

# GETTING A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN:

## “LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME UNTO ME”



by David Lee Burris





And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

— Matthew 18:3-4

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In Matthew 18:3, we read: “*And [Jesus Christ] said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*”

The context of Matthew 18:3 sets the tenor: “[1] *At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* [2] *And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,* [3] *And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* [4] *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*”

Verse 1 is crucial. The disciples are being selfish, as they desire to know who will be the prominent person in the Heavenly Realm. In other words, it is ***not*** about Jesus Christ, the King, but about ***them***. Who of ***them*** will be so honored with the exalted position? There is the attitude of competition, a desire to glorify self. Just by reading Christ’s scolding, we can sense that ***pride*** is their motivation. For that reason, the Lord beckoned a little boy and put him in the middle of the crowd. That child was a teaching aid: he was the personification of ***humility*** rather than ***ignorance***. Draw your attention to verse 4: “*Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*”

**Children know their weaknesses and inadequacies, but adults have had so much influence from their own evil hearts and the evil world system that they have adopted an attitude of self-sufficiency. A child is more compliant than an adult. Adults will argue because they have had more time to become self-centered and deceive themselves into autonomy (operating apart from the Creator God). Pride has set in. They have already gone through this educational system and are nearly impossible to reform. Habits, especially bad ones, are difficult to break. As we will see, such arrogant independence is completely foreign to God’s Word. It does ***not*** belong in His kingdom.**

**In the first century, children enjoyed little esteem and virtually no respect. While families appreciated their own children, society merely tolerated them. The very language of the day reveals this first-century prejudice. One Greek word for child (*pais* or *paidion*) also can mean “servant” or “slave.” Yet another (*nepios*) carries connotations of inexperience, foolishness, helplessness. Greek philosophers regularly chided a stupid or foolish man by calling him “nepios.” Indeed, biblical writers admonished Christians to “stop thinking like children [*paidia*]” (1 Corinthians 14:20).**

**Imagine, then, the people’s astonishment when Jesus brings a troublesome, noisy child and places him in front of the crowd (Matt. 18:1-9). With His hand on the lad’s shoulder, Jesus has the audacity to suggest this small tyke provides an example to be followed. Even the boy himself had to feel great surprise! Young children couldn’t wait to reach adulthood. They eagerly looked forward to shedding their lowly station. But Jesus said, “No, you’re missing it entirely. Unless you humble yourself like one of these, you’ll never enter the kingdom of God.” He means, “Look at them now, learn from them now, and aspire to become like them.”**

**Then Jesus does it yet again, just after He clears the temple of the money changers (see Matthew 21:12–16). Jesus not only chases off the thieves, but He heals the blind and the lame as well. The kids start shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” The chief priests and teachers of the law were furious and demanded of him, “Do you not hear what these children are saying?” “Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, ‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise’?”**

**What went on here? The religious leaders scoffed at Jesus: “Rein in these ignorant, foolish, and lowly children who treat you like the Messiah. You might be able to fool them, but we see right through you!” Jesus shrewdly turned the tables, in essence saying, “You were fooled, but not the ‘ignorant’ children!” Jesus seemed to delight in the fact that “inexperienced, simple” children had an understanding superior to the trained adults.**

**Speaking to the crowds in Galilee, Jesus declared, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure” (Matthew 11:25–26).**

**We find the genius of children, spiritually speaking, in their helpless state. The Bible, as well as Christian spirituality, has consistently held pride as the greatest spiritual failing known to humankind. The message of the gospel scandalizes the proud: it insists that we admit we are fallen, helpless, and in need of someone to pay the price on our behalf and then to imbue us with a foreign power so that we can live life the way it was meant to be lived. An infant incarnates this truth perfectly.**

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## What Can We Learn From Children?

There could be no greater job for a parent than to teach the child about Christ and what a person must do to follow the Lord as the proverb says: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

As we strive daily to teach our children (an all-consuming task), there are so many things in our world that we as parents must look out for such as TV, school, friends. I’m afraid that in our effort to teach sometimes we forget to learn from them. We must remember that in order to go to heaven we must be child-like. And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:3).

What could we possibly with all our knowledge learn from such a small child? Have you ever topped to watch a group of small children play? They don’t care if you are white, black, Hispanic, or Asian. They do not have the prejudice we do sometimes as adults. It does not matter if you are rich, poor, popular, cool or not. Can we say as Christians that daily in our effort to serve the Lord that we are child-like in these areas? Are we learning from our children (Jas. 2:8-9)?

Have you ever been around a child when the child starts to learn to read? As I strive to serve the Lord, do I have this type of an appetite for the knowledge it requires to follow God’s word? “As newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2; Tit. 3:14).

As adults we often have problems with others, and we might have a brother sin against us. How do we then treat that brother? Do we hold that grudge for a long time or is it forgotten immediately? How long will you be mad at someone before things are back to normal? Do we forgive and love again as fast as a child? Do we forgive at all? “Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4).

**Children love to please their parents.** They are so proud when I tell them that they have done a good job. Do we each day want the Lord to see the way we live our lives, or do we need to act as a misbehaving child and hide in shame? Parents should be good examples for all to follow, but let us all try to remember that to serve God we must learn from our children.

**As parents, we have the responsibility to teach our children. But could we be missing valuable lessons they could teach us about becoming like little children?**

**There is a proper order of things. I strongly believe it is proper for parents to teach their children to become responsible, successful adults. But could it be that children are also teachers?**

## **1. Belief like little children**

**Lesson:** There was no question in their young minds. They believed what the Bible said. What they soon learned is that some things only God can do.

**What I learned is that understanding who God is can begin early in life and in small ways, but it only matures through the lessons of experience and exposure.**

## **2. Generosity like little children**

**Lesson:** Giving offerings to God is not a haphazard activity. It takes planning and purpose—and it must be from the heart.

### **3. Childlike faith**

*Lesson:* Nothing is too small—nor is anyone too young or old—to get God’s attention.

### **4. Optimism like little children**

*Lesson:* Even the darkest of days can be brightened by the rays of optimism and hope.

### **5. Humble like little children**

It was only normal that the disciples associated Jesus with power. After all, think of the miracles they had witnessed—the instantaneous healing of the sick, demons cast out, mastery over nature in calming a storm and more. Even they themselves were commissioned by Him to perform similar actions (Matthew 10).

Everything associated with their Master seemed to signal rule and control over any kind of adversity through countless miracles. Misunderstanding, they anticipated His ultimate ushering in the prophesied Kingdom of God with authority and might, with themselves at His side.



**What they failed to discern was Jesus’s true motivation—His desire to serve mankind, not to be served (Mark 10:45). It’s not surprising, then, that the disciples eventually found themselves embroiled in heated speculation involving power—about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:1). It was time for an object lesson.**

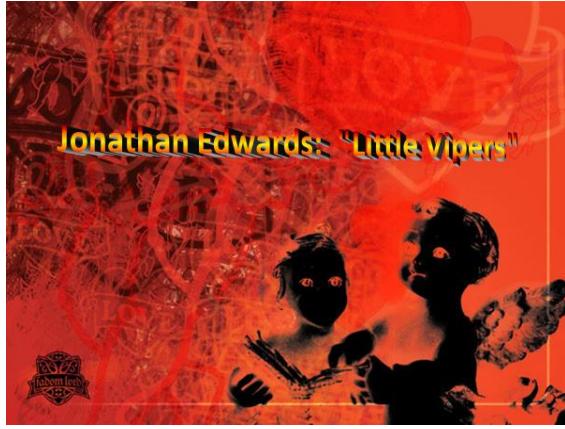
**“Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me’” (verses 2-5).**

**Imagine what must have gone through the minds of men like James and John (the “Sons of Thunder,” Mark 3:17), Peter and, yes, even Judas—all men of strong will, zeal and action—as they heard these words.**

**What could be said of a little child? He had no status. She had no power. A little child had no pride, ambition or guile. Indeed, all a child could do is learn, trust and submit, which, of course, was exactly Jesus’ point.**

***– Karen Meeker***

# CALVINISM IS SIMPLY WRONG



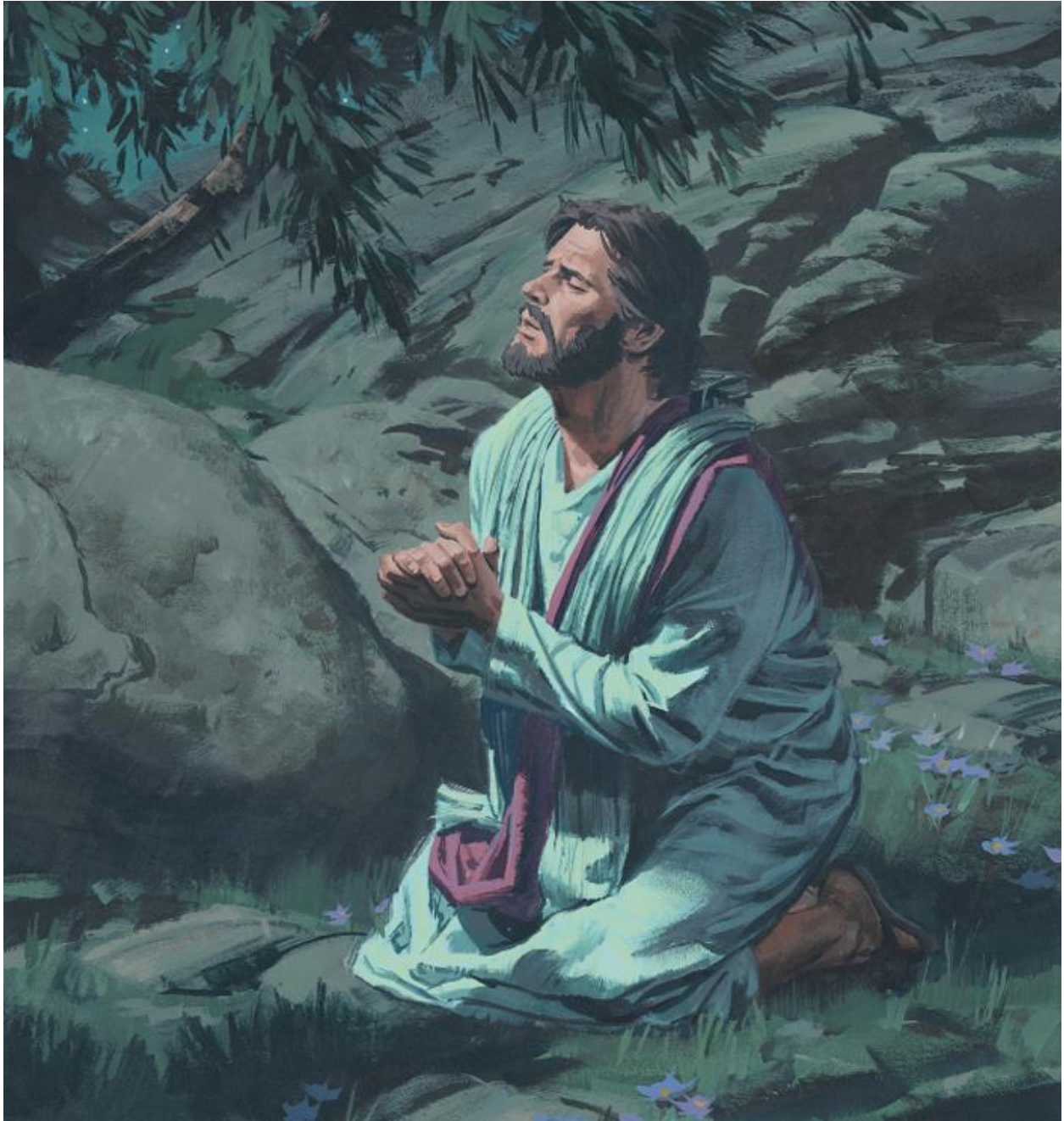
Calvinistic teaching claims that all humans have inherited a corrupt spiritual nature due to the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Due to this marred and perverse nature, the human heart is desperately deceitful, and man's nature is evil. This doctrine generally is referred to as "total depravity." Calvinists insist that "[e]vil pervades every faculty of his [man's—DM] soul and every sphere of

his life. He is unable to do a single thing that is good" (Palmer, 1972). He cannot do, understand, or desire the good: "[t]he corruption extends to **every part** of man, his body and soul" (Steele and Thomas, 1963, emp. in orig.).

Calvinism further maintains that, due to this inherited spiritual depravity, babies are born with a corrupt nature. Babies, therefore, are born depraved and, by definition, are in a "lost" state. The only way for babies to be saved is for them to be one of **the elect**—a predetermined few whom God arbitrarily decided to save while condemning all others. Hence, free will does not enter into the question of salvation. The Calvinist maintains that people cannot **choose** to receive salvation from God. They are in a lost condition due to their corrupt spiritual nature, and do not have the ability even to **desire** salvation, let alone to attain it. While several lines of argumentation from the Bible can be advanced to refute the Calvinist's viewpoint with regard to depravity, one in particular merits notice: the Bible's teaching regarding the spiritual condition of children. Long ago, the prophet Ezekiel, after contrasting the behavior of a father with his son, stated unequivocally: "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son" (18:20; cf. vss. 2-19). Jesus, Himself, demonstrated the spiritually safe condition of children when He stated: "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

Adults must become like children if they wish to be saved! Children hardly can be spiritually depraved! Christ followed up this declaration with a comparable observation: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14). – *Dave Miller*

# THE SACRIFICIAL PARENTAL LOVE AWAITING US AS GOD'S CHILDREN IN HEAVEN



## IN GETHSEMANE ALONE

1. Oh, what won - drous love I see, Free - ly shown for you and me,  
 2. "Tar - ry here," He told the three, "Tar - ry here and watch for Me,"  
 3. Long in an - guish deep was He, Weep - ing there for you and me,

By the One who did a - tone! Just to show His match - less grace, Je - sus  
 But they heard no bit - ter moan; For the three dis - ci - ples slept While my  
 For our sin to Him was known; We should love Him ev - er - more For the

*rit...* **Chorus**

suf - fered for the race,  
 lov - ing Sav - ior wept In Geth - sem - a - ne, a - lone. Oh, what love,  
 an - guish that He bore Oh, what love,

match - less love, Oh, what love for me was shown His for -  
 match - less love, Oh, what love

*rit...*

ev - er I will be, For the love He gave to me, When He suf - fered all a - lone.



There is no  
greater



than to lay down one's  
life for one's friends

JOHN 15:13

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# Greater Love

HAS NO ONE THAN THIS:  
*to lay down one's life*

— FOR ONE OF HIS FRIENDS —  
*John 15:13*

# Classic Cicero Story of Damon & Pythias

Damon and Pythias endured either the father or the same despotic ruler as Damocles of the sword hanging on a slender thread-fame, which is also in Baldwin's collection. This tyrant was Dionysius I of Syracuse, an important city in Sicily, which was part of the Greek area of Italy (Magna Graecia). As is true of the story of the Sword of Damocles, we can look to Cicero for an ancient version. Cicero describes the friendship between Damon and Pythias in his *De Officiis* III.

Dionysius was a cruel ruler, easy to run afoul of. Either Pythias or Damon, young philosophers in the school of Pythagoras (the man who gave his name to a theorem used in geometry), ran into trouble with the tyrant and wound up in prison. This was in the 5th century. Two centuries earlier there had been a Greek named Draco, an important law-giver in Athens, who had prescribed death as the penalty for theft. When asked about his seemingly extreme punishments for relatively minor crimes, Draco said he regretted there was no punishment more serious for more heinous crimes. Dionysius must have agreed with Draco since execution appears to have been the intended fate of the philosopher. It is, of course, remotely possible that the philosopher had engaged in a serious crime, but it hasn't been reported, and the reputation of the tyrant is such that it is easy to believe the worst.

Before the one young philosopher was scheduled to lose his life, he wanted to put his family's affairs in order and asked leave to do so. Dionysius assumed he would run away and initially said no, but then the other young philosopher said he would take his friend's place in the prison, and, should the condemned man not return, he would forfeit his own life. Dionysius agreed and was then greatly surprised when the condemned man returned in time to face his own execution. Cicero doesn't indicate that Dionysius released the two men, but he was duly impressed with the friendship exhibited between the two men and wished he could join them as a third friend. Valerius Maximus, in the 1st century A.D. does say that Dionysius released them and kept them near him ever after. [See Valerius Maximus: *The History of Damon and Pythias*, from *De Amicitiae Vinculo* or read the Latin 4.7.ext.1.]



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The Rules!**

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## MANKIND TREATED AS FAMILY

Romans Chapter Eight, Verses 14 thru 17

***"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba (Daddy), Father' "***

## MANKIND TREATED AS FAMILY

Galatians Chapter Four, Verses 4 thru 7

***"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba (Daddy), Father' "***



**A Child's Trust.** A young child trusts with all his heart that his parents will be there for him in his time of need. A child trusts that his father will be there for him when he takes those first steps, or takes his first ride on his new bike. A child trusts that his mother will be there for him when he scrapes his knee, or when the other kids are picking on him. Those who would enter into that heaven must, too, manifest a simple, loving trust in the One who loves us and died for us. When God makes a promise, we should trust Him to see it through. When I do what He has told me through His word, I can rest assured and trust with all my heart that He will uphold what He has promised. I can also rest assured that He will be there for me in times of need, in times of rejoicing, in times of despair. God is faithful and will not forsake His children (Hebrews 13:5). **Do you trust in God?**



- ◆ Inhabitant
- ◆ Residence
- ◆ Citizenship

## **THE SECOND CHILDHOOD OF THE CHRISTIAN**

**The Agape Higher Love of the Mature Christian incorporates the Parental Sacrificial Love toward those “Babes in the Faith” in our local Communities of Covenant. Furthermore, this Matchless Love works in Attitudinal Complement. In other words, those mature in the faith must remain open to continuous learning and cherish the natural curiosity of childhood – we must try to be as forgetful of personal offense as young children and always willing to work with everyone.**

**Moreover, we should put aside the adult defense mechanism of personal pride especially when it interferes with our Christian Mission & Representative Ambassadorship. Bottomline, we must see others and ourselves the same as God sees us – His Children!**

**Our Life on Planet Earth is Purposed for Spiritual Personality Development – We Are Spiritual Creatures Having A Human Experience – We Are in a Space/Time of Soul-Making as Good Fits for the Heavenly Realm!!**

**HEAVEN IS A PREPARED PLACE FOR THOSE WHOSE SHARED VISION OF HAPPINESS IS OF PAINLESS & LIMITLESS ETERNAL PLAY!!!**





*\*These are the essence of my thoughts while reflecting prior to surgery for my second heart attack Sunday afternoon 10/2020.*