

**Message #86****Luke 18:15-17**

When Jesus Christ was actually, physically here on earth, He was in a world of proud religion. People went to their worship services and they were proud of it. The Scribes and Pharisees were the proud learned scholars, who dominated the religious world with their self-righteous, pious, intimidating form of religion. They had their formalities and their rituals and it was impressive to watch.

At this point in the life of Jesus Christ, there were some people who were still trying to make up their minds concerning who Jesus Christ actually was. The disciples had been growing and maturing and learning the true things of God. But there were still many trying to figure it out.

Most of the Scribes and Pharisees rejected Christ and wanted Him dead. They wanted to do whatever they could to keep the focus off of Jesus Christ and keep it on them. The Pharisees had their religious works and rules and codes and they were impressive in the way they promoted them and applied them.

In all of the pious talk and all of the theological discussions, many were losing sight of a critical matter when it comes to God and that is the matter of simple faith. Faith is not a complicated thing. **The truth is justification and your eternity simply comes down to what you believe.** Now the faith that one must have, must be very specific. It is a specific faith in one Person and only one Person and that Person is Jesus Christ.

God's salvation is not by works, religion, morality or laws; it is by faith in Jesus Christ. Now every religious person has some type of faith. Most people have faith in their religion or denomination or their works or themselves. But that will not save anyone. Faith that saves is a faith that totally and completely trusts in Jesus Christ to save. That is exactly what Jesus Christ teaches right here.

Notice the first word of **verse 15**, "and." This is a sequential connection to the previous discussion about who was justified. It was not the religious Pharisee, it was the one who saw himself as a sinner and cried out to God for His judicial salvation.

What Jesus teaches is this:

**PEOPLE WHO WILL BE IN GOD'S FUTURE KINGDOM AND HEAVEN ARE THOSE WHO COME TO JESUS CHRIST WITH A CHILDLIKE FAITH.**

This thesis is so foreign to the way Pharisees think. They think they are powerful and impressive to God because of their own self-righteous religion. To say to a Pharisee unless you totally trust in Jesus Christ like a little child, you will never be in heaven is a real slap in their arrogant face.

When you tell a Pharisaical hypocrite that you need to totally trust in Jesus Christ like little children did 2,000 years ago, you will soon discover that you are up against the same mindset Christ saw when He was here.

When Jesus was here on earth, little children came to Christ. They trusted Him with a simple childlike faith and Jesus never wanted His disciples to forget that.

It is true we need to grow and mature and develop sound minds and doctrine, but we must never lose sight of a childlike faith in Jesus Christ because that is the critical key to being right with God.

It does not matter what we have or how much we have developed, we must always realize it is Jesus Christ who gives us a relationship with God and we need to believe that like a child does.

There are four narrative parts to this very important text:

**NARRATIVE PART #1** – Parents were taking their children to Jesus Christ. **18:15a**

Parents were bringing their children, even their babies to Jesus Christ in order to have Him touch them. **They were not bringing their babes to Jesus so He would baptize them. They were bringing them to Him to touch them.**

If we compare parallel passages of Scripture that discuss this event, we also conclude that they were having Him touch them and it included a special prayer asking God to bless each child- Matthew 19:13; Mark 10:16.

There are two different Greek words used concerning the children in this context:

The Greek word “babies” (breph) used in **verse 15** is one that refers to a newborn infant baby (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 85). This was the very word used by Luke for Jesus Christ as a newborn baby (Luke 2:12, 16).

The word for “children” (**v. 16**) and “child” (**v. 17**) (paidion) is one that refers to a very young, little child (*Ibid.*, p. 33).

By using these two words we get an accurate picture of what was happening. The parents were taking their babies and their small children to Jesus Christ to have Him touch them and pray for them.

This was a bold move on the parent’s part. They are not taking them to the religious leaders to have them touch their children and pray, they are taking them directly to Jesus Christ. They were basically showing the entire religious world that the One they wanted their children to be touched by and prayed for was Jesus Christ. Frankly, when Jesus Christ was here on earth, what parent wouldn’t want this?

Dr. Richard Lenski made an interesting observation about this when he said this passage clearly proves that children are not automatically right with God and with Jesus Christ. They need to be individually directed to Him. It is a very healthy thing to see babies in a nursery, or to see young children sitting quietly in a worship service listening and learning the things of God. It is a healthy thing for parents to bring those children to hear God's word. But parents have a responsibility to point those children to the truth that only Jesus Christ can save them.

We live in a world in which most people on Sunday promote sports, rest and entertainment. Just recently a very famous athlete died who was taking his daughter to play basketball on Sunday. He was not taking her to church so she could be exposed to truth about Jesus Christ.

These parents personally took their own babies and children to Jesus Christ. They did not leave the choice to them. They did not wait for an invitation. They did not wait for someone with a donkey to pick them up and give them a ride. They did not leave it up to a Pastor or Elders or Deacons; these parents took their own children to meet Jesus and wise are those parents who follow this example.

Years ago, when I taught public speaking, I made each student put together their own testimony of how they came to faith in Jesus Christ. I listened to hundreds of students tell their story and the vast majority of the stories were because their parents took them to hear the word of God.

To do this in this culture was a high risk endeavor. But these parents were willing to take that risk because they wanted their babies and little children to be touched by Jesus Christ.

**NARRATIVE PART #2 – Disciples rebuked the parents for bringing their children to Christ.  
18:15b**

When the disciples saw the parents were bringing their children of all ages to Jesus Christ, they began rebuking these parents. That word "rebuke" (epitimwn) not only carries with it the idea of giving out some verbal admonition, but it also includes the idea of forbidding something or putting a stop to something (*Ibid.*, p. 176). These disciples are giving these parents a very weighty and negative rebuke.

To these disciples, this kingdom stuff was not for babies. To their way of thinking, Christ did not have time to touch the lives of children because He had more important things to do. To the disciple, spending time with them was critical, but touching babies was not.

We never want to become so rigid in our thinking that we start limiting who we think Jesus Christ has the right to touch. We never want to reach a point that we think it is our responsibility to determine who has a right to be touched by God's grace and who doesn't.

Sometimes a Pharisaical mindset can creep into a church. I personally know of a broken down sinner who was told by a minister that she was a loser. He literally said that and she left totally depressed.

The amazing thing is, this woman became one of the most beautiful servants of God I ever saw. That minister appointed himself judge and jury and actually was preventing this woman from coming to Jesus Christ. Thank God in His grace. He overruled him.

**NARRATIVE PART #3** – Jesus Christ instructs the disciples about the children. **18:16**

Jesus Christ decided to give His disciples some instruction. There are three specific critical lessons He taught them:

**Lesson #1** - Permit children to come to Me. **18:16a**

Notice that **verse 16** begins with a strong adversative conjunction “but” (de). In sharp contrast to what the disciples were doing, Jesus was doing just the opposite.

This is an imperative command that Jesus is giving that covers everyone listening to Him. This includes the disciples, the parents and the children. He is actually commanding the children to come to Him. He is commanding that the children come to Him.

The pronoun “them” is neuter, which means Jesus called for the children to come to Him. So while the disciples were trying to prevent the children from coming to Christ, Christ is commanding them to come to Him. He is doing just the opposite of what the disciples wanted.

**People can get so backwards in their religious thinking that they actually do just the opposite of what God wants and they actually think they are doing what God would have them do.**

Now as He was calling the children to come to Him, He also lectured the disciples and said you need to stop and leave those parents alone and permit these children to come to me (*Ibid.*, p. 71).

There will be times when true Biblical Christlikeness will be just the opposite of what strict formal religious people think. True Biblical Christlikeness will often challenge the status quo of the Pharisaical crowd.

One of the most powerful preachers of England in the late 1800’s was F. B. Meyer. While he was pastoring Victoria Road Baptist Church in Leicester, England, he began to have a deep burden for lost souls. It did not matter to him where the people were from or what they had previously done, he wanted to present them with the grace gospel. His church was a very proper church. It was very wealthy and had many influential people in it. The fact that F. B. Meyer seemed to associate and care about the lower class of people really upset the leadership. One night one of the board members told F. B. Meyer that he needed to stop reaching out to these people. F. B. Meyer did just the opposite. He immediately resigned from that church and took another one and God blessed it. He not only kept ministering to all people, but he actually started a ministry to paroled prisoners, including setting them up in business and putting them to work.

That is what Jesus Christ did and it did not sit well with these Pharisees.

**Lesson #2** - Do not hinder children from coming to Me. **18:16b**

This is another imperative verb. Luke uses a word (kwluw) that refers to actually restraining people. This word not only means to forbid something but to hold it back from happening (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 262)

The disciples were apparently holding back the children in some form of crowd control and Jesus says stop it right now. He says don't you ever prevent someone from coming to Me.

Here is a great lesson for any one. Jesus wants you to come to Him. No matter how weak or feeble or helpless you may think you are, Jesus Christ wants you to come to Him.

**Lesson #3** - God's future kingdom belongs to those who come to Christ. **18:16c**

Now look carefully at what Jesus says here, God's kingdom belongs to those just like this.

In other words, God's kingdom will not feature any proud, self-righteous, domineering religious people. God's kingdom will feature all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds, who came to faith in Jesus Christ like a little child.

Not one person will ever get into heaven without coming to personal faith in Jesus Christ because in Jesus Christ is redemption, propitiation and justification.

**NARRATIVE PART #4** – Jesus Christ applies this episode to everyone. **18:17**

Here is an amazing application that Jesus Christ Himself makes. Christ was surrounded by hand-picked disciples. Christ was surrounded by the most powerful and impressive religious leaders of the day and yet He tells them all that the key to spiritual life is a faith in Jesus Christ that comes to Him with the simplicity of a child.

Unless one is willing to come to faith in Jesus Christ, he will not enter the Kingdom of God. The Greek text is very emphatic here. This is a double negative “ou may” (ou mh) construction, which means it is completely impossible for one to get into heaven or into the Kingdom of God without coming by faith like a child to Jesus Christ. It will never, never ever happen.

**Jesus Christ is not a way to God; He is the only way to God.** It does not matter what your background or sin. It does not matter what your education or income. If you do not come to faith in Jesus Christ like a child, you will never see heaven. That is exactly what Jesus is saying here.

**There are some very powerful lessons to learn here:**

- 1) Jesus Christ loves little children and He will not ever turn away one who comes to Him. That song “Jesus loves the little children” is very accurate and true.**
- 2) Unless you personally go to Jesus Christ by faith, you will not enter God’s Kingdom. You will never get into heaven by your works, religion or accomplishments.**
- 3) Older faithful disciples need to maintain a childlike trust in Jesus Christ and the word of God.**
- 4) We must make certain we never hinder one from coming to Jesus Christ. We must promote that regardless of past failures or sins, one may come to Christ and be saved.**