

17. Learning How Love Defeats Fear

In our last topic, we saw that one of our goals, as Christians, should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to abide in the love of God. We saw that God wants them to grow so that their lives develop a mature godly love. This will help them learn how to equip others to abide in the love of God. Today, we will focus on how we help our children learn to abide in the love of God and defeat the fear that is in their lives.

In some of our past topics, we have focused on the fact that we are to help our children learn to pray for boldness to speak the Word of God to those who are not Christians. However, that is not the only area of life where the Lord wants us to help them develop boldness. In 1 John 4:17, we read, “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” Here, we see that it is not the desire of the Lord for Christians to be fearful in their lives, either in the present, or as they look ahead to the Day of Judgment. In this verse, we see that as the love of Christ grows to maturity in our lives, we will be able to look ahead to the Day of Judgment with boldness.

First, we want to help our children understand that the Day of Judgment will be very different for those who have placed their trust in Christ compared to those who have not placed their trust in Christ. The Day of Judgment for those who are not Christians is described in Revelation 20:12-15, where we read, “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. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Those who are not Christians have very good reason to fear the final judgment.

Those who are not Christians will be judged for every sin they have committed when they stand before God on the Day of Judgment. Every sinful thought, word and action they have ever committed in their lives has been recorded. The books that have these records will be opened on the Day of Judgment and every non-Christian will be forced to admit that their lives were filled with sin. Following their judgment, they will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where they will burn forever. All individuals who have not repented of their sin and placed their faith in Christ, and the salvation He provided, have every reason to fear the Day of Judgment.

That is why 2 Corinthians 5:10-11 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.” Since we know the terror that people who reject Christ face, we share the Gospel with others and seek to persuade them to turn from their sin and turn to Christ. They will be judged for every evil deed they have done.

Those of us who have placed our trust in Christ will also stand at the judgment seat of Christ. There, Christ will reward us for what we have done in our service for Him since we became Christians, because, as Christians, all of our sins have been blotted out and Christ has promised that He will remember them no more. As a result, 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 says, “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 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.” Here, we see that our works as Christians will be tested to see what works can be rewarded.

Every work that we have done that has eternal value will be like gold, silver or precious stones. Every work that we did for earthly reward will have no value for eternity and will be like wood, hay or straw. The Lord will test all of these works by fire. Those works that have eternal value will be purified by the fire and will have even greater beauty. Those works that only have earthly value will be removed when they are tested by fire. As a result, we will have boldness as we stand before Christ if we have done works that have eternal value, because we will be able to look forward to the rewards we will receive from Christ.

That is why 1 John 4:18-19 tell us, “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.” We want to help our children learn to be led by the love of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” As we help our children take root in Christ and His love, they will lose their fear of future judgment because they will become motivated to live for Christ, instead of themselves, and more and more of their works will become works with eternal value.

When Christians are not led by the love of Christ, they remain driven by fear and continue to make it their goal to please people, instead of pleasing the Lord. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 says, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” The Corinthians had been Christians for a period of time. However, most of them had experienced limited growth in their spiritual lives and were still controlled by fear. As a result, their lives were still filled with envy, strife, and divisions, because they were still driven by fear.

That is why we want to help our children grow and mature in the understanding of the love of Christ for them. 1 John 4:19 points out the fact that we help our children learn to respond to the love of Christ, when it says, “We love Him because He first loved us.” This means that as they grow in their understanding of the love of Christ for them, they will also grow in their love for Christ. We also want to show them how to help other new or weak Christians grow and develop a mature love.

Many Christians do not understand how to grow and mature in the love of Christ. Christ demonstrated His love for people by being patient and kind to them even when they rejected Him. 1 John 4:20-21 tells us how we can help our children understand when they are learning to be led by the love of Christ. Those verses say, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.” The evidence of the fact that people have a love for God is shown by the fact that they have learned to love other people. This is what makes it possible for them to follow the example of Christ and be patient and kind, even to those who reject them.

Christ also demonstrated His love for people by His compassion for them. Matthew 9:36-38 says, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” We want to show our children, by our example, to have compassion for all people who do not yet have Christ as their Shepherd. This is the way they learn to show the love of Christ to those who do not yet know Christ.

One of the things that 1 John 4:20 points out is the fact that a person cannot say that he loves God when he hates a brother. The very nature of Christ is love. As a result, Christ gave us His nature at the moment we placed our trust in Him, and it became a part of our nature to love others. That is why all growing Christians will have any previous hatred they had toward others replaced by love as they grow and take root in the love of Christ.

1 John 4:19 says that we love God because He first loved us. Then, 1 John 4:21 says that if we love God, we are commanded to love our brother also. We are able to love our brother as we love God and as we yield our lives to Christ. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that any moment they are yielding to Christ, the love of Christ will flow through their life to the lives of others. As that love flows through our lives and the lives of our children, others will be drawn to Christ if they are not Christians. If they are Christians, that love flowing through their lives will help them to grow in their understanding of the love of Christ.

Christ does not want any Christian to be living in fear. Instead, Christ wants every Christian to learn to take root in His love. In Ephesians 3:17-19, Paul gave us a model of praying that others will take root in the love of Christ that passes all understanding. We also want to pray that our physical and spiritual children will take root in the love of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children move from being driven by fear to being led by the love of Christ.