

OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

“Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 19:14). The word translated, “suffer,” means to send forth, to permit or to allow, and not to hinder (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon). After hearing of the healing power of Jesus and the blessings that He bestowed, many parents and guardians began bringing children to Jesus. Some of the children were infants (Luke 18:15) and the disciples began to rebuke “those that brought” the children (Mark 10:13). The reason for rebuke is not given, but Jesus clearly reveals that the disciples’ rebuke is unwarranted and wrong. Jesus tells His disciples to bring the children to Him because “of such is the kingdom of heaven”. Jesus’ response is very telling. First, the statement verifies that those who will be saved must share a similar disposition and certain characteristics as are exhibited by children. Second, it proves that the idea that babies are born in sin, as is taught by many denominations, is a damnable false doctrine. If babies and little children were full of sin, why would Jesus compel them to come to Him and then state “of such is the kingdom of heaven?” Jesus was obviously not saying that the kingdom of heaven is composed of a group of little sinners. He was, however, stating that the composition of the saved would share qualities that are displayed by children. One Christ-like characteristic shared by the saved and by children is innocence. Children are innocent from the guilt of sin (Eze. 18:20). Just as little children are not able to walk until their muscles have time to grow and develop, they are not able to know and understand the Law of Christ until they have had time to grow and develop their mental faculties. “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4) and since a small child’s mind is unable to comprehend and discern the meaning of the law, he is not found guilty of that law. In like manner, a Christian can be seen as innocent from sin by obeying the Gospel of Christ which culminates in water baptism (Acts 2:38) whereby one can have all his past sins washed away (Acts 22:16). Children are also innocent to the ways of the world. The practice of worldliness only rears itself after a child has been taught and trained, by word or by deed, the paths of sin. A Christian is to be innocent of the ways of the world as well. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And ***be not conformed to this world***: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2, emphasis B.G.). Secondly, children exhibit an humble attitude. While the adults were interested in who would be the greatest in the kingdom, Jesus replied, “Whosoever therefore shall ***humble himself as this little child***, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 18:4, emphasis B.G.). Lastly, since children are humble, they have no problems forgiving one another. Children can be red-faced and full of anger one second and then laughing and playing again the next. Christians must have this same forgiving spirit towards those who will repent. Peter asked, “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Mat. 18:21-22). Jesus desires that His followers be willing to forgive as often as the erring brother is willing to truly repent and ask for that forgiveness.

Let us continue to put into practice the child-like qualities of innocence, humility, and

forgiveness, “for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

- *Brad Green*