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Third Quarter Lesson 9, Aug. 5, 1900

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN.—Matthew 18: 1-14.

Read Matthew 17: 22-27.

Compare Mark 9: 33-50.

Commit Verses 12-14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.—Mark 10: 24.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—Autumn A. D. 29. Not long after the transfiguration. The disciples had returned from their northern journey with Jesus.

Place.—Capernaum, a town near the southwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Probably in the home of Peter.

A DISCUSSION AS TO WHO WAS GREATEST.—We learn from Mark (9: 33, 34) that on the way home from the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples had a discussion as to who was the greatest.

THE APPEAL TO JESUS.—Vs. 1, 2. Jesus and the disciples returned to Capernaum. Here Jesus paid for himself and Peter the halfshekel temple tax (30 cents) with the money from the mouth of the fish caught by Peter. At the same time, at the same gathering of the disciples in which the above event took place. Came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

Jesus then gives them an object lesson. Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and then took him in his arms in loving embrace, to show his sympathy with childhood and his love for children. How many who have children in heaven have been comforted by this loving act of Jesus.

THE RELATION OF CHILDREN AND THE CHILDLIKE TO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

THE CHILDLIKE SPIRIT THE CONDITION OF ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.—V. 3. Except ye be converted. The word here rendered be converted signifies a radical and complete change in method, spirit, or course. And becomes as little children: not sinless, for no children are sinless. They all need to be saved from being lost. And if none but the sinless could enter the kingdom of heaven, that kingdom on earth would be empty. The meaning is, you must have those qualities which are characteristic of childhood. These qualities are: (1) humility; (2) freedom from ambition, rivalry, or jealousy; (3) tender and gracious affection; (4) perfect trust; (5) obedience; (6) a teachable spirit; (7) unworldliness; (8) indifference to the distinctions of rank and wealth. Shall not enter: not only could not be first, as they were seeking to be, but could not even enter the kingdom, and have any part in it. Why? Because the kingdom of heaven is a spiritual kingdom, and the self-seeking spirit is opposed to its spirit.

THE CHILDLIKE SPIRIT IS THE WAY TO TRUE GREATNESS.—V. 4. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself (so as to be) as this little child is in this company. To humble oneself is not to think meanly of oneself, not to disparage oneself, not to be unconscious of our powers or knowledge, but not to think highly of ourselves on this account, not to seek honor or greatness for ourselves, but simply to use whatever we have or are in the humblest service, with no thought of ourselves. The same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven, for he has most of the heavenly spirit. Only disinterested love can be great. So he that would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven must be greatest in love, in self denial, in faith, in service, in purity, and all the other virtues which make heaven what it is.

But distinguish between the strong desire to improve, to have large usefulness, to grow in holiness and love, and the desire to have more honor and power, or even to be better than others. To do the very best we can in everything is our duty.

THROUGH THE CHILD TO CHRIST.—V. 5. Whoso shall receive. Shall recognize and welcome. One such little child. The representative of childhood. In my name. For my sake. Receiveth me. Recognizes, loves, appreciates me.

PUTTING STUMBLING BLOCKS IN THE WAY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG DISCIPLES.—Vs. 6, 9. According to Mark (9: 38-41), John relates an incident which raises a question about receiving Christ, which led to a warning concerning putting stumbling blocks in the way of (v. 6) these little ones which believe in (on) me. Not only children, but the inexperienced in the Christian life, the weak and lowly. Offend. Cause to stumble into sin. It were better for him that a millstone

were hanged about his neck, to make escape impossible. And that he were drowned in the depth of the sea, which was within sight. It is better to die than to lead another into sin. It is Satan that says, "All that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job 2: 4). To every true man there are many things worth more than life. There is no sadder sight than the shipwrecking of others' souls, holding out the false light that ruins others as well as ourselves.

Putting Stumbling Blocks in the Way of Children. (1) By teaching that children cannot become Christians while young; (2) by neglect of their religious training; (3) by the example of parents who are more interested in worldly things than in religion, who neglect family prayer, and the church, and Sabbath school; (4) by all conduct on the part of church, the teacher, or the parent which tends to repress, chill, or check the enthusiasm of childhood for Christ, and darken its simple faith in him; (5) by faultfinding with the church and good people in their presence, thus lessening their respect and reverence for them.

Stumbling Blocks in the Way of the Weak. The true church always takes special care of the weak, the neglected, the poor, all who have something of childlike dependence. Stumbling blocks are put in their way by neglect, by coldness of welcome, by permitting temptations, by pride, by false distinctions, by want of gentle and loving training. Woe unto the world. Not a wish, but a warning, a statement of fact. Because of offences. Because there are so many stumbling blocks in the way of men becoming good, especially in the way of children. No parent looks forward in vision of the dangers, the pitfalls, the temptations, the enemies of every kind which his child must meet, without a feeling of dread. For it must needs be that offences come. Those who would serve Christ cannot live in the world and not meet temptations and hindrances. But woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Who is guilty of leading of others into sin. He that sins himself is weak, but he that leads others into sin is devilish. Wherefore. Because if you yourself fall, you will make others stumble over you. Every one of your sins and failures, your faults, will be a stumbling block. If thy hand or thy foot offend thee (read these into sin) cut them off. The meaning is, if objects dear as the right eye and useful as the right hand, stand between us and the righteous spirit, cause us to fall into sin, we must give them up rather than the heavenly life. Hand. The temptation to do what is wrong. Foot. Going into forbidden ways. Halt. Or lame from the loss of a foot. Maimed. From the loss of a hand. Eyes. Coveting, lusting. Better . . . to enter into life halt . . . than . . . with one eye. Not that any can be literally such in heaven but it is better to be a true Christian, and to enter into heaven without enjoying the things that caused us to sin than to enjoy them here and then be lost. Cast into (the) everlasting fire. That prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25: 41). Fire is the symbol of the most terrible torment, and nothing can put it out. The consequence of sin are eternal. Hell fire. This terrible warning comes from the most loving heart in the universe. It is love that points out the danger of sin. Love lights the beacon to keep men from being wrecked. He that refuses or neglects to warn is the one who is cruel.

ENFORCED BY THE CARE OF HEAVEN FOR THE LITTLE ONES.—Vs. 10, 14. Take heed that ye despise not. Look upon as of small account, so as to neglect their interests. For I say unto you. Making the revelation emphatic. That in heaven their angels. The angels who represent them and have them under their care all the time. It is not asserted, or necessarily implied, that each little one has a guardian angel. The angels as a class are ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation" (Heb. 1: 14). Since these pure exalted beings are thus employed, we should not despise one weak or young Christian. Do always behold the face of my Father. Always have ready and immediate access to the Father, to present their needs and wrongs. There is no neglect of children in heaven. Therefore there should be none on earth. For the Son of man, etc. Shows how earnestly Jesus seeks to help the very ones he wants his followers to help. If a man have an hundred sheep. This parable is given more fully in Luke 15: 10, and the parable is explained and illustrated in Lesson III, Fourth Quarter. The lost sheep is a type of the helpless and the sinful, those who are in sad needs of care and salvation. He rejoiceth more, etc. Because of the evils from which it had been rescued. Even so. As the good shepherd did so much for a lost and helpless sheep. It is

not the will of your Father which is in heaven. He desires that all shall repent and be saved. He has done everything possible to wisdom and love, to save them. So we, like him, are to care for the little ones, the children, the lowly, the wanderers, those farthest away. This is the joy and the duty of the church.

A Remarkable Exhibit of Bibles.

When one visits a great national museum and is shown the sword of a great military commander—say Wellington or Grant—one oftentimes counts it a great privilege to touch the sword reverently, as if some martial virtue might pass from it to the person. A remarkable collection of weapons used by great spiritual warriors was on exhibition in the library of the Congregational House, Boston, from June 4-11. The weapon is the Bible, but in form it varies from a soldier's pocket edition to large extra illustrated tomes, and in time of manufacture from the earliest editions of the European presses down to the latest editions of the American and British Bible Societies. But the absorbing interest of this collection centers not in bibliographical, but in autographical and biographical facts, and in the information it gives to those who wish to make their Bibles more useful and helpful to themselves and others by annotation and extra illustration. To see and handle Bibles that once belonged to Phillip Melancthon, John Knox, Samuel Mathar, David Brainerd, or that were made by John Eliot, carries one far back in the history of Protestantism. The Bibles of such soul-winners as D. L. Moody, Phillips Brooks and Charles Spurgeon have a sentimental interest of incalculable worth and, when examined, reveal the mental habits of the men. Thus the edition of the Psalms used by Phillips Brooks is interleaved, and the writing on the inserted leaves shows the range of his reading in general literature and his correlation of thought and incident found there with the thought of the Psalmist. Spurgeon's Bible, sent to M. Moody after Spurgeon's death, is the one in which, by red ink entries, he kept track of his sermons when printed. Mr. Moody's Bible is crowded with notes and reveals on every page the methods of the great evangelist in studying and expounding the Word.

To admirers of Henry Ward Beecher the Bible he used for fifty years, now owned by Hon. T. G. Sherman, has peculiar interest. During the last twenty years of his life he carried it with him to all the many funerals at which he officiated. The Bible which H. Clay Trumbull, chaplain of the Tenth Connecticut Regiment during the Civil War, used in and out of prison, on the march and in bivouac, in preaching to the living and in burying the dead, has a pathetic interest and unusual value. The small, old fashioned Bible which G. Stanley Hall read twice through before he was fifteen years old fascinates those who know how loyal he is to religion while profoundly conversant with modern science. Prof. J. Henry Thayer, of Cambridge, the eminent Greek scholar, in sending his Greek New Testament incidentally let in light on his own life work when he said, "I sometimes use half a dozen editions in half an hour when running down the history of even a punctuation point. The Bible which the late Prof. E. A. Park took with him to the orient in 1870 is especially interesting now because of its annotations, often shrewd and humorous. Credit for gathering this remarkable temporary collection of Bibles together belongs to Mr. S. Brainerd Pratt, a retired Boston merchant, connected for many years with Berkeley Temple, and now residing in Buckland, Mass. His valuable collection of ancient Bibles and manuscripts was placed in the room adjacent to the Congregational Library soon after the new building on Beacon street was entered. Mr. Pratt has spent money freely in pursuit of his passion for accumulating everything pertaining to Biblical literature and history, a passion first aroused thirty-five years ago.—The Congregationalist.

For the Master's Use, A Parable.

The writing desk lay open. Its owner had been called away in the act of beginning an important letter. On it were laid a sheet of notepaper and an envelope, beside it stood the ink bottle, and close by lay a pen, the blotting-paper, and the pen-wiper. The silence of the room was broken by the notepaper speaking to his companions: "You needn't look so consequential, it said, scornfully; it is on me the letter will be written." Yes, said the Pen; but you forget it is I who write it. And you wrote, said the Ink, that you couldn't write without me. You needn't boast, said the Ink-bottle, for where would you be but for me!

It is ridiculous of you all to be so conceited, interposed the Blotting paper; only for me what a mess you'd be in.

And may I ask, said the Envelope, what use would any of you be if I did not take the letter safely where it is to go?

But it is I who write the directions on you, snapped the Pen.

Dear sirs, please stop quarrelling, gently said the little Pen-wiper, who had not spoken yet.

What have you to say? asked the Pen, contemptuously. You are nothing but a door-mat, and he laughed at his own wit.

Even if I am only a door-mat, said the Pen-wiper, humbly, only for me you would be so rough with dried ink you couldn't be used. And that is all any of us are good for—just to be used. We might all stay here for the rest of our lives, and not all of us put together could write that letter. Only the hand of our Master can do that. I believe he's right, said the Envelope and Note-paper together.

Yes, said the Ink. It was foolish of us to forget that we can do nothing unless we are used.

True enough, murmured the Ink-bottle, for what use would I be if you were not in me.

Yes, to be sure, said the Blotting paper, we ought to have thought of that.

Indeed, yes; and I'm sure I beg your pardon, Mr. Pen-wiper, for calling you a door-mat, said the Pen, in a humble voice.

Please don't mention it, said the little Pen-wiper, but I do think we would be happier if we could just do the best we can, without being jealous.

As he spoke their owner re-entered the room and silence fell. The Pen was taken up and dipped in the Ink, and passed to and fro on the Note-paper; the Blotting-paper pressed on it; the letter placed in the Envelope; the address written; the Pen wiped on the Pen-wiper.

We have each done our part, murmured the Ink.

Yes, said the Pen, and without our Master we could have done nothing at all.—The British Messenger.

There is an old legend of a man who sold his soul to the devil. The conditions were: For a certain number of years this man was to have all his desires gratified, at the expiration of which time his soul was to be forfeited.

When the time agreed upon had expired this man was unwilling to fulfill his part of the contract, and asked the devil upon what terms he could be released. The reply was: If you curse your God, I will release you.

No, said the man, I can not curse the being whose nature is love. Give me something less fearfully wicked.

Then kill your father, replied the devil, and you go free.

No, answered the man, that is too horrible to think of. I will not commit so great a crime. Are there no other conditions?

One more, replied the devil; you must get drunk.

That is a very easy thing to do, the man answered, and I accept your proposition. I can not kill my father, I will not curse my God, but I can get drunk, and when I become so I'll all will be well.

Accordingly he got drunk, and when in this condition chanced to meet his father, who upbraided him, which so excited the ire of the drunken and half-crazed man that he slew his father, cursed God, then fell down dead, and the devil had him without fail!

Only a legend this particular case. But how true to the facts regarding the liquor curse.

How many things do I put before my religious duties?

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Yours truly, (REV.) F. M. YOUNG, Pastor Baptist Church, Bridgetown, N. S.

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