

# Sins Against Children

The Book of Matthew gives us the stories and sayings of Jesus grouped according to subject. Luke is the chronological "Gospel." Matthew's outline is logical, rather than chronological. It is obvious that Chapters 18 and 19 are about children. This section begins this way:

"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them..."  
(vs. 1-2)

Sadly, adults sin against children, and this is a very serious matter (Note Matthew 18:6!). Families should beware of sins that can hurt the future of the kids.

## 1. Despising Them.

The question posed was about greatness (Matthew 18:1). The answer given involved a child. Without childlike qualities, no person could ever be truly great (Matthew 18:2-4). You must "become as little children" in order to "enter into the kingdom of heaven." A man must "humble himself" as a "little child" to be among the "greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Little children will become great unless adults "offend" them (vs. 5-9). Jesus said, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones" (v. 10). We make a big mistake when we "despise" a child. The word "despise" here means "to disparage," "to treat with disinterest," "to belittle in the mind." To despise a child is to discount him, to disregard him, to think little of him. Every child is somebody important. To miss this fact is to make a big mistake and to mistreat children! They are small, but they have big potential. Their humility and their faith are in better shape than ours! God assigned an angel to each one of them (v. 10), and He wants all of them to be saved (vs. 11-14). Take them seriously. Love them. Teach them. Win them to Christ. Pray for your children daily. See in them wonderful evidence of God's work in the world. Help each one reach his potential!

## 2. Offending Them.

We see in Matthew 18:5-9 that people who "despise" children often "offend" them. We also see that these "offenses" are great sins deserving terrible punishment. The word "offend" here means "to cause to stumble or fall" with the idea of causing a person's ruin! Any adult who would cause a child to stumble or turn from the right path and thus cause that child's eternal ruin deserves to pay for this "offense" in Hell! Verses 15-35 deal with the idea of "offenses" among adults, and steps to be taken in order to prevent or correct them. But the offending of a child is an especially evil thing because of the harm it can do in his future. Look again carefully at Matthew 18:1-14. See in verse 14 that it is not the will of God that even "one of these little ones should perish." In other words, God does not desire that any person born grow up and die and go to Hell. God assigns an angel to each baby, apparently to give him special watchcare in his life (v. 10). We know from John 1:9 that Christ enlightens every child so that from his earliest days he hears in some way from God. Romans 7:9-10 describes a child first ignorant of God's law, and therefore unaccountable for his sins. Then he becomes aware of the law, and thus is condemned and convicted. Galatians 3:23-26 tells us that this awareness of the meaning of God's law will, by the Spirit of God, lead the convicted child to faith in Christ. God's work in the heart of every child is wonderful, and His plan is for his salvation. What goes wrong that so many of them end up rejecting Christ, never being saved, living ungodly lives, and falling some day into Hell? Adults "offend" them. That's what happens. Adults turn them off the path, cause them to stumble, trip them up. How do "offenses come"? Wicked things are told to children. Wicked things are done to children. Holy things are ridiculed. Good influences are criticized. Adults, often unthinking, oppose what God is doing in the lives of kids. Men will answer to God for the influence they have had over children.

## 3. Divorce.

Matthew 19:1-12 gives very plainly Christ's teaching on divorce. Not much explanation is needed, if one will take

these verses at face value. God plans for married people to stay married. A case of adultery will allow for divorce, but God does not command divorce even then. Not every divorce is sinful, but every divorce is caused by sin. God's perfect will is a fixed marriage, not a scrapped marriage. The Lord's plan was for a stable family situation, in large degree for the sake of the kids. What did the prophet Malachi say?

"The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit, And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away [divorce]..."

(Malachi 2:14-16)

The Lord hates divorce, because He made the man and woman "one." And why did He do this? "That he might seek a godly seed"--godly children! Yes, people should stay married--for the sake of the children, and for the sake of God's will. Make great sacrifice to salvage, to fix, to heal, and to keep your marriage!

## 4. Spiritual Neglect

Right after Christ's teaching on divorce comes the story of parents bringing Jesus their children (Matthew 19:13-15). Notice that they "brought" the children to Him, and then He said, "Let the children come" ("Suffer" means "let"). Parents are to do all they can to bring their kids to Jesus, but then each child must himself make the decision to come. We are to love, discipline, and teach our children. We are to explain the gospel to them. We are to pray for them. Then, one day, they will see their need and come to the Lord Jesus for salvation! What a wonderful day is that day when they come! It is the reward for the parent who has done all he can to bring the child to Jesus. What awful neglect it is when parents do little or nothing to bring their children to the Lord! Yes, each child must come by a decision of his own heart, but few come unless they have been brought by the prayers, teachings, and admonitions of good parents. Are you guilty of neglecting your children spiritually?

## 5. Spiritual Abuse.

The rest of Matthew 19 gives us the strange story of a rich man who wanted to earn eternal life. Apparently he had received Bible training (See vs. 16-20), but he knew nothing about Bible salvation. He had responded well to his parents' training, and had always been a "good boy" (Read again v. 20), but he lacked something. In the story we find that this man was far from salvation. It would be nearly impossible to get him saved (vs. 23-24). Why? His problem seems to have been materialism. He would not forsake his possessions, even if his greed cost him his soul. What is it when parents give children spiritual and moral training, but aim them in the direction of Hell? It is spiritual abuse. Does your life and your example infuse your children with a love of the world, a love of money, and a self-righteous mind? Has your influence turned them away from such vital spiritual matters as faith, humility, and Christ Himself? The so-called Christian home that does not influence the children for godliness but only teaches them about God is abusing these precious souls. This materialistic, prideful, self-righteous man walked away from Jesus, lost forever. We must pay attention not only to what beliefs we teach, and what behavior we produce, but also what kind of heart we are developing in our children.

<b>Decision:</b> I will make my children important enough in my life to set their salvation as one of my main goals in life.
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