

Sunday March 24th sermon: "Only Little Children Can Be Saved! The God of All Comforts (Pt 50)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,
by John Pittman Hey

Matthew 18:1-14; Mark 10:13-27

Paul makes clear in Galatians how we become sons of God: by being joined to Christ by faith, baptized into Christ by the Holy Ghost, put into union with Christ.

There has always been an infinite love between God the Father and Christ the Son, as equal persons of the Godhead, loving and delighting in each other. Being in Christ, we now partake of that eternal and infinite love between Father and Son!

Our Lord Jesus was always a Son -- holy, just, perfect, beloved and in His humanity, obedient to His Father.

We were none of those things, we were not natural sons of God. But Christ has perfected us before God, and we are brought into the family of God. We are not perfect in ourselves, but perfect in Christ.

By this great salvation, we have all been made sons of God, having been given the Holy Spirit of adoption as sons, whereby we cry, Abba Father! God has convinced us we are His sons by giving us the Spirit of His Son, knitting us together with Christ and with our Father in a miraculous way, that cannot be compared with the relationship of earthly fathers and their adopted sons.

The disciples asked Christ, who will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? They were always jockeying for the best positions, sometimes to the point of embarrassment!

They did this because they viewed the kingdom in terms of earthly kingdoms, where there were positions of power and prestige close to the king. How do we get into those slots in the kingdom of heaven?

Jesus commences to disabuse them of this false view. He presents to them a little child, and tells them that unless they be converted, and become as little children, they could not enter into the kingdom!

But the disciples had prevented little children from coming to Jesus, and had been rebuked by the Savior for doing so.

They looked on little children as a burden and hindrance to the work of the kingdom, because they still considered the kingdom an earthly one.

But Jesus informed them that "of such little children is the kingdom of God!" Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom as a little child, shall not enter therein.

Some people falsely believe that Christ is teaching that all little children go to heaven, but this view completely misses Christ's meaning!

Christ is asserting that all who would enter the kingdom must come to Him! All must trust in Jesus! Christ makes it clear, that God's jealousy and protection is for those little children who believe in Jesus!

All must come to Christ as little children. This does not mean that older people must be literally converted back to small children physically.

Rather, Jesus is using physical little children as a picture of the spiritual "little children" who will make up the kingdom of God.

These characteristics include their weakness, defenselessness, their inconsiderable worth to the world, their complete dependence upon others for food and shelter, their simple trust in those kind people that they know, their lack of pretense or power or money.

In fact, no one can enter into the kingdom of God unless the Holy Ghost has converted that person spiritually into such a little child.

In the text, Christ contrasts the spiritual little children with the rich young ruler. That man was strong, privileged, rich, self-righteous, and lacking of nothing in this life.

Sadly, he was no spiritual little child! He took charge of his own salvation, keeping the law, and trusting in his good works. But when Jesus suggested the man ought to, in effect, strip himself of his own self-sufficiency, and let go of his wealth, that was a transformation that the rich man would not consider.

After all, the whole point of being a rich young ruler is that you never have to rely on anybody else, you are all grown up and able to take care of yourself.

Thus, the rich young ruler was the antithesis of both a physical little child, and of a spiritual little child at the same time!

Those who misconstrue Christ's use of this metaphor of little children, make the same mistake as Nicodemus, who thought that to be "born again" referred to a recapitulation of physical child birth.

But Christ made it clear: you must be born again by the power of the Holy Ghost! It is a spiritual birth as a small child, not physical youth, that is required in order to enter the kingdom of God!

Like physical birth, spiritual birth is not something we can initiate or control. The first is by a natural process outside the will or mind of the child. The second is an impartation of spiritual life by the Holy Ghost, outside the will or mind of the sinner.

Without such spiritual life being given, nobody can trust Christ like a little child, nobody can come to Christ in meekness like a child, or in total reliance upon the strong Savior.

To be converted and become like a little child unto salvation, does not mean to be made like a little physical child. Rather, it means to be born by the Spirit as a child of God, with simple faith in Jesus, without cynicism, without self-righteousness or self-reliance, as powerless to save oneself, as feeding only on Christ the Bread of Life sent from heaven!

When Jesus states that it is not the will of the Father that one of these little ones who trust in Him should perish, He is speaking, not of physical little children, but of all God's children who trust in Jesus, whether they be physically young or old.

Christ is speaking of us, we who have trusted in Him, when the Holy Ghost raised us up spiritually from the dead!

Christ ties this whole discourse up near the end, when He refers to His own as "children." It is the spiritual children of God that are the treasured ones who will not and cannot be lost from the power of Christ!

Thus, being made children of God is not merely a benefit God gives to those who trust in Christ. It is, rather, the condition to which we must be converted by the Holy Ghost in order to trust in Christ and be saved by Him.

The rich young ruler recoiled from this sort of conversion, and he certainly could not convert himself spiritually into a little child to trust in Jesus.

What a comfort God has bestowed upon us, to make us His children, to be given that child-like faith and trust to come to Christ to be saved!