

S.O.H.L.

WEEKLY MINISTRY MEDITATIONS

Pronounced "Soul"

October 7, 2013

Receiving With Open Arms

MATTHEW 18:2-7 NKJV – (2) Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, (3) 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. (4) Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (5) Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. (6) Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (7) Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"

After reviewing the scripture reading, apparently the disciples had already forgotten what Jesus said about the worth of children and the seriousness of causing one of them to stumble or fall. So the question should be "When did Jesus address the disciples about this matter?" **Chapter 9:33** in the gospel of Mark, the Apostle Mark records that Jesus and His disciples came to Capernaum for the last time after an absence of several months. When they were in the house, Jesus candidly asked the disciples what they were arguing about on the road on their way to Capernaum. The disciples were ashamed to admit they had argued about who was the greatest. You see, matters of rank were important to the Jews so it was natural for the disciples to be concerned about their status in the messianic kingdom. Perhaps the privileges given to Peter, John and James fueled the argument. But regardless, in **Matthew 18:2** Jesus called a child unto Him and thus Jesus opens up my first point.

In **Matthew 18:2-3** Jesus set a little child in the midst of them and declares children as the "Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven." There are four words (set, greatest, kingdom and heaven) that we will focus on in this verse. Jesus used a child to help His self-centered disciples get the point. Christ is calling us to be "Childlike and not Childish"; not arguing over petty issues and not attempting to promote self. True greatness is a matter of inward spirit and heart. It is seen in the person who expresses his faith and love of Christ in sincere humility in a desire to serve both God and man, and in a willingness to be seen as the least important in God's Kingdom. Children are the foundation! The disciples had become so preoccupied in status, positions, promotions and recognition, that they lost sight of the Divine purpose! Jesus saw the children as pure and innocent.

In **MATTHEW 18:2-5** Jesus defines the childlike characteristics. Submissive (Vs. 2), Convert (Vs. 3), Humble (Vs. 4), Receive (Vs. 5) and Respectful (Vs. 2-5)

In **MATTHEW 18:6-7** Jesus denounces the one who suppresses a child. Children are trusting by nature. Because they trust adults, they are easily led to faith in Christ. God holds parents and other adults accountable for how they influence these little ones. Jesus warns that anyone who turns the little ones from faith in Him will receive severe punishment. Don't cause a child to stumble in life!

In **MATTHEW 19:13-15** Jesus reiterates on His first discourse concerning children. It is interesting that children are introduced shortly after the discourse on divorce: often they are the ones who suffer most severely from broken homes. The disciples saw the parents bringing their children as an annoyance and as an intrusion. But Jesus intervened with words that have since endeared Him to children of every age in (verse 14) chapter 19. Three lessons that emerge from that statement by Christ.....(A) It should impress the servant of the Lord with the importance of reaching children, whose minds are approachable, with the Word of God. (B) Children who wish to confess their faith in the Lord Jesus should be encouraged, not held back. (C) The words of the Lord answer the question of what happens to children who die before reaching the age of accountability. OVERALL LESSON: Jesus welcomes all children, "The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven." We are commanded to be childlike and not childish. Don't cause a child to stumble in his or her faith in Christ.

SCRIPTURE READING - Psalms 127:3-5

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

The powers of evil around you are no match for the power of Jesus within you.

October 1, 2013