

22. Helping Our Children Learn to Work as We Wait for the Lord

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to stand fast in the Lord. We know that our children will face opposition as they serve the Lord because Satan and those who are following Him are not happy when they see Christ working in and through the life of any Christian. As a result, we saw that the Lord is the One who is able to establish our children and keep them from the evil one. In our topic today, we are going to see that we want to help our children learn to work as they wait for the coming of the Lord.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, we read, “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.” We begin these verses by seeing that Paul gave the Christians in Thessalonica a command. This command was to withdraw from any Christian that was walking in a disorderly manner.

The word that is translated “disorderly” was used in the Greek society to talk about a soldier who was not marching in a proper way or for people who did not show up for work because they were spending their time following sinful pleasures. Paul had both taught the teachings of Christ and had written the book of 1 Thessalonians to this church at an earlier time. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, we read, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.” In this verse, another form of the word disorderly is translated “unruly”. The only other place this word is used is in 2 Thessalonians 3:11, which gives us a description of the disorderly when it says, “For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.” Here, we see that a disorderly person does not work but spends his or her time inquiring about the business of others.

Paul told the Christians to withdraw from a disorderly Christian. The word that is translated “to withdraw” means *to avoid and not spend time with such people enjoying their fellowship and participating in their activities*. Paul and the team with him gave the Thessalonians a good example by working hard both day and night to give the Thessalonians an example to follow. 1 Thessalonians 2:9 says, “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 and the team with him knew the importance of leading others by their own example. In the same way, as physical or spiritual parents, we are to lead our physical and spiritual children by our example.

In verse ten, we see that Paul said that if any would not work that they should not eat. Paul, Silas and Timothy had given an example by working night and day when they were with the Thessalonians. Apparently, there were a few that were physically able to work that were not working when these men were in Thessalonica. As a result, when Paul was in Thessalonica he said that those who refused to work should not be given food by the other Christians because that

would encourage them to be lazy. Here, we see that Paul reminded the Christians of the command that he had given earlier when he was with them in Thessalonica.

We see why Paul gave that reminder in 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 that says, “For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.” There were a few who had become Christians that continued to walk in a disorderly manner. They did not work at all. Instead, they spent their time inquiring and gossiping about the business of others. People who are not Christians may do those things, but here we see that Christians are to set an example for others by the way that we work.

Paul used two words as he spoke to the Christians that were busybodies. The first was to command them to begin working. The second word that Paul used is exhort. The word that is translated “to exhort” means *to come to one’s side to encourage, teach, comfort or strengthen*. Here, we see that Paul says that even when it is necessary to give a command to correct a sinful or rebellious Christian, the command should be given in love. Paul illustrated this principle in Philemon 1:8-9 where we read, “Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, yet for love’s sake I rather appeal *to you*—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” Paul could have commanded but he chose instead to appeal in love. We need to follow the example of Paul so that we provide an example for our physical and spiritual children to follow when they have to deal with sin in the lives of others.

Here, we see that Paul appealed to the busybodies to work with quietness so they could provide their own food. The word that is translated “quietness” means that they were *to work without meddling in the affairs of others*. They were to learn to be silent instead of gossiping about what was happening in the lives of other people. In the same way, we want to help our children learn to work to supply their own needs. At the same time, we want to show them by our example the importance of avoiding gossip about other people.

That is why 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15 goes on to say, “But *as for* you, brethren, do not grow weary *in* doing good. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.” Here, we see how we are to respond even if there are some Christians who are meddling in the affairs of others and gossiping. We are to set an example by not getting tired of doing what is good. Galatians 6:9-10 promises us, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Here, we see that we will reap a reward according to the timing of God if we make it our goal to look for every opportunity to do those things that are good and pleasing in the sight of God.

We also see how to respond to Christians who are rebellious and do not obey the Word of God. We are to take notice of the fact that a Christian is presently rebellious and not obedient to the Word of God. Then these verses say that we are not to keep company with such a Christian. The word translated “keep company” means that we are not *to spend time in social situations, such as*

eating, because that will cause the person to think that we approve of their rebellious actions. Instead, 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 Christians who are spiritually mature are to seek to restore such a person and help them get back into a right relationship with the Lord.

We also see the attitude that we are to have as we seek to restore a rebellious Christian. We are to seek to restore with a spirit of gentleness. That spirit of gentleness is important for our own sake. If we have a wrong attitude, we will also be tempted to sin. Romans 14:13 says, “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in *our* brother’s way.” If we judge another person, we will cause that person to stumble. In addition, we are also allowing ourselves to become controlled by pride.

That is why we are told that we are not to treat the Christian in rebellion like an enemy. Instead, we are to admonish that person as a brother. Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Here, we see the way to admonish as a brother. We are to have the Word of God in our hearts so that we admonish with the Word of God. We are also to have grace in our hearts because our goal is to restore and not to condemn. When the Word of God and grace are in our hearts, we will admonish as a brother instead of condemn as a judge. In the process, we will also help to restore the brother or sister.

We want to help our children to learn to minister to rebellious Christians. In 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18, we read, “Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord *be* with you all. The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.” Here, we see that as our children learn to restore others that the Lord of peace will also give them peace. Philippians 4:7 says, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” The peace of God will guard our hearts and minds, as well as the hearts and minds of our children, as we seek to restore rather than judge.

The Thessalonians had been Christians only a short period of time when the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians were written to them. However, they were given many instructions that would help them to learn to minister to others. As we teach and model these lessons for our physical and spiritual children, the Lord will also help our children learn to minister effectively to others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to work and serve the Lord as we wait for His coming.