

THE CHILD-LIKE SPIRIT.

Matthew 18: 1, 2, 4.

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Both conversion and sanctification must partake of the child-like nature. The first is the reception or the creation of this nature; the second is the complete development of the same. This is represented in our Scripture lesson. Not that the figure is perfect in all its parts; no figure ever is; we must discriminate. Children are not always commended in Scripture. There are many passages which tell us that we must be unlike children. For instance, we hear the apostle Paul saying: "When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things." And again: "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." Here, you observe, we are warned against certain characteristics of the child, and we are shown, by comparing these passages one with another, that our Lord was not teaching that children were unfallen, and that until they had committed actual sin they were as the angels in heaven. No, this was not His meaning. He was simply alluding to certain characteristics of a child, which represented, as far as possible, spiritual conditions.

No figure could have been so admirably adapted to reprove and correct the mistaken notions of the disciples. It showed them that if true greatness was the object of their desire, they were seeking it in the wrong direction. They might see, in the little child which he condescended to set in the midst of them, an emblem of true greatness. A little child, for instance, is destitute of ambition. It does not mind high things, and when the Psalmist would indicate his humbleness of mind, he says, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved myself as a child that is weaned of his mother. My soul is even as a weaned child."

This humility, which is here taught, appears to be, in the sight of God, a most precious grace. When the Apostle Peter urges it upon women—and it is just as necessary for men—he says, "They are to have the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price." St. Augustine being asked, "What is the first thing in religion?" replied, "Humility." "What the second?" "Humility." "What the third?" "Humility." McCheyne says, "I charge you, be clothed with humility, or you will yet be a wandering star, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." Dr. Payson once said, "Some time ago I took a little work purporting to be the lives of sundry characters as related by themselves. Two of those characters agreed in remarking that they were never happy until they ceased striving to be great men. This remark struck me. It occurred to me at once that most of my sins and sufferings were occasioned by an un-

willingness to be the nothing which I am, and by consequent struggles to be something. I saw that if I would but cease struggling, and consent to be anything or nothing, just as God pleases, I might be happy. You will think it strange that I mention this as a new discovery. In one sense it was new; I had known it for years; but I now saw it in a new light. My heart saw it, and consented to it; and I am comparatively happy. My dear brother, if you can give up all desire to be great, and feel heartily willing to be nothing, you will be happy too."

The humble! The man that does not think he is of great consequence; the man who is lowly in heart; the man who is willing to be nothing, if God may be glorified. Humility! That spirit in the believer which is prepared to take the lowest place; which says, "Let not me be seen, but the Master; let not me be magnified, but the Master." Humility! St. Augustine was right, for humility is the beginning and end of religion. Humility scoops away the barren sand of our self-conceit, that so our foundation may rest solidly upon the rock which is Christ. This, then, was the lesson taught by our Lord to His disciples. They thought only of earthly greatness. He of heavenly virtues. "Tell us," they seem to say, "how the happy time of our greatness is to come. Show us how we are to conquer our enemies. Lift up thy banner, and lead us on to victory. Make haste to sit upon Thy throne and let us be princes and nobles at Thy side." So he took them up into a mountain, and sat down, not upon a throne, but upon a grassy mountain slope. All was silent as He began to speak: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Seek, then, to be humble with the humble Jesus, and He will exalt thee. As thou becomest, by His grace, lowly here, thou shalt be exalted there.

Again, little children are without disguise. As soon as they learn dissimulation, their childlike nature is gone; the very bloom and beauty of childhood has vanished away. And it is the same with the sanctified believer. He is free from all affectation and constraint; his actions, words and manners are all natural.

Again, little children are conscious of their weakness and dependence. It is beautiful to see a little child in its helplessness hanging upon its mother's bosom or resting in its father's arms. More beautiful a thousand fold is it to see a believer clinging, like a little child, to Christ, telling Him everything, living upon Him, and stretching out his hand for help and strength in every hour of trial and temptation.

Again, little children are remarkable for their forgiving spirit. They do not long retain their displeasure. Their misunderstandings are soon over. "Brethren," writes the apostle, "in malice be ye children."

Once more. A loving spirit is in like manner characteristic of little children. The love of a little child is very pure and natural. It is easy for it to love. Love is the element in which he lives and moves and has his being. It is thus that our Lord teaches the true principles of the higher life. If we would be great we must be

little. If we would be strong we must be weak. If we would be wise we must be simple. If we would be exalted we must be humble. None are so sure of wearing the shining robe of the glorified as those who are "clothed with humility," and none are so sure of reposing in Jesus' bosom as those who are now found at Jesus' feet. Brethren, I find myself today yearning for this childlike spirit. I covet it more than the miser's gold, or the scholar's knowledge, or the politician's power.

Lord, forever at Thy side
Let my place and portion be,
Strip me of the robe of pride,
Clothe me with humility.

WHAT GOD LISTENS FOR.

It is said that once when Sir Michael Costa was having a rehearsal with a vast array of performers and hundreds of voices, as the mighty chorus rang out with the thunder of the organ, and rolls of drums, and ringing horns, and symbols clashing, some one man who played the piccolo far away up in some corner, said within himself: "In all this din it matters not what I do!" and so he ceased to play. Suddenly the greater conductor stopped, and then cried aloud: "Where is the piccolo?" The quick ear missed it, and all was spoiled because it failed to do its part.

Oh, my soul, do thy part with all thy might! Little thou mayest be, insignificant and hidden, and yet God seeks thy praise. He listens for it, and all the music of His great universe is made richer and sweeter because thou givest Him thanks. Bless the Lord, oh, my soul.—Mary Guy Pearse.

THE RIGHT LIGHT.

The end of life is not to do good, although many of us think so. It is not to win souls, although I once thought so. The end of life is to do the will of God. How can you build up your life on that principle? Let me give you an outline of a little Bible reading.

The object of life. "I come to do Thy will, O God."

The first thing you need after life is food. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me."

The next thing you need after food is society. "He that doeth the will of My Father, which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother." You want education. "Teach me to do Thy will, O God." A whole life can be built upon the one vertical column and then, when all is over, "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."—Henry Drummond.

WHAT TO FEAR.

Most people shrink from death, but there are some things more to be dreaded than death.

A lie, a theft, a vile oath—any sin, is to be viewed as more terrible than death. It is sin that makes us fear death. Get rid of sin, and death will not frighten us.—Sel.