

## Suffer the Children - radio

The scripture for our sermon today is Matthew 19:13-15. *“13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. 15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence”* (Matthew 19:13-15).

There are at least six plain lessons in this text of scripture:

1. First, **It is the will of Christ that children come to Him.** He said, *“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not”* (Matt. 19:14). And He actually laid His hands on children. He said that these young children were exemplary of those in the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, do not keep them back. Do not think that because they are weak in themselves, insignificant in themselves, have no understanding, that they should not be brought to Christ, that they cannot be saved. It is the will of our great God and Savior that children be brought to Him. Oh, how great is the condescending compassion of the Lord of glory! How we ought therefore to depend on His goodness and heed His teaching here and bring our children to Christ! Children are never too young, never too old, never too foolish, and never too sinful to be brought to Christ. It is His will that they come. Bringing them is His work! Salvation is not in the understanding or by the strength or because of the will of a child! Salvation is not by our understanding, or the will or the work of a man. Salvation is in Christ alone!
2. The second lesson is this: **Loving, believing parents bring their children to Christ.**
  - a. They see the one great need their children have: it is Christ. The need of their children is also their own need (as Abel learned from his parents). They see themselves in their children. They recognize their own sin nature in their children’s disobedience. They believe that their children need Christ above all things. So they pray for them. They talk to them. They take them where the Gospel of the grace of Christ is

taught and preached, even if it costs them time and money. Even if they have to give up worldly pleasures to do so.

- b. Those who bring their children to Christ know that they themselves are utterly unable to meet the spiritual and eternal needs of their children. That's why they come to Christ in prayer on their behalf. That's why they take them where the truth of the Gospel is believed and taught. Their children's souls are at stake!
3. The third lesson is that, **It is never too early to be concerned for our children**. Luke said, in his account, "*They brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them*" (Luke 18:15). They did not bring their infant children to be sprinkled. They did not bring them to dedicate them. They brought them to Christ Himself!
4. The fourth lesson is this, **The Spirit of God teaches us why we must bring our children to Christ and what we are to ask for them**
  - a. **Why must we bring our children to Christ?** Because, like ourselves, our children are guilty, sinful, under the sentence of death. They became guilty by Adam's disobedience. Paul said, "*By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners*" (Rom. 5:19). They are enslaved to the corruptions of sin in their nature just as we, their parents. They received a sin nature at conception. David said, "*I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me*" (Ps. 51:5). Job said, "*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one*" (Job 14:4). We are utterly unable to save ourselves. And we are utterly unable to save our children. Only the great Physician of our souls can save us and our children from the great disease of our sin (Isa. 53:4)!
  - b. And, the Spirit of God teaches us **What are we to seek** for our children: We are to seek Christ alone. There are three things that those who came to Christ with their children sought from Him. We ask, "Lord, save them by your will. Save them by your command. Save them by your touch." Salvation is by the will of Christ. Salvation is by the command of Christ to sinners to live and believe. Salvation is by the touch of Christ.

- i. **We are saved by the will of Christ.** In Matt. 8, a leper came to Jesus. He said, “***Lord, if you will, you can make me clean***” (Matt. 8:2). Jesus said, “I will, be thou clean.” We are saved by the will of Christ. Jesus told the Jews, “*The Son quickeneth whom **He will***” (John 5:21).
- ii. **And, We are saved by the command of Christ.** Jesus told the centurion that He would come and heal his servant. The centurion said, “***Speak the word only***” (Matt. 8:8). We are saved by His command. Jesus said, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live*” (John 5:25). We are given life at the command of Christ only! The Psalmist said, “*Thou hast given commandment to save me*” (Ps. 71:3). And, “*Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation*” (Ps. 35:3). Christ’s command to save is His call to believe the truth of the Gospel. Paul told the Thessalonian believers, “**13 We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ**” (2 Thess. 2:13-14). God the Father chose His people to salvation. All who were thus ordained by God to eternal life, are given faith, because salvation is through the sanctifying, life-giving operation of the Spirit of God in regeneration (Acts 13:48). The Spirit of God births us as God’s sons and gives us faith in Christ crucified, which is the truth declared in the Gospel. Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth and the life*” (Gal. 4:4-6; John 14:6).
- iii. **And, We are saved by the touch of Christ.** When the leper said, “**2 Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 3 Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed**” (Matt. 8:2-3).

In the healing of that one leper, we see the will, the command and the touch of Christ. In His touch Christ exerts His will to save. He issues His command to save. And puts forth His power to save. He brings to pass in us the salvation He purposed and purchased for us.

- iv. And those who brought children to Jesus **asked Him to bless them**. Who are the blessed of God? David said, “***Blessed** is the man whom thou chooseth and causes to approach unto thee*” (Ps. 65:4). And David said, “***Blessed** are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. **8 Blessed** is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom. 4:7-8). Peter said, “***God**, having raised up his Son Jesus, **sent him to bless you**, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:26). Therefore, we are blessed by God choosing us to salvation. We are blessed by Christ’s justifying blood and righteousness. And we are blessed because the Spirit of Christ turns us from our unbelief to faith in Christ by His life-giving call in the preaching of the Gospel (John 6:63; 2 Thess. 2:13-14). May God so bless us and our children that He would save us by His choice, by Christ’s redeeming work, and by the saving operations of His Spirit in bringing us to Christ in repentance and faith.**
- v. Finally, those who brought their children to Jesus **asked Him to pray them** (Matt. 19:13). Christ prays for His people. “*I pray for them*” (John 17:9). “*He made intercession for the transgressors*” (Isa. 53:12). “*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34). Our Lord Jesus Christ prays for His people. When the Lord Jesus comes before God, He brings His people with Him. “*Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*” (Heb. 9:24). Christ is the way. He is the door. We come by Him. “*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter by the*

*blood of Jesus*” (Heb. 10:19). God always hears Him. He works all things in life and death together for our good to bring us to eternal glory (2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:10). Oh, Lord of glory! Plead my salvation and the salvation of my children! Therefore, these parents brought their children to the Lord Jesus Christ that He might touch them, that He might bless them, that He might bless them, and in so doing, save them by His will and by His command.

5. And the fifth lesson taught in Matt. 19:13-15 is that **Jesus actually saves children**. Matthew said, “*He laid His hands on them*” (Matt. 19:15). We are not left in suspense or doubt. Someone might ask, “Does God save children?” The answer to that question is most definitely yes! Why do we ask questions like this? Because we think that children are unable to understand, unable to exert their will in a decision, unable to commit themselves to Christ, in short, unable to do anything to help God save them! Doesn’t this thinking reveal that we have a fundamental misunderstanding of how God saves?! We are not saved by our cooperation at all! Salvation is the work of God -- alone! It is God’s choice: not yours, not mine, and not your parents’. It is Christ obedience: not yours, not mine and not your parents’. Salvation is life from the dead. Spiritual life is not by our choice, or by our decision, or because of our commitment. It is because the Lord Jesus Christ, in resurrecting power, commands us, by the preaching of His Gospel, to live! “*The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation*” (Rom. 1:16)! Just as dead people cannot raise themselves to life, even more so, spiritually dead sinners cannot raise themselves to spiritual life! “*But God be thanked! You were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart (in believing) that form of doctrine delivered unto you (Gospel)*” (Rom. 6:17). Moreover, we cannot keep ourselves believing; we cannot keep ourselves saved. But God be thanked! We are “*kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*” (1 Pet. 1:5). Salvation and righteousness and faith are God’s gifts. “*By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the **gift of God***” (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 5:17). Our problem is not our lack of strength. Our problem is that we think our strength is required to cooperate with God in our

salvation! Our problem is that we think God requires our strength at all! But God's strength, according to the apostle Paul "*is made perfect in weakness*" (2 Cor. 12:9). "*When we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly*" (Rom. 5:6)! "*To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*" (Rom. 4:5). You see, to the one who believes God justifies on the ground of Christ's blood and righteousness alone; to that one, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One we believe, is our righteousness before God (Jer. 23:6). We know that an infant child cannot save itself. We therefore wonder if they can be saved at all! But doesn't this reveal that we think God requires something from us to save us?! He does not! If any are saved, whether infant, young or old, it is "*of the LORD*" from first to last (David's son, Jeroboam's son, John Baptist).

The wisest man who ever lived, king Solomon, said, "*I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in*" (1 King 3:7). Because Solomon saw himself as a child before God, he asked the LORD for an understanding heart. We only ask for what we need and what we do not have and what we cannot produce! **If you don't come to Christ for all in salvation, then you don't come at all!** If you, like a child, have no ability to do one thing to save or keep yourself; if you have nothing to benefit Christ and His kingdom, then you have precisely what little children have: nothing! And having nothing, you have what you need to come to Christ! Come to Christ with your nothing and find Him to be your all (Col. 2:9-10)!

Now, having considered these six lessons, we must ask **how do we bring children to Christ?** The answer is: we bring our children the way we come. How do you come to Christ? If you come in God's way, you come by looking to Christ as He is revealed in the Gospel of His grace. "*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*" (2 Tim. 3:15). God exerts His power to save when we hear the Gospel! "*The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth*" (Rom. 1:16)! "*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17)! Therefore, if you come to Christ in God's way, you come by

faith in Christ alone. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me”* (John 14:6). Jesus told Nicodemus, *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life”* (Num. 21:8-9; John 3:13-15). All sinners have eternal life who look only to Christ as their remedy from the curse of God’s law. And God told Moses, *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you”* (Ex. 12:13). Therefore, this is the question: Do you believe that all of your salvation is that God provided and received and now looks upon (considers) only Christ crucified for you? That is what Jesus told Nicodemus: *“all who believe, live.”* The spies Joshua sent to Jericho told Rahab the harlot that all in the household with the scarlet thread in the window would be spared (Josh. 2:18-19). Is your only salvation from the wrath of God that God receives Christ for you? This is what faith is. What is faith? Faith is renouncing all that may be called mine, and finding my salvation only in what may be called Christ’s! Let me repeat that (x2)! This is the message of the Gospel: *“Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus (just as Israel was in the house where the blood was sprinkled, and Rahab’s household was in the home where the scarlet thread was tied, ‘Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus...’), who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”* (1 Cor. 1:30-31). God has made Christ all He requires for His people. Do you have any wisdom in yourself that can save or keep you saved? Do you have any righteousness in yourself? Can you sanctify yourself by your cooperation? Can you redeem yourself? Do you have anything in yourself to boast before God? If you do, you are not yet a child of the kingdom of heaven. You have yet to be made a little child, you yet to be converted by God! If you are holding anything of your own as the basis for believing you are saved or as your confidence of being kept, or as your answer in the Day of Judgment, you are not yet as a child, but are a proud sinner! Therefore, cast down all that may be called yours, and look and come to God upon all that may only be called Christ’s! *“We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and (glory, boast) rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have **no** confidence in the flesh”* (Php. 3:3)!

Now, if this is how you come to Christ, then bring your children to Him in the

same way. Don't look for anything in them. Call upon Christ to save them without their help. Ask Him to lift them up. Ask Him to exert His will, to command their salvation, to bring His power to bless them, and to pray for them and save them to the uttermost! Isn't this what we ask Christ to do for us? Gracious Lord! Raise me from my spiritual deadness, my weakness, and my sinfulness to see that you alone are my great God and only Savior! Let me hear in my heart the truth that my salvation is in Christ alone! If you come to Christ in God's way, you don't consider your obedience. If you come to God in Christ, you don't consider your will. If you come to Christ, you don't consider your work, your faith, your love or your faithfulness. You only consider Christ and Him crucified! You consider what Christ did alone in His living and dying and rising and His interceding at God's right hand (Rom. 8:34)! You only consider His goodness and His ruling authority and His power to save the sinfulest to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25)! And you stake your eternal salvation and your present grace entirely on God's goodness to receive you for Christ's sake! If this is how you come, then tell your children to come in the same way! Bring them to hear the glorious Gospel of God's grace in Christ! Jesus Christ came to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15; Matt. 1:21)! Children are sinners! Therefore, Jesus tells us not to keep any from coming to Him because of their age or their sin! Because salvation depends on Christ alone, no one should be discouraged from coming except those who think they have something they must find and bring from themselves! In summary, scripture teaches that:

- It is the will of Christ to save children and sinners of all ages;
- None should keep children from Christ due to age or sin. On the contrary, we have every reason to pray for our little ones and to bring them to hear the Gospel of God's grace!
- We must humble ourselves as little children and find Christ to be our all. All who are in heaven are converted to see Christ is their all.
- Our Lord does in fact bless children. Christ actually saves babies.

Having an understanding of these things, I would now like to try to briefly answer three questions regarding children:

1. First, Is there an age when a baby in the womb becomes a person?  
According to scripture, a person begins life at conception. David said, "In



*sin did my mother conceive me*” (Ps. 51:5). Only a person can be a sinner. When the Son of God came into the world, He said, “*A body hast thou prepared me*” (Heb. 10:5-7). Christ came into the world when He was conceived by the Spirit of God in the womb of Mary. And John the Baptist leaped in his mother’s womb six months from conception. God said also that Jeremiah was set apart to be a prophet of the LORD from the womb (Jer. 1:5). Therefore, babies are children at conception, in the womb.

2. Second, is there an age of accountability? Are children innocent until they reach a certain level of maturity, so that if they die as children, they enter heaven by their innocence? The answer is **no**. Again, David said, “*I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me*” (Ps. 51:5). By Adam’s disobedience, all of Adam’s sons were made sinners and subject to death (Rom. 5:12-19). According to David, our state before God at conception is that we are sinners. And there is only one way a sinner can enter heaven. That way is Christ. God saves sinners in one way alone: by His eternal, electing love, by Christ’s redeeming blood, and by the life-giving birth of the Spirit of God. God said that Jacob was loved by God while he was in the womb of his mother Rebecca. God said that Esau was hated in the womb; he was not chosen to salvation. Esau lived and died in his own sin, and will stand and answer God for his own sin. But Jacob, though he was as much or more of a sinner than Esau, because he was chosen by God in Christ, Christ therefore suffered and died for him. The Lord Jesus redeemed Jacob from all his sins. God spared Jacob because God did not spare His only begotten Son for Jacob. Therefore, God saves all: whether infant or ancient, whether male or female, Jew or Gentile in one way alone: by the electing love of God the Father, the redeeming blood of Christ, and the sanctifying, life-giving call of the Spirit of God. There is no other way for sinners to be saved. No son or daughter of Adam will appear in glory who is not washed in Christ’s blood and robed in His righteousness (Matt. 5:20; 22:12; Rev. 5:9; 19:8). Do you look to Christ alone?!
3. Third, do all children who died in childhood go to heaven? We all want to know the answer to this question, don’t we? Consider these facts first. Throughout history, many children died in childhood. Some died directly at

God's hand. In all of the firstborn that perished in Egypt, there were doubtless young children included. And surely there were children that perished in the flood of Noah's day. And there must have been children that died in the fire and brimstone that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah. Moreover, some children died at the hand of others by God's command. For example, Samuel told Saul to kill all of the Amalekites. Samuel said that would include infants (1 Sam. 15:3). And of course, many children died at the hands of wicked men. Pharaoh, by his decree, killed many newborn Israelites (Ex. 1:22). And Psalm 137:8-9 speaks of God's vengeance on Babylonian babies, because the Babylonians killed Israelite babies. But understand this: the OT is prophetic (x2). Sodom and Egypt were evil, but they represent a greater evil: the kingdom of satan. Babylon, Egypt and Sodom represent antichrist, free will works religion (Rev. 11:8; 17:1-18:24; Gal. 1:8-9). The Jews of Jesus' day trusted their parentage, and worshipped their will and their works (Rom. 10:1-3; Col. 2:23). They rejected Christ. Jesus said "*You are of your father the devil*" (John 8:44). All who trust their works are in satan's kingdom. Therefore, though babies were put to death in the OT, their deaths signify the judgment of God on the devil and his kingdom. God will not spare those who oppose His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who assert their will and works in salvation against Christ will perish. But the answer remains: Do all babies go to heaven who die in childhood? The Bible teaches with certainty that some do. David's first son by Bathsheba did (2 Sam. 12:23). And Abijah, whose name means, "Jehovah is my father," who was the son of that wicked king Jeroboam was also saved by God (1 Kings 14:13; Rom. 8:29-30). But do all babies go to heaven who die in childhood? To this question, the Lord leaves us to trust Him. We know that Christ received infants. We know that He blessed and prayed for infants. And we know that heaven is populated with those who are made like infants in conversion. But we must leave the matter with Christ. Now, in this answer (that we must leave the matter with Christ), I want to point out something very important. When we leave our children with Christ, we should be no less confident and no less comforted. Jesus Christ came into the world to save ungodly, unrighteous, hardened, helpless, hopeless sinners!

If He can save me(!), He can save anyone! He neither requires nor accepts help from those He saves! If He did, where would you and I be!? Therefore, just as I look to Christ as all my righteousness, trust Him to take away all my sins; and just as I depend on His grace alone, in the same way, I trust Him for my children! May God give you and me grace to come to Christ and bring our children to Christ in this way! There is no salvation but by His will, by His command and by His touch! There is no Savior but Him! I am greatly encouraged that in the Gospels, the Lord Jesus Christ healed and raised from death and delivered from satan every child who was brought to Him. He said, "*Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out*" (John 6:37).