

32. Understanding How We Can Be Effective in Ministry

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Christ is unchanging. We also saw that the writer of Hebrews gave us several ways to bring glory to God. As we help our children learn to walk with the Lord, their lives will begin to bring more and more glory to the Lord. In this topic, we are going to see how we can be effective in ministry as we serve the Lord.

In Hebrews 13:9, we read, “Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.” The word translated “carried about” means *to be driven or to carry here and there*. The same word is used in a similar warning in Ephesians 4:14, where we read, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” In this verse, the word for children speaks of a child that is not old enough to speak clearly. This reminds us that Christians who are very immature in their spiritual lives will be driven or carried here and there by false teachings and false teachers.

The word translated “strange” usually talks about a person that is a stranger or a foreigner. As a result, in this context it is talking about teachings that are foreign to the Word of God or in disagreement with the Word of God. Paul warned the elders in Ephesus, in Acts 20:29-31, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” Then, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 says, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” We still have false teachers, so we need to continue to warn weak Christians not to be deceived by false teachings.

Instead, we need to help new Christians, weak Christians, and struggling Christians learn to be established by grace. Ephesians 2:8-10 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” We are saved by grace, and we are to grow in grace. 2 Peter 3:18 says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.” We help Christians grow in grace as we show them how to become mature both in their hearts and in their minds. Philippians 4:6-7 says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” We want to help weak, struggling, or new Christians learn how to have their hearts and minds established in the peace of God.

The writer of Hebrews recognized that there were Jewish false teachers who were telling the Jews that they needed to depend on the Jewish ceremonial laws either to obtain salvation or to grow in their spiritual lives. The writer reminds the Jews that this focus on the ceremonial laws about foods had not helped them to experience spiritual growth. Then, the writer went on to compare the Old Testament sacrifices with the sacrifice that Christ made when He was offered as the sacrifice for our sins.

Hebrews 13:10-14 says, “We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.” The writer reminded the Jews that the bodies of the animals whose blood was placed on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant were not eaten. Instead, the bodies of the animals whose blood was taken by the high priest into the Holy of Holies were burned outside the camp of Israel. The writer then goes on to point out the fact that the burning of the bodies of those animals outside the camp was actually a picture of the payment of Christ.

When Christ was crucified, He was crucified on the cross outside the city of Jerusalem. John 19:16-17 says, “Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.” This place was outside the city wall of Jerusalem. As a result, Christ paid for the sins of all people outside the gates of the city. The animals whose blood provided a covering for sin in the Old Testament were burned outside the camp and later outside the city of Jerusalem. In the same way Christ also shed His blood outside the city wall as he paid the penalty to take away our sin.

As a result, the writer of Hebrews encouraged the Jews who had become Christians to be willing to go outside the Jewish religion that was centered in the animal sacrifices that were offered in the city of Jerusalem. Here, we see that the writer of Hebrews encouraged the Jews to leave the Levitical system with its sacrifices and ceremonies and depend totally on the blood of Christ for their salvation, even though it meant they might be rejected by the other Jews. The Jewish Christians had placed their faith in Christ, but Acts 21:20 says, “And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.’” Here, we see that the Jewish Christians were all still zealous for the law. This included everything that was a part of the Levitical law. The writer of Hebrews recognized that this zealous attitude toward the Levitical law was hindering the spiritual growth of the Jewish Christians.

That is why the writer reminded the Jews that on this earth we have no continuing city. They were no longer to focus on the earthly Jerusalem, but rather the heavenly Jerusalem. That is why Hebrews 12:22-24 says, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made

perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.” The Jewish Christians would not mature by keeping the law; neither would the Gentiles. That is why we, as Christians, may experience reproach or rejection from those who want to continue to try to be made righteous by trying to keep the law. We are to focus on the city that is to come, which is heaven.

As Christians, we have already been made righteous by the blood of Christ. As a result, Hebrews 13:15-17 says, “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” As Christians, we are now able to offer a different kind of sacrifice. We are able to offer this sacrifice continually, not just when we bring an animal to be sacrificed. We are able to offer a sacrifice of praise as we give thanks to the Lord. Ephesians 5:20 says, “Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We offer a sacrifice of praise as we give thanks to God for all He has done.

We also offer a sacrifice of praise when we do good and share with others. The word translated “good” means *to do what is right or to act in a way that is pleasing to the Lord*. Matthew 5:16 says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Our good works will be used by the Father to draw people to Christ. Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Here, we see that we are to notice the opportunities God gives us to do good and to take those opportunities to minister to others. God is well pleased when we do good and share.

We also offer a sacrifice of praise when we are submissive to those who are placed in leadership by the Lord. The word translated “rule” means *to lead or to be over*. In Luke 22:25-26, Christ told the disciples at the last supper, “...The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called “benefactors.” But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.” In verse 26, this word is translated “governs”. Then, Christ went on to point out His own example of how He had led them by serving them. We want to have a submissive attitude toward godly leaders because the Lord calls them to be bondservant leaders who serve.

We want to remind our physical and spiritual children that godly leaders are watching out for their souls. One day, they will give an account to the Lord for the way they have served other Christians. We want to give them the opportunity to give that account with joy because of the fact that we chose to offer a sacrifice of praise by having a submissive attitude so that we could carry out the work of the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how we can be effective in ministry.