

## 2. Learning to Make Our Lives Count for Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be led by the Spirit so that they will develop the inner man. As we are led by the Spirit, we grow in godly character, which causes us to demonstrate the love of Christ out of a pure heart. It causes us to have a clear conscience. It causes us to develop a genuine faith. As we show our children by example how to be led by the Holy Spirit and develop the inner man, we will see that our children will want to learn how to make their lives count for Christ. That will be the focus of our topic today.

We begin this section by being reminded that the life of Paul did not always have a positive impact for Christ. 1 Timothy 1:12-14 we read, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” Here, we see how the life of Paul was changed by Christ so that he could make his life count for Christ. Paul gave thanks for what the Lord had done in his life.

The word that is translated “enabled” means *to receive strength or to make strong*. It is used in Acts 9:22 to speak of Paul soon after he became a Christian. That verse says, “But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.” Here, we see that immediately after Paul repented of his sin and turned to Christ, he began to receive strength and his life began to count for Christ. Many years later while a prisoner in Rome, Paul said in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Here, we see that Paul still realized that his strength must come from Christ if his life was going to continue to count for Christ. As Paul came to the end of his life, he used this word one more time to describe what the Lord had done in his life. 2 Timothy 4:17-18 says, “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen!” Paul knew that he had to receive strength from the Lord to carry out the ministry that the Lord gave him.

Paul also encouraged his spiritual son Timothy to receive his strength from the Lord to make his life count for the Lord. 2 Timothy 2:1-2 says, “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Here, we see that Paul told Timothy that if he would depend on the strength that the Lord provided his life would have an impact on a whole group of faithful men who would be able to teach others also. Because Paul trusted the Lord for strength and the Lord counted him faithful and put him into the ministry, he knew Timothy would have a similar ministry. The same will be true for our children.

Before the Father drew Paul to Christ, his life had been very different. Paul used three words to describe his previous life. He said that he was formerly a blasphemer. The word translated

“blasphemer” means *one whose speaking against God is evil, abusive and slanderous*. The word that is translated “persecutor” means *one that mistreats others and causes them to flee to protect their lives*. The word that is translated “insolent man” means *a proud man who speaks evil and commits violence against others*. However, God showed the greatness of His mercy by saving Paul. Paul said that he did these things in ignorance because of his unbelief. Christ showed that He clearly understood this ignorance in those who are still in unbelief when He said in Luke 23:34, “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ And they divided His garments and cast lots.” Those in unbelief do not understand what is righteous.

Paul understood that the grace that the Lord shows when He saves us is an exceedingly abundant grace. Grace is the forgiveness of God that we receive because of the fact that God gave us the faith to believe in Christ and understand His love for us. We also want to help our children understand the greatness of the grace of God. It is also the grace of God that gives us the strength to live a new life. Titus 2:11-12 says, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” Christ does give us His power to live a new life.

Paul went on to say in 1 Timothy 1:15-17, “This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” Here, we see that Paul understood the purpose why Christ came to this earth. He came to save sinners. Until people know that they are sinners, they will not come to Christ for forgiveness. We want to help our children learn how to explain to people that they are sinners but that Christ came to save them from their sin if they will repent and place their faith in Christ.

Paul said that he was the chief of sinners because of the fact that he had formerly been a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man. Many people feel that God could never forgive them because they are so sinful. We want to help them understand that Paul said that he was the most sinful person so if the Lord could save Paul He will also save them if they will come to Christ in repentance and faith. Paul then explained why God chose to show mercy to him. God wanted to show the greatness of the longsuffering (patience) of Christ. God saved Paul as a pattern or example for all who will believe in the future. All who will believe on Christ are promised everlasting life. God also wants to make the lives of all who believe have an eternal impact. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Here, we see that our lives have been created for good works so that we can spend the rest of our lives carrying out those good works.

God is the One who deserves all of the glory for what He did in the life of Paul and for what He has done in our lives. He is the eternal King. He is immortal and will never die. He is invisible so we cannot see Him even though we know that He is with us. He is the source of all wisdom. He is the one who deserves all glory and all honor. He is to receive this glory forever and ever.

In 1 Timothy 1:18-20, we read, “This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” We saw in the previous topic that “a charge” means *to give a command or to pass on instructions*. 1 Timothy 1:3 says, “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine.” Paul left Timothy at Ephesus to correct those who were teaching false doctrine.

This ministry of Timothy was first recognized by the leaders of the churches in Lystra and Iconium. Acts 16:2-3a says, “He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him.” 1 Timothy 4:14 adds, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” Paul knew that Timothy would have a good ministry for three reasons. 1 Timothy 1:5 says, “Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith.” First, Paul knew that as Timothy walked in the Spirit he would be able to serve others in love. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Second, Paul knew that Timothy had a clear conscience. Third, Paul knew that Timothy had a genuine faith.

Some Christians had turned away from these three things in their lives. In 2 Corinthians 11:25, we see that Paul spent a night and a day in the water after a shipwreck. Paul said that the two men mentioned in this chapter had suffered a shipwreck of their faith because they did not maintain a pure heart and a good conscience. In fact, it had become necessary for Paul to discipline them as it says that he delivered them to Satan. We see the purpose of delivering a Christian to Satan in 1 Corinthians 5:5 where we read, “Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Satan is allowed to do whatever he chooses to the body of a disobedient Christian but he cannot touch the spirit because even a disobedient Christian has eternal life. As a result, the spirit of such a person will be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus and that Christian will be taken to heaven.

Paul wanted Timothy to walk in such a way that his life would impact others for eternity. This is the same desire that we should have for our physical and spiritual children. That will happen as we help them develop a pure heart, a good conscience and a genuine faith because their lives will be transformed. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to make their lives count for Christ.