

### 13. Learning to Be Encouraged by Others

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children recognize the importance of separating themselves from false teachers and their teachings. This is important if our children want to learn to live a holy life that is pleasing to the Lord. We want to help our children understand that our ministry for the Lord will only be truly effective when our lives agree with the words that we speak. Today, we are going to see that Titus provided great encouragement to Paul during a difficult time. We want to show our children by our example how they can be an encouragement to others including other Christian leaders.

In 2 Corinthians 7:1, we read, “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Chapter six concluded by saying in verses 17-18, “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.’” God gives us a wonderful promise about His relationship to each one of us as Christians. Because of those promises, we want to show our children the importance of cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit.

Here, we see that we want to help each of our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of moment-by-moment cleansing from sin. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We show our children that our responsibility is to confess our sins to the Lord as soon as we realize that we have sinned. Then, the Lord does the cleansing in our lives. The word that is translated “filthiness” means *defilement*. This is the only time this word is used in the New Testament. However, it is used three times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to speak about religious defilement with idol feasts, idols, sacrifices to idols and defilement with temple prostitutes of idols. That kind of defilement has a great impact on both our human spirit and our body.

Instead, we are told that we are to be perfecting holiness in the fear of God. The word that is translated “perfecting” means *to complete or bring to an end*. Our goal in life is to see our lives become more and more like Christ because of the reverence that we have for God. Paul expressed his desire to become like Christ when he said in Philippians 3:10, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” Here, we have an example for our own lives as we grow and become an example to our children.

We go on to see the invitation that Paul and Timothy gave to the Christians in Corinth. 2 Corinthians 7:2-3 says, “Open *your hearts* to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one. I do not say *this* to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.” Here, we see that Paul and Timothy invited the Corinthian Christians to open their hearts to Paul and Timothy. In our last topic, we saw that Paul and Timothy had open hearts to the Christians in Corinth. We saw that meant that Paul and Timothy had a great love for the Corinthians whether the Corinthians returned that love or not.

Paul and Timothy gave three reasons why the Corinthian Christians should also open their hearts in return. First, they had not wronged anyone in Corinth. The word that is translated “wronged” means *to act unjustly to hurt or wrong*. Second, they had not corrupted anyone in Corinth. The word that is translated “corrupted” means *to destroy or to corrupt a Christian from true faith*. 2 Corinthians 11:3 says, “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” Paul and Timothy carefully avoided doing or saying anything that would corrupt the faith of the Corinthians. Third, they had cheated no one. The word that is translated “cheated” means *to take advantage of another for self-gain*. 2 Corinthians 12:17 asks the question, “Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you?” Paul made it clear he had not cheated them in any way.

Paul and Timothy went on to say that they were not writing to condemn the Corinthian Christians. They had already told the Corinthians that they were in their hearts. We have seen in other topics that Paul considered the Christians in Corinth his beloved children. That is why he did not say what he said to condemn them. Instead, he had the attitude that he mentioned in 1 Corinthians 4:14 where we read, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*.” In contrast, after Christ warned Peter in Mark 14 that he would deny him, Peter declared that he would die with Christ before he would deny him. (Mark 14:31) We know that Peter failed because he depended on his own strength. However, we see that Paul and Timothy were willing to die for the sake of the Corinthians. In the same way, they were willing to make sacrifices in their daily lives for the sake of the Corinthians.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:4, “Great *is* my boldness of speech toward you, great *is* my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.” The word that is translated “boldness” means *to have freedom when speaking or to be confident in our speech or actions*. 1 John 4:17 uses this word as that verse says, “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” Paul spoke with confidence about what the Lord was going to do in the lives of the Corinthian Christians. He knew that the Lord would continue to work in their lives. This confidence caused him to be filled with comfort as he thought about the Corinthians. This confidence also filled Paul and Timothy with joy even though they were going through a period of tribulation.

Paul explained how they had experienced both outward and inward conflicts while they came to Macedonia. 2 Corinthians 7:5 says, “For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside *were* conflicts, inside *were* fears.” We saw in an earlier topic in 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 that they had an open door in Troas but left Troas because of their concern about the Christians in Corinth. They came to Macedonia hoping to hear from Titus what was happening to the Corinthians. When they arrived in Macedonia, they did not find Titus. As a result, that is why this verse says that their bodies had no rest. They were experiencing outward conflicts from the people who were in opposition to the Gospel. At the same time, they were experiencing inward fears because of their concern for the Christians in Corinth. Here, we see again that Paul and Timothy had a very great concern for the Corinthians.

However, we see that Titus did arrive in Macedonia after Paul and Timothy had been there for a

short time. We see that the Lord used Titus to provide great encouragement to Paul and Timothy when he met them in Macedonia. 2 Corinthians 7:6-7 says, “Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.” Paul described his attitude as downcast at the time that Titus arrived in Macedonia.

The word that is translated “downcast” can mean *not rising far about the ground, humble in spirit or those who are humiliated*. It is used here in this verse of those who are humiliated. Paul used this word the same way again when he wrote in Romans 12:16. In that verse, he said “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion” to speak of those who are socially, emotionally or financially low or humiliated. We might say that Paul and Timothy felt like they were emotionally drained because of their concern for the Christians in Corinth.

God used the coming of Titus to bring great comfort to Paul and Timothy. Here, we see that there was great encouragement in having a person come and visit them during this time when they were emotionally drained. The same is true today. We can show our children the great value of visiting people who are going through a difficult time in their lives. We can show by our example that this is a very important ministry to others.

However, Titus then brought additional comfort by the message that he had about the Christians in Corinth. The word that is translated “consolation” is used several times in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. We saw in our topic on those verses that it means *a calling near for help or that which provides encouragement, comfort or refreshment*. Here, we see that Titus had received encouragement from his visit with the Corinthians. What he said also brought encouragement to Paul and Timothy. Titus said that the Corinthians had a great desire to see Paul again and to again enjoy fellowship with him.

The Corinthian Christians were also filled with sorrow because of their sin and showed an attitude of true repentance. They wanted Paul to know that they had a love or zeal for Paul that had caused them to defend Paul from the attacks by false teachers. Paul and Timothy wanted the Corinthians to know that they had been filled with joy by this encouragement about the changes in attitude by the Corinthians. Here, we see a key lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand. We want them to realize that people will change even their negative attitudes if our children will continue to return love to others even in times when others are rejecting them. That is why they do not need to take rejection personally. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to minister to those who may reject them for a time.