

-1Title: Children

Intro:

Psalm 127:3

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward.

Why then have they been forced in to hard labor? Why have they been sold as slaves of almost every imaginable work? Why have they been kidnapped and drugged into being child soldiers in parts of Africa? Why have they been abandoned, rejected, and even persecuted unto death, that they are the most persecuted people in the world to day and nobody hears them? We are talking about children. What we see as a blessing, most of the world sees a burden. This is one of the greatest and darkest spots on the history of humanity on how mankind has treated them. Today I want to show us the importance of children in the eyes of Jesus Christ and God the Father and the short fall of man in this area.

To start us off I want to read a section from Pastor Phil's harmony of the gospels, "The Gospel Of The Messiah". In this part he combines the accounts from each book of the gospels into one seamless reading and this will give us an introduction as to how Jesus taught the disciples the importance of children and the value they have in the eyes of our Creator.

The title of the section: 4. Several Disciple's Desire To Be Great

3Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. 4And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, **What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?** But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. 5And 6Jesus, 7perceiving the thought of their heart, 8sat down, and called the twelve. 9At the same time came the disciples unto 10 saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 11And [he] saith unto them, **If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.**

12And Jesus called a little child unto him, 13And he 14took a child, 15and set him 16by him, 17in the midst of them: 18and 19when he had taken him in his arms, he

20said 21unto them,

For starters isn't this the problem of mankind in the world, past and present, and probably future? Who is the greatest? Who has the better truck, bigger boat, better house, bigger bank account? Even the disciples were not immune in comparing themselves one to another about who would be greatest in heaven. With selfish remarks they disputed 'I think He likes me more than you, o-yah He picked me before He picked you.' Even the disciples had this problem, but here is where the teaching begins: Jesus perceived the thoughts of their hearts and was now going to illustrate what heaven is like through the example of a child and at the same time show us the value of children through God's eyes.

I In the eyes of Jesus

In this first point we will be looking at two illustrations in which Jesus uses little children as the center point in teaching the disciples. They will be from Matthew chapter 18 from the passages that pastor Phil read for us and starting with verses 3&4 and then continuing with verses 5&6.

Mat 18: and I will start at verse 1

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

2 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,
3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And as we look at verses 3

Jesus said:3 "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

What is it that he requires and insists upon?

What is it that we are to be converted to?

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible writes it like this and I think it conveys it very well:

First, "You must be converted, you must be of another mind, and in another frame and temper, must have other thoughts, both of yourselves and of the kingdom of heaven, before you be fit for a place in it. The pride, ambition, and affectation of honor and dominion, which appear in you, must be repented of, mortified, and reformed, and you must come to yourselves." Besides the first conversion of a soul from a state of nature to a state of grace, there are after-conversions from particular paths of backsliding, which are equally necessary to salvation. (most of us will understand this salvation is the process we would refer to as sanctification to be made righteous)the quote continues "Every step out of the way by sin, must be a step into it again by repentance. *Secondly*, You must *become as little children*. Converting grace makes us like little children, not foolish as children (1 Co. 14:20), nor fickle (Eph. 4:14), nor playful (ch. 11:16); but, *as children*, we must *desire the sincere milk of the word* (1 Pt. 2:2); as children, we must be careful for nothing, but leave it to our heavenly Father to care for us (ch. 6:31); we must, as children, be harmless and inoffensive, and void of malice (1 Co. 14:20), governable, and under command (Gal. 4:2); and (which is here chiefly intended)¹"

Not only must it be a conversion from sinner to saint but also from saint to simple, into someone God can mold and use for His will and His purpose.

Verse 4

4 "Therefore whoever *humbles* himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The online bible Greek lexicon defines the word humbles like this

1) to make low, bring low

1a) to level, reduce to a plain(simple and ordinary, without ornamentation or frills)

1b) to bring into a humble condition, reduce to meaner (of low social position)

1b1) to assign a lower rank or place to

1b2) to abase

1b3) to be ranked below others who are honored or rewarded

1b4) to humble or abase myself by humble living

1c) to lower, depress

1c1) of one's soul bring down one's pride

¹ Henry, Matthew: Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible : Complete and Unabridged in One Volume. Peabody :

- 1c2) to have a modest opinion of one's self
- 1c3) to behave in an unassuming manner
- 1c4) devoid of all haughtiness

Therefore who ever *humbles* himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

There you go. It's that simple. If you can check off all the boxes in this one simple definition you could class yourself as being humble.

I know one thing for-sure and that is I won't be the greatest in heaven, not in the top 10, not in the top 100, not in the top 1000, or 10,000 or 100,000. No, when I just look at a simple definition of this word and just look into my own heart, I feel unworthy to go there. This is what Jesus was trying to implant into the disciples' mind, this level of humility is what will make heaven great.

Oh children are a gift of God alright, but in society they are at the bottom, the lowest of lows, so low that the unborn are not even counting as a living being in today's standards.

We know for certain that this low esteeming of children is not the thinking of Jesus. When we look at verses 5 and 6 we find a very interesting picture of what Jesus draws out of children, first verse 5

Verse 5

5 "Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

In brief Matthew Henry states "Whatever kindnesses are done to such, Christ takes as done to himself." ²

What ever kindness we extend to children in the name of Jesus, He sees it as extending it to Him. How else do we explain verses like Matthew 25:34-40?

34 "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

36 'I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was

² Henry, Matthew: Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible : Complete and Unabridged in One Volume. Peabody :

in prison and you came to Me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?

38 'When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?

39 'Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

40 "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

The connection could not be made more clear. It is when these actions are done from the heart, when they are done as natural actions, it is that kindness that brings joy to Jesus and brings us closer to Him and more like Him.

Verse 6

6 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

In Wikipedia's definition of a millstones they included this statement. A millstone around one's neck is a Biblical metaphor meaning a burden or large inconvenience one has to endure.

burden or large inconvenience, well lets look at this verse for a moment

The Greek word millstone in this text is *mulos (moo'-los)* Vine's describes this word like this " Denotes a hand-mil consisting of two circular stones, one above the other, the lower being fixed... small stones could be turned by one woman; larger ones were turned by two." The part that is interesting to note is the word that is present in the Greek and is not present in most if not all versions including KJV and the NKJV and that is the word right after *mulos (moo'-los)* which is *onikos (on-ik-os')* which is defined: for a donkey, or turned by a donkey.

So this millstone that Jesus is talking about is not the small hand drive counter top kitchen aid they would have used in this time period and neither was it the 100 pound rock that was turned by two or three, this mill stone that is depicted here is a 2000+ pound rock and pulled in circles by a donkey it is probably 4-6 feet high and 1-2 feet thick.

Vine's continues on with the definition like this "still larger ones were turned by a donkey "a great millstone", indicating... the immediate and overwhelming drowning of one who causes one young believer to stumble." Now think of what Jesus was implying. Most swimmers cannot tread water with more than 20 pounds of dead weight on their belt. Imagine this 2000 pound rock which you certainly couldn't walk with and very certainly could never swim with, being hung around your neck and then imagine being kerplunked in the deepest part of the ocean. I think that what Jesus expressing to the disciples was that this act of causing one of these little ones to sin is so bad that it would be better if they were completely removed from the face of the earth and probably from God, no grave, no tomb. Just a large rock at the bottom of the sea that he would be tied to. Just a splash and some bubbles and nothing more.

Now I know that Wikipedia has lots of fast information and is usually not too bad in accuracy but I think if you had a *mulos (moo'-los)* *onikos (on-ik-os')* around your neck and were thrown into the middle of the sea, it would be a little more than a burden or large inconvenience, though it would only be for a very short while. I think that Wikipedia missed the mark on this one.

In this we see just how much emphasis Jesus places on children, especially those who believe in him. Like the song says “Jesus loves me this I know, for the bible tells me so, little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong” How many of you children love that song...

How about “Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world’. How many of your children enjoy that song too...

You know why children love these songs? Because it is true! When we looked at the previous verses we see that Jesus loves children, the simplicity of children, the humbleness of children, the innocence of children. When that child knows Jesus and loves him it becomes a foundation in their minds, like big cement pillars on which so many other truths will be built upon. We are to be willing to receive them, train them, love them like Jesus loves them. He loved them so much that He died for them, as the second stanza of the second song “Jesus died for all the children, all the children of the world” And this is only point number one, we also want to look at what God the Father thinks about children which brings us to point number II, in the eyes of the Father.

II In the eyes of the Father

For this point we will be looking at verses 10 and 14. This is Jesus speaking but it is more of a warning and command in regards to the Father. Verse 10

10 "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven."

This verse has two main points, first part is the first half of the sentence and the command that is given. “Do not despise one of these little ones”. The Online bible Greek lexicon defines despise like this “to contempt, despise, disdain, think little or nothing of.”

This is often a natural problem with mankind, we always want to measure everyone up to here, always wanting to compare their level of thinking or understanding to my level, and not God’s. How often do we catch ourselves with these words coming out of our mouths ‘young vites du nicht beta’ or ‘ha ack de nush ya leit’ I won’t ask the young children in the congregation to

raise their hands if they ever heard this from their parents because I know that there are three fine children here in the front row that would raise their hands if I did ask. I'm guilty of this too. How often we forget the words of Colossians 3:21 "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."

We always want them to automatically be instantaneously at our level of thinking or understanding. As Christian parents we should heed the words of Ephesians 6:4: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

Even Paul when writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4 verses 11 and 12 encourages him saying:

11 These things command and teach.

12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Timothy was young and was probably looked down upon for this and this alone. Nobody in this world is perfect, except Jesus, but we can be perfect in the stage we are in now, in the process of becoming like Christ. Just as Paul stated, to be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. And if I might add be an example also to the children in our lives.

Now the second part is when Jesus says, "for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven."

So much can be taken from this one line. First Jesus says "for I say to you" this is a direct statement to the disciples that something factual is about to be revealed.

First are the words "in Heaven", so right away we must conclude that since this is Jesus speaking, Heaven must be a real place, so what about this real place called heaven is he referring to? Well the next words are "their angels" - but not just ordinary angels. It is specifically "their angels". Whose angels? Well the first part of the verse was talking about "little ones" and so now it is "their angels". Each "little one" has "their own angel" "in heaven." So in Jesus' words we come to the understanding that each child in the world has an angel in heaven? And what do they do? "Always see the face of My Father who is in heaven". That they always see the face of the Father- this part is a little more difficult to understand but after checking

some commentaries I think it would be described like this and this is my interpretation. In every kingdom there are various ranks and levels of persons that can come before the king. Some must ask for permission such as common folk and others such as advisors or commanders of the king would probably not.

For example, let's say here is the king sitting on his throne and is listening to a peasant pleading how much tax deduction he should receive because the king's road runs over his property and because of this he doesn't have enough grass to feed his sheep and therefore must buy extra grass to feed his sheep because of the road. Now if in the middle of this poor man's plea the king's highest ranking army commander comes in and goes 'ah-hem', the king's attention will immediately be removed from this poor peasant to the commander. If the commander says to the king 'we have a situation', the king's attention will be focused on the commander. Even if at that moment the king's cook comes in, whose rank is higher than the peasant but lower than the commander asks if the king would want the chicken pot pie or roast pig for supper, he too will receive a 'hush hush I'm busy.'

Here is the idea we want to draw out of this verse: these angels are the generals of God's army, they always see the face of the Father, meaning, they always have instant access to the Father's attention in heaven. They have this seniority to come directly to the father without delay or interruption, and inform the Father of any wrongful action against children that they are watching.

So how do we know that God has this high view of children? Well if we go down to verse 14 we read:

14 "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish"

To perish by definition is

1) to destroy

1a) to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to ruin

1b) render useless

1c) to kill

1d) to declare that one must be put to death

1e) metaph. to devote or give over to eternal misery in hell

1f) to perish, to be lost, ruined, destroyed

2) to destroy

2a) to lose

It is never the will of the Father that any child of innocence should be lost or destroyed. A quote from John MacArthur from his book “Safe in the arms of God”:

God’s great judgment on His people was never voiced more clearly than through the prophet Ezekiel... His indictment of the people of Jerusalem was extremely strong:

(Ezek. 16:20–22) You took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your acts of harlotry a small matter, that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through the fire? And in all your abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, struggling in your blood. (Ezek. 16:20–22)

God lays full claim to these innocent sons and daughters who are sacrificed to false gods. He says these children were born to Him and they are His children. He exerts full ownership over the innocent ones. He even refers to them as “the innocents” in [Jeremiah 2:34](#) and [19:4](#). Though fallen creatures like all Adam’s offspring, infants are not guilty in the same sense as those whose sins are willful and premeditated. Therefore God expresses serious displeasure over the people of Israel, who failed to treat their little ones the way God treated them.³

End of quote

But people will argue. “What about times in the old testament when God commanded that entire people groups should be killed, man, woman and child?” My answer to that is that these people had degenerated so far into sin there would never be any hope of repentance or change of mind from the sin they had become. And if we take into consideration to the quote from MacArthur, God commanded that Israel pass judgment upon the people and in the process He took his children home. And I think judgment shall come again as we look into the third point in the eyes of society we will see a small look at what this world has done.

III In the eyes of Society

³ MacArthur, John: Safe in the Arms of God : Truth from Heaven About the Death of a Child. Nashville, Tenn. : Thomas Nelson

Mark 10:13 and 14 lets go to that passage verses 13 and 14

13 Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them.

14 **But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them,** "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.

In verse 13 we have the problem that man sees things through man's eyes. Even the disciples here again want to place the value of children at the bottom of the social ladder, in their eyes Jesus is much too busy, much too important, and it is very foreign to their thinking that the creator of the universe could or should to be bothered by children. Verse 14: "But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased" no words are recorded of his displeasure of the situation, it was probably one of those looks that needs no words, like some Sunday mornings I ask Liesa what she thinks if I would wear this jacket with this shirt and this tie, and I get the look. No words need to be exchanged, complete comprehension of the other person's thoughts are achieved with the look. Because then Jesus says to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God."

The phrase "for of such is the kingdom of heaven" is often referred to in most commentaries as the kind of people that are found in heaven, just as Jesus Himself spoke earlier in verse 3 of chapter 18 "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven," It is the child like humility, child like faith that will be present in the people who are in heaven. It is the simple, innocent, and dedicated faith of children or as Matthew Henry stated "as children, be harmless and inoffensive, and void of malice, governable, and under command". These are the type of people that are there. Now I want to propose to you another view point, not one that would replace the first but one that would parallel and may be a little more literal in looking at it from today's age.

Through history children have been mistreated, abused, taken for granted, look down upon, rejected and despised unto no end. Millions have died from diseases that would have been treatable, millions have died from hunger but rulers feed their armies instead. Millions have died from tragedy when tragedies could have been avoided and the list goes on and on. But the thing I wanted to focus on is how are children viewed in the eyes of society

and focus on one point in particular.

Not to worry it is not a point that I think needs pointing out in this congregation. This church loves children, it is evident in the Sunday school classes, it is evident in the VBS week, it is evident by the people and parents in this church, and largely by the number of birth announcements there have been in the past year. I think that there were to be 20 in this congregation alone. No I'm talking about the lost world in general and one of the most ugly and horrendous things that man has ever invented. One of the most horrendous acts that man has ever thought of. And that is the issue of abortion. The destroying of life of the unborn. The rest of this point will look only at this one area of this terrible act done towards children, not to worry there are no details of this act, only on the statistics.

Two points I want to mention before I continue is I hold to the view that at the moment of conception there is life and it is person. Second, any child inside the womb or outside under the age of innocence if they die for what ever reason they are instantly take to heaven by the angels that watch over them.

I agree with John MacArthur in his interview with Larry King part of the interview went like this: and this is a quote again from his book 'Safe in the arms of God' as he refers to that show.

WHAT ABOUT A TWO-YEAR-OLD BABY CRUSHED AT the bottom of the World Trade Center?"

The question was fired at me by Larry King. I had been invited to participate as a panel member on the *Larry King Live* television program one Saturday evening. The program was taped in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. Even though we had been discussing issues of life and death, grief and hope, as part of this program, Larry's question seemed to come out of nowhere.

"Instant heaven," I immediately replied.

Larry fired back a second question: "He wasn't a sinner?"

I again answered, "Instant heaven."

Larry's compelling questions revealed a nagging, troubling issue in the human heart.

What *is* the future of a baby crushed by the rubble of the collapsing World Trade Center? What about any baby that dies? What happens to an unborn child, an infant, a child, or even a physically mature but mentally handicapped adult with the mental capacity of a child after he dies? What is the fate of that "little one" as he or she enters eternity? The questions are agonizing ones for many parents, Christians and non-Christians alike.⁴ but I

⁴ MacArthur, John: Safe in the Arms of God : Truth from Heaven About the Death of

answered “Instant heaven” truly is the destiny of infants and children.⁵

If you recall in the introduction I started with this statement that it is the most persecuted group of people in the world. Their number is greater than any war, it is greater than any genocide, I think it is greater than any one thing done to any one class of people.

“for of such is the kingdom of God.” I think that this statement can be literal for a reason, and that is in the last 100 years on record abortions have ready reached 1,000,000,000.

I know that that is a number that is almost unfathomable to most of us so I prepared some illustrations to show us the extent that this has impacted the world today. If you are a truck driver or enjoy traveling you could take these 1,000,000,000 children have them hold hands side by side and line them up on the yellow line or center of the road. You would cover all of Canada’s 1,000,000 km of roads in the entire country, pavement and gravel. Think of that the next time you travel to Edmonton.

If you would take each one of these children and put them on one square foot tile you would have to tile 36 square miles to reach that number, that’s 144- ¼ sections of land.

Still can’t comprehend? If you took this brick, it’s a Lego brick we used to call it a foyer some call it a square, but what ever you call it, if you would stack a billion of these bricks, and now trust me on this, it took me half an hour for this calculation...you would fill this entire sanctuary and foyer from the floor to the ceiling. (step aside from the pulpit and place one on the floor) that’s one, that two, These are children who have no voice, no say in their choice of life. They cannot even fight back even if they wanted to. They are unwanted, they are thought of as nothing and they are treated as nothing. This is how the world treats these children today. The world hasn’t even done this as a sacrifice or made it an offering to gods, it simply doesn’t want them.

“The most unsafe place for a child in this day and age is inside the womb.”

Now someone may say, “yes that is a big number but that’s over 100 years”, they wouldn’t stay children they would also grow up in heaven?” My

a Child. Nashville, Tenn. : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003, S. 1

5 MacArthur, John: Safe in the Arms of God : Truth from Heaven About the Death of a Child. Nashville, Tenn. : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003, S. 7

answer to that would be yes that could be true but even if they grow up at the same rate in heaven as on earth, you still add 12 million each year, that would still be 120 million under the age of 10 right now.

It brings a little different view when Jesus said “for of such is the kingdom of God.”

God said in Ezekiel 16:21 "that you have slain My children". This is murder, and judgment is coming.

Now I know that this last point has a disturbing aura to and it was not my intent to make you depressed or discouraged in regards to this issue, but it was done to bring us to the realization of a couple of things. First it brings to light as to what is happening in the world today in regards to the unborn and to what magnitude it is being done.

And second, not only does the world reject His children, it rejects His Son, the one most important thing that God in all his greatness power and wisdom did, He gave us, His Son, His one - and - only - Son. As we approach the season that we celebrate the greatest gift sent by God Himself with the birth of Jesus Christ, who is the savior of the world, John 1:11 says “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” My friends, if you think that I’m ending this message on a sad note it doesn’t even compare to what God felt when He gave his perfect Son, and He hung on a cross because we didn’t want him, because he didn’t fit into our society. And in some aspect we all hung him there, thinking I don’t need him, any more than what this world thinks it needs more children. Isn’t that the message that the world is sending today? We hear of ‘save the planet,’ ‘save the animals’ but very few say ‘save the children’. We hear of people chaining themselves to trees in protest to logging, but don’t even bat an eye at the amount of lives lost each day to abortion.

Liesa showed me a picture on the internet the other day. Someone had carved into the trunk of a tree a picture of an unborn child in the womb with the caption underneath ‘pretend I’m a tree and save me’. If you have bought into the lie that Pro-choice is your choice, you have bought in one of the greatest deceptions that the devil has poisoned mankind with today in regards to children. Why? Because these are His children and they are living people and He loves them.

But to this murderous, evil hearted, and sinful creation came the greatest gift

God could give mankind; it is salvation. It was our place that Jesus took on that cross, He hung there for you and me. Matthew 18:11: "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost." and if you hear this message today and you have not accepted Jesus into your heart as your personal Saviour, repent and do it today, tomorrow may not come.

So in conclusion we looked at the words of Jesus in His teaching to the disciples by using children and in that also revealed his own heart towards the love he has to the young and simple. We also looked at the view of children in the eyes of the Father as also spoken through Jesus, we see that they are His children and the love God has for the little ones. Lastly we looked at the devastation man has brought to this world in regards to even just this one area regarding children.

Psalm 128 1-4

- 1 Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways.
- 2 When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.
- 3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table.
- 4 Behold, thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the LORD.

This is how God planned it, children are to be a blessing. I know that there are those who God has not granted children and to some not a spouse but there are still many children out there in this lost corrupt world that need you to be an example, in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity and the love of Jesus. To this there is no limit.

As Jesus said in verse 5 of chapter 18 "Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me."