

## 11. Learning to Please the Lord as We Serve Him

In our last topic, we saw that one of the privileges that we have as Christians is to show our physical and spiritual children what it means to be motivated by the love of Christ. We have been called to the ministry of reconciliation and have been given the message of reconciliation. We saw that this means that we are called to serve those who are not yet Christians by telling them how they can have forgiveness of sins and receive eternal life. We have also been given the Word of God as our message of reconciliation so that our message has the power of God instead of just our own opinions. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to please the Lord as they serve Him.

In 2 Corinthians 6:1-2, we read, “We then, *as* workers together *with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.” In these verses, we see that Paul described his ministry to the Corinthians. We want to help our children learn from the example of Paul how to please the Lord as we serve Him. Paul pointed out that as Christians we are workers together with Christ. Paul had said this same thing in 1 Corinthians 3:9 where we read, “For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building.” What a great privilege we have to be chosen by the Lord to help Him in His work.

Paul pleaded with the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. We need to help our children understand that there are people who claim to be Christians that have never placed their faith in Christ. Many of these people are depending on their own works for salvation. Galatians 5:4 says, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” In addition, there are people who have become Christians but are now trying to grow by keeping the law. Romans 7:19 says, “For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice.” Those who depend on their own efforts to live the Christian life will continue to experience this failure and miss the blessings of the grace of God.

Paul and Timothy had a great concern to see the Christians in Corinth learn to respond to the grace of God which they had received. They also wanted the Corinthians to become fellow workers with them in sharing the Gospel with others. We should have the same concern for our physical and spiritual children. We want them to become workers with us in sharing the message of salvation with those who do not yet know Christ, as seen in 1 Corinthians 3:9 above. Now is the day when people can hear and respond to the Gospel. The day will soon come when others will die and then they will have no more opportunity to receive salvation. As a result, we want to help our children learn to become God's fellow workers with us.

As we finished our last topic, we saw that we are ambassadors for Christ and are called to share the ministry of reconciliation with others. Now, 2 Corinthians 6:3-5 says, “We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings.” We want to help our children

learn to have the same attitude that Paul and Timothy had as they shared the Gospel. That means that we must model that attitude by our example. Here, we see that we do not want to give offence in anything as we share the Gospel. We want to give our children an example by the way that we respond even to those who reject the Gospel.

In our topic that included 2 Corinthians 3:1, we saw that the word translated “commend” means *to present, to introduce or to place together*. We saw it can be used in either a good sense or a bad sense. Here, we see that Paul and Timothy introduced themselves as the ministers or servants of God. One of the evidences of the fact that they were servants of God was the way they responded in difficult situations or in suffering. We also want to show our children how to respond with patience even when they experience opposition or suffering. In Philippi, Paul and Silas were beaten and put in stocks in the inner prison. Acts 16:25 says, “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Even in the middle of their suffering, they were praying and singing to the Lord.

Our children watch closely how we react when we experience rejection or suffering from others. We will have a great impact on the lives of both our physical and our spiritual children if they see that we respond to rejection or suffering with much patience. In Romans 5:3-4, we see that tribulation produces perseverance. Then, James 1:2-4 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” As our children see how the Lord gives us joy when we share the Gospel, even when we experience rejection, they will see by our example how to please the Lord as they serve Him.

Paul and Timothy also provide us with an example of the way that the Lord works in our lives as we are faithful in sharing the Gospel with others. 2 Corinthians 6:6-7 says, “By purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit works in our lives and helps us mature so that we are an example to our children. As we learn to be led by the Spirit, He develops purity in our lives. He helps us to grow in the knowledge of the Lord and His Word. The Holy Spirit also causes our lives to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” As the Holy Spirit causes our lives to bear the fruit of the Spirit, our lives become a witness to everyone including our children.

Paul and Timothy also provide us with an example of the way to speak to others. We see that they spoke the truth. In Ephesians 4:15-16, we read, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” We speak the truth as we share the Word of God. We speak the truth in love as we depend on the power of the Holy Spirit instead of our own strength. We see that the result of speaking the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit is the fact that we help each person in the body of Christ, including our children, learn how

to serve the Lord effectively. They are shown by our example the importance of speaking the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit instead of in their own strength.

We also want to show our children how to serve the Lord in all spiritual battles with the armor of righteousness. In Ephesians 6:12-13, we read, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” The armor of righteousness given in the following verses (14-17) includes several defensive pieces of armor: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation. We are given only two offensive weapons as we stand against the powers of Satan. Our two offensive weapons are the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God and prayer. As we show our children how to use both the defensive and offensive weapons by our example, they are learning how to fight spiritual battles in a way that brings glory to God.

As we show our children how to please the Lord as we serve Him, we can expect two different kinds of responses. In 2 Corinthians 6:8-10, we read, “By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and *yet* true; as unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and *yet* not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things.” Here, we see that those who respond to the Gospel by placing their faith in Christ will respond in a different way than those who choose to reject Him. We will receive honor from some and dishonor from others. Some people will give an evil report about us while those who turn to Christ will give a good report. Some will call us deceivers while others will recognize that we are telling the truth.

In many cases, we will be unknown by the world. At the same time, we will be well known by those whose lives are changed by the Lord as a result of our faithful ministry and service for the Lord. We are dying to self but we are experiencing genuine life. Galatians 2:20 says, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Even though people may make us suffer for Christ, we cannot be killed because Christ has given us eternal life.

We can rejoice even in times of sorrow. We may not have much of earthly value but we are able to share with others the riches of eternal life. In fact, we may have nothing in this world but we are joint heirs with Christ and will share all things with Him for eternity. As we provide an example of our values by our lives, our physical and spiritual children will develop these same values because they see our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to please the Lord as you serve Him.