

18. Learning How to Respond When Others Reject Us

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our children learn how the Lord rewards us for our service to Him. We saw that we actually experience great blessing when we give to the Lord. We also saw that we will experience blessing throughout eternity as we see how the Lord used us to serve others. Others will also be blessed because they served us. However, we also have times in our lives here on this earth when people reject us because we follow Christ. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to respond when others reject them because they follow Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 10:1-2, Paul wrote, “Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--who in presence *am* lowly among you, but being absent *am* bold toward you. But I beg *you* that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.” Apparently, some of the Christians still continued to reject Paul because of the words of the false teachers that had come to Corinth. As a result, Paul now began to respond to those who continued to reject him. The word that is translated “meekness” means *gentleness or mildness*. 2 Timothy 2:25 says, “In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.” Here, we see that meekness is a humble attitude when correcting others which does not try to get even.

The word translated “gentleness” is translated “courtesy” the only other time that this word is used in the New Testament. Acts 24:4 says, “Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.” A gentle person is one that does not get even but treats others with respect and courtesy. Christ always demonstrated a humble and courteous attitude. This was the attitude that Paul had shown when he was with the Corinthians. As a result, Paul felt that he needed to write to the Corinthians with boldness in case some had interpreted his humility as weakness. However, this was not the boldness of one who was depending on his own strength.

Paul went on to explain what gave him boldness. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.” Paul said that he did walk as a human or physical person. However, he did not fight spiritual battles in human strength. This is a key lesson that we also want to show our physical and spiritual children by example. We will only be effective in our service for the Lord if we fight spiritual battles with the spiritual weapons mentioned in Ephesians 6. There, we see that our only offensive weapons are the Word of God and prayer.

The Word of God and prayer are powerful weapons because we are praying that the Lord will use His Word to complete His purposes. Corinth, like most cities in ancient times, had a fortress or stronghold on the top of a hill where the people could flee when an enemy came against them. As

we speak the Word of God and pray that the Lord will work through His Word to accomplish His purpose, we will see the Lord defeat all of the attacks of Satan. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Word of God will examine the inner thoughts and plans of the heart of any person.

Here, we see that the Word of God is able to cast down all the arguments and ideas that false teachers and people without Christ try to bring against the Gospel. The ideas of people or even those ideas that are demonically inspired cannot stand against the Word of God. We want to help people learn to turn from human wisdom to godly wisdom. James 3:14-17 says, “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” As we help our children learn to share the Word of God with a humble and gentle attitude even to those who reject, they are actually learning to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ because they are bringing others the light of the Gospel which defeats spiritual darkness and sets free those who place their faith in Christ.

Some of the Christians in Corinth had listened to the false teachers that had come to that city. As a result of his concern for these struggling Christians, Paul said that he was ready to punish all disobedience. The word that is translated “to punish” means *to protect or defend a person from another*. In this verse, it meant to defeat the message of false teachers with the Word of God and protect the struggling Christians from these attacks on their faith. This would make it possible for them to act in obedience to God.

Paul went on to say in 2 Corinthians 10:7-11, “Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he *is* Christ's, even so we *are* Christ's. For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed--lest I seem to terrify you by letters. ‘For *his* letters,’ they say, ‘*are* weighty and powerful, but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.’ Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *we will* also *be* in deed when we are present.” The word that is translated “outward appearance” is usually translated “face” and was sometimes used to speak about what a person thought. By that word, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to look at the obvious facts that they could see.

If those who were false teachers thought that they belonged to Christ, then it should be obvious that Paul also belonged to Christ. Paul had suffered and risked his life many times to tell others about Christ. He had planted churches everywhere he went that now continued to teach about Christ. Those facts were very obvious because Paul had spent many years of his life doing those things. In 1 Corinthians 9:22-23, Paul had written, “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. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with *you*.” The Corinthians had seen the

example of Paul and knew that he was willing to do whatever it took to share the Gospel with others.

Paul said that he could boast about his authority. In fact, he mentioned his authority as an apostle in 2 Corinthians 12:11-12 where we read, “I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.” Paul had also seen Christ on the road to Damascus and probably while he was out in the desert of Arabia. However, Paul explained why he was called to be an apostle.

The Lord had called Paul so he could edify Christians like the Corinthians. He had not called Paul to destroy them. In 2 Corinthians 12:19, Paul wrote, “Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But *we do* all things, beloved, for your edification.” Here, we see that Paul had one goal in his relationship with the Corinthians. He did all that he did in order to edify or build up the believers. Here, we have a key example for our own lives. In order to help our physical and spiritual children become all that God has planned for them, our goal should be to do all that we do to edify them so that they are strengthened in their spiritual lives.

Paul did all that he did to build up others. As a result, he did not want to terrify them with the letters that he wrote to them. In fact, Paul had said earlier in 1 Corinthians 4:14, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*.” In the verse that we quoted in the previous paragraph, we see that Paul again called the Christians in Corinth “beloved”. Paul wanted the Corinthians to think about the differences between his example and that of false teachers. They could see from the example of Paul the great love that he had for them. In contrast, false teachers sought (and still seek) their own benefit.

The false teachers said that Paul acted one way when he wrote letters from a distance and acted a different way when he was present with them. The false teachers recognized that the letters of Paul were weighty and powerful. In contrast, they also said that when Paul was present with them that he was physically weak. They said that his speech was worthless and of no benefit. Paul had written in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Paul did not try to be eloquent like the Greek philosophers. Instead, he chose to speak with words that presented the Gospel clearly. This is also the example that we should give to our children.

Paul said that the way he wrote in his letters, when he was absent, was the way he would be when he came to visit them and was present with them. Here, we see that Paul also gives us an example for our own lives. We want to be a consistent example that our physical and spiritual children can follow. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how you respond when people reject you.