

12. Learning to Live a Holy Life

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our children by our example how to please the Lord as we serve Him. We saw that will include showing them how to suffer when opposed by those who choose to reject the Gospel. As we show them how to respond when we suffer, we are preparing them to become workers together with God in His work. They will experience great joy in their lives as they learn to become workers together with God. In order to be effective as workers together with God, the way they live their lives must be in agreement with their words. As a result, in our topic today, we want to help our children learn how to live a holy life that will draw others to Christ.

Paul and Timothy shared their hearts with the Christians in Corinth. 2 Corinthians 6:11-13 says, “O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your *own* affections. Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.” We have seen that part of the Christians in Corinth acted as though they rejected Paul even though he had brought the Gospel to them. However, Paul did not return that rejection by rejecting them. Instead, we see that Paul and Timothy spoke openly with the Corinthian Christians.

Paul and Timothy said that their heart was wide open. The word that is translated “wide open” in these verses means to be enlarged in heart or to welcome and embrace a person in love. Here, we see that regardless of whether the Corinthians accepted them or rejected them, Paul and Timothy continued to have love that came from their hearts for the Christians in Corinth. Paul had shown that same love when he wrote 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 4:14, we read, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*.” We see that Paul considered the Corinthian Christians his beloved children. We want to show that same attitude to both our physical children and to our spiritual children.

Paul said that the Corinthian Christians were restricted by their own choice. The word that is translated “restricted” means *to be in a narrow place or to be compressed or cramped*. Here, we see that it was in their own hearts that they felt compressed. The word that is translated “affections” means *the place in our heart where we have the tender emotions such as kindness, compassion, mercy, affection or tenderness*. In Philippians 1:8, Paul wrote, “For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.” Paul and Timothy felt great compassion and tenderness toward the Corinthians but those Christians had not opened their hearts with the same love toward Paul and Timothy. Many times, weak or struggling Christians have to be shown how to love others by the love and tenderness that we show to them. This can be especially true when we have spiritual children that have never known godly love before meeting us.

As a result, Paul and Timothy invited the Corinthian Christians to learn to be open with them. Since Paul and Timothy treated the Corinthian Christians with the same love that loving parents show to their children, Paul and Timothy invited the Corinthians to respond to that love by showing love in return. Sometimes, as our physical and spiritual children grow, they go through periods in

their lives when they do not return our love as parents. When that happens, Paul and Timothy show us by their example how to continue to show love to our children. In 2 Corinthians 12:15, Paul expressed the love that he continued to show to the Corinthians when he said, “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.” Regardless of how the Corinthians responded, Paul said he would continue to love them.

Paul and Timothy knew that the false teachers did not show that kind of love to the Corinthians. As a result, they wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’” Paul and Timothy realized that the false teachers were the ones who were actually causing the Corinthian Christians to lose their love for Paul and Timothy.

Paul and Timothy used an Old Testament illustration to warn the Christians in Corinth about joining together with false teachers. Deuteronomy 22:10 says, “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.” The Jews were told not to place different kinds of animals in the yoke together to pull the plow because that would be an unequal yoke. Here, Paul and Timothy used that as an illustration to show what happens when Christians try to work together with false teachers that reject salvation by grace through faith in Christ. A Christian cannot have fellowship and work together with a false teacher to do the work of the Lord when that person rejects the salvation that Christ provided by His death and resurrection. A righteous person and a lawless person cannot have fellowship because they are walking two very different directions. In the same way, you cannot have light and darkness in the same place at the same time.

“Belial” was a name for Satan that meant *the totally worthless one*. In contrast, Christ is the One whose life has infinite value. Since Satan is totally opposed to Christ, it is impossible for Satan and Christ to work together. Amos 3:3 asks the question, “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” Of course the answer to that question is no. As a result, false teachers who reject Christ cannot work together with followers of Christ whose greatest desire is to be faithful in their service for Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Paul had earlier written the Corinthians, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” Here, he reminded them again that as Christians we are the temple of the living God. Since our bodies are the temple of the living God, it is impossible for us to have agreement with idols.

As Christians, the Holy Spirit came into our lives at the moment that we became Christians. Romans 8:8-9 says, “So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the

Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” Those who are false teachers and still in the flesh cannot please God. In contrast, we have the Spirit of God living in our lives from the moment that we become a Christian. In fact, if we do not have the Holy Spirit in our lives, that would be clear evidence that we do not belong to Christ.

Christ placed the Holy Spirit in our lives as the down payment and guarantee of our eternal salvation at the moment we placed our faith in Christ. As a result, that also means that God dwells in us. Our body is the temple of the living God. God has chosen to walk among us so that we can begin to experience a little of the fullness of life with Christ even while we are here on this earth. God has promised to be our God. He has also called us to be His people. As we learn to walk in fellowship with the Lord, our lives are being transformed into the image of Christ.

That is why 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 says, “Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.’” Here, we see that Paul and Timothy told the Christians in Corinth to separate themselves from false teachers that were trying to lead them astray. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the importance of separating themselves from false teachers and their teachings. Paul illustrated this principle in Acts 19:9 where we read, “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.” Here, we see that Paul separated the disciples from those who did not believe.

The word that is translated “unclean” means *something that is unclean in thought and life*. In the New Testament, this word is used most commonly to speak about unclean spirits or demons. Acts 8:7 says, “For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.” In the verses from 2 Corinthians above, we see that Paul and Timothy wrote the Corinthian Christians to separate themselves from the teachings of false teachers because the source of false teaching is demonic. In the same way, we want to help our children separate themselves from all teachings that are demonic in their source.

God gives a wonderful promise to all those who separate themselves from false teachers. God says that He will be a Father to them. God also says that all those who place their faith in Christ and follow Him will be His sons and daughters. Romans 8:16-17 says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” We want to help our children come to a full understanding of what it means to be the children of God. In these verses, we see that God gives us His Spirit to bear witness to us that we are His children. In addition, we also become heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that this means that we will share the inheritance of God throughout all eternity. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to live a holy life as children that will share God’s eternal inheritance.