

## 2. Learning to Help Others Become Fellow Workers

In our last topic, we saw how to help our physical and spiritual children when they are going through times of great suffering in their lives. We want to remind them that they serve the God who raises the dead and as a result, He is the One that has the power to go with them through any time of suffering. Today, we want to focus on another key lesson as we encourage our physical and spiritual children. We want to help them learn how to become fellow workers and partners with us in ministry. In addition, we also want to help them learn how to help others learn to become full partners in ministry.

In 2 Corinthians 1:12-14, we read, “For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you. For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end (as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also *are* ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.” The word that is translated “boasting” means *the act of glorying*. When we use this word in talking about what we do, it is pride. When we use this word to describe what the Lord is doing in our lives, it means to give glory to the Lord. 2 Corinthians 7:3-4 says, “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. 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.” Here, we see that Paul was telling others about the way that the Lord had worked in the lives of the Corinthian Christians.

In verse 12, Paul was talking about the way that the Lord had worked in his life. He said that he had a clear conscience because of the fact that God had worked in his life in such a way that his actions were carried out with humbleness and godly purity. Paul knew that he had not depended on human wisdom. Paul had shown humbleness both to those who were not Christians and to those who were Christians. Paul said that he chose to write with words that they could read and understand. Paul also said that he and Timothy were the reason the Corinthians could boast just as the Corinthians were the reason that they would be able to boast when we all stand before the Lord. The reason that they could boast or rejoice in each other was due to the fact that they would be in heaven together.

We saw in the previous topic that Paul and Timothy had been fearful for their lives in Asia. In addition, they felt the pain of being misunderstood and falsely accused by part of the Corinthian Christians. That is why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:15-16, “And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit--to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea.” Here, we see that Paul had wanted to visit Corinth twice, once on the way to Macedonia and then again, a second time, on the way from Macedonia to Judea. Paul wanted to have the opportunity to have two visits to give encouragement to the Corinthian Christians. Here, we see the great love that Paul had for the Corinthians even though some of the Christians were making false accusations against Paul. In 1 Corinthians 4:13-14, Paul had written, “...being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as

the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*.” We see that Paul had the love of a father for his children in spite of false accusations.

It had become necessary for Paul to change his plans and not visit Corinth on the way to Macedonia. As a result, those who were against Paul in Corinth had told the other Christians that they could not trust Paul. That is why 2 Corinthians 1:17-20 says, “Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? But *as God is faithful*, our word to you was not Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us--by me, Silvanus, and Timothy--was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” Some of the Corinthians said that Paul had shared his plans lightly or without really meaning what he said.

Others said that Paul just made his plans according to the flesh. By this, they meant that Paul did not even seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in his planning. Paul wanted to make it clear that when he said yes that he meant yes; when he said no that he meant no. Here, we see that there were people in Corinth that were accusing him of making promises that he did not mean. Acts 20:1 says, “After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to *himself*, embraced *them*, and departed to go to Macedonia.” Here, we see that Paul had actually been forced to leave Ephesus quickly when they wanted to kill him and that was why he had to escape by going immediately to Macedonia because there was not time to wait for a boat going from Ephesus to Corinth.

There are also times in our lives where people, even other Christians, make false accusations against us or against our physical and spiritual children. We need to help our children be prepared to know that what they have done is right before the Lord even when people are accusing them falsely. Paul said that he knew that God was faithful. God knew that the accusations from some in Corinth were false. God knew that Paul did not say yes when he really meant no. Paul said that the message that he, Silvanus and Timothy had preached was not a yes and no message. They had preached about the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and the message of Christ is unchangeable. Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Here, we see that Paul realized that those who were accusing him were actually trying to say that his message about Christ was a false message.

Paul then referred to the promises of God. Paul said that every promise of God is yes in Him. Every promise that God made can be concluded with an Amen. When people say “Amen”, it means *Let it be so*. When God says “Amen”, it means *It is and it shall be so*. Paul had shared many promises from the Old Testament during his time in Corinth. Paul said that God will keep every promise that He has made because His promises are unchangeable. When our children are accused falsely, we need to just encourage them to remember that the promises of the Lord are unchangeable. We need to pray with them that the Lord will give them His strength to turn any false accusations over to the Lord so that they can experience His peace.

As our children make the choice to ask the Lord for His strength, we need to remind them of the promise in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. Those verses say, “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” In these two verses, we see that God establishes us in Christ. We also see that God has sealed us and given us the Holy Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. This promise is also given in Ephesians 1:13-14 where we read, “In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Here, we see that God has placed the Holy Spirit in our lives as His seal of the fact that we are His children. The Holy Spirit is also the guarantee of our salvation and eternal inheritance until we enter into that eternal inheritance.

We also need to help our children understand another key ministry of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:15-16 says, “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” We want our children to understand why they do not need to be fearful when people make false accusations against them. We see that the Holy Spirit adopted us into the family of God and the Holy Spirit continues to testify to our human spirit that we are the children of God. We can choose to listen to false accusations of others or we can choose to rest in the fact that the Holy Spirit reminds our human spirit that we are the children of God.

2 Corinthians 1:23-24 says, “Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.” Here, we see that Paul said that another reason he did not come immediately to Corinth was to spare them. In a topic on chapter seven, we will see that the people of Corinth had repented of their sin. Paul could now come with joy because of their repentance instead of having to remind them of their need to repent. He also reminded them that he did not have dominion over their faith. He said his ministry was not to rule over their faith.

Instead of ruling over their faith, Paul said that the Christians in Corinth were fellow workers in the work of the Lord. Here, we see that the goal of Paul was always to help others become “adult sons and daughters” and full partners in ministry. We do the same thing as we help our children learn to take responsibility for their own choices and help others learn to do the same. Paul said in Philemon 1:15-17, “For perhaps he departed for a while for this *purpose*, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave--a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would me*.” Paul treated Philemon as a partner in ministry and explained to him the importance of helping Onesimus become a beloved brother and partner in ministry. Even when some of the Corinthians spoke against Paul, he still treated them as partners in ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children mature and become full partners in ministry.