

Helping Our Children Learn to Respond to Suffering

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 16**

By

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Growing Godly Families Series

This series of manuals is the result of a series of weekly e-mail topics that have been prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. They originally started out as a one page topic that gradually grew to the point where most topics are about three pages in length.

This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders to give them Biblical principles for the development of godly physical and spiritual families. Because they give Biblical principles for developing godly families, they are also helpful for new Christians that want to grow and become godly families.

Mark 10:43-45 says, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." In these verses Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership. The purpose of this series is to help every family develop their full potential as godly families.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate in this world before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Success produces rewards until we die but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, "So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life." I Corinthians 10:31 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The Growing Godly Families Series is designed to help your family life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

Table of Contents

	Page
1. Learning About Our Future Inheritance	1
2. Learning to Rejoice in Testing	4
3. Learning Why We want to Live a Holy Life	7
4. Learning to Love with a Pure Heart	10
5. Learning to Live as the People of God	13
6. Learning to Live for Christ in the World	16
7. Learning to Follow the Example of Christ	19
8. Learning to Live as a Godly Wife	22
9. Learning to Live as a Godly Husband and Example	25
10. Learning to Live as an Example in the World	28
11. Learning More about the Suffering of Christ	31
12. Learning to Live and Suffer for Christ	34
13. Learning to Serve in the Strength of Christ	37
14. Learning to Suffer According to the Will of God	40
15. Learning how to Both Lead and Serve	43
16. Learning to Submit to God and Resist the Devil	46

1.

Learning About Our Future Inheritance

Today we are beginning a new series of topics from the book of I Peter. In these topics we will see that the Lord used Peter to teach us many lessons about suffering. As a result, the book of I Peter is a very helpful book to teach our physical and spiritual children lessons about the way that Christ teaches us to respond when we suffer for Him. In addition to learning to respond to suffering this book will also help us learn to explain many other lessons to our children.

In I Peter 1:1-2 we read, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.” We see that Peter introduces himself as he begins this book. His introduction is very brief and just mentions that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ. The qualifications to be an apostle are given in Acts 1:21-22 where we read, “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” These verses also tell us the primary ministry of the apostles. They were to be witnesses of the resurrection.

Peter also explained to whom he originally wrote this letter. He said that he wrote to the pilgrims of the Dispersion. The word that is translated “pilgrims of the Dispersion” means a person that is from a foreign country who is presently living in another land with the people of that land. Hebrews 13:13-14 says, “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.” As Christians, we understand that this world is not our permanent home. Peter uses that word here to speak about the fact that we as Christians are actually citizens of heaven and are only temporarily living on this earth as strangers in a foreign country. Philippians 3:20 says, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” A citizen who loves his country is always eagerly looking forward to the time when he will be in that country permanently. As we grow in our understanding of this fact, it changes our view of this world.

At the time that Peter wrote, he was writing to Christians who were scattered in the following regions: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These regions were all located in the area that is the present country of Turkey. Peter reminded these Christians that the whole Trinity was involved in their lives as Christians. First, Peter said that they were the elect (chosen) according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father. Ephesians 1:4 says, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” The Father chose each Christian before the world was ever created.

Second, Peter said that this was done in sanctification of the Spirit. Sanctification means to set apart or to consecrate. At the moment of salvation all of our sins, past, present and future, were forgiven and blotted out and the righteousness of Christ was placed on us by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the One who gives us power as we yield to Him to be obedient to God. Third, our salvation was made possible through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. I Peter 2:24 says, “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.” We are able to live for righteousness because of the fact that the righteousness of Christ is placed on each Christian at the moment of salvation.

Here we see that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit worked in unity so that we could experience the grace of God in our lives. Titus 2:11 says, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” Christ came so that we could know the grace of God and receive the salvation that has been provided through Christ. Ephesians 2:8-9 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.” When we accept that grace by placing our faith in Christ, it then becomes possible to experience the peace of God in our lives. That peace is described in Philippians 4:7 where we read, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Peter wanted that peace to be multiplied in the life of every Christian.

Peter went on to describe the future inheritance that is promised to every Christian. I Peter 1:3-5 says, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” As we think about our future inheritance as Christians, we are reminded first of all of our relationship with God. Once Adam and Eve sinned most of the people in the Old Testament never felt a close relationship with God.

Here we are reminded that because of the death and resurrection of Christ that we can call Him, Father. Hebrews 4:14-16 says, “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet* without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” As Christians we can come to the Father with boldness because we come to the Father through Christ. It is through the blood that Christ shed on the cross that we have obtained mercy and grace. In the Old Testament the blood of animals only covered sin and the people still felt distant from God. In John 1:29 John the Baptist introduced Christ by saying, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Because Christ took our sin away, we can come to the Father with boldness through Christ.

We also see what the abundant mercy of God has done for us. The word that is translated “begotten again” means to be born anew or to be born again. In fact that is the way it is translated in the only other place that this word is used in the New Testament. In this same chapter I Peter 1:22-23 says, “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives

and abides forever.” Here we see that the fact that we have been born again makes it possible for us to love one another fervently with a pure heart.

We see here that that we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Because Christ rose from the dead, we no longer have to fear death. Titus 2:13 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” The world looks at all of the problems around them and is filled with fear. We can look up and look forward to that blessed hope which is the coming of Christ to take us to be with Him forever.

We see that our eternal inheritance is described in three ways. First, our inheritance is incorruptible. This means that our inheritance cannot corrupt or decay. I Corinthians 15:52 says, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Second, our inheritance is undefiled. This means that our inheritance is free from any fault. Hebrew 7:26 says, “For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens.” Because the One who paid our penalty is undefiled, He has also made our inheritance so that it is undefiled. Third, our inheritance does not fade away. I Peter 1:24 says, “Because all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away but the word of the LORD endures forever.” Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.” Just as the Word of God will endure forever, even so our inheritance will endure forever.

The reason that we can have peace and know that these things are true is due to the fact that we are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation. Romans 1:16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Here we are reminded of the fact that the salvation that we have received has been received through the power of God. He is the One who has all power. I Corinthians 1:18 says, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” We have been saved by the message of the cross. That message is foolishness to the world but to us it is the power of God.

God is also ready to reveal that eternal life that we have at the last time. Luke 12:40 says, “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” As Christians we are to be ready for the coming of the Lord at any time. I Corinthians 15:52 says, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” We want to encourage our physical and spiritual children to be ready for the coming of the Lord at any moment because God is ready to reveal that eternal life that we have and Christ will come suddenly. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn about our future inheritance.

2.

Learning to Rejoice in Testing

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn about the future inheritance that each Christian has been promised. We also saw that we want to help our children realize the importance of being ready for the coming of the Lord at all times because we do not know when Christ will come to take us to that inheritance. However, at the same time we also want to prepare our children to live for the Lord as we wait for that coming. One thing that is very important is to show them how by our example and help them to learn to rejoice in testing.

I Peter 1:6-9 says, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of *your* souls.” The fact that we have an eternal inheritance means that every Christian can rejoice as we look to the future. However, we are not yet enjoying that inheritance. In fact we may even be going through a time of difficult testing. That was true for the people to whom Peter originally wrote this letter. As a result, the things that Peter wrote to them can help us and our children learn how to rejoice even when we are going through a time of testing.

Peter understood that the Christians in his day were rejoicing greatly even though they were grieved by the trials that they were going through at that time. The word that is translated “greatly rejoice” means to be exceedingly glad. This same word is used in I Peter 4:13 where we read, “But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” Here the word is translated “with exceeding joy.” This teaches us an important lesson. We can have great joy even in difficult times as we remember our eternal inheritance.

We see that it is possible to rejoice greatly even during the times when we are grieved by various trials. That is due to the fact that joy is based on what the Lord is doing in our lives and not the things that are happening around us. Peter first reminded the Christians that the trials that they were experiencing would only be for a little while. Peter also recognized that they had been grieved by these trials. The word that is translated “grieved” means to make sorrowful. The word that is translated “trials” was used by James in James 1:2-3 where we read, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” Both Peter and James understood that the Lord allows testing and even great sorrow to develop patience in our lives.

We see that the reason the Lord allows such trials in our lives is due to the fact that the Lord wants to show the genuineness of our faith. Fire is used to purify gold because fire burns out the tiny specks of dust that are in that gold and makes the gold pure. Here we see that trials in

the life of a Christian are much more valuable than the gold that is tested by fire because our trials demonstrate that our faith is genuine. The revelation of Jesus Christ refers to the coming of Christ for the church. At the time that Christ comes for us the genuineness of our faith will be recognized. That is why we eagerly look forward with love to the time when we will see Christ. At that time our genuine faith will bring praise, honor and glory to Christ for all eternity.

Because we are looking forward to the coming of Christ, we can rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible and full of glory even though we do not yet see Christ. This is due to the fact that we have believed even though we have not yet seen Christ. At the time that Christ comes we will receive the full reward of our faith. We have received salvation by faith. However, at the coming of Christ we will receive the fullness of that salvation. Romans 8:23 says, “Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” Here we see that we received the Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation as the down payment. At the coming of Christ we will receive our eternal body.

Peter goes on to describe our salvation in more detail in the following verses. I Peter 1:10-12 says, “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.” Here we see that the Old Testament prophets wanted to clearly understand how this salvation would be provided.

We see that the prophets inquired and searched carefully. In Acts 15 James was quoting from Amos at the Jerusalem Council. Acts 15:15-17 says, “And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things.’” The prophets knew the Gentiles would receive salvation but they did not fully understand how that salvation would be provided even though they made careful inquiry. They had to accept the fact that God would provide salvation by faith. That is why Hebrews 11:39-40 says, “And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”

Although the prophets did not fully understand, they prophesied of the grace that would come to the Gentiles. Here we see that the Old Testament prophets were obedient to the Lord and prophesied the things that the Lord told them to speak even when they did not understand what they were saying. The Old Testament prophets wanted to know who they were talking about and when that person would come. We also see how the Lord led them to prophesy what they spoke and wrote. We see that their message was given to them through the Holy Spirit. II Peter 1:19-21 says, “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a

light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” Here we see that they spoke those words because they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit spoke to the prophets and predicted to them in advance so that they wrote about the sufferings of Christ. Passages like Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 and many others tell us many things about the sufferings of Christ. Isaiah 53:3-5 says, “He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” However, we see here that the writers who wrote those prophecies wondered who they were talking about and when those things would happen. The same was true when they wrote about the resurrection and the other glories that would follow.

In fact God revealed to the prophets that the things which they were writing were not for them or the people living during the time that they were on earth. That is why certain parts of the Old Testament could not be understood until after the death and resurrection of Christ. Here we are reminded of the greatness of the wisdom of God. That is why Christ said to the disciples after the resurrection in Luke 24:44-45, “Then He said to them, “These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Even though the disciples walked with Christ for more than three years they could not even understand until after the resurrection.

Earlier that same day Christ had appeared to two of His followers as they walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Luke 24:25-27 says, “Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Here we see that the day of His resurrection Christ helped His followers to understand passages from throughout the Old Testament that explained what had happened in the previous few days. As a result, the followers of Christ had the privilege of explaining Old Testament passages that had never been understood before even by angels.

However, they could not minister in their own strength. They needed the Holy Spirit to give them both understanding and power to preach just as we do. That is why Christ said in Luke 24:49, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” We want to help our children learn to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that we are able to rejoice even when we are experiencing testing because of the message that the Lord has given us to share. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to rejoice in testing.

3.

Learning Why We Want to Live a Holy Life

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to rejoice even when they are going through times of testing. We best help them to learn that lesson as they see us rejoice when we are going through difficult times of testing. In order to be filled with joy during those times of testing, we must have faith that the Lord is working through what is happening in our lives to complete His will. That faith will grow stronger as we make it our goal to live lives that are holy and pleasing to the Lord because we will be walking by faith.

That is why I Peter 1:13-16 says, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance; but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy.'" In Israel and the surrounding nations, the people would commonly wear long robes. However, when they were getting ready to travel, they would use a leather belt to tie those robes close to their bodies so that the robes would not hinder their travel. Here Peter used that familiar activity and encouraged the Christians to apply that activity to their thoughts. We see that Peter encouraged them and us to focus our thinking on the grace that we as Christians will receive at the coming of Christ. Our thinking is the thing that determines our actions.

The word that is translated "be sober" means to think clearly and exercise self-control so that we can act to please the Lord. The word is used in I Thessalonians 5:8 where we read, "But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation." Here we see that such thinking will strengthen our faith, love and hope. Since the Christians to whom Peter was writing were going through a time of severe testing and persecution, Peter encouraged them to rest their hope fully on the grace that they would receive at the time that Christ returns to take us to heaven. Here we see that when we live with an eternal focus in our lives that we will see any suffering in this world from a different viewpoint. Paul said in Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us." The suffering that we experience on this earth is just for a moment when we are focused on the eternal glory to which we look forward.

When we have our attention on that eternal glory, it also changes the way that we act on this earth. It will be our desire to be obedient children of the Lord because we want to please Him. Before we placed our faith in Christ, we lived to please ourselves. That meant that we followed our sinful lusts and lived in sin. As we think about the eternal glory that Christ has for us we begin to think and act differently. Romans 12:2 says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." We followed our sinful lusts because of our lack of knowledge of spiritual things. Paul said in Ephesians 4:17-18, "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because

of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Here we see that ignorance speaks of the spiritual blindness that controlled our lives before Christ gave us new life.

Now we see that Christ has called us to Himself and encourages us to follow His example and live a holy life. Christ calls us to be holy in all of our conduct. Ephesians 4:22-23 says, “That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Here we see that the key to changing our conduct or actions is to change our thinking. Once we become Christians that is possible because we are able to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. We also have an example to follow because God invites us to follow His example when He says, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

I Peter 1:17-19 goes on to say, “And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Those who call on the Father are those who have placed their faith in Christ.

These verses teach us a key lesson about the character of God. We see that God judges each person's work without partiality. For the person that is not a Christian, that person will be judged by his or her sinful works and will receive eternal judgment for those works. However, as Christians, our sins have been blotted out and so our works will be judged impartially to see what works can be rewarded. I Corinthians 3:14-15 says, “If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” As God judges impartially, all of our works that have eternal value will be rewarded. All of our works that were only for this earth will be burned. Every person that becomes a Christian will be saved but those who have no works of eternal value will see all of their works burned. As a result, we want to do works that have eternal value.

We only live on this earth for a short period of time compared to eternity. As a result, we only have this short period to do works that will receive eternal rewards. That is why we are told to live this time with godly fear. Philippians 2:12-13 says, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.” Here we are reminded that God has worked in our lives. Now we are to let that salvation impact the lives of others as we seek to please God. Because of His great love for us we have a godly fear that causes us to want to serve Him with reverence and love so that we can do His will.

We have this godly reverence and love because we realize that Christ did not pay the penalty to redeem us from our bondage to sin with silver or gold. Before we received that gift of life from Christ by faith our life was a life that was filled with aimless conduct (sinful behavior). This sinful behavior had been passed down to us by our ancestors because their lives had also been

controlled by sin. Because of that sin we were prisoners of Satan. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." We could not escape that bondage. Instead we needed One who would redeem us from that bondage by paying the price.

The price to redeem us was very high. In fact the price that Christ paid to set us free from the penalty of our sin was His precious blood. John 1:29 says, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Christ was the perfect sacrifice who could redeem us from sin because He was without blemish and without spot. As a result, we want to live a holy life that pleases God because Christ paid the price to redeem us from our sin with His own blood. We want to respond to His great love by pleasing Him.

I Peter 1:20-21 says, "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." The word that is translated "foreordained" means to foreknow or to know in advance. Here we see that before Adam and Eve were ever created that God knew that they would sin. As a result, God planned to redeem us from sin by the blood of Christ before the first sin was even committed. This also reminds us of the greatness of the love of God because He made the plan to redeem us from our bondage to sin long before there was sin.

Although that plan was made before creation, Christ did not appear until these last times to carry out that plan to redeem us. It is through this payment by Christ that it is possible for us to come to God and believe in Him. God, the Father, is the One who raised Christ from the dead and gave Him glory to show that He was satisfied with the payment that Christ made for sin. I John 2:1-2 says, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." The word "propitiation" means to be satisfied. The Father was satisfied with the payment that Christ made for our sins and showed that satisfaction by raising Christ from the dead and giving Him glory.

It is that payment for our sin that makes it possible for us to have our faith and hope in God. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others how to receive this faith and hope. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Our children can learn to lead others to faith in Christ as they learn to share the Gospel from the Word of God with others. Hope is the confident assurance of our eternal salvation which is the result of that faith. We want to help our children learn to share that hope described in Titus 2:13, "Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." As our children learn to explain these things to others, they can also experience the joy that comes from sharing with others the joy that they can have through life in Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why we want to live a holy life.

4.

Learning to Love with a Pure Heart

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to live a holy life. The thing that motivates us to live a holy life is an understanding of the love of Christ that He paid to redeem us from the consequences of our sin. We will do much more when we are motivated by the love of Christ than we will do because we feel it is our duty. The same is true for our children. As we help them grow in their understanding of the love of Christ, they develop a strong desire to please Christ and live to bring glory to Him. In our topic today we are going to see that we want to help them learn to love with a pure heart.

I Peter 1:22 says, “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.” In the previous verses we saw that those verses talked about living a holy life in response to the love that Christ showed for us by shedding His precious blood to pay the penalty for our sins. We saw that His payment redeemed us from the bondage of sin and Satan. As a result, we saw that we want to live holy lives that please the One that paid our penalty. That is what motivates us to obey the truth and be obedient to the Word of God. However, we also know that we can only obey that truth as we depend on the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through our lives.

We see that when we depend on the power of the Holy Spirit that He will give us a love for the brethren (other Christians) that is without hypocrisy. Godly love is much greater than family love. At any moment that we are yielding our lives to the control of the Holy Spirit, it is then possible for the love of Christ to flow through our lives. The word that is translated “fervently” means to stretch out the hand. The people who are not Christians cannot love with this kind of love because they cannot yield their lives to the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:38 says, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” Christ was able to go about doing good because the Father was with Him. In the same way, we can love fervently and go about doing good because the Holy Spirit is working through our lives. That love in our lives will also be a pure love.

The only way that we can really love fervently is to love with a pure heart. The word that is translated “pure” means a heart that is free from sin, evil desires and guilt. We keep our hearts pure when we confess our sins as soon as we realize that we have sinned. We keep our hearts free from evil desires as we set our minds on things above. Colossians 3:2 says, “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” That makes it possible for us to think Biblically instead of thinking according to the way of the world. We keep our hearts free from guilt as we fully understand that Christ has forgiven our sins and no longer holds them against us. Many times this is a very difficult thing for many Christians to understand and apply in their lives because of various sins in their past. In such cases we need to help them learn how to let go of their guilt.

I Peter 1:23-25 says, “Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible,

through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you." Here we see why we are given the power to do good. We have received spiritual birth. John 3:6 says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The spiritual seed that made it possible for us to receive spiritual birth is seed that is incorruptible. Incorruptible seed is seed that cannot corrupt or decay. Incorruptible was used in I Peter 1:4 to describe our eternal inheritance. That verse says, "To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."

In addition, we have been given spiritual birth through the Word of God which lives and abides forever. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word of God was able to pierce through our sinful and rebellious hearts as the Holy Spirit brought conviction to our hearts and the Father drew us to Christ. We want to help our children fully understand the difference between their words and the Word of God. Our own words are just our opinions. When we share the Word of God, we are sharing a message that is living and powerful.

Peter illustrated this great difference between our words and the Word of God by quoting from Isaiah 40:6-8. Our lives (and our opinions) are like the grass. Our glory is compared to the flower of the grass. Flowers are beautiful when they are in bloom. However, they are beautiful today and quickly fade away in a few days. That clearly illustrates our lives, our ideas and our opinions. Very few of us make it to live to one hundred years of age. Our ideas and opinions may change tomorrow. In contrast, Peter reminded us that the Word of the Lord endures forever.

Peter went on to point out the fact that when the Gospel was preached to the people that they had heard from the Word of the Lord which endures forever. This is a key statement for us to understand and explain to our children. In Matthew 24:35 we read, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." Revelation 21:1 adds, "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea." There will be an end to the present heaven and earth. However, the Word of the Lord will last forever. The things that the Lord has spoken will happen exactly as the Lord has spoken them. As a result, when we share the message of the Gospel from the Word of God, we know that we are sharing a message that provides eternal life to all who believe. We go on to see how that Word will change our lives.

In I Peter 2:1-3 we read, "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious." As we come to these verses we see that we are to lay aside certain things. The word that is translated "laying aside" means to put off or to put away something from you. Romans 13:12 says, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light." Here we see that we are to cast off or lay aside the works of darkness. Five of those works of darkness are mentioned in this verse.

First, we are to put off all malice. The word that is translated “malice” means to desire to injure or wickedness that is not afraid to break laws. Titus 3:3 uses this word when it describes our life before we placed our faith in Christ. That verse says, “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” Second we are to put off all deceit. The word that is translated “deceit” means deception or guile. Christ is our example because I Peter 2:22 says, “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.” Christ always spoke the truth when He spoke.

Third, we are to put off all hypocrisy. The word that is translated “hypocrisy” means the acting of a stage player. In New Testament times one actor would play different parts in a play. If he was supposed to be an angry person, he put an angry mask in front of his face. If he was supposed to be a happy person, he would put a happy mask in front of his face. As a result, the word hypocrisy came to mean a person who puts on a false front and acts in a different way than that person really is in his heart. Christ used the word to describe the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:27-28 where we read, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” Christ said that the scribes and Pharisees were full of hypocrisy. Fourth, we are to put off envy. Here we see that we are not to desire what belongs to someone else. Fifth, we are to put off all evil speaking. The word that is translated “evil speaking” means to speak evil against another person or to try to defame their character.

Instead of speaking those evil things that hurt and destroy others, we see that like newborn babies we are to desire the pure milk of the Word of God so that we can grow spiritually. The word “newborn” speaks of a person that has just received spiritual birth and become a Christian. The word that is translated “desire” means to long for or to pursue something with love. Philippians 1:8 says, “For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.” Here we see that Paul had a great longing and love for these Christians. We see that we are to have that same love and longing for the pure milk of the Word of God. The reason why we are to have this longing for the less difficult teachings of the Word of God is due to the fact that those teachings will help new Christians in their spiritual growth.

The word that is translated “tasted” means to experience or take as food. As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to put the Word of God into practice in their daily lives, we see that God’s Word causes them to experience spiritual growth. It also helps them to understand that the Lord is good, kind and loving. As a result, they are able to continue to experience spiritual growth in their lives which makes it possible for them to grow and learn to love with a pure heart. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to love with a pure heart.

5.

Learning to Live as the People of God

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to love with a pure heart. We saw that such love only happens as we learn to follow the example of Christ and put away such things as malice, envy and hypocrisy. As we help our children learn to love with pure hearts, we will then be able to help them learn to live as the people of God. That will be the focus in this topic as we look at Biblical principles that will help them to live as the people of God.

As we come to I Peter 2:4-5 we read, “Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Here we see that we are to come to Christ and remain with Him as to a living stone. When we come to Christ, we are to learn to abide in Him. John 15:5 says, “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” He is able to make it possible for us to bear much fruit because He is the living stone. The word that is translated “living” is the word used in John 4:10 where we read, “Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.’” Christ is the One who has life and gives life.

As the living stone that fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament, Christ was rejected by men. Isaiah had predicted that rejection when he said in Isaiah 53:3, “A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” Although He was rejected by the leaders of His day, Christ was certainly the chosen of the Father. The Father revealed that choice to the people when He said in Matthew 3:17, “And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Father made that choice very clear by raising Christ from the dead. Acts 4:10 says, “Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.” The resurrection showed that the Father was satisfied with the payment that Christ had made.

We also see that Christ has made us living stones. The resurrection life that the Father has given to Christ also means that we have resurrection life and are living stones. Paul said in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” As living stones, God has built us into a spiritual house. Ephesians 2:19-20 says, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner *stone*.” Here we see that we have become part of the household of God. Our bodies have become the temple of God.

God has also made us a holy priesthood. This means that each Christian has the privilege of offering up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God because we come to God through Christ. As the priests of God, we have the privilege to speak to God for people. This means that we have the privilege to speak to God in prayer for both Christians and for those who are not yet Christians. Paul asked other Christians to pray for him when he said in Ephesians 6:19, "And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel." As we pray for those who are not Christians, although it is in a different context, we can use the words of Paul in Acts 26:18 where we read, "To open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." We can pray that Christ will do these five things in the lives of those who are not Christians as we pray for them.

As the priests of God, we also have the privilege to speak to people for God. The last spoken words of Christ before He returned to heaven are recorded in Acts 1:8 where we read, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Paul summarized the message that we are to share with those who are not yet Christians when he said in I Corinthians 15:3-5, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve." The first two verses of that chapter tell us that this is the message by which people are saved. We will only be faithful priests of God as we faithfully share this message in the strength that He gives us.

I Peter 2:6-8 goes on to say, "Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." Therefore, to you who believe, *He is* precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed." Christ is the chief cornerstone. He is the chosen of God. He is precious in the sight of Father. Those who believe and place their faith in Him will no longer be filled with shame. Peter made it clear that those who believe this promise will experience the fact that Christ is precious.

In contrast, those who are disobedient and reject Christ as the chief cornerstone are compared to the builders who rejected the chief cornerstone in the building of the temple in the Old Testament. Even though Christ is the chief cornerstone, He is a stone of stumbling to those who reject. Such individuals stumble over the message of the Gospel. Instead of coming to the rock that is the foundation for their lives, those who reject find that Christ has become for them a rock of offense. I Corinthians 1:23-24 says, "But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." The message of the crucifixion is either the message of salvation or the stumbling block over which those who reject stumble. They stumble and receive eternal judgment because they choose to reject and be disobedient to the Word of God.

Since we are a part of the group who have responded to the Gospel and placed our faith in Christ, I Peter 2:9-10 says, “But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” Here we see that the Lord used Peter to write several things about what it means to live as the people of God.

First, we are a chosen generation. In John 15:16 Christ said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” Peter had been in the upper room on the night when Christ spoke these words. He repeated them here to remind every Christian that we have been chosen by God to be a part of His spiritual family.

Second, we are a royal priesthood. We also saw what it means to be priests of God. Here we see that we are a royal priesthood. The word translated “royal” means that which belongs to a king. Since Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords, we are His priests and invite people to become a part of His kingdom. Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” As a royal priesthood, we are to seek His kingdom and His righteousness.

Third, we are a holy nation. God set aside the nation of Israel for a period of time and called the church to be His people. There is still a future for Israel because Romans 11:25-26 says, “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” God will again use Israel in the future but at the present we are His holy nation.

Fourth, we are His own special people. As His special people, we are to, “Proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Here we are reminded again that we have been called to speak for God because He called us out of darkness. We are to share the message that will not be known unless we share it as His special people. We now also live in His marvelous light. In the past we were not even a particular nation of people. However, in the present we are now the people of God. Ephesians 2:13-14 says, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation.” We had not obtained mercy but have now received that mercy.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand these special privileges that we have been given, we help them understand that we can now live as the people of God. This is a very great privilege. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to live as the people of God.

6.

Learning to Live for Christ in the World

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to live as the people of God. We saw that as Christians we are called both a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood. As the people of God the Lord has called us to carry on His work in the world at this time. In order to be effective in that ministry we want to help both our children and other Christians learn to live as the people of God. In this topic we want to help our children understand how they can live for Christ in this world.

In I Peter 2:11-12 we read, “Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” As Peter began this section we see that he had a great love for the Christians to whom he was writing. Our ministry to all Christians will be more effective as we practice the new commandment in all of our relationships with them. John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” We are called to love one another as we serve each other.

Peter wanted the Christians to understand his love for them because of the request that he had for them and for all Christians in the following verses. Peter pointed out the fact that as Christians we are strangers and pilgrims in this world. The word that is translated “strangers” means one who lives as a foreigner or stranger on earth due to the fact that our citizenship is in heaven. The word that is translated “pilgrims” speaks of one who comes from a foreign country to live with the people of that land for a period of time. Hebrews 11:13 says, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Just as the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 recognized their time on earth was temporary, we as Christians also need to recognize that we are just here for a short time to do the work Christ has for us.

The word that is translated “abstain from” means to hold oneself off or to avoid. In I Thessalonians 5:22 we read, “Abstain from every form of evil.” Here we see that we are to avoid fleshly lusts. Galatians 5:19-21 gives us a summary list of some of the things that are fleshly lusts when those verses say, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Here we see that fleshly lusts involve many different kinds of sinful desires. These were the sinful desires that controlled us before we became Christians.

As we walk in the Holy Spirit and are led by the Spirit, He gives us His strength to avoid these

sinful lusts. Peter points out the fact that such sinful lusts war against the soul. The word translated “war” talks about a military campaign or a soldier on active service. The word is used in II Corinthians 10:3-4 where we read, “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.” As we walk in the Spirit Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” This is what makes it possible for us to have conduct (behavior) that is honorable among the Gentiles.

Those who are not Christians may try to speak against us and even accuse us of being evildoers. However, they will be forced to recognize as they carefully observe our actions that we are doing good works. Matthew 5:16 says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” As the world observes our good works, some of them will be drawn to the Lord. Those who reject will have no excuse when the Day of Judgment comes for them.

As a result, I Peter 2:13-14 goes on to say, “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good.” Here we see that one of the things that we are to do is to submit ourselves to every ordinance of those that the Lord has placed in authority over us. The word that is translated “ordinance” is normally translated creature or created being. This would include all levels of governmental authority that have been placed over us. We are to place ourselves under these government authorities for the sake of the Lord so that all of our actions will bring honor and glory to Him.

Government authorities have two primary functions in their relationship to the people that they lead. They have been placed in authority by God to punish those who are evildoers. At the same time God has placed them in authority to honor those who do good. Romans 13:3-4 says, “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil.” Here we see that those who do evil will have a fear of those who have been placed in authority because they are afraid that they will be punished. In contrast, those who are doing good do not need to be afraid. Instead God has placed them in their positions of authority so that God can bless us through them.

As a result, we see how we are to live for Christ as long as we are in this world. I Peter 2:15-17 says, “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men--as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.” Many times Christians want to know how they can do the will of God. Here we are told how to do the will of God in our relationships to those who have been placed in positions of authority over us. This is how we live for Christ in the world.

We see that it is the will of God that we do those things that are good. The word that is

translated here “that by doing good” means to do something that profits others or to be a good help to someone. 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 look for opportunities that will profit others and help them. As we make it our goal to do good to all we see that the Lord says that our actions will silence the ignorant words of those who deny God and speak from their lack of knowledge of God.

As Christians we have been set free. However, we are not to use that freedom as a covering to do evil or commit sin. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Here we see that we have been given liberty so that we are free to serve one another in love. When our actions are motivated by the love of Christ for us, those actions will be pleasing to the Lord and silence those who do not know the Lord.

As a result, we are given a list of actions that will show that love as we live for Christ in the world. We are to recognize that we are the bondservants of God. Ephesians 6:6-7 says, “Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.” We are to make it our goal that in everything that we do that we do it in such a way that it will please the Lord. That love will cause us to do four things as we live for Christ.

First, we will honor all people. The word that is translated “honor” means to have respect and place a high value on others. Ephesians 6:2-3 says, “Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” Here we see that the only commandment that contained a promise was the commandment to honor our parents. We see that as Christians we are to treat all people with that same honor and respect.

Second, we will love the brotherhood. The word that is translated “brotherhood” means those who are fellow Christians. This word is used one other place in the New Testament. I Peter 5:9 says, “Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” The previous verse talks about the devil. Here we are reminded that the devil causes all Christians to suffer because he hates God and all who serve Him. We are to love other Christians as Christ loves us.

Third, we will fear God. The word that is translated “fear” means to reverence God and to show that reverence by obedience to Him. I John 4:18-19 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” A godly fear and reverence will take away our fear of people.

Fourth, we will honor the king (or other ruler in authority). This is the same word that was used when we were told to honor all people. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to place a high respect and value on all leaders. The Lord will work in their lives as they honor and value their leaders. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to live for Christ in the world.

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 I 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 that 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 though 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. II 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. I 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. I 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 because 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.

I 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.

8.

Learning to Live as a Godly Wife

In our last topic we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to follow the example of Christ. Christ gave us a perfect example throughout His life. However, His greatest example came at the time that He went to the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. The things that Christ did gave us an example for our lives of what it means to be willing to suffer so that others might have the opportunity to hear how to receive eternal life. Today we are going to see how the Lord uses the life of a godly wife to draw her husband to Christ if he is not a Christian.

When a married couple does not hear about the death and resurrection of Christ until they are adults, many times the wife will become a Christian before her husband becomes a Christian. That is true in our day just as it was true in the time that Peter wrote the book of I Peter. That is why I Peter 3:1-2 says, “Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear.” Here we see that just as the previous verses mentioned that household servants are to be submissive to their masters that a Christian wife is to be submissive to her husband. We saw that to be submissive means to place your full potential at the disposal of another.

Here we see that when wives have a submissive attitude the Lord often uses that attitude to draw the non-Christian husband to Christ. That is why such wives are told to be submissive to their own husband (rather than to a leader in the church). The word that is translated “obey not” is usually translated believe not or unbelieving because it refers to a person who refuses to allow one’s self to be persuaded. In John 3:36 we read, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” In this verse it is translated he who does not believe. Here we see that there are times when a husband is refusing to let himself be persuaded by the words of other Christians.

Here we see that many times a wife can do what other Christians cannot do and such husbands will be won by the changed behavior of the wives. The word that is translated “observe” is only used one other time in the New Testament and means to watch closely. That use is in I Peter 2:12 where we read, “Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” Here we see that Christians draw others to Christ by their changed actions because unbelievers are watching closely. The behavior that a husband really notices in his wife is her chaste conduct when it is demonstrated by godly reverence.

The word that is translated “chaste” means actions that are pure from any fault. This speaks about a wife who is growing in godly character so that the husband can see the changes in the inner attitudes that Christ is developing in her life. James 3:17-18 say, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits,

without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” Here we see that growth in godly character produces that purity of life that leads a husband to Christ.

We see that those godly inner attitudes are contrasted with those who just try to change their outward appearance. I Peter 3:3-4 says, “Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel--rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” Many women in the world only try to change their outward appearance and never think about their inner attitudes. Three common areas that women in the world try to change are used to illustrate the difference between outward beauty and inner beauty. Women who are not Christians focus on changing the outward beauty by what they do with their hair, the wearing of jewelry or the wearing of expensive clothes. They usually do not think of inner beauty as well.

In contrast, Peter here reminds Christian wives of the tremendous value of focusing on the inward beauty of godly character. The Bible has much to say about the development of the heart (inner person). God told Samuel in I Samuel 16:7, “But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” People do look at the outward appearance. However, God will also cause a husband that is not a Christian to begin to notice the changes of the heart of his wife as the wife grows in godly character.

This passage goes on to describe that beauty of the heart by describing the beauty of the heart as incorruptible beauty. The word that is translated “incorruptible” means that which cannot corrupt or decay. I Peter 1:4 says, “To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” This verse refers to our eternal inheritance. It also describes the inner beauty of godly character. In the sight of God such character is incorruptible, undefiled and does not fade away.

Two words are used to describe that inner beauty of a godly wife. First, we see that such a woman has a gentle spirit. Matt. 21:5 says, “Tell the daughter of Zion, behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” In this verse we see that the word is translated lowly. Another word for a gentle spirit is humility. Gentleness toward God means that we accept the things that He allows in our lives as good. As a result, we accept them instead of resisting them. A gentle, humble or lowly person does not focus on himself or herself at all. Instead such a person yields the control to the Holy Spirit to work as He chooses.

Second, the second word that describes such a woman says she has a quiet spirit. The word that is translated “quiet” means peaceable or quiet. The only other place that this word is used in the New Testament is in I Timothy 2:2 where we read that we are to pray, “For kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” When a non-Christian husband has a wife that has a humble and quiet spirit he begins to place great value on her life. This verse also tells us that God places a great value on a wife that has these attitudes.

God led Peter to use an Old Testament illustration to show the great value that God places on a woman with a gentle and quiet spirit. I Peter 3:5-6 says, "For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror." Of all of the women mentioned in the Old Testament, the one that God chose to illustrate a gentle and quiet spirit was Sarah. However, these verses show us that many other Old Testament women had this same spirit. A key thing to notice about all of these women was that they trusted in God and allowed Him to work in and through their lives.

We see that such women were described as holy women. The word that is translated "holy" is used 229 times in the New Testament and is nearly always translated holy or saints. When used of people it is always used to speak of those who had their faith in God. In the New Testament we see that we become saints at the moment that repent of our sin of unbelief and place our faith in Christ. The word that is translated "adorned" means to prepare, to get ready or to put in order. In Revelation 21:2 John wrote, "Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." In Titus 2:10 we read, "Not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." Here we see that servants are to adorn the doctrine of God by their godly behavior. God says that godly wives adorn themselves by their godly behavior.

The Old Testament women chose to be submissive to their own husbands. Sarah is a perfect illustration of this submissive attitude. There is only one place in the Old Testament where it is recorded that Sarah called Abraham lord. In Genesis 18:10-12 God spoke to Abraham and said, "And He said, 'I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.'" (Sarah was listening in the tent door which *was* behind him.) Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" Abraham was 99 years old and Sarah was 89 years old. God told Abraham that Sarah would have a son in her old age. That is the one recorded instance where Sarah called Abraham lord. That answer in that context points to the fact that Sarah chose to show a submissive attitude both toward God and toward Abraham (even though it meant having a baby at 90 years of age).

As a result, we see that Sarah is an example and a spiritual mother to all Christian women that show a gentle and quiet spirit. That is why God says that such an attitude is of great value. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to develop that same spirit in their lives. Then their lives will be an example to others and will help others to develop that same spirit. They will also be able to teach women how to live as a godly wife even when such women have a husband that is not yet a Christian. As we have seen God will work though that attitude to win many husbands to Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to develop a gentle and quiet spirit.

9.

Learning to Live as a Godly Husband and Example

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to help godly women learn to develop a submissive attitude and a gentle and quiet spirit. We saw that such a spirit will often be used by the Lord to draw husbands that are not Christians to Christ. In some cases the husband becomes a Christian before his wife. In our topic today we are going to see how a husband learns to develop a gentle and quiet spirit that will draw his wife, his children and others to Christ.

In our topic today we see that godly husbands are also to follow the example of Christ and develop a submissive attitude and a gentle and quiet spirit. I Peter 3:7 says, "Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered." The word that is translated "likewise" means equally or in the same way. This word was used in verse one to show that wives were to be submissive and follow the example of Christ. I Peter 5:5 says, "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Here we see that younger people are told to be submissive to their elders. In our passage we are given instructions about the way that husbands are to show their submissive attitude.

First, husbands are to live with their wives in an understanding way. This same word is translated knowledge in II Peter 3:18 where we read, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen." Here we see that we are to grow in our understanding of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In the same way a husband is to live with his wife in such a way that he grows in his understanding of the needs and feelings of his wife so that he can meet those needs and understand those feelings.

Second, husbands are to give honor to their wives. To give honor to a wife a husband must have respect and place a high value on his wife and then treat her in such a way that he shows the value that he has placed on her. This same root word is used twice in I Peter 2:17 where we read, "Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." A husband is to recognize that his wife is physically weaker and provide both physical and emotional protection to his wife.

Third, husbands are to understand that as husband and wife they are heirs together of the grace of life. In Genesis 2:18 God said, "And the LORD God said, "*It is* not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." God recognized the need of Adam long before Adam recognized that need. Then when God brought Adam and Eve together God said in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." God joined Adam and Eve together so that they would be one and gave that as the model for all marriages to follow. God also said that they were to become one flesh which speaks of the unity that they are to have as husband and wife.

Fourth, husbands are told that if they will show this kind of a submissive attitude toward their wife that their prayers will not be hindered. We saw in the earlier verses that if the wife becomes a Christian first that the husband would be won by the changed behavior of the wife. Here we see that if the husband becomes a Christian first that the wife will be won to Christ by the changed behavior of the husband. As a result, his prayers for the salvation of his wife will not be hindered because his changed actions will be used by the Lord to draw the wife to Christ.

We go on to read in I Peter 3:8-9, “Finally, all *of you be* of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, *be* tenderhearted, *be* courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” Here we see how all Christians are to relate to one another so that others will listen as they share the Gospel. First, we are to be of one mind. Here we see that we are to all learn to have this same submissive attitude toward the Lord and toward each other as Christians. Ephesians 5:21 says, “Submitting to one another in the fear of God.” As we submit to one another, we will also seek to show the love of Christ to one another because we will have the same heart attitudes.

Second, we are to have compassion for one another. The word that is translated “compassion” means to suffer with one another or to feel the pain of each other. Such an attitude will cause us to demonstrate the love of Christ to one another during times of suffering or loss. Third, we are to love as brothers. I Peter 1:22 says, “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.” Here we see that as brethren we are to love one another fervently with a pure heart. In fact this basic thought is repeated five times in the book of I Peter.

Fourth, we are to be tenderhearted toward one another. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in Ephesians 4:32 where we read, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” In both verses this word means to have a love and compassion that comes from the heart. Fifth, we are to be courteous to one another. This word means to be friendly or kind so that we treat each other with respect. Sixth, we are not to try and get even with each other and we are given two things that we are to avoid. If someone does evil to us, we are not to get even by doing evil back to that person. If someone speaks evil of us, we are not to get even by speaking evil about that person.

Seventh, in contrast to the evil actions and words mentioned in the previous point, we are to give a blessing instead. The word that is translated “blessing” means to speak well of another person. God called us to receive the blessing of eternal life by forgiving our sins when we came to Him in repentance. As a result, we are to forgive others who do evil to us so that they can learn how to receive that same blessing. Galatians 3:13-14 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”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” We became spiritual children of Abraham and have received eternal life.

I Peter 3:10-12 says, “For "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.” These three verses are taken from Psalm 34:12-16. Peter used these verses from Psalm 34 to show us that Christians can experience a life of peace and joy even in a world where there is much suffering and evil.

As Christians, we make choices in our lives every day. Some of those choices allow us to experience peace and joy while others cause us to experience conflict. If we choose the things mentioned in the previous verses we will normally experience peace and joy. The quotes from Psalm 34 show that some of those choices are choices about the things that we will say. If we want to love life and see good days, we will choose to ask the Lord to give us His strength to avoid speaking evil about others. James 3:8-9 warns us, “But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.” We will also ask for His strength to avoid speaking words of deceit.

In addition to asking the Lord to give us strength to avoid sinful speaking, we can also ask the Lord for strength to avoid evil and carry out those actions that are pleasing to the Lord. The Lord will give us His strength to turn away from evil and do good instead. 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.” As we walk with the Lord we will be looking for opportunities to do those things that are good and pleasing in His sight.

The Lord will also give us His strength to seek His peace. The word that is translated “to seek” means to seek something so that we find it. The word that is translated “to pursue” means to run swiftly to catch a person or a thing. James 3:17-18 says, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” We help others make peace with God by sharing the Gospel with them so that they place their faith in Christ. Christ has called us as Christians to be peacemakers as we explain to others how to have peace with God.

As we do the things that Peter quoted from Psalm 34, we know that the Lord is watching over us and He is listening to our prayers. In contrast, we are told that the Lord sets His face against those who do evil. As a result, we want to give our physical and spiritual children an example to follow as we show them how to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. Proverbs 16:7 says, “When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” There are times when we will suffer for doing the will of the Lord. However, the Lord will give us an inner peace and joy in such circumstances. The Lord will also work in the lives of those who treat us as enemies and some of them will be drawn to Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to be a godly example to others.

10.

Learning to Live as an Example in the World

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to become examples in their relationships with one another as Christians. We saw that as people live lives that are pleasing to God that He will work in such a way that we will be able to see the Lord give us lives that we can enjoy. However, we also live in a world where most of the people are not Christians. At time we will suffer for Christ because many people in the world are in rebellion against Christ. As a result, our topic today will teach us ways that we can help our children learn to live as examples in the world where many people are in rebellion against the Lord.

In I Peter 3:13-14 we read, “And who *is* he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, *you are* blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” As you can see these verses begin with a question. It would seem like people would not want to harm us when we are doing what is good. However, Christ told the disciples the night before He was crucified in John 15:18-20, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” Here we see that there are people in the world who will make Christians suffer because of their hatred for Christ. Such people are actually persecuting Christ when they make us suffer.

There is a need to examine our lives when we suffer. Peter wrote that if we suffer for the sake of righteousness that we are blessed. Here we see a key lesson for our own lives and also one that we want to help our children understand. We are to make sure that we are suffering for righteousness and not for our own sin. Ephesians 4:15 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--.” Two things are necessary in order for our suffering to be for righteousness' sake. First, we must be sharing the truth. Second, we must be sharing the truth in love. We can share the truth with a wrong attitude and the world will rebel against our sinful attitude. In such a case we will be suffering for our own sin.

In contrast, if we share the truth and also share the truth in love, we see that we are blessed. The apostles understood this when they were beaten by the Jewish religious leaders for sharing the Gospel. Acts 5:41-42 says, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.” The apostles were filled with joy when they had been beaten by the religious leaders because they had shared the truth and they had shared the truth in love. As a result, they considered it a privilege to suffer for Christ.

In fact the apostles also showed that they were not fearful or troubled because of the threats that were made against them by the religious leaders. We see the response of Peter and John in Acts 4:18-20 when they were threatened, "And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Here we see that Peter and John spoke the truth in love and were not afraid of any threats because their desire was to be obedient to the Lord.

The word that is translated "be troubled" means to cause inner conflicts that take away our calmness of mind. In John 14:27 Christ said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Christ wants us to experience His peace. He does not want Christians to have inner conflicts that take away that peace. This is a peace that the world can never give us. As we have that inner peace, we are able to share the Word of God effectively even with people who might oppose.

I Peter 3:15-16 says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed." The word "sanctify" means to set apart. We are to set apart Christ as Lord in our hearts. Here we see that we are to recognize Christ as the Lord and Master of our lives. When we have that attitude we will always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks us about the hope that we have in our lives.

The word that is translated "defense" means a speech or message of defense. Philippians 1:16-17 says, "The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel." Here we see that people had two different attitudes as they preached the Gospel. Some preached Christ for self gain. Others preached Christ from a heart of love. Those who preached from a heart of love knew that Paul was going to give a defense of the gospel when he spoke to the Roman emperor.

Here we see that as Christians we should always be prepared to give a defense of the hope that Christ has given to us. Titus 3:7 says, "That having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." As Christians we have been given the hope and confident assurance of eternal life. As a result, we are to be prepared to explain to people why we have that hope.

We also see the attitude that we are to have as we speak to others about the hope that we have in Christ. We see that we are to share that message with meekness and fear. The word that is translated "meekness" means with gentleness of spirit. James 3:13 uses this word when it says, "Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom." Here we see that if we depend on the Lord for godly wisdom that we will give that defense with a gentle spirit that makes it possible for us to speak with wisdom. We will also speak with a godly reverence or fear because of our desire to please God.

As we give a defense of the hope that we have within us, we will be able to have a good conscience. A good conscience is a conscience that has no guilt because we know that we have a clear conscience before the Lord. Paul said as he gave his defense before Felix in Acts 24:16, "This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men." Paul knew that his conscience was clear before God so it did not bother him to have to give a defense before a Roman ruler.

Peter had heard the Jewish leaders speak against Christ and accuse Him of many things. He saw that when Christ was crucified that He was crucified between two criminals who were being judged for crimes that they had committed. However, Peter also knew how Christ had responded to the shameful treatment that He received. Peter knew the words of Christ that are recorded in Luke 23:34 where we read, "Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots." Peter had seen the example of Christ as He showed love to His enemies. At the same time Peter had also denied Christ himself. As a result, Peter knew how it felt not to have a good conscience before God. Peter felt like such a failure that he and six other disciples went back to fishing. There Christ came to Peter and restored Peter and promised him that he would have a great ministry. From that point in time Peter made it very clear that he wanted to have a good conscience before the Lord.

As a result, Peter asked the Lord to give him boldness and strength to be a good witness for Christ. He boldly preached on the Day of Pentecost when three thousand were saved. Later when Peter was brought before the very same religious leaders that condemned Christ to death Peter silenced the words of the religious leaders by his good conduct. Acts 4:8-13 says, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus." Peter was totally without fear and had a good conscience before the religious leaders.

I Peter 3:17 says, "For *it is* better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." Peter knew the guilt and shame he felt when he had not been a good witness. He also know the blessing and good conscience that the Lord gave him when he was faithful to give a defense for the Lord. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the way that Peter felt in both situations. That way they can fully understand why it is worth it to suffer for doing what they know is good and pleasing in the sight of the Lord. That will encourage them to ask the Lord for His strength so that they can live their lives as godly examples in the world. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to live as godly examples in the world.

11.

Learning More about the Suffering of Christ

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to live as godly examples in the world. At times they may be forced to suffer for their faith because of the fact that those who reject Christ and treat Christ as an enemy will also reject those who faithful as they speak for Christ. However, we want our children to see from our own lives that it is a privilege to suffer for Christ and be an example to the world that is around us. In order for us to know how to help our children more fully, we want to help them grow in their understanding of the suffering of Christ. That will be the focus of this topic.

In I Peter 3:18-20 we read, “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, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.” Here we see that Peter reminded the Christians of the reason why Christ suffered. Peter knew that many of those to whom he was writing were suffering because of their faith in Christ. As a result, he knew that they needed to be reminded of the way that Christ suffered for them.

We see several things about the death of Christ. First, His sufferings were once for all. Hebrews 10:11-12 says, “And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” No further sacrifice will ever be needed because the sacrifice of Christ was forever. Second, His sacrifice was the just for the unjust. The word “just” speaks of one who is faultless or guiltless. The word “unjust” speaks of one who is sinful. Here we are reminded that Christ was without sin and as the perfect sacrifice of God could die for those who are sinful and guilty.

Third, Christ died so that He might bring us to God. The word that is translated “to bring” means to draw near or to open a way of access to God. In the Old Testament, the high priest could only go into the Holy of Holies one day a year. On that day he went in first to take blood as a covering for his own sin. Then he would go out and get additional blood as a covering for the sins of the people. That blood only covered sin until sin could be taken away. When John the Baptist introduced Christ in John 1:29 we read, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Christ died to take away our sins. As a result, Hebrews 4:15-16 says, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Christ made it possible for each individual who places his or her faith in Christ to come boldly to the Father at any time or in any situation.

Fourth, Christ was put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit. Hebrews 2:9 says, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death

crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.” Here we see that Christ became a man so that He might taste death for every person. However, Christ was made alive by the Spirit. Before Christ died, He answered the request of the thief on one of the crosses by saying In Luke 23:42-43, “Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Christ died physically but His Spirit immediately went to Paradise.

When Christ died we see that He went and preached to the spirits in prison. Luke 16:22-24 helps us to understand this statement when those verses say, “So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’” Prior to the resurrection of Christ, those who died in the Old Testament could not go directly to heaven because their sins were covered but not taken away. As a result, they went to Hades (the place of the dead) which had two parts. One part was called Abraham’s bosom or Paradise and was a place of blessing. The second part was called the place of torment. We see that the rich man in the place of torment could talk with Abraham and Abraham could answer him.

When Christ died He was on the side called Paradise or Abraham’s bosom. Those who had rejected God were on the other side called the place of torment. During the time that Christ was in Paradise we read that He preached to the spirits who were in prison (the place of torment). This included all those who were disobedient and were destroyed by the flood in the time of Noah as well as all of the other unbelievers throughout the Old Testament. Only Noah and his family were on the ark and went through the flood safely. For the rest the flood was a time of judgment. When Christ preached to those who were judged at the flood and to all other unbelievers His message of His death and coming resurrection meant that those in the place of torment would experience eternal judgment. Those in Abraham’s bosom also heard as Christ preached and the message brought great joy to them because it meant that the penalty for their sin had been paid once for all.

As a result, when Christ rose from the dead, He immediately took Paradise and all of the Old Testament saints in Paradise and presented them to the Father. Ephesians 4:8-10 says, “Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." (Now this, "*He ascended*"--what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” As a result of the resurrection of Christ, all Christians now go immediately to heaven to be with Christ. II Corinthians 5:8 says, “We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” At the moment of physical death we can look forward to the fact that our soul and spirit will immediately be with Christ in heaven.

We see that the passage goes on to talk about those who were saved with Noah during the flood. I Peter 3:21-22 says, “There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the

resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.” The word that is translated “antitype” means a picture or pattern of a spiritual truth. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is Hebrews 9:24 where we read, “For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Here we see that the Old Testament tabernacle and later the temple were a picture of the fact that Christ would enter into heaven to be in the presence of God for us.

Here we see that baptism is a picture of the fact that we have died to the control of sin and have been raised to new life through the resurrection of Christ. Romans 6:3-6 says, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 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.” Baptism does not take away sin. However, baptism is a picture of the fact that we have been raised to new life through Christ. II Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Through the resurrection of Christ we have been raised with a new nature that gives us the power to live a new life.

In addition, we see that Christ has gone into heaven where He is now sitting at the right hand of the Father. One of the things that Christ is doing as He sits at the right hand of the Father is making intercession for us. Romans 8:34 says, “Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Here we see that Christ is praying for us as He sits at the right hand of the Father. Hebrews 1:3-4 says, “Who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” Here we see that the angels, authorities and power have all been made subject to Christ.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand all that the death and resurrection of Christ did for each one of us. When we realize that He suffered for us and in our place, it helps us and our children to rejoice when we suffer for Christ. When we realize that His resurrection means that Christ is now making intercession for us, we can help our children understand that we do not have to fear anything on this earth. Instead we can look forward to eternity with Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn more about the suffering of Christ for us.

12.

Learning to Live and Suffer for Christ

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what the suffering and death of Christ means for each one of us as Christians. We saw that because of His suffering for us that we can count it a privilege when we suffer for the sake of Christ. We are going to see that Peter went on to explain what it means to learn to live for Christ and do the will of God on this earth. That will cause those who are not yet Christians to speak evil of us because they want to continue to live to satisfy their evil desires. As a result, we are to be prepared to suffer for Christ.

In I Peter 4:1-2 we read, “Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.” In our last topic we were reminded that Christ suffered for us in the flesh. We saw why Christ was willing to suffer for us. Based on what He did for us, we see the way that we are called to respond. The word that is translated “arm” comes from the word that means to take weapons such as are used for warfare. Another form of this word is used in II Corinthians 10:4-5 where we read, “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.” Here we see that we arm ourselves with the weapons of God for spiritual conflict.

However, that conflict is not like a physical conflict. Instead we see that we are to arm ourselves with the same mind. The word that is translated “mind” means the same thinking, understanding or attitude that Christ had. The word that is translated mind is only used one other place in the New Testament. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” In this verse the word is translated intents. This reminds us that we are to arm ourselves with the same mind or attitude that Christ had as He suffered and died for our sins. This verse also shows us that our weapon is the Word of God.

The greatest way that we could suffer would be to be put to death for our faith in Christ. That was the way that Christ suffered for us. However, to suffer in that way also means that we have ceased from sin because we will be free from sin for all eternity. Here we are reminded that even to die for Christ only means that we will never sin again. When we arm ourselves with this understanding, it will also be our desire to live a different life. Our goal will be to enjoy the freedom that we have in Christ. In order to enjoy that freedom, we live with a new purpose in life. Instead of living to satisfy the lusts of the flesh of men, we will live to do the will of God. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” This verse says that the will of God is to serve one another through love. It is through doing the will of God that we experience what true freedom is in our lives.

We are reminded of what our lives were like before we placed our faith in Christ. In I Peter 4:3 we read, “For we *have spent* enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles--when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.” Most of the people to whom Peter was writing probably became Christians as adults. As such individuals looked back at their lives before they came to Christ; they were glad that they no longer had to live as they had lived before they knew Christ.

Peter went on to describe what life was like before those people became Christians. The word that is translated “lewdness” means outrageous and shameless participation in sensual sin. The word that is translated “lusts” means a desire for what is forbidden. These activities are often accompanied by drunkenness. The word translated “revelries” has the thought of drinking and partying late into the night with the sins that go along with such wild parties. Abominable idolatries speak about all of the sins that go along with idol worship. Here we see that Peter understood the background of many of those who had become Christians and also gives a description of the lives of many people today who are not yet Christians. Romans 6:21 says, “What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death.” Here we see that the things we did before we came to Christ now make us ashamed.

We also see how former companions in sinful living react when people become Christians and Christ changes their lives. I Peter 4:4-6 says, “In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with *them* in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of *you*. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” When people are living to satisfy their sinful lusts, they think people are strange when their lives are changed by Christ.

The word that is translated “strange” means to be surprised, astonished or shocked by one whose life is changed. I Peter 4:12-13 says, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” Instead of being shocked or surprised when we suffer for Christ, we are to rejoice for the opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ.

In contrast, the people who are not Christians are shocked and surprised when we do not join them in their sinful living especially since we were formerly a part of those who lived that lifestyle. They cannot understand why we do not want to continue joining them in their sinful living. The word that is translated “dissipation” means a life devoted to sinful living. One of the two other places this word is used in the New Testament is Ephesians 5:18 where we read, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” Here we see that instead of joining others in their sinful living that we are to be filled with the Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit we will speak and live boldly for Christ. This is the part that people that are not Christians cannot understand as they observe our lives. As a result, that is why they speak evil of us.

However, the day will come when they will have to give an account to God for the lives that they have lived if they do not repent and place their faith in Christ. Revelation 20:12-13 says, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.” Each person that has failed to repent and place his or her faith in Christ will give an account at this final judgment. Those who have not repented will not have their names in the Book of Life. Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Here we see that each of those persons will experience eternal judgment in the lake of fire.

In contrast, those who had the Gospel preached to them and placed their faith in Christ will have a very different future. Even though Christians have experienced physical death like those who have rejected Christ, for the Christians it is only physical death. That physical death is also the result of sin. Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned--.” However, each Christian has received spiritual life. Christ told Nicodemus in John 3:5-7, “Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” Here we see that spiritual birth is necessary.

Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” There is a great reward for all those who have received spiritual life. Ephesians 2:4-7 says, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Throughout eternity we will experience the exceeding riches that Christ has provided for us by His kindness.

That eternal reward is described in Hebrews 12:22-24 where we read, “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.” As we help our physical and spiritual children understand the reward that we have because we have placed our faith in Christ, any suffering that we experience on this earth will seem like nothing. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to live and suffer for Christ.

13.

Learning to Serve in the Strength of Christ

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children be prepared to suffer for their faith in Christ. Those who were their partners in sin before they became Christians will not understand why they have changed and may turn against them. The changed behavior of a Christian will draw some of those friends to Christ. However, others may reject and even turn against those who become Christians. As a result, we want to help our children be prepared to suffer if God allows them to suffer. In our topic today we are going to see that we want to help our children learn to serve in the strength that Christ provides.

In I Peter 4:8 we read, “But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.” The word that is translated “end” means the completion or the time when life as it presently exists will cease. Romans 6:21-22 says, “What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.” Here we see that the completion of life without Christ results in eternal death while the completion of life with Christ means that everlasting life is the result.

As Christians, we are reminded that at the completion of all things for all people is at hand. Earlier in I Peter 2:12 Peter wrote, “Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” The day of visitation is the time when God will judge both the good and the evil. The good will be judged to see what rewards they will receive and the evil be judged for their sins and will receive eternal judgment. Since this verse says that day is at hand we need to be prepared for the coming of Christ at any moment. I Corinthians 15:52 says, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” That coming is going to be so sudden that we need to be prepared for Christ to return to take us to heaven at all times.

As a result, we are to be serious and watchful in our prayers. The word that is translated “be serious” means to exercise self control or to think soberly. The word translated “be watchful” means to be watchful or sober. I Thessalonians 5:6-8 uses this word twice and translates this word sober. Those verses say, “Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation.” Here we see that if we are prepared for Christ to come at any moment that it will guide us both in our prayer life and in our actions as we serve the Lord.

I Peter 4:8-9 describes how we will act toward one another as Christians if we expect Christ to come at any moment. Those verses say, “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” *Be* hospitable to one another without grumbling.” The word that is translated “fervent” was used to describe a runner who was giving every last bit of energy to win a race. The only other place where that word is used in

the New Testament is in Acts 12:5 where we read, “Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.” Here we see that they were in constant prayer for Peter. We are to have the same kind of love for one another.

The reason why we are to have that kind of love for one another is also described. Proverbs 10:12 says, “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.” Here we see that Peter quoted the last half of this verse. When we have a fervent love for one another as Christians, we will be quick to forgive when someone sins against us. James also quoted this verse when he said in James 5:19-20, “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” Here we see that we are to show that same love to those who are not Christians because Christ can use the love that we demonstrate to draw others to Himself.

We also see that we are to be hospitable to one another. The word that is translated “hospitable” comes from two words that mean to love and strangers so the word means to show love to strangers. For the first three hundred years in the history of the church, most of the churches met in homes. In Romans 16:5 Paul sent greetings to the church that met in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, “Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.” As a result, the other two places where this word is used are in the list of qualifications for elders in I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8. Around the world many churches still meet in homes. However, here we see that all Christians are to learn to show hospitality. We want to be an example and help our children learn to be an example of hospitality.

In I Peter 4:10-11 we read, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Here we are reminded that every Christian has received a spiritual gift or combination of gifts. Some of those gifts are speaking gifts and others are serving gifts. Peter wanted every Christian to learn to use his or her gift properly. The word that is translated “minister” means to serve others or to be a servant. As Christians our spiritual gifts are given to us to serve others. We are to be good stewards (managers) of these various gifts that are the result of the grace of God.

The word that is translated “oracles” means the very words or utterances of God. Hebrews 5:12 says, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” We see that Hebrews was written to immature Christians who needed to be retaught the first principles of the very words of God. If we as Christians have a speaking gift, we are to speak the very Word of God instead of just sharing our own ideas or opinions. Our words and opinions have no power. In contrast, Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” When we speak the Word of God instead of our own opinions, the Lord will speak through His Word with power.

If we have a serving gift, we are to exercise a serving gift with the ability that God supplies. The word that is translated “ability” means strength, power or might. In Ephesians 6:10 we read, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” In this verse the word is translated might. As a result, we are to be strong in the Lord by depending on His might instead of our own strength. As Paul prayed for the people of Ephesus in Ephesians 1:19, in part of his prayer he prayed, “And what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.” Here the word is translated mighty so Paul prayed that Christians would serve in His mighty power instead of their own strength.

We are also reminded that God is the One who supplies that ability just as He is the One who reminds us to speak the Word of God instead of our own words or opinions. The word that is translated “supplies” means to supply or furnish abundantly. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in II Corinthians 9:10 where we read, “Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have *sown* and increase the fruits of your righteousness.” Here we see that God multiplies the seed that we have sown to increase the fruits of our righteousness. As we minister in the strength that He supplies, the Lord will multiply the results.

Whether we speak the Word of God or serve in the strength that the Lord supplies instead of our own strength, we see that our ministry causes God to be glorified in all things. The word that is translated “may be glorified” means to make glorious or do honor to. I Peter 4:16 says, “Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.” Here we see that the Lord gives us the opportunity to bring glory to Him as we are obedient to Him.

This glory is brought to the Father through Christ. Romans 15:5-6 says, “Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Because of the obedience of Christ to do the will of the Father we see that as Christ works in our lives with the result that we are like-minded in our relationship with one another that this brings glory to the Father. This glory that is brought to the Father belongs to Him and will be brought to Him throughout all eternity as we serve to bring glory to God.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to speak the very Word of God and serve in the strength that God supplies, the Lord will work through their lives in a mighty way. Their service for the Lord will also bring glory to the Father because they are serving in His strength and not their own as we and they carry out the work of the Lord in the world. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to serve in the strength that the Lord supplies to their lives.

14.

Learning to Suffer According to the Will of God

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to serve in the strength that the Lord supplies. We saw that will happen as those who have speaking gifts speak the very Word of God instead of speaking their own ideas or opinions. We saw that those who have serving gifts will be effective as they learn to serve in the strength that the Lord supplies instead of trying to serve in their own strength. By doing those things they will bring glory to God through Christ. In this topic we see that we want to help our children learn to suffer according to the will of God.

In I Peter 4:12-13 we read, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” Peter reminded the Christians again that he had a great love for them. Peter understood that the Christians in his day were going to experience great suffering as this book was written close to the time that the Roman emperor burned Rome. To cover his own evil the emperor blamed the Christians for burning Rome. As a result, Peter knew that Christians would need real encouragement as they suffered.

The word that is translated “fiery trial” means burning to test metals or trials that test our character. In this verse it is talking about the difficult trials that Christians go through that test or refine our character. The word that is translated “happened” means something that God allows to happen. In Acts 20:19 Paul said, “Serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews.” Here we see that Paul talked that the things that happened to him because of the plotting of the Jews. God allowed those things to happen in the life of Paul so that the Gospel could be spread to many places. In the same way God allows trials in our own lives to test or refine our character and to allow the Gospel to spread to others.

The word “partake” means to be a partner or a sharer. As a result, Peter encouraged the Christians to rejoice because they were given the opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ. Christ suffered for doing the things that were right. In the same way when we suffer for Christ we are suffering for doing the things that are right and rejoice for the privilege of suffering for Christ. Acts 5:41 says, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” The apostles had been beaten for speaking about Christ and they rejoiced for the privilege of suffering for Christ. We can also rejoice when we suffer for Christ.

However, in the future there will be a time of even greater rejoicing. The glory of Christ will be revealed when He comes back to take us to heaven. At that time we read that we will be glad with exceeding joy. Peter shared this same thought when he said in I Peter 1:6-8, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes,

though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.” The word that is translated exceeding joy here is translated greatly rejoice and rejoice.

We go on to see the viewpoint of God when we suffer for Christ. I Peter 4:14 says, “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.” The word that is translated “you are reproached” means to be treated evilly and to be spoken against for the name of Christ. Peter wrote that when such things happen that we are blessed. The word that is translated blessed is used nine times in Matthew 5:3-11. Matthew 5:10-11 says, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.” We can look forward to blessing from the Lord when we are spoken against and persecuted for Christ.

At the very time that we are going through such suffering we see that God promises that the Spirit of glory and of God will rest upon us. Paul said in II Corinthians 12:9-10, “And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” In our very times of weakness we experience the strength of Christ working in our lives.

Peter went on to tell the Christians in I Peter 4:15-17, “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” Here we see that Peter first reminded the Christians in his day that there are four things that we are to avoid so that we do not suffer for those things. The first three are a murderer, a thief or an evildoer. Such things will certainly bring judgment.

However, the fourth thing is something that Christians sometimes do. The word that is translated “a busybody in other people’s matters” means a person who meddles in the affairs of others or one who takes the supervision of affairs pertaining to others. In I Thessalonians 4:11-12 we read, “That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and *that* you may lack nothing.” Sometimes a Christian will take it upon himself or herself to tell others what they should do and not do including the actions of people that are not Christians. Here we see that we are to pay attention to our own actions and not try to tell others what they should or should not do. When we try to intrude into the business of others, especially non-Christians, they may turn against us and make us suffer for intruding into their business.

In contrast, if we suffer for our godly life and testimony as a Christian, we do not need to be ashamed. Instead of feeling shame when we suffer for being a Christian, we are to glorify God.

We are to be thankful for the opportunity that the Lord has given us to be an example of godly love to the world around us. 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 do good both to Christians and to those who are not yet Christians because such actions bring glory to God.

We see that judgment is to begin with those who are Christians and a part of the house of God. I Corinthians 11:28-32 says, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." Here we see that as Christians we are to examine ourselves. If we fail to examine ourselves, we see that we will be disciplined by the Lord. However, we will not be condemned with the world because Romans 8:1 says, "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Since Christ will discipline us if we fail to examine ourselves, we are reminded that the judgment of those who are not Christians and who do not obey the Gospel will be much worse.

In I Peter 4:18-19 we read, "Now 'If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?'" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls *to Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator." Here we are given a quote from Proverbs 11:31 which says, "If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, How much more the ungodly and the sinner." Here we see that those who are righteous (those who have placed their faith in Christ) will receive their discipline on the earth. However, those who do not turn to the Lord while they are alive on this earth will have their judgment in the future. Their judgment will be eternal because Revelation 20:15 says, "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." That is why we are to leave all judgment to the Lord.

In contrast, there is a very different future for those who suffer according to the will of God. Those who suffer according to the will of God are those who have followed the example of Christ and are suffering from those who are not Christians because of our faith in Christ. We see that we can commit our souls to Him. The word that is translated "commit" is a banking term and means to make a deposit or to entrust something to another person. When we choose to do those things that are pleasing to God we are entrusting our lives to God and can look to Him for reward. We know that we can look to Him for reward because He is the One that created us and gave us spiritual life.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn what it means to suffer according to the will of God, we are preparing them for any suffering that they may face in their lives. We are able to show them how to rejoice in such suffering as we experience joy during those times that we suffer for Christ. That makes it possible for them to be able to learn from us because of our example. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to suffer according to the will of God.

15.

Learning How to both Lead and Serve

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to suffer according to the will of God. To suffer according to the will of God means that we learn to suffer for being faithful and obedient to God. It does not mean that we suffer because of our own sins. In our topic today we are going to see how we help our children learn to both lead and serve. Sometimes Christians drive others instead of lead them because such Christians have no idea what it means to lead and at the same time serve.

In I Peter 5:1 Peter wrote, “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed.” In the next few verses we see that Peter is going to give instructions to those who are the leaders in the local churches. These leaders are called elders in verse one and overseers in verse two. In Titus 1:5 leaders are called elders and in Titus 1:7 the same people are called bishops. As a result, we see that all three titles: elders, overseers and bishops are used for leaders in the local church.

Peter both exhorts (beseches) and calls himself a fellow elder. Here we see that Peter does not claim that he has higher authority than any other elder. Instead he makes a request as a fellow elder. This is an important thing to notice because Christ said in Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Christ is the One who has authority over all flesh. Christ spoke of the authority the Father had given Him in John 17:2 as He prayed to the Father, “As You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.” We want our children and other people to understand that we are the bondservants of Christ and He is the One with all authority.

Even though both Peter and Paul were apostles they recognized that they served under the authority of Christ. Paul said in II Thessalonians 3:8-9, “Nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.” Here we see that Paul chose to lead by example instead of leading by authority. Peter says here that he is a fellow elder and then in verse three he reminds the other elders that as elders they are also to lead by example just as he was doing.

Peter also wrote as a witness of the sufferings of Christ. Since Peter was writing to the Christians that were suffering, he reminded them again that Christ had suffered for them. Peter understood the greatness of the sufferings that Christ went through for us. Since Peter was a witness of those sufferings, He heard when Christ cried in Matthew 27:46, “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” As a result, Peter recognized that our sufferings are small compared to those of Christ.

However, Peter also had a future perspective because he wrote as one who would be a partaker of the glory that would be revealed in the future. Just as Peter had earlier reminded those to whom he was writing of that glory, we see here that he reminded them again. In I Peter 1:6-9 he wrote, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of *your* souls." Peter wrote to the fellow elders as one who had a joy that was inexpressible.

Peter went on to say in I Peter 5:2-4, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." Here we see that the first responsibility of elders is to shepherd the flock of God. As elders we are to remember that the flock that we lead belongs to God. The word translated "shepherd" means to feed and lead a flock. When Christ restored Peter in John 21 after Peter had denied Christ three times, John 21:16 says, "He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." Christ told Peter he was to lead and feed the sheep of Christ based on his love for Christ.

Paul gave the elders in Ephesus the same instructions when he used this same word in Acts 20:28 where we read, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Here we see that elders are to shepherd the church of God. Christ paid an expensive price to purchase that flock so elders are to lead with love.

The word that is translated "serving as overseers" means to look very carefully after the flock. The only other place this form of the word is used is in Hebrews 12:15 where we read, "Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled." Here we see that the word is translated looking carefully. A shepherd was to look very carefully after each sheep in the flock to make sure that no harm came to any of the sheep. Elders have that same responsibility as they care for the flock of God.

Then we are given three things that elders are to avoid and three things that they are to do instead. First, elders are not to serve by compulsion but willingly. The word translated "compulsion" means because someone forces them to do it. Instead elders are to lead with willingness. Second, elders are not to serve for dishonest gain but eagerly. The word that is translated "dishonest gain" means to be greedy for money. This word is used in both the qualifications for deacons and for elders. I Timothy 3:3 says, "Not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous." Then I Timothy 3:8 says, "Likewise deacons *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money." Spiritual leaders will not lead effectively if they are greedy for money.

Third, elders are not to lead as lords but are to lead by example. The word that is translated “being lords over” means to bring a person under one’s power. This word is only used three other times. In Acts 19:16 it talks about a demon possessed man who overcame the seven sons of Sceva. The other two uses are in Matthew and Mark and both passages have almost the exact same words. Mark 10:42-45 says, “But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”” Here we see that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them.

In contrast godly elders are to lead by example. The word translated “example” means a pattern or example to be imitated. Paul used this same word in Philippians 3:17 where we read, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.” Here the word is translated pattern. Here we see that if we are an elder we are to live a life that will be a pattern for others to follow. Elders who lead in this way can look forward to the crown which is eternal glory when Christ appears.

In I Peter 5:5 we read, “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”” The word translated “likewise” means in the same way. Just as elders are to lead by example, the younger Christians are told to submit to the elders by following their examples. In fact all Christians are to be submissive to one another. Submit and submissive are the same Greek word. In the military, it meant to arrange yourself under your leader. In non-military use it meant a voluntary attitude of cooperating and taking responsibility. As a result, we see that as Christians we are all to lead one another by providing godly examples to follow.

We are also to be clothed with humility. The word that is translated “clothed” meant to put on the clothing of a bondservant. Here we see that as Christians we are to put on humility as our clothing. Philippians 2:3-4 uses this word when it says, “*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.” Here this word is translated lowliness of mind. Peter illustrated that this was also an Old Testament teaching by quoting from Proverbs 3:34 which says, “Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble.” God gives us His grace as we choose to have a humble attitude toward one another.

As we show our physical and spiritual children by our own attitude how to develop a humble attitude, the Lord will use that attitude to help them learn to lead others as the bondservants of Jesus Christ. A driver drives people until they can get out of the way. A leader will lead people as far as he or she has gone. A bondservant will serve others to develop their full potential for Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children as a bondservant of Christ how to both lead and serve with a humble attitude.

16.

Learning to Submit to God and Resist the Devil

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to both lead and serve. We saw that such ministry will be most effective when that ministry is done with an attitude of humility. We also saw that godly leaders are to serve as the bondservants of Christ. We will be effective as we serve other Christians by showing them how to serve the Lord effectively. In our topic today we are going to see what it means to submit to God and also to resist the devil.

In I Peter 5:6-7 we read, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” The word “therefore” means consequently or these things being so. As a result, we need to be reminded of what the previous section says about humbleness. I Peter 5:5 says, “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Here we see that both the younger and the older people are to be submissive to one another. We are also all to be clothed with humility.

As we humble ourselves toward one another, the most important person to humble ourselves before is God. Romans 8:28-29 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Christians often quote verse 28 and forget about verse 29. However, verse 29 tells us that the goal of the Father is to conform us to the image of His Son. In order to help us learn to become more like Christ, the Father allows suffering and difficult situations to come into our lives to help us become more like Christ. That is why we are to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God because a humble attitude accepts the things that God allows in our lives.

When we humble ourselves and accept the things that God allows to happen in our lives, we trust that God will exalt us in His time. The word “exalt” means to lift up. James 4:10 says, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” Here we see that the word is translated “lift up”. Christ spoke a parable in Luke 18 about two men that went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee exalted himself. The tax collector humbled himself. As a result, Christ said in Luke 18:14, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” God will lift us up when we have humbled ourselves and allowed God to work in our lives and through our lives.

The word “care” means anxiety or worry. We are to cast (throw) all of our worries on Christ because Christ cares about us. The disciples were caught in a terrible storm while they were crossing the Sea of Galilee in a little boat. They were afraid that they would sink. Mark 4:38-39 says, “But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him,

"Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm." Here the disciples questioned whether Christ cared for them and Christ showed by His actions that He did care. In the same way we are to trust Christ when we have things that cause us to worry or be anxious.

As we go on, I Peter 5:8-11 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*. To Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." The word that is translated "be sober" means to be watchful or sober. The word translated "be vigilant" means to be cautious or to stay alert. We are to be watchful and alert because the devil is our enemy.

We see that the devil walks around like a roaring lion looking for people to destroy. A key thing to understand is that normally lions travel in groups. When they find an animal to eat, the young lions will go to the far side of the animal and hide in the tall grass. Once the young lions are in place, an old lion that has usually lost most or all of his teeth will rise up on the opposite side and begin to roar. The animal will see and hear the old lion and immediately begin to run away from the old lion. The animal will then run into the young lions that are hiding in the grass and they will kill him and tear him apart. Then the old lion will come and eat with the young lions.

In the same way, the devil tries to destroy Christians by accusing them to God and to others in an effort to discourage the Christians. However, the devil is really like a toothless lion once we become Christians. I John 2:1-2 says, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." Satan is called the accuser of the brethren. Christ is our Advocate or defense attorney. When Satan accuses us to the Father, Christ says that He paid for our sins with His blood and that we accepted the payment. The word "propitiation" means that which satisfies. The Father says, "I am satisfied with the payment. Case dismissed."

That is why we are told to resist Satan and be steadfast in the faith. Ephesians 6:17-18 says, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." Here we see that the Word of God and prayer are our two offensive weapons for resisting Satan. Prayer shows our dependence on God and the Word of God is our weapon to defeat Satan. We are also reminded that the brotherhood (every Christian) experiences these same sufferings in the world because Satan is also trying to destroy them. However, Christ already defeated Satan and so we do not need to be fearful of him when our faith is in Christ.

We are reminded that God is the God of all grace. God has called us to enjoy His eternal glory and has made that eternal glory possible through Christ. Here we see that God allows any

suffering that we experience in our lives to do four things. First, suffering perfects us. The word that is translated “to perfect” means to make us complete or mature. Hebrews 13:20-21 says, “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.” The blood of Christ makes us complete so that we can carry out the will of God on this earth.

Second, suffering establishes us. The word that is translated “establish” means to make stable or to make firm. II Thessalonians 2:16-17 says, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” Here we see that Christ gives us strength so that we can both speak for Him and do good works that are pleasing to Him.

Third, suffering strengthens us. The word that is translated “strengthen” means to make a person strong. Paul prayed for Christians in Ephesians 3:16, “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.” God has given us the Holy Spirit to strengthen us in the inner man. Fourth, suffering settles us. The word that is translated “settle” means to lay the foundation. Ephesians 3:17 goes on to say, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love.” The word that is translated settle in I Peter is translated grounded here. Our faith will be able to stand on a firm foundation because it is on the foundation of Christ and His love.

It is the Lord who has all glory and to whom all dominion will belong forever. God has allowed us to suffer so that we can become more like Christ since we are going to share His eternal inheritance forever. Romans 8:16-17 says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” Here we see that God has chosen to make us His heirs so that we can share in His glory forever. That is why we are thankful for the opportunity to submit to God.

In I Peter 5:12-14 we read, “By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand. She who is in Babylon, elect together with *you*, greets you; and *so does* Mark my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.” Here we see that Peter had written this letter to encourage the Christians who were suffering to remember the true grace of God in which they stood. He also sent greetings from Christians who were going through similar suffering in the area where Peter wrote this letter.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn what God is working to accomplish in their lives through suffering, we help them to realize why God will work greatly in their lives as they learn to submit to Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children what it means to submit to God.