

7. Learning to Follow the Example of Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to live for Christ in the world. As we show our children by our example how to live for Christ in all that they do, they will have many opportunities to share with other people how to have forgiveness of sins and receive eternal life. The Lord will work through their godly character to draw others to Himself. In our topic today, we are going to see how to follow the example of Christ in our own lives so that we can lead our children by our own example and invite them to imitate our example.

In 1 Peter 2:18-20 we read, “Servants, *be* submissive to *your* masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God.” The word that is used for “servants” here is not the word for slave that is used in many passages. Instead, it is the word for a servant who lived in the household of his master. Christ used this word when He said in Luke 16:13, “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” It was impossible for this form of servant to serve two masters because the servant could not live in two houses at the same time. This is a reminder that many of the early Christians served as household servants.

As household servants, these servants were to be submissive to their masters. This meant that they were to place themselves under the authority of their masters. A submissive attitude would make it possible for them to place their full potential at the disposal of their master. Fear of God will produce reverence and respect for God. Fear of a master would cause a servant to be obedient to his master. Ephesians 6:5 says, “Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ.” Here, we see that when we have a reverence for God it will cause us to be obedient to a master because we want to please Christ. That is why a household servant was to be obedient to his master whether he was a kind master or a harsh master. In the same way, we are to do all that we do to please Christ.

Sometimes, worldly masters would treat their servants very harshly. The word that is translated “commendable” means “*grace or the things that are done out of grace.*” Here, we see that servants were to act with grace toward their masters whether those masters were kind or evil. We see that the reason for such actions was to have a clear conscience before God. Romans 13:5 says, “Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.” Here, we see that a submissive spirit is not to be primarily out of fear. Instead, a submissive spirit is what makes it possible for us to have a clear conscience before God. We will have a clear conscience, especially when we are suffering, even when we have done nothing wrong, because God gives us His peace.

If a servant was beaten because of sins that he had committed or disobedience to his master and was patient, that would not make a great impact on others. However, if a person did the things that were good and pleasing to God and suffered for doing good and was punished for doing good,

such actions would be an act of grace and would be pleasing in the sight of God. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” Christ gave an important example to follow by the way that He came to this earth. As a result, when servants in the day of Peter or we in our day follow the example of Christ, that example is pleasing to God and impacts others.

We go on to read much more about the example that Christ provided for us. 1 Peter 2:21-24 says, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.” Here, we see that we have been called to salvation and we are to demonstrate that salvation by godly patience.

We do not see patience from a lot of the people in the world, we need a good example to follow in order to grow in patience. Here, we see that our example is Christ, the One who suffered for us. 1 Peter 3:17-18 says, “For *it is* better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.” Here, we see that Christ suffered for us even though we were sinners and unjust. In the same way, we are to follow the example of Christ and be willing to suffer so that those who do not know Christ can see an example of the love of Christ in our lives and learn to follow Christ.

Since Christ did provide us with an example, we are to follow in His steps. The word that is translated “example” is only used in this verse in the New Testament. In the time of the New Testament, a young child would be given a written copy of all of the letters of the alphabet so that he could learn to make the letters by copying them. That written copy was the example that the child was to follow exactly. The word that is translated “to follow” means “*to walk close behind another person so that we can walk in the footprints and imitate the steps of the person that we are following.*” Mark 16:20 said of the apostles, “And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.” Here, the word is translated “accompanying” because the apostles spoke and the signs happened.

Then we are given several things that we are to do as we follow and walk in the steps of Christ. First, we see that Christ committed no sin even though He endured terrible abuse and pain. In the same way, when we suffer for Christ, we are to ask Him to give us His strength to endure that suffering without sinning. Second, we see that no deceit was found in His mouth. The word that is translated “deceit” means “*guile, deception or deceit.*” Mark 14:60-62 says, “And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, ‘Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?’ But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, ‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ Jesus said, ‘I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’”

Here, we see that at first Christ said nothing. When He did speak, He spoke the truth and did not try to deceive Pilate.

Third, when Christ was reviled, He did not revile in return. The word “revile” means “*to heap abusive words on a person.*” As we saw in the verses quoted above, Christ did not even answer their abusive words. Fourth, Christ did not threaten when He suffered. Instead, He committed Himself to the Father because the Father is the One who judges righteously. Luke 23:46 says, “And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, “into Your hands I commit My spirit.”’ Having said this, He breathed His last.” Here, we see that Christ gave us a perfect example. He committed Himself to the Father because He knew that the Father is the Righteous Judge. In the same way, we know that the Father will judge us righteously.

Christ also bore our sins in His body on the cross. The word that is translated “bore” means “*to place on one’s self a load to be carried.*” Christ placed our sins on Himself as He went to the cross and died in our place as our substitute so that the holiness of God was satisfied by His payment for our sin. Galatians 3:13 says, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’).” Christ became a curse for us so that we could be set free from the penalty of our sin.

By His death on the cross in our place, we also died to our sins so that we might live for righteousness. Romans 6:5-6 says, “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” We are no longer slaves to sin. As we yield to God, He gives us His power to act righteously. Romans 6:13 says, “And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.” Here, we see that we are alive from the dead and can act righteously. That is due to the fact that it is by the suffering of Christ for us and in our place that we have been healed. The word that is translated “you were healed” means “*to make whole or to set free from the penalty and power of sin.*” We are now free to serve the Lord in His strength.

1 Peter 2:25 says, “For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” Isaiah 53:6 says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” That was our condition and the condition of our children before we turned to Christ. Christ is now our Shepherd and Overseer who loves us and protects us from Satan. In John 10:11 Christ said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” Because Christ gave His life for us, we want to show our children by our example what it means to give our lives for others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to follow the example of Christ.