

LESSON 9



EXCEPT YE BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN

Scripture Texts: Matthew 18:2-4; Isaiah 26:4; Luke 11:34; Philippians 4:8; 1 Corinthians 5:8, 14:20; Titus 1:15; James 3:17; 1 Peter 5:5

The first glance at the title of today's lesson might cause it to appear that saints are weaklings. But we shall find that to become childlike, trusting, and submissive to our Heavenly Father does not make us easy prey to unfair imposition.

When children of God submit to God and put their trust in Him, they find great protection from the wicked schemes of the enemy. We need never fear what God leads us into. In today's lesson we learn what the expression "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" means.

MEMORY VERSE: *Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 18:3

Necessity of Childlikeness

We read in Matthew 18:2-4 of being converted and becoming as little children. We must be changed because we are self-willed, self-dependent, and stiff-necked. There are many descriptive traits of a child—honest, trusting, dependent, yielding, tender, openhearted, receptive, pure, etc. But those who know children might say that none quite so adequately defines the child nature as Jesus' words—as a little child. What this nature is, God wants us to be.

The Kingdom of Heaven does not open to the proud, the self-assertive, or the heart closed by sin. These must be repented of. One must humble himself.

How is a little child humble? Does he protest his unworthiness? Or resent the fact that he is beneath others? He humbly depends on another for his every need. He is open, frank, and yielding; looking to higher authority, obedient to it. Repentance breeds this childlike attitude in one. Without it one cannot be saved (Luke 18:17).

The refreshing change of the newly saved is due to the child nature springing fresh in their hearts like new growth on a plant. They are hopeful, receptive, openly honest, eager, hungry for new light and new duties. This should continue and does according to how close and obedient one keeps to the Lord.

Some Childlike Qualities We Need

TRUST (Isaiah 26:4): Trust in the Lord, not self. The world urges one to have faith in oneself. Faith in oneself cannot reach far enough. In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Trust Him as a little child trusts his parent. Rest in Him. When a parent puts a child on a table and tells him to jump, his faith in his parent just naturally causes him to jump, trusting that his parent will catch him.

SINGLE EYE (Luke 11:34): The straight forward, steady look, singleness of purpose. A shifting eye casts about

for an excuse, a change, for possible advantage over one. The single eye is settled, steadfast. It looks to Jesus and deals in truth. Truth is light.

SINCERITY, TRUTH (1 Corinthians 5:8): To have the right to partake of the Lord's Supper, one's inward spiritual state must be in accordance with the symbolic meaning of the supper. In the heart must be sincerity and truth unmixed with malice and wickedness.

NO MALICE (1 Corinthians 14:20): In malice be ye children, in other words be ignorant of it. There is a saying, "Children and fools tell the truth." Duplicity, hypocrisy, and sly scheming have not yet entered them. They believe what they hear and speak to be believed.

GOOD THOUGHTS (Philippians 4:8): "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Thought is the root of action and character. Wrong thoughts are as hidden cancer that will break out in corruption and sin. Pure thoughts blossom in righteousness. Think of the things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtue, and praise. When evil thrusts itself before us, let thoughts of it keep pure, free of the guilt. This is done when we lean upon the Holy Spirit.

PURITY (Titus 1:15): A pure heart sees things in a pure way. As mud thrown into a spring cannot contaminate it but is quickly washed away, so is impurity when thrust at a pure heart. A well of water is there springing up (John 4:14). It refuses what is contrary to it.

GENTLENESS, EASILY ENTREATED (James 3:17): Could this describe a little child? A saint is easily touched, easy to talk to, and has sympathy for others. The love of God in the heart listens, feels, and is ready to consider a plea for help. A saint can be inconvenienced and not feel injured.

SUBJECTION, HUMILITY (1 Peter 5:5): All of you be subject. Saved individuals are not bossy, demanding, proud, or control-seeking. They are submissive, yielding, cooperative, humble, self-forgetful, and in honor they prefer one another. For a pattern look at Jesus, the King of kings. He was meek and lowly. He came to minister.

The child nature is planted in the heart with salvation. We must let it grow. Feed, cultivate, and develop it, refusing temptations to act otherwise. The Christian life is repression of self and expression of Christ. Why does Christ esteem singleness of eye and singleness of heart so highly?

Jesus set a little child before us as a sample of that in which He delights. Christ said to become as that little child; the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Should not what is precious to Him be held precious by us?

He went on to show the dreadful end of those who wrong children. Discuss some of the ways children are being wronged and led astray in our land. Read Matthew 18:6.

JUST A THOUGHT

"No nation has ever fallen from without until it has corrupted from within." —C. W. Burpo

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