



² And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, ³ And said, **Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.** ⁴ Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 18:2-4)

A newly converted Christian is the youngest creature known to man for he has just been born anew! Have you ever considered salvation from that point of view? To be 'born again' means to begin a life in this world that continues for eternity. So our earthly lives are but a vapor of steam compared to the Eternity Future. How young we are when we have come to know Christ. Being born again does not have the same meaning that Nicodemus tried to give it. ³ *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* ⁴ *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* (John 3:3-4) Nicodemus may not have understood, either, once Jesus had given him the answer; but now his spiritual curiosity was piqued to its maximum and he would never again come to Jesus by night, but broad daylight! ⁵ *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* ⁶ *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* ⁷ *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.* ⁸ *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* (John 3:5-8)

Those who learn things of the Spirit must learn just as a little child learns. All of the old superstitions and misconceptions must be swept away to make room for that new Spirit of Truth and Promise that is being imparted by God's Holy Word. I was struck to the core by a song I heard sung by George Beverly Shea (Will the Circle be Unbroken) as I drove to conduct a funeral recently:

Will the Circle be Unbroken

There are loved ones in the glory,
Whose dear forms you often miss;
When you close your earthly story,
Will you join them in their bliss?

In the joyous days of childhood,
Oft they told of wondrous love,
Pointed to the dying Saviour;
Now they dwell with Him above.

Will the circle be unbroken
By and by, by and by?
There's a better home awaiting
In the sky, in the sky?

You remember songs of heaven
Which you sang with childish voice,
Do you love the hymns they taught you,
Or are songs of earth your choice?

The most impressive part of this song was in the last verse quoted. When we were children, it was so easy to believe. I never asked a four year old if they loved Jesus who did not respond in an absolute affirmative. Those old songs we sang as children in Bible camp – *Climbing Jacob's Ladder; Jesus Loves Me; Jesus Loves the Little Children*, etc – seemed so easy to sing, and our youthful hearts did not question a word of those hymns. As we grew older, and our hearts were distracted from those ancient truths, we allowed the world to take the place of heaven in our souls.

The passage quoted from Matthew 18 begins with our Lord doing something a bit unusual for the Asian minds of the Middle East. They were accustomed to persons of children being subordinated to the privileges of the adults, but Jesus placed them right in the midst as if they were the honored guest for His discourse: "*And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them.*" It is true that Jesus really does love the little children just as our Bible school hymn says. He next taught the listeners a lesson that may have confused them just as Nicodemus had been confused: "*Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*" Wouldn't you have cherished the privilege of being there – of hearing the Words of Jesus, and watching the little children – as Jesus called to their youthful hearts and they came promptly in obedience to His call? They had no idea what Jesus wanted with them, but they responded immediately and trustingly to this Strangers call. How different would children be today who have been taught to trust no stranger; but Jesus is a stranger to every heart of a sinner. He only becomes a "*friend that sticketh closer than a brother*" when we have been called and chosen to belong to Him. But children are different. Their hearts are trusting, malleable, and innocent. It is easy for them to come to Christ.

Unfortunately, it is usually the adults that stand in the way of their coming to Him by their arrogance, their own lack of faith, or their claims to primacy above them. 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.* (Matt 19:13-15) Unfortunately, it is often those who are closest to Jesus who

prevent others such as these children and blind Bartemaeus from coming to him, or the Syro-Phoenician woman. When we have gained the privilege of salvation in Christ, we often believe that sets us apart as somehow more worthy than the riff-raff that seeks access to His Heart. We forget that we, too, were riff-raff before we came to be children of God.

In order to be useful to God, we need to cast away all the trappings of pride of title, of possessions, and of position, and become humble and meek as little children. By the way, I will say that there is a far greater strength in meekness and humility than any brute force. Brute force grasps at everything simply because everything is within its reach; but humility reaches out in peace and refuses that to which it is not entitled.

What happens to our children in America between the trusting ages of five and fifteen? Something terrible happens to that little soul that was once so prone to hear, and believe, the Word of God. Often the parents do not instill any affirmation of faith in their hearts, and the public schools do all in their power to discourage belief in anything other than self and state.

Today, being young is all the rage. If you want to really be young, take heed to today's devotion. Everyone who names the Name of Christ is a child in His estimation. We in the Church, if we are true to the faith, are as little children – loving and being loved. When the Lord calls us to a duty, we come immediately and without question. He can lift us up on His knee, or send us away on errands, but we always respond with immediate dispatch. How old are you, Friend.

Are you as a little Child in the kingdom of Heaven?