

#### 4. Learning How to Follow the Example of Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to become faithful servants of God. We saw that starts as we lead them to Christ and help them grow to spiritual maturity. However, to become faithful servants of Christ we also want to help them do the same with faithful men and then equip those faithful men to do the same with others also. We are going to see in our topic today that we also want to help our children learn to follow the example of Christ.

In our previous topic, Paul gave Timothy several illustrations of how others serve as examples of the way to serve the Lord. Now in 2 Timothy 2:8-10 we read, “Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” Here, we are reminded that Christ is our greatest example. Christ chose to be obedient even unto death. Philippians 2:8 says, “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.” Christ was willing to carry out the will of the Father by dying the most horrible form of death.

However, the Father made the message of the Gospel complete by raising Christ from the dead. As a result, Paul was very willing to follow the example of Christ. It is true that he was suffering hardships. In fact, he was being treated as an evildoer. The word that is translated “evildoer” is used three other times in the New Testament. All three of the other uses are in Luke 23 where the word is used to describe the two criminals who were crucified on each side of Christ. Paul was even bound in chains like a common criminal. As a result, Paul could truly say that he was being treated like a common criminal. At the same time, Paul made it clear that the Word of God could not be chained. Here, we see that even though Paul was in chains the Word of God could not be stopped.

The word that is translated “endure” means “*to bear suffering calmly and with patience.*” 1 Peter 2:20 says, “For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God.” Paul accepted the suffering that he was experiencing with patience because he was suffering for the sake of the elect. The word translated “elect” means “*those who had been chosen by God to salvation.*” Paul was willing to do whatever was necessary in order to make it possible for others to hear the Word of God. Paul had written earlier in 1 Corinthians 9:22, “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.” The goal of Paul was to share the Gospel so that others would be able to look forward to eternal glory.

2 Timothy 2:11-13 says, “*This is* a faithful saying: For if we died with *Him*, we shall also live with *Him*. If we endure, we shall also reign with *Him*. If we deny *Him*, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” Each time Paul said, “This is a faithful saying,” he was summarizing a key teaching that was commonly repeated among the churches.

When we placed our faith in Christ, we died with Christ. Romans 6:3-4 says, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” The result of dying with Christ means that we now live with Him and will live with Him for all eternity.

If we endure (bear suffering calmly and with patience), we can look forward to the day when we will also rule with Christ. However, we are also given a warning if we deny Christ. Christ said in Matthew 10:33, “But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.” Here, we are reminded that those who reject Christ and do not place their faith in Him will be rejected by Christ when they stand before the Father at the time of judgment. Such individuals will be denied because they never had a true faith. John 3:18 says, “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Christ is always faithful. He is always faithful to give life to those who believe and He must be faithful to reject those who reject.

In 2 Timothy 2:14-16 we read, “Remind *them* of these things, charging *them* before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.” Here, we see that Paul urged Timothy to remind the people to whom He ministered of the fact that Christ is faithful. To be faithful to save those who believe means He must also be faithful to judge those who reject. This was to help all those who were believers in the time of Timothy to recognize a key characteristic of false teachers.

False teachers like to strive about words. The word that is translated “to strive” means “*to argue about words.*” Another form of this word is used in 1 Timothy 6:3-5 where we read, “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.” Here, we see that their purpose in striving or arguing about words is to try and teach their false ideas for self-gain. Paul told Timothy to tell the Christians not to participate in arguments over words with such false teachers since the goal of false teachers is to overthrow the faith of those who listen to them.

Instead, Timothy was told to be diligent to present himself approved to God. The word that is translated “be diligent” means “*to focus on the goal.*” 2 Peter 3:14 says, “Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.” Here, we see that a person that seeks to be diligent before God is focusing on being blameless in the sight of God. In order to be blameless in the sight of God, Timothy was to be a worker that did not need to be ashamed. The word that is translated “worker” here is translated “laborer” twice in Matthew 9:37-38. Those verses say, “Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send

out laborers into His harvest.” Timothy was not to be ashamed as he worked in the harvest field of the Lord.

In the same way, we do not want our physical and spiritual children to be ashamed as they work in the harvest field of the Lord. In order to avoid being ashamed, Timothy was told to rightly divide the work of truth and we want to teach our children to do the same. The word that is translated “rightly divide” means “*to cut straight or to teach the truth directly and correctly.*” The phrase “the word of truth” is explained in Ephesians 1:13 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.” Here, we see that the word of truth speaks about the Word of God, especially about the message of the Gospel in the Word of God. Timothy was to make certain that He taught the Gospel and the whole Word of God directly and correctly.

In order to teach the Gospel correctly, Timothy was to shun profane and vain babblings. 1 Timothy 6:20-21 says, “O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace *be* with you. Amen.” Here, we see that false teachers who speak profane and vain babblings claim that they have been given special knowledge from God. We want to help our children learn to recognize any person that is adding to the Word of God or taking away from the Word of God. Revelation 22:18-19 says, “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.” False teachers often claim to have special revelation from God. Such false teachings always increase ungodliness.

2 Timothy 2:17-18 goes on to say, “And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.” Here, we see two of the false teachers with whom Timothy was familiar. The words of such false teachers are like a dangerous cancer that spreads through the body of a person until it causes the death of the person. The word that is translated “strayed” means “*to swerve and miss the mark.*” It was used in the verses quoted in the previous paragraph and also in 1 Timothy 1:5-7 where we read, “Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.”

Instead of developing a godly life, false teachers twist the Word of God to get people to follow their false ideas. These two false teachers were saying that the Christians had missed the resurrection. We want to help our children learn to recognize when false teachers are twisting the Word of God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to follow the example of Christ and not be deceived by false teachers.