

Jesus Blesses the Little Children

Mark 10:13-16

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Introduction

Being a pastor is an absolute joy because of the journey that I go through when I delve into the Word of God. It is through the study of this passage and the study of **Romans 5**, that I've become convinced by Scripture of this following question: what happens to babies and children and those who cannot tell the difference between right and wrong when they die? I've been studying this subject all week, and I'm convinced by the weight of Scripture that these group of people go to heaven. I do not want to do this because of sentimental reasons because it sounds right. I want to be convinced by Scripture of what happens to those people. My wife and I have personally lost three babies in miscarriage and it has affected us in a profound way. How much more does it affect those who have lost their child when they have held them in their arms. For those, I offer these Scripture for comfort and assurance in the knowledge that God will bestow His grace on them.

Before modern medicine, life expectancy for children was very bleak. Many children die out of the womb due to diseases and unsanitary conditions. Many children die because of diseases, social, economic and environmental reasons. Since 1973, 55,000,000 babies have been aborted in United States alone, not counting the world. What happens to those children when they die?

As a believer, I have found that **Genesis 18:25** to be the most comforting words in Scripture because it all hinges on the character of God. Abraham asks this question after God informs him that He will destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham is stunned due to the magnitude and severity of God's punishment. He is also concerned about his nephew Lot who lives in the city with his wife and children. He asks God this question:

Far be it from You to do such a thing-to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from You! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Abraham asks a rhetorical question because he knows God's holy and merciful character. He knows that God will do what is right, and He will do that every time. We can trust the Lord when He saves His people, and we can trust the Lord completely when He judges the righteous and the unrighteous. God is not going to overlook anybody and mess up. Jesus has said in **John 6** that none of His people that the Father has given Him shall ever be lost. What a precious promise and assurance.

What we see here in Mark is a powerful illustration of God's grace. All three synoptic gospels have recorded this event, and it is significant. We need to take care and read what is being said here. This passage gives us a direct contrast to the following passage: the rich young ruler. Here Jesus blesses the little children (and we know from Scripture that God does not bless those who are cursed), and with the rich young ruler who rejects Jesus' offer, Jesus never blesses him. It is an illustration of God's grace to those who are helpless, ineffective, worthless and in needing of His help to stand. "He gives grace to the humble" and "He will lift you up."

It is also where Scripture answers the question of what happens to babies and children when they die?

Mark 10:13-16

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have Him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.

- Jesus was probably teaching and healing the multitude (per **10:1** and **Matt 19:2**)
- People brought their little children
 - Luke is emphatic that the little children were babies up to 3 years old
 - Jesus held them in His arms

- So that Jesus would touch them
 - Wonderful picture of our Savior—He ministered by touch
 - He was known for His great affection
 - In contrast to priests and Pharisees, they refused to touch so they would not be defiled
 - People knew this
- Why did they go to Jesus?

Matthew 19:13a *Then little children were brought to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them and pray for them.*

- They saw Jesus' power and teaching—they knew Him to be God's man
- They wanted their children to know God and have God's man bless them
 - This is actually a practice for the Jews
 - They would take their children to the synagogue and have them blessed by elders
 - They did this because they thought he was closest to God
 - Elder would pray that the child would grow up famous in the Law, faithful in marriage and abundant in good works because they believed good works got into the Kingdom of God

Note: They prayed that he or she would become famous in regard to the Law, having a full understanding of the Law, complying with the Law demonstrated in faithfulness in marriage, and in an abundance of good works. In a sense, they are praying for the child's salvation. They are praying for the future of that child to be drawn to the Law of God, obedience to that Law, conformity to that Law and therefore a place in the Kingdom.

- Disciples' rebuke
 - Very strong word—sharp reprimand
 - They turned on the parents and tried to get them out of the scene
 - Why? For bringing the children to Jesus
 - The Jewish view is that children have no place in adult settings
 - This is because they view children having no capacity to understand the Law

14 *When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.*

15 *I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*

- Jesus was indignant
 - Strong words = very angry...at the disciples
 - This is not a minor issue because they were out of touch with the attitude of God
- Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them
 - Why?
 - Because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these
 - Note not kingdom of God belongs to these (as if only for the children that showed up in front of Jesus)
 - Jesus is saying that the kingdom of God belongs to those in this category—the babies, infants, little children
 - Very clear what Jesus means
 - Jesus is saying that the babies possess the kingdom of God
 - God has special care and special rule in their lives as children
 - John Calvin—"This passage gives citizenship to both children and those who are like children."
- Are babies sinners?

Psalms 51:5 *Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

- Babies are not born (or conceived) morally neutral
- They are born with the totality of sin in its fullest corruption in their persons
- Sinfulness is a condition that all people are born in and that leads them to choose evil
- How can they go to heaven?
 - Children do not consciously know what they are doing in relation to God
 - They are not responsible for the choices between sin and righteousness because of lack of understanding
- God's grace
 - They are under God's grace and special protection until they reach a condition when they are accountable
 - This is different for each person (no such "age of accountability")
 - This can happen to adults with a child-like mind

Note: We need to be clear that that Scripture does not teach that they get saved at conception and then lose their salvation when they come of age. They are under the sphere of God's grace. God determines the time of death of each person, and for the death of the child, His grace extends to them. How? Scripture does not answer—this is the deep things of God that we do not know.

- We are saved by being totally in God's grace
 - We have to be in the helpless state (humbled by the fact that we do not deserve His mercy or grace)
 - Jesus makes this analogy that we are to be like little children if we are to enter the kingdom of God
 - This is the key—if little children cannot enter the kingdom of heaven when they die, then we cannot do the same
 - Why? Because they are in a helpless state, totally dependent on God's grace

Biblical texts for babies going to heaven

Deuteronomy 1:39 *And the little ones that you said would be taken captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad—they will enter the land. I will give it to them and they will take possession of it.*

- Children have special category—they do not know right from wrong
- Other than Joshua and Caleb, the only people to take over the land were the children who did not partake in the rebellion because they did not know

Jeremiah 19:4 *For they have forsaken Me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned sacrifices in it to gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent.*

- Blood of the innocent
 - When God says something that is innocent, He means it (this is not a flippant or ironic statement)
 - Children sacrifices—They were killing children
 - God says that they are innocent—He saves them

2 Samuel 12:22-23 *He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.' 23 But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."*

- David is comforted in the fact that he will see his child again

- Contrast this with his grieving over Absalom—he continues to grieve over him after his son dies
 - David knows that he will never see him again (unlike the baby that died after birth)

1 Kings 14:10-13 *Because of this, I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israel—slave or free. 11 Dogs will eat those belonging to Jeroboam who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country. The LORD has spoken! 12 As for you, go back home. When you set foot in your city, the boy will die. 13 All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. He is the only one belonging to Jeroboam who will be buried, because he is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the LORD, the God of Israel, has found anything good.*

- Jeroboam was a wicked king—led the nation into idolatry and children sacrifices
- All family would be killed—none would be buried and be food as carrion
- However, one of Jeroboam's son would die and be buried (as opposed to being not buried)
- Why? Because God found something good in him—he did not participate in Jeroboam's rebellion
- It is important to note that God uses the word boy instead of youth

Revelation 5:9-10 *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because You were slain, with Your blood You purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."*

- Every tribe, language, people and nation
- All people groups are represented in heaven...how? Most of them have not heard the gospel
- God's grace extended to the children who have died

If a dead infant were sent to hell on no other account than that of a original sin, having inherited the Adamic sin nature, there would be a good reason to the divine mind for that judgment because sin is a reality. *(In other words, there would be reason for God to send a dead infant to hell, just on the basis of the fact that he possessed a sinful nature.)* But, the child's mind would be a perfect blank as to the reason of its suffering. Under such circumstances it would know suffering but it would have no understanding of the reason for its suffering. It could not tell itself why it was so awfully smitten and consequently the whole meaning of its sufferings being to it a conscious enigma, the very essence of the penalty would be absent and justice would be disappointed and cheated of its validation. R.A. Webb, *The Theology of Infant Salvation* (1907)

What is the remorse of someone who has no understanding of why he or she is even there?

16 *And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them.*

- He blessed them!
- Jesus does not bless those who are cursed, but He blessed the children
- This is the greatest illustration of God's grace

Application

There is comfort to those who have lost children. God, by His grace, will take them to heaven and number them among the priests and kings. It is His grace we can take comfort in knowing that our Lord will do what is right.

For those who are still living and growing up, there is never a better time to evangelize them to Christ! This is our life priority because when they get past the point of accountability, we become the stewards of their lives. Their salvation is still a work of God but we are to be the agent by which that work is done. We are the primary missionary in the life of our children.