holy Spirit to demonstrate His power by working in the lives of those with whom they share the Gospel.

Paul explained why it is important to make certain that we help our children to understand the importance of allowing the Holy Spirit to demonstrate the power of God. Otherwise, people will base their faith on the wisdom of men. In contrast, the Holy Spirit convicts and convinces people of their spiritual need. John 16:7-11 says, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” When the Holy Spirit does the convicting, people will base their faith on the power of God and not the wisdom of men.

Paul did share wisdom with the people to whom he ministered. However, he chose to share the wisdom of God instead of sharing the wisdom of men. 1 Corinthians 2:6-8 says, “However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” In the same way, we want to help our children learn to share the wisdom of God from the Word of God instead of sharing their own opinions.

The word that is translated “mature” means *those who are full grown or adults*. As it is used here it speaks of those who have become mature Christians and not new or struggling Christians. The word that is translated “wisdom” speaks of knowledge that covers many different things and also speaks of the knowledge that belongs to God. As a result, Paul pointed out the fact that we want to share the wisdom of God with those who are mature to equip them for effective ministry for the Lord. Paul made it clear that we do not want to share the wisdom of this age.

In fact, 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 tell us how to help our children learn to speak the wisdom of God. Those verses say, “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 does not teach us through human wisdom. Instead, the Holy Spirit teaches us by comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Two key passages that help our children to understand how the Holy Spirit compares spiritual things with spiritual are the following. 2 Peter 1:19-21 says, “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” Here, we see that the men who wrote the Bible were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” These verses tell us that God uses all Scripture to help Christians become mature and equipped for every good work.

The word that is translated “mystery” in the Bible means *something that God has hidden from the unbelieving but reveals to those who have placed their faith in Christ*. Luke 8:9-10 says, “Then His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘What does this parable mean?’ And He said, ‘To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’” Paul shows us in Ephesians 3:3-5 that mystery can also mean something that was previously hidden that is now revealed. Those verses say, “How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.” Here, we see that many things were revealed in the New Testament that had been hidden in the Old Testament. God hid this wisdom in the time of the Old Testament and chose to reveal it to those who become mature Christians in the New Testament.

God said that the rulers of the world did not understand the wisdom of God. In fact, they could not know that wisdom because they had not placed their faith in the Lord. God said that if the rulers of this world would have placed their faith in Christ that they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. That is why we read what Christ said as He prayed in Luke 23:34, “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’” We want to help our children understand the wisdom of God so that as they share the message of faith they will share it so that people will stand in the power of God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to share the Word of God so that the faith of others will stand in the power of God.