

24. Learning to Receive Rejection with Gentleness

In our last topic, we saw that we wanted to show our children by our example that we are willing to suffer if necessary to help struggling Christians in their spiritual growth. There are many lessons that can only be learned through example. Learning to suffer for the purpose of helping others grow is an example of one lesson that can only be learned from the example that others model. One of the ways that our children can experience suffering can be rejection by others. In our topic today, we are going to see how to show our physical and spiritual children how to learn to receive rejection with gentleness.

In 2 Corinthians 13:1-4, we read, “This *will be* the third *time* I am coming to you. ‘By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.’ I have told you before, and foretold as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare--since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.” Here, we see that Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth again that his coming visit would be his third visit to the city of Corinth.

Paul quoted from Deuteronomy 19:15 to point out that he would deal with the Corinthians biblically when he came to Corinth. That verse says, “One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.” Paul had heard several reports of the presence of unrepentant Christians being present in the church at Corinth. However, if he saw that there was a need for Biblical discipline, Paul would follow the Biblical principles in the application of that discipline. He had told the leaders in Corinth on his second visit that they needed to exercise discipline toward those who were continuing to live in unrepentant sin and had not exercised that discipline himself so that the leaders could have time to follow his instructions.

However, since the leaders had not disciplined some of the unrepentant who were living in sin in the church, Paul said that he would not spare when he came the third time. The false teachers had said that Paul was not an apostle of Christ. Some of the Corinthians wanted proof that Christ was speaking to Paul. Paul reminded them that Christ is not weak. In fact, Christ had worked in a mighty way in the lives of the Corinthians to give them salvation. Some people thought that Christ was weak because He allowed Himself to be crucified. However, Paul reminded the Corinthians that Christ had been raised from the dead and was alive by the power of God. As we saw in an earlier topic, Paul had been told by the Lord that when he was weak that then he was strong. As a result, Paul would come to Corinth the third time in the power and strength of God and not in his own strength. He would discipline rebellious Christians if that was necessary.

As a result, Paul told the Christians that were living in sin in 2 Corinthians 13:5-6, “Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? --unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.” Here, we see a key lesson that we need to help our children learn how to

explain to others. If a person claims to be a Christian, and continues to live in open sin and rebellion against the Lord, such an individual needs to be encouraged to examine his or her life to make certain that he or she has a true faith. At the same time, we want to remind our children what Galatians 6:1 says about the way to speak to such a person, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” They are to speak to the sinning Christian in a spirit of gentleness.

Paul asked the rebellious Christians, don’t you know that Christ is in you, unless you never experienced true repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? Paul had not had to ask a question like that of the Thessalonians. Instead, he was able to say in 1 Thessalonians 1:8-9, “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” The Thessalonians had turned to God from idols (true repentance) and they were serving the living and true God (true faith had produced a changed life). Paul wanted to see the rebellious Christians in Corinth also give evidence of true repentance and faith.

As a result, Paul concluded his letter to the rebellious Christians in Corinth with a gentle plea. 2 Corinthians 13:7-10 says, “Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete. Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.” Here, we see that Paul continued to pray for the rebellious Christians. His prayer for them was that they would choose to avoid evil.

Paul did not pray that they would avoid evil for his sake. Instead, he wanted them to do what is honorable. The word that is translated “honorable” means *that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects*. Paul had a great concern for the Corinthians to learn to live godly lives. He did not care if they personally rejected him but he did want to see every Christian grow to spiritual maturity. In Colossians 1:28-29, Paul wrote, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” The goal of Paul was always to help every Christian become mature in Christ. That was his goal and purpose as he served others because of the way that the Lord was working in his life. That should be the same purpose that we have in our lives as we give our children an example to follow.

Paul made it clear that he did not want to do anything that would be against the truth. Instead, he wanted the truth of the Gospel to be clearly seen in his life so that others could follow his example. That is why he had earlier told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.” As a result, Paul told the Corinthians that he was glad to be weak if that would help the Corinthian Christians become spiritually strong. Paul said that it was his prayer that the Christians in Corinth would be complete. Again, he points out the fact that his prayer was for the

maturity of the Corinthian Christians. Paul had written this letter to make sure that he avoided speaking with sharpness when he got to Corinth. He wanted to use the authority that the Lord had given him as an apostle to build up the Christians and not to destroy them. Here, we see a great example for our own lives.

As Paul concluded his letter, he said in 2 Corinthians 13:11-14, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.” Here, we see that he said for a final time that he wanted to see them become mature in their spiritual lives. He begged them to experience the comfort and encouragement of the Lord.

He also encouraged them to be one of mind. This was an encouragement to them to learn to be in agreement and unity. A short time later, he wrote the same thought to the church in Rome. Romans 12:16 says, “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.” Then a few years later, Paul wrote the same thing to the Philippians. Philippians 2:2-4 says, “Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” As we look at these verses, we see that Paul had a great concern for Christians to grow to maturity so that they would be able to function together in unity.

Paul also wanted the Christians in Corinth to live in peace so that they could experience the love and peace of God in their lives day-by-day. Here, we see some goals that we have for both our physical and spiritual children as we help them grow to spiritual maturity. We want them to learn to live in agreement and unity in their relationships with other Christians. Then, we want them to experience the love and peace of God in their lives as they continue to grow in fellowship with the Lord. That will happen as they see us respond to them with gentleness even when they have wrong attitudes at those times when they are trying to do things in their own strength.

As this book concludes, Paul reminded the Corinthians of the fact that the Trinity wanted them to experience the blessing of the Lord. We want the same thing for our children. We want them to experience the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in their lives. We want them to grow in their understanding of the love of the Father for them. We want them to experience the fellowship that happens as we yield moment by moment to the Holy Spirit. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to receive rejection with gentleness so that they can enjoy the peace of God in their lives.