

45. Learning the Importance of Open Doors

In our last topic, we saw that the resurrection gives our lives as Christians meaning and purpose for the present as well as eternal life for the future. We saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that the resurrection gives them a reason to be thankful for all things. We also saw that the resurrection gives them a great purpose for their lives as they abound in the work of the Lord. In our topic today, we are going to see that one of the things that we want to help our children recognize is the open doors the Lord has given them to serve the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, we see that Paul first answers the questions of the Corinthian Christians that they had about the offering that they were preparing to send to help the Christians in Jerusalem. Those verses say, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 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. And when I come, whomever you approve by *your* letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.” The Christians in many different areas were collecting money to help the needy Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who were experiencing much persecution and suffering from the Jews who had rejected the message of the death and resurrection of Christ.

We actually learn several principles that we want to model for our physical and spiritual children about giving to the Lord from the instructions in these verses. First, Paul encouraged them to give on the first day of the week. In the Old Testament, the Jews had worshiped on the Sabbath or Saturday. However, here we see that as Christians we gather on the first day of the week to worship because we are remembering the day of the week that Christ rose from the dead. Acts 20:7 says, “Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” Here, we see that it was a common practice for the Christians to get together to break bread on the first day of the week. Paul told the Corinthian Christians to use this gathering as the time to give their offerings.

Second, we see that Paul instructed the Christians to lay aside their offering during the week so that they would be prepared to bring their offering on the first day of the week. At that time, it was common for the workers to be paid each day at the end of the day. As a result, they were encouraged to lay aside their money each day during the week so that they would be prepared to bring their offering when they gathered together on the first day of the week.

Third, their offering was to be based on the way that the Lord had prospered them. The word that is translated “prospered” means *the way that the Lord has blessed us in many different ways*. In 3 John 2, we read, “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” Here, we see that prospering can be related to prospering in health, in our spiritual life or in all areas of our lives. For the Corinthians, Paul was talking about the way that the Lord had prospered them financially. Paul said that they should bring their offerings each week so that there would be no need to try and gather the money together when he came.

Fourth, Paul said that they were to choose the people who would handle their gifts. The word that is translated “approve” in this verse means *to recognize a person as worthy after examination or to approve a person*. Those who are responsible to care for the money of the church are often called stewards. In 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, Paul wrote, “Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” As a result, Paul told them to choose faithful people to handle the money of the church. Paul said that the ones they chose could handle and even take their gifts to the needy saints in Jerusalem. This is a principle that we also want to explain to our children. It is important to choose people to handle the money of any church that are recognized as worthy or qualified to handle the money so that there will be no questions about the way that the money is handled.

Fifth, Paul said that if others thought it would be fitting for him to go with those who would take the money to Jerusalem he would also go with them. Here, we see that Paul was willing to do whatever was necessary to help the churches get their gifts to the suffering Christians in Jerusalem. We want to provide an example to our children by our own lives of being available to help the churches carry out their ministry for the Lord.

Paul went on to say in 1 Corinthians 16:5-7, “Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia). And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go. For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits.” In these verses, we see that Paul had a desire to visit the church in Corinth. He was already planning to take a trip to Macedonia, the Lord willing.

In fact, Paul even said that it might be possible for him to spend the winter with the Christians in the city of Corinth. Here, we see that Paul had a real desire to help the Christians in Corinth in their spiritual growth. In fact, Paul had written in 1 Corinthians 4:14-16, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*. 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.” Here, we see that Paul had the concern of a spiritual parent and wanted to help these Christians in their spiritual growth and development. We also want to help our children learn how to become spiritual parents to others so that they can help others in their spiritual growth.

Paul said that he wanted to spend time with the Christians in Corinth. As a result, he did not just want to come and then leave immediately. He had a desire to spend the entire winter with them in order to help them in their spiritual growth. Then, he said that they could send him on his way. As a result, He said that he would also come to Corinth if the Lord allowed him. Here, we see that the attitude of Paul was to make certain that whatever he did he was doing the will of the Lord. This is also an attitude that we want to show our children by our own example.

However, Paul explained why he needed to stay in Ephesus for a period of time before he came to the city of Corinth. 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 says, “But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and *there are* many adversaries.” Paul realized the

need to continue his teaching in the city of Ephesus to prepare the Christians there for the opposition that they were facing.

The Lord had opened a great and effective door in the city of Ephesus. Acts 19:8-10 tells what happened when Paul came to the city of Ephesus. Those verses say, “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. 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. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” Here, we see that even though there was great opposition from the Jews in Ephesus, the Lord had opened a great and effective door for ministry for Paul. Many times, the places where we face the most opposition are also the places where the Lord wants to do His greatest work through us.

Here, we see that Paul had the opportunity to give daily instruction to the people who followed the Lord and were becoming disciples. Then, these people were taking the Word of God throughout the entire Roman province of Asia. As a result, the Gospel was spreading to many places that Paul had not even had the opportunity to visit personally. Two such cities were the cities of Colosse and Laodicea. Colossians 2:1 says, “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.” Colossians 4:12-13 tells us that Epaphras was the one that brought the Gospel to these cities as well as to the city of Hierapolis.

However, Paul also had many adversaries. 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 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*.” In addition to many Jews turning against Paul, the silversmiths of Ephesus also fought against Paul.

In Acts 19:23-34, we see that this opposition was led by a man named Demetrius. He said in Acts 19:27-28, “‘So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.’ Now when they heard *this*, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, ‘Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians!’” Here, we see that Christianity was hurting the business of making idols and the silversmiths were filled with wrath. As a result, Paul had opposition from the Jews and also many of the businessmen in the city of Ephesus. We need to prepare our children for the fact that open doors to share the Gospel will often include opposition from those who reject Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand how God opens doors for ministry.