

#### 4. Learning to Triumph in Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we are to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to restore a person that has been disciplined by the church as a result of living in open sin. We also saw why it is important to restore such a person and reaffirm our love to that person. Today, we are going to see that Christ wants us to help our children learn how the Lord works in each of our lives to cause us to triumph as we serve Him.

After Paul left Ephesus to travel to Macedonia and later to Corinth, he traveled through the city of Troas. There he had the opportunity to share the Gospel before he traveled on to Macedonia. 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.” We see that some important things happened while Paul was in Troas.

When Paul came to Troas, we see that the Lord opened a door to make it possible for Paul to preach the Gospel in Troas. We want to help our children understand that the Lord is the One who opens doors and closes doors for us. Acts 16:6-9 says, “Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’” Here, we see that on an earlier trip the Lord had closed certain doors for Paul. When Paul had come to this same city of Troas, the Lord had shown Paul that He was going to open a door for him to share the Gospel in Macedonia.

In Colossians 4:2-3, Paul asked the Colossians to pray for him. In those verses, he said, “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains.” Here, we see that Paul asked the Christians in Colosse to pray that the Lord would open the door for him to share the Gospel. Here is an important lesson that we need to explain to our children. We need to encourage them to pray that the Lord will open the door for them to share the Gospel. When the Lord opens the door, we will see the Lord work in the lives of the people with whom we share the Gospel.

Paul did not have rest in Troas as he was preaching the Gospel, because he was eagerly waiting for the return of Titus from the city of Corinth. As a result, when Titus did not come to Troas, Paul left Troas and went to Macedonia to find Titus. When he got to Macedonia, Titus had not yet arrived there. 2 Corinthians 7:5-7 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. 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.” Here, we see that when Titus did arrive in Macedonia, he had a good report about what the Lord had done

in the city of Corinth. As a result, this good report brought great encouragement to Paul. Here, we are reminded that even leaders need encouragement.

The coming of Titus brought such joy to Paul as he remembered the arrival of Titus that 2 Corinthians 2:14 says, “Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.” Here, we see that Paul was filled with joy both because of the arrival of Titus and also because of the good report that he brought about the Christians in Corinth. In the city of Rome, when a Roman general would return after a great victory, there would be a great parade called the Triumph to honor the general. Paul was illustrating the fact that God also causes us to experience victory through Christ.

During the parade, the flowers that were thrown in the streets ahead of the parade would give off a wonderful smell or fragrance as the horses stepped on them. Paul was showing us that God uses us to help people clearly understand the Gospel and that message is like the wonderful smell of the flowers as the knowledge of God spreads to every place where we share the Gospel. This is a beautiful illustration of the way that the Lord uses the ministry of any person that shares the Gospel with others. In the sight of God, our ministry is like the wonderful aroma of flowers with a beautiful smell. Here, we see a real picture of the desire of God for the message of the Gospel to be spread in every place. We want to help our children understand how God views their ministry as they share the Gospel with others.

In 2 Corinthians 2:15-17, we read, “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.” Here, we see the great beauty that God sees as the knowledge of the Gospel is spread abroad. God says that our message is the fragrance of Christ. The beauty of the message of Christ is described in Isaiah 52:7 where we read, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good *things*, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” The message of salvation is good news to all who will hear and receive it.

However, we are reminded of the fact that those who hear that message will respond to that message in two different ways. Some will hear that message and it will be a message of salvation and to others it will be a message of judgment. In the parade of triumph in Rome, it was the aroma or smell of death to the enemy that had been defeated. In the same way, to those who reject the message of the Gospel it is an aroma of death. This is the choice that every person must make. Moses warned the people of Israel that they also faced this same choice. Deuteronomy 30:19 says, “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.” In the same way, we want to help our children realize the importance of encouraging others to choose life.

We see that the message of the Gospel is the fragrance of life to those who choose to place their

faith in Christ. Christ said in John 10:10, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” We see that the goal of Satan is to destroy people by encouraging them to reject the message that we share. In contrast, the goal of Christ is to give life to all who will come to Him to receive that abundant life.

This message is such an important message that it is important that we depend on the Lord to give us His strength to share the message clearly instead of trying to share it in our own strength. We are not sufficient in our own strength to share such a message. However, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 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.” As we yield our lives to the Lord, He is able to work through our lives to defeat everything that exalts itself against God and cause others to bring their thoughts into obedience to Christ. That is why Ephesians 6:17-18 tell us that our only offensive weapons in this battle are the Word of God and prayer.

Paul also contrasted his teaching with the teaching of the false teachers that were present in Corinth and most of the other cities where the Gospel was being shared. Paul said that he and those with him were not like so many who were peddling the Word of God. The word that is translated “peddling” means *to make money*. A person who is peddling the Word of God is a person that is corrupting and changing the message of the Gospel for their own personal gain. This is why false teachers teach what they teach. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Here, we see that false teachers are controlled by their love for money. Paul also described the character of such teachers a few verses earlier when he said in 1 Timothy 6:5, “Useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of* gain. From such withdraw yourself.” Here, we see that those who change the Gospel for personal gain are corrupt and lack the truth.

In contrast, Paul said that he and those with him were sharing the Gospel out of a heart of purity. They were not seeking personal gain for themselves. Instead, they were seeking to please God in all that they taught. Here, we see an important lesson that we want to model for our physical and spiritual children in our own lives. We want them to see that our whole goal is to please the Lord as we share the Gospel. As our children observe our lives, they can see that we are motivated by the love of Christ as we share the Gospel with others. In this way, we show them how to share the Gospel out of a pure heart by our example. In doing that, we are showing them how to triumph in their own lives as they serve the Lord and share the Gospel with others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to triumph in Christ.