

SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME

TEXT: LUKE 18:15-17

INTRODUCTION:

1. Luke 18:15 says that when parents were bringing infants to Jesus, so "that He would touch them," His disciples saw it, and rebuked them.
2. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (18:16).
3. This story is also recorded by Matthew and Mark. Mark 10:14 says that when Jesus saw the disciples rebuking the parents who were bringing the children, "He was much displeased."
4. Then in Luke 18:17, our Lord said, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."
5. Our Lord was teaching that child-like faith is necessary for a person to be genuinely saved. He was talking about child-likeness, not childishness.
6. If childishness were a requirement for salvation, then we would be in the midst of a great revival!

I. CHILDREN SHOULD BE INTRODUCED TO CHRIST AT AN EARLY AGE

1. These parents had the right idea - they brought their children to Christ (18:15). These verses have absolutely nothing to do with infant baptism, a custom that is contrary to Scripture.
2. When Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached against "baptismal regeneration," he received letters objecting to his stand, and oftentimes these critics would quote this text, Luke 18:15, 16.

3. At that time, the majority of people in England were Anglican and they sprinkled babies. While not all of them held to baptismal regeneration, most of them did.
4. In response to these critics, Spurgeon preached a message entitled, "Children Brought to Christ, and Not to the Font."
5. These verses teach us the importance of bringing children to Christ. Sadly, many parents do not have their priorities right, and therefore their children are not being brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
6. Many years ago (1921), Charles Erdman wrote, "At this present time there are many things which tend to keep parents from bringing their children to the Master: custom and carelessness and indifference and fear and diffidence; even friends conspire to prevent and rebuke those who really long to see their children brought into a sanctifying relationship to the Lord. No problem of today is more important than the removal of such barriers and obstacles. The Christian nurture of children is the supreme need of the times" (*Luke*).
7. Erdman wrote that nearly 100 years ago. Consider all of the hindrances and obstacles today - Little League and other sporting events, Boy Scouts, public school programs, music recitals, visiting friends and relatives, etc.
8. Erdman said, "No work is more Christ-like and none more blessed than the care of these little ones whom our Lord so truly loves. We are the real servants of our Master only as we feel the appeal of childhood and as we seek to supply to children their physical and mental and spiritual needs" (*Luke*).
9. It was a great blessing that night at Long Beach a few weeks ago when several of our young people gave testimonies, and told how they were saved in Sunday School and Children's Church and at a Friday night youth meeting, etc.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF WINNING CHILDREN TO CHRIST (18:16).

1. The apostle Paul told young Timothy, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 3:15).
2. Children should be taught the Word of God as soon as they're born. Psalm 34:11 says, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD."
3. Spurgeon was one of the greatest preachers of all time. He said, "It would not be easy for some of us to recall the hour when we first heard the name of Jesus. In very infancy that sweet sound was as familiar to our ear as the hush of lullaby. Our earliest recollections are associated with the house of God, the family altar, the Holy Bible, the sacred song, and the fervent prayer."
4. An English newspaperman named Robert Raikes said, "The world marches forth on the feet of little children." Robert Raikes was concerned about prison reform, and he observed that many poor children wound up in prison.
5. Robert Raikes believed very strongly that if one wanted to change society for the better, and ultimately decrease the prison population, one must reach the children.
6. Have you ever heard of Robert Raikes? He started the Sunday School movement in England in July of 1780.
7. Mr. Raikes put the word out through his newspaper. Right away he and his teachers were able to enroll about 100 children, ranging in age from five to fourteen years old.
8. Soon the Sunday School movement spread all over England and then in America. "The world marches forth on the feet of little children."
9. Have you ever heard of the WWI flying ace Eddie Rickenbacker? By the time WWII started he was working as a civilian and was assisting the war effort in various ways.
10. In October 20, 1942, he was carrying a secret message from the Secretary of Defense to General Douglas MacArthur, who at that time was the commander of the Southwest Pacific Theatre.

11. The plane carrying Eddie Rickenbacker and his crewmates crashed out at sea. The men were stranded out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean in little life rafts for 23 days with no food, and surrounded by sharks.
12. What did they do for 23 days? Eddie Rickenbacker remembered many hymns from his early childhood in Sunday School.
13. Another crew member had a Bible. They prayed, sang hymns, and read the Bible. They had prayer meetings and asked God to rescue them.
14. The U.S. Air Force, unable to find them, intended to abandon the lost crew after searching unsuccessfully for more than two weeks, but Rickenbacker's wife convinced them to extend the search another week. Meanwhile, the newspapers reported that Eddie Rickenbacker had died.
15. Navy pilots rescued the surviving members of the crew, suffering from exposure, dehydration, and starvation, on November 13, 1942.
16. One serviceman had died and was buried at sea. Eddie Rickenbacker completed his assignment and delivered the secret message to General MacArthur. No one ever made the message public.
17. According to Eddie Rickenbacker, each person on the rafts got saved. The co-pilot, Second Lieutenant James C. Whittaker, had been an atheist, and at first he resented the (mandatory) prayer meetings.
18. But before long he repented and trusted Christ as his Saviour. When he was picked up on a tiny island out in the South Pacific, he told his rescuers, "It was my newfound faith in God that sustained me. Of this I am sure."
19. Whittaker later wrote a book about the ordeal entitled, *We Thought We Heard the Angels Sing*.
20. Let's win more children to Christ. That child could grow up to be another Eddie Rickenbacker or another Timothy.

III. CHILD-LIKE FAITH IS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

1. Child-like faith is necessary for genuine conversion because children are normally characterized by simplicity, dependence, trustfulness, and honesty, and these are traits necessary for genuine conversion.
2. The Psalmist said, "LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child" (Psalm 131:1, 2).
3. Sinners are often very haughty, but children are not haughty. So our Lord says child-like faith is necessary for genuine conversion.
4. Sunday School teachers and Vacation Bible School teachers have noticed how easy it is to talk to children about the Lord. And yet oftentimes it can be very difficult to talk to some adults!
5. Children are known for their simplicity. Salvation is not complicated (although some people try and make it complicated).
7. Children are known for their dependence - a child is dependent on adults to feed them, to take care of them, to teach them, etc.
8. Likewise, when a person is ready for salvation, he or she must realize that they are totally dependent upon God for everything.
9. Just as a small child could not expect to get in a car and drive to California, sinners must understand and admit they can never get to heaven on their own.
10. I remember the time I spoke to two JW ladies who were sitting on the bench in front of our building. One of them scoffed at me: "Where is heaven? Where is the devil? Where is hell?"
11. I have never seen little children scoff at the Bible like that.
12. Another child-like characteristic is trustfulness - a child trusts his parents implicitly. Likewise, we need to trust the Lord if we expect to get to heaven.
13. Statistics have demonstrated that the vast majority of born-again Christians were converted in their youth. That is why we have a Sunday School, Children's Church, VBS, a youth ministry, etc.

14. We need to reach young people before the devil gets them and ruins them. Oftentimes it is too late by the time they become teenagers.
15. One teenage girl stopped coming to our Sunday services and Friday night meetings. She was shot in the head by her boyfriend on Jamaica Avenue in Queens.
16. One teenage boy scoffed at me when I spoke to him about salvation. He's in prison now. He murdered his parents.
17. We need to reach young people before the devil gets them and ruins them. Oftentimes teenagers - even in good churches - are very cold and very worldly. Some parents need to wake up!
18. The great evangelist, D.L. Moody, came home from a meeting one night and his wife asked him, "How many were saved tonight?" He replied: "Two and a half." She said, "Oh, you mean two adults and one child." He answered her, "No. I mean two children and one adult. The adult has only a half a life left to live for God but the children have their whole lives ahead of them."
19. Young people: you have your whole lives ahead of you. Do not waste precious time. Start serving the Lord right now.
20. Ecclesiastes 12:1 says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."
21. Back in the early 19th century, a pastor of a church in Scotland was discouraged and ready to resign. The deacons asked him why. He replied: "I only saw one person get saved the entire year and that was little Bobby Moffat."
22. That same Robert Moffat grew up and became a great missionary to Africa, and the father-in-law to the famous missionary and explorer David Livingston.

CONCLUSION:

1. Somebody went up to a farmer one time and said, "How do you get such beautiful sheep?" And he replied, "By taking care of the lambs."
2. After our Lord rose from the dead, He shewed himself to the disciples when they were fishing in the sea of Galilee (called "Sea of Tiberias" in John 21:1).
3. And when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:15).
4. Then Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs" (21:15), that is, young sheep.
5. Then He said to him again the second time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (21:16).
6. And then our Lord said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."
7. Jesus saith unto him, "Feed my sheep" (21:17).
8. People have wondered why our Lord said, "Feed my lambs...Feed my sheep.Feed my sheep."
9. Just as they have speculated over the different Greek words for "love" (21:15, 16, 17 - *agapaō*twice, then *phileo*).
10. But "lambs" need to be fed first. Otherwise they might never become healthy sheep.