



## The Pulpit Exchange

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)  
So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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### **Biblical View of Children's Salvation**

Recently, there was some discussion and it arose a couple of times after service relating to what a Biblical view is of children's salvation. I chose to look at this subject. I had an interest in my own as a person again to see what the Scripture says. Also, I think it has been a subject where there has been some confusion relating to this, not necessarily among us, but over the years for many years. It was a

subject that was in focus in the Reformation time, the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. It was one of the issues that separated the Anabaptists from their accusers. The State church view was that because of Adam's sin God condemns infants and children to eternal punishment. Therefore, their answer to that was to have infant baptism where they felt that puts things in the right perspective and that will save children.

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As we know, the Anabaptists rejected that view and that created quite a controversy. They did not baptize infants, and it was one of the reasons for much suffering on the part of the Anabaptists among other reasons. There was a lot of dialogue on that very issue.

Some of the Calvinistic theology today would say that children are lost. I have met individuals who have said that children are lost. Along with that some

would say that children, or anyone is predestinated either to be saved or lost and that one cannot change that. Therefore, if a child happens to be one that is predestined to be lost there is no hope. We believe that is certainly not the Biblical view. Nevertheless, when you go beyond our circles there is a lot more diversity relating to their view on children.

We want to seek to look at some Scriptures and then seek to see again from the Scriptures

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what God's view is relating to children. 1) *First of all in the Old Testament there would be various places where children are referred to.* It would seem quite clear that children participated along with their parents in God's promises and in the blessings that God gave to them. The example of that would be with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Some of them when their children came to years there were those that turned away and were not faithful to the Lord. It seems obvious that in their childhood as they were with their parents that they did benefit directly from the blessings that God gave right with their parents. There was not a difference made there.

*Deuteronomy 31:9–13 mentions the need for the covenant being repeated every seven years so that the children which had not heard would learn to fear the Lord.* This suggests that there was a time when obviously when they did not understand but they needed to teach so that they would learn to fear the Lord. “And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel. (10) And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of

the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, (11) When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. (12) Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: (13) And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.”

They (periodically — it says every seven years) were to have a special assembly. That is in addition to the other teaching that they were to be giving. They were to keep them so that those who had not known would know and would learn to fear the Lord.

*This implies that children must be old enough to hear and understand and must choose to reverence the Lord.* It implies that there is that individual choice which each one needs to make. There is a time where there needs to be a personal commitment.

In *Nehemiah 8:2* we will look again notice the children. “And Ezra the priest brought the law

before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.” They brought the whole group together, it mentions the women and all that could understand. This implies the children also. They were wanting to teach them to help them to a personal choice.

Children were not responsible for their sins, for sins in childhood, nor for the sins of their ancestors. We will notice a couple of Scriptures on that. There is the case in Israel where God did hold them responsible like the adults. That was when the ten spies came back with a negative report. God punished everyone who was twenty years and older. They would not enter the promised land. God made a difference there with the young and the older ones. They could say, “Were not any of the children sympathizing with their parents when their parents identified with the ten?” Very likely their children would have been influenced by that as well. Nevertheless, God made a difference where He did not hold the young ones responsible like He did the older ones.

Let us look at *Deuteronomy 1:39* and think of the difference of responsibility in relation to the

sins of one’s ancestors or childhood, “Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.” In referring to the same thought of going into Canaan they said, that the children which “had no knowledge between good and evil,” will be the ones to go in.

We see God’s attitude and the difference of responsibility also in *Jonah 4:11*, “And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?” The Lord in speaking to Jonah said, “Why should not I have considered that you know in giving them an opportunity. It gives us some insight into God’s attitude toward children. It was compassion that God had toward the innocent ones. They had a special place.

Let us look at *Deuteronomy 24:16* relating to the idea that children are not responsible for the sins of others. “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.” It is the

thought of personal accountability.

*Jeremiah 31:29, 30* says, “In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. (30) But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.” They were using that proverb incorrectly. God was saying, where they were, but He said it is not correct. Finally, everyone answers for themselves. Children do not inherit the guilt of their parents, I believe is the thought given here. Finally, each one must answer for their own iniquity.

In summary, relating to the Old Testament, there would be a lot that one could look at that shows children with their parents benefiting. There were certain purifications. There was the circumcision for the male children, but they benefited from God’s blessing without the same involvement as an adult. They were not guilty for their father’s sins, and it does seem like there was definitely a choice required for them to make as they grew in their understanding and as they were able to understand. They needed to make a personal choice of faith in the Lord and the covenant needed to become their

own — the covenant relationship by their own commitment to the Lord. Those are some things that we can observe from the Old Testament.

II) *We want to look at Christ’s attitude toward children.* Again, looking at it from a broader picture in our understanding of the Gospels, children, again and again, children and adults were blessed in Jesus’ miracles and in His workings with men. The children benefited such as Jairus’ daughter. She was twelve-years-old when she was healed. Children were present with the multitudes like where the five thousand were fed. They were present benefiting from what Christ provided. Children were obviously blessed by Jesus. There are examples of that. They were touched with the ministry of Jesus, but nowhere do we see Jesus calling the children to repentance. Rather, we have Him looking out for them and blessing them.

Those who believed and followed the Lord, the ones that He challenged to follow Him, were adults, were they not? Again and again we see that Jesus was not calling the children to repentance. Where were the children that were doubting and turning away? Where were the ones who were opposing Him? Attention is

not called to that. We do not see that. It gives us an indication of Christ's view. Christ used children to teach adults about how to receive Him. Children were in focus, but He does not emphasize to them their need for repentance. Certainly, as they were older, they would have been called to make a commitment, but, we do not see that. Jesus rebuked the disciples when they were interfering with the children coming to Him. He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not" (Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16). There was rather condemnation on men when they wanted to push the children away.

It would certainly seem like Christ had a tender spot for children. In light of the many examples in the Gospels of where children were present, if Jesus had viewed them as lost individuals, certainly He would have left examples for us in how He reached out to them. There are many examples of where Jesus reached out and presented the Gospel. Yet we do not have Him doing that with the small children. Jesus Christ said that children are already a part of the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 19:13–15 (a familiar Scripture) says, "Then were there brought unto him little children,

that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. (14) But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. (15) And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence." Several places this same account comes out in the Gospels, Mark 10:13–16 says very much the same thing. "And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. (14) But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. (15) Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. (16) And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

How did Christ receive Children? Did he not receive them and accept them as they were? The Scripture says, "he took them up . . . and blessed them." In the context here, immediately after this the rich young ruler came, who had been keeping the law. How did Jesus relate to Him? Did He bless him and send him on his way? He

said, “You have a problem. . . go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor” (Mark 10:21). Then, it says, “And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved” (Mark 10:22). Jesus went right to a need in his life — the need for surrender — in His encounter there. In contrast, when the children came He picked them up and blessed them. That also gives us an insight into how He related to children and how He received them. They certainly He had a special place.

It is sometimes said that Jesus was simply using them as an object lesson, and was not necessarily saying that they were a part of the kingdom of heaven. A correct understanding would be that He says, “for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16). I believe it is a twisting of the Scripture to say that it is not. He is referring to children. Yes, it is of those that have the attitudes of children also — the humility. It is those who are a part of the kingdom. Nevertheless, He is also saying that children are a part of the kingdom of heaven. In looking at the word meanings there, those who understand the Greek would say that the meaning would refer directly to children and that they are a part of

the kingdom of heaven.

Again, in summary looking at what Jesus believed and Jesus’ view of children, Jesus Christ accepted and received them with open arms. He had a tender spot for children. He was not calling the little children to repentance. Rather, He used them as an example and a lesson to others. He also held His followers accountable for how they related to children. He emphasized the need for relating properly to children lest they are a stumbling block to them. We will notice a little more on that later on.

Another question, we could raise, “How do we relate to children and the sin nature in relation to children?” We could say Romans 5 could be one of the clearest Scriptures. It was a little different angle but I think it is one of the clearest Scriptures that would address this subject. The context here in Romans is one of salvation. It is the theme by faith in the Lord Jesus, a commitment to the Lord. He addresses the thought here of the sin nature. First of all, I will quote the Scripture from 1 Corinthians 15:22. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” The teaching here is that Christ more than undid what Adam’s sin did by way of the provisions which are much

more. Applying and looking at that thought, I believe we can see here that children in their childhood, or as we say “in their innocence” are not held accountable for Adam’s transgression. We have the sin nature. We have a nature that is inclined the wrong way but we are not guilty for Adam’s sin. Rather, we are guilty because of our own sin. Keeping that in mind I think we can see in this Scripture that it is the provision of Christ and the blood of Christ which covers, we could say, for the sin of children as well.

Let us read let us look at Romans 5:12 thinking of it from that perspective. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Then we have the parenthesis. I will read picking up verses 12 and 18 and then I will go back to the parenthesis. “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation;” (referring to the thought of verse 12) “(18b) even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” Where did the free gift come? “Upon all men unto justification of life.” He undid what Adam had done.

Now, let us read beginning at

13–21, “(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. (14) Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. (15) But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. (16) And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. (17) For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) (18) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (19) For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (20) Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:



(21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Notice in verse 15, much more the grace of God. If we have the offence, “by the offence of one . . .” many were made that, but he says, “but much more the grace of God which is abounded unto many through Christ. We notice that in the justification for “all men” in verse 18, “grace did much more abound” (verse 20). Therefore, we can say Christ more than adequately cleared up what Adam undid. We have a nature that is bent toward wrong, but I believe that we can rightly conclude that the blood of Christ has covered for the sins of children, of those in innocency. We are not guilty for the sin of Adam, not guilty for Adam’s transgression, but we are guilty as when we come to the age of accountability and reject and turn away. That is when we become guilty for our rejection.

If children were lost and not recipients of God’s mercy, could this teaching, could this verse be true, where he says, “grace did much more abound,” where sin had abounded? We believe that the blood of Christ has covered for children in their innocency. Like I said, we have a sin nature

in that we are bent toward wrong. However, we are not finally guilty for Adam’s transgression. When one rejects the Lord Jesus and follows their own sin nature when they come to the age of accountability, it is then that they become guilty before God because of the rejection and because of their rejection and self will.

He continues on then, looking at this chapter in the context, he says in chapter 6:1 then, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” Is Jesus’ provision much greater than, and has more than compensated? Well no. He said, “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein” (verse 2)? How can we go on in sin if we are serving the Lord? Paul says if we are dead, we are freed from sin. There needs to be a turning from it. He goes right on after that and emphasizes individual responsibility, individual commitment, and personal accountability. Therefore, we understand that we cannot. We do not. There must be a response to the Gospel call. When one comes to the age of accountability (and it is a part of living) we cannot live in sin and claim to have the blessing of God. He says, “Likewise reckon ye also your-

selves to be dead indeed unto sin” (Romans 6:11). It calls for an active, aggressive commitment to the Lord if we want to be faithful. We do not sit back and have the Lord just clear it all up. He will do that if we have faith in Him.

*When does a child become responsible or become accountable?* Again, this is an issue that varies. To say that it is a certain age or an exact age, we do not say that. It does vary. The Scripture does not spell it out. Nevertheless there are some indications that we have. For example, Jesus went with his parents to the Temple at the age of twelve. I think that it was at the end of the thirteenth year that the Jewish boy was to have reached the age when he was to take his religious duty and responsibility. It was in that time period. We often say the age of twelve. Many times, twelve to fifteen is when there is that awareness, greater awareness of personal accountability. There is an awareness of personal sin and a need for a Saviour. It is at that time when we believe that children ought to when they have that personal call. There needs to be that personal response of faith to the Lord. Again, it may vary.

It can vary where a child grows up with a proper (with

right teaching) like they would in our settings. It is a little different from where one is exposed to a whole lot of wickedness and wrong doing. Nevertheless, it could sometimes be maybe at a later age before that awareness comes. Nevertheless, it is important that one does see their own personal need of a Saviour. They need to realize that they need a personal commitment and a personal faith. To promote it like some do relating to emphasizing child evangelism, having the little children make commitments can actually bring a confusion in the minds of children such that they do not understand what is happening when they do actually reach the age when they are accountable to God. It is important that we think right about it, lest we actually become a stumbling block.

*What is the parent's responsibility?* What is our responsibility as parents relating to our children, in light of what we have looked at in the Scripture? *The Scriptures again and again emphasize the need for teaching.* We can notice that from Deuteronomy 6 where it says that they were to teach them. It emphasized very much that they would be teaching their children the right way. It was to be continually held in front of them, so

that they also would choose to have that covenant relationship with the Lord. It was to be “line upon line,” (Isaiah 28:10, 13) “when thou walkest by the way” (Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19). In every area of life they were to capitalize on teaching and have it in the forefront. That is God’s desire for us today as well that we are diligent in teaching and in directing our children in showing them the right way to go.

Teaching the covenant in the Old Testament was a part of keeping the covenant. Teaching it and being faithful in that area was a part of keeping it. We would say that for us today, teaching is a part of our Christian responsibility. Teaching our children is a part of keeping the faith.

*Again, thinking of parents’ responsibility in relating to children, in the faithful home situation, the Scriptures emphasize the need for parents to be an example to their children.* For example Ephesians 5:22, 25 says the wife is to submit to the husband, and the husband is to love. In the faithful home situation children are taught how the Church is to relate to Christ and how Christ relates to the Church. By faithfulness in our homes and being a right example, it does give the children a proper frame of reference in their relationship

in how one relates to the Lord. We have said that already. Their concept of God often is developed from how we relate to them.

Taking that a step further like from Ephesians 5, their concept of how the Lord relates to the Church and how the Church relates to the Lord is developed in how they see it working on the home level. Children should be able to see in their parents those who have a respect for the Lord and how a disciple ought to live. As they see a faithful mother, they see how a disciple of the Lord ought to live. As they see their father, they should see one from whom they ought to be able to understand something about how the Lord loves the Church and relates to the Church, by how their father relates to the home. Is that saying too much? I do not think it is. I believe it is given in the Scripture too, and we need to be a right example in that way.

Further, children are told to obey their parents. In Ephesians 6:1, and also in Colossians 3:20 it says that children should obey their parents. Parents are to teach obedience by example and discipline. Jesus was an example of that and it says that he “was subject unto them” (Luke 2:51).

Parents are to nurture their children. Ephesians 6:4. They need to develop and have the

kind of relationship with their children that will show them through teaching and example how to live. It is the idea of training and teaching. Can we train them into the Christian life? Well, no they are born. They need to be born into the Christian life by proper faith and a personal relationship. However, from what the Scripture teaches it is important that we are teaching them how a Christian ought to live. We teach them the precepts of God. This is how God wants us to live. This is the way that God wants us to walk. By diligent teaching then we can help to lay the groundwork so that as they have a personal faith they can then enter into and have a consistent Christian experience. Yes, they need to be born and they are saved through the blood of Christ, but it is important that we are teaching “line upon line” (Isaiah 28:10, 13) and that we are bringing them up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4) such that it does lay a ground work for them to be faithful the rest of their lives. The burden that we see coming out in the Scriptures is that the teaching would be given so that it rivets them such that they follow in that way the rest of their life. Certainly, it calls for much diligence and it is a great responsi-

bility that we have as parents to teach them and lay that kind of ground work for them.

*What about a child's religious experience before conversion?* We believe that the child is directly accountable to their parents and parents can “clear the air” with their children. We, as parents have a direct accountability to God for their actions. It is right that a child learns to pray. We ought to teach them to pray. Teach them to read the Scriptures. Be acquainted with the Scriptures. We read them Bible stories and they learn. It is right that they learn, trust and have security in the Lord to pray to the Lord for and express trust in the Lord in that way. It is right to do that. It is right that they participate in worship in our worship services and in our family worship. As I already emphasized, we diligently teach them right conduct and how a Christian ought to act and live. It is a part of our teaching them and part of their religious activity in their childhood. It lays a ground work for them as they come to the age of accountability.

I want to yet look at Matthew 18:1–6. We have here the teaching of Christ relating to offending one of the little ones. It says, “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. (5) And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. (6) But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”

We often apply it to the new believer in relation to offending one of these little ones. It could also apply as it relates to children. It is one of the reasons, like I said before, that we need to have a right view of children. Having a wrong view, we could become a stumbling block and come under the judgment of God

because of that. Child evangelism could do that, where it brings, and can bring confusion into the mind of the child such that it makes it difficult for them to know how to relate later on. There are various ways that we could be a stumbling block by failing to teach and train. We could also lay a groundwork that makes it hard for them to finally come out right. Certainly it does emphasize the seriousness of the responsibility.

May God help us to be faithful. We certainly thank the Lord for the many little ones among us, the many innocent ones among us. I believe the Lord, as He looks down on an assembly like ours, has a very keen interest in the innocent ones. May we ever see it from a right perspective. May God help to be faithful and diligent in the responsibility that rests upon us to bring them up in a way that will help them to lay a ground work for a life of faithfulness, and lay a ground work for an eternity with the

## **Keeping Innocent Children Innocent**

John 3:5–7 says “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which

is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” In the past we have come to realize that some have been brought into the church, have been baptized into

the church without this realization that they were dark, in sin, enslaved, in bondage, and that they had a nature that they could not deal with. They had not realized what it says in Luke 14. They have not been able to count the cost and choose wisely, and in the end have a foundation that fits them for all of life.

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. . . So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26, 33). That speaks to me of a conscious choice that a person needs to make to be born into the kingdom of God. We do our children an injustice to try and bring them into that experience when they are yet innocent.

We would like to establish the fact that our children are innocent in the eyes of God. Ephesians 6:1 simply says, “Children, obey your parents.” That shows who they are responsible to, does it not? Nowhere, that I can find in the New Testament does it make them responsible to God. *Let us look at a few of what we would call “indirect” Scriptures.* Matthew 18:3 says, “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.” Matthew 19:14 says, “But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus is saying that we need freedom from guilt for fellowship with God. And He is implying through these verses that children have that. They have freedom from guilt and they can have communion and fellowship with God like the believer can (not in the same sense) but there is no enmity there with God.

1 Corinthians 13:11 speaks to this point, I believe. “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” His speech, understanding, and thought as a child, he said, was not equal to that when he became a man. It was not equal to making a choice which has truly counted the cost. 1 Corinthians 14:20 says, “Brethren, be not children in understanding.” It would imply to us that there is definitely a difference in the understanding of a child and the understanding of an adult. Jesus recognized this difference. In His healing to adults, He often said along with it “Thy sins be

forgiven,” (Matthew 9:2; Mark 2:5) or, “Do you have faith to be healed?” However, when He was healing a child, he worked through the parent to heal that child. Time and again we see that.

*Some direct Scriptures that talk about the innocence of a child.* Romans 4:15 says, “Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.” Then Romans 5:13 says, “For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.” It simply tells us that there is no imputation of sin where there is no law. Before they realize that they have broken a divine law of a holy God, God does not hold them responsible and accountable.

Romans 7:7–9 says, “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. (8) But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. (9) For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” Here Paul says that “I was alive without the law once. I did not know what lust meant. I did

not know that I was breaking a commandment of a holy God.” However, when the Holy Spirit revealed that to him he said, “I am guilty before the Law. I am guilty before a holy God. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived.” When sin became an experience with him that he desired to do, and he wanted to do that, that was when his relationship with God died. That is when he became accountable to God. We have no right to do that to a child.

Jesus again brings out this fact in John 9:41 talking to the Pharisees. They said they were not guilty before Him — before Christ. “Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.” Thus, when a person knows and understands the will of God, and that he has broken a law of a holy God, then their sin is there. They are accountable for that. John 15:22 says, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.” I say we have no responsibility, we have no obligation, and further we have no right to make children guilty before a holy God. Conversion is a work of God’s Spirit upon the heart of the indi-

vidual.

John 3:6 says, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” If we will have converted, living stones within the church of God, it will be only by the work and the operation of Holy Spirit. Any aspect of church life, or of church work that is born of man’s will and of man’s doing will be brought to naught. I do not care if it is our preaching, if it is our discipline in the church, or if it is confession. If we force people to confess and make them say I was sorry without a realization that they have truly repented from this, that work will be brought to naught. It cannot prosper because it is not born of the blessing of the Holy Spirit of God.

Romans 8:7 says, “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” If we take a child and read him the Bible stories and take him to church and sing these songs of the Gospel to them and there is absolutely no enmity there between that child and God. They say, “Read some more father, read some more,” if you are reading those interesting Bible stories. When a story would convict an older person, children make absolutely no connection between that story and themselves. That tells me that

there is no enmity in the life of that child between that child and God. They are innocent before God. We will touch on that Scripture again a little later.

The Bible says, “The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Corinthians 3:6). That is the life we want to see brought out in our children when they realize before God that they are guilty. We want to, and we need to, in the church see that they have true life which will fit them for all the aspects and all the “fiery darts” (Ephesians 6:6), of Satan that will come against them. Without that they will be weak and faltering.

*The doctrine of salvation depends upon (as we believe and understand) the call of God.* It depends upon man’s repentant attitude. The Christian life is a radical change and we “grow in grace” (2 Peter 3:8). We do not grow into grace. We do not put on the covering. We do not join the church and keep its standards and then after a while we realize that well, we need to do this yet in order to be pleasing to God — we need to do this. It is not a works relationship with God. It is growing in grace. It is not growing into it, if you understand what I mean.

Also, the doctrine of salvation is total victory through Jesus



Christ. It is not this half-hearted confession and no repentance. It is total victory. It is a battle fought. It is a battle won. It is not a constant battle in my life that I am today battling the same old thing that I was in the past ten years. Rather, there was a point of change in your life and in my life. From there on we grow and we grow in our experience. It is not simply that we battle the same old thing. There is victory there and we need to understand that. We need to teach it in our churches.

*There is entirely too much hazy teaching and understanding and requiring of repentance in our churches.* We take people in who have simply confessed and who have not changed. I have a neighbour who says, “I sin ten thousand times a day, and ask God at night to forgive me.” Does he know what repentance means? I say he does not know what repentance means. He has not realized what it means to repent, change his ways, and ask God to help him so he does not sin those ten thousand times a day like he says, because he goes with the realization that he will do exactly the same thing tomorrow. That is not the Christian life. The Christian life is a change and it is one where God has given us power over sin.

*What happens if we take a child of immature understanding to the steps of conversion before they realize Romans 3* where it says, “all have sinned” (Romans 3:23), and that “I am a sinner in the eyes of God?” What happens if they have not realized Romans 7? It teaches the grace and the power of God to control our nature to take care of the Satan’s work within us and to render it powerless and useless. If we take them through these steps of conversion before they realize that, they can never know the blessedness of Romans 8 — the power of the new life. They are burdened and frustrated and they lack John 1:12 where it simply says, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

We open the door to Calvinism when we do this. It allows sin as a normal experience. It paves the way for the second work of grace that later on that they really realize that they are sinners in the eyes of God. Then, what was that conversion experience (so called) back there? Well, then they come to realize, “Maybe this is a normal experience, and now I need a second infilling.” Then, later on we need another infilling. No, when God opens His storehouse of grace to a person at

conversion there is everything there open to me to live the Christian life of victory.

The Mennonite church has needed to implement renewal programs. I received a pamphlet in the mail not long ago when I was thinking of this subject. They extolled the wonderful things that the Holy Spirit was doing for the modern Mennonite church today. I say they needed to do that to keep bolstering people up because they failed to meet the Biblical requirement of repentance and Holy Spirit infilling at conversion. They failed to realize that there at conversion is opened to me everything. There at conversion and upon accepting a person into church life we need to have evidence of the power of the Spirit of God at work in His life or we have no right to give that person a hope that they are right with God by taking them into the church.

*If we impress little or young, innocent children that they need to repent it makes it hard for them to repent and change when God does call.* It makes it hard for them to admit that they do have a need, or it can make a person self-sufficient and proud. "I have done this by myself. I have lived a fairly good Christian life up until now by myself." They will gradually cut out some

things possibly, but they will lack the divine power, joy, and assurance and they will lack the joy of knowing that the Lord has done this for me, and that this is the Lord's work for me in my life. Psalm 40:2 says, "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." It gave me direction.

If they are too young, and if it is not the work of the Holy Spirit upon their life, they will lack that joy, power, and assurance. They will learn to live on feelings and not faith. "Today, I am down here and tomorrow maybe I feel a little better because I heard a wonderful sermon," or something like that, instead of living a life of faith before a holy God, and depending solely upon Him for my assurance, power, and my daily sustenance. It tends to develop people without personal conviction or conscience. Parents, the church, or someone else becomes the governor for their life instead of the holy Word of God. It makes for poor perception of Bible truth for everyday victory. It is hard for them to leave Hebrews 6 and go on and grow in their Christian experience because they have not understood the deep things and the deep truths of salvation.

I am not here to do battle with

those who chose young. If there are ones in your churches who chose young I only ask, "Do you know repentance?" Do you know what repentance means? That it means a turning about and forsaking of all that is old, of all that belongs to Satan and his kingdom, and are you open now to all the known will of God? That is where I would leave that relationship with you now.

*When we tell an innocent child to confess to God, we transfer our responsibility to God.* In their immaturity, in their inability (like it says there in 1 Corinthians 13:11) and their inability to understand God in all His works which we need for the salvation experience, they are made to relate to Him to this unseen Authority. It brings fear into their life, and experience. They are afraid that "God will punish me for this sin that I have done." At this point I would like to inject that some of our literature in our older school books, looking through it lately has that concept in there. I am not saying that all of our children will be upset about that. Some of them might be, but taking into account the amount of our material that goes to non Mennonite homes and schools where they do teach that — child evangelism, our books are fit right into their pro-

gram. They do not in the end have a strong emphasis on that, but they do meet their requirement for what they are looking for. Things that have been done to change that for which I am glad for.

We are talking about this relationship bringing fear to them. They fear that God will punish them for their sin. Brethren that is entirely the wrong concept of Christian experience. It is a love relationship. It is not a fear relationship. If your relationship with God is simply a fear relationship, I would give you nothing for it because we do not fear God. We do *fear* Him in the sense that we respect and we reverence Him and we obey Him, but we love Him. 1 John 4:18 says "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." I believe sometimes that is why we see so much "dead wood" in our churches because their relationship is built on a fear relationship instead of a love relationship. Fear comes from unyieldedness, I am afraid in our churches. Fear comes from being unyielded to the will and the Word of God.

Too long maybe we have had an idea that this conversion experience is a matter of background, culture, and teaching and that if we teach and train them right then they will come to know God

whether it is early or not so early, it will not matter so much. However, I believe firmly that it is Holy Spirit conviction and empowerment that gives the Church life — abundant life, so that out of its bellies can flow rivers of living water. It is not a background nor is it training. We have brethren in Nigeria and elsewhere and we are thankful for that. It is not a background that has brought them in. It is the power and the Word of the will of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit upon men's lives that bring them to the place where they realize that this is God's Word.

*Do we keep them innocent by ignorance?* No, Samuel was in the Lord's house. He ministered there and it says he was "girded with a linen ephod" (1 Samuel 2:18). It also says that, "Samuel did not yet know the LORD" (1 Samuel 3:7). Although, he was acquainted with all these sacrifices and all the laws, personally he did not yet know the Lord. Teach them. Talk of them. Live them yourself, rather than think that we should not teach them. We realize we must teach them because this is how the Law can do its work as the "schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24).

They see that when the Holy Spirit speaks to them, they will see that "Here am I, a lost sinner.

Over here is God and over here is His holy law together. Somehow, I am estranged from that." However, if they do not have that realization or the knowledge that this is the law of God and this is what God requires of me, how will they ever be brought over here to a relationship with God? Therefore, we need to teach them the law of God in order to bring them to the place where they need to be. Otherwise, they will have no base or no footing and a poor base for their Christian life.

Often, when a young child would respond in a meeting, they do not have that enmity of Romans 8 there against God. They often need a better relationship with their parents. The parents could take care of the situation. I think we, as ministers, for their good and for the church's good, have developed a better understanding of accountability and conversion in our churches and to keep the pressure out. However, along with that is an urgent need of a better child/parent relationship — a relationship that has the finger on the pulse of each child and knows what each child is doing and thinking.

*We keep them innocent by discipline.* This is one of the key ways. It simply says, "Children, obey your parents in all things:

for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. (21) Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged” (Colossians 3:20, 21). We provoke to anger and discouragement when we do not punish the disobedience that they have done and clear the guilt so that they can go off and feel absolutely free that they are guiltless before us because they have been punished for it. The punishment has been meted to the crime and they can go off feeling that they are free. I believe, firmly that this could be applied more in dealing with children to relieve the guilt, to punish them. So often we neglect to do that. We fail in our actual doing of it. It is not that we would want to disown them but we fail to actually bring it about and we leave them mixed up and confused. As parents, we stand as their image of authority and we are developing and establishing a pattern of respect for authority for life. We need to clear the guilt so that they can go on feeling that they are guiltless. If we have not lived or disciplined consistently it brings them into conflict at the time of conviction. They are forced to choose between the parents and the Bible way.

*We keep children innocent by a healthy interest in childhood*

*activities and projects and by ignorance of sin.* If children find out too much and they know experimental knowledge of sin they know that we do not approve of that. It brings a conflict and a guilt within them that they are not ready to express and to clear with us. The simple work ethic is a release from the emotional pressures in school and home life. We must enter into that with them as parents, so that they realize that we, as a family unit, stand together firm on this and that we need each other and each one contributes to the welfare, well-being, and the health of this home by the project that we are doing here by how we are working together. The world’s individualistic, self-sufficient attitude is rubbed off too much upon us to the detriment of our homes and our family oneness that we need there.

I cannot give a pattern that if you follow this then they will sense that you are genuinely interested in them. Nevertheless, it is not hard to tell your interest, and they can tell your interest by the way you relate to everyday life with them. It is more parental attitude than it is the matter of having all these circumstances really good and this good relationship. We never gain a relationship by ridicule, sar-

casm, anger at their mistakes, intentional or not. I pity the child who has never heard their father say that “I am sorry. In this case . . . I did . . .” or “I acted wrong.” That helps to establish a relationship with them and with you that they cannot go over. They can realize that father knew he was wrong here and he was ready to admit that.

You ask, “What does this relationship have to do with innocence?” I see this in it, if we have a good relationship with our children, at any point where you see guilt for something they have done wrong, it can be cleared by the one who is responsible and by the one who is genuinely interested in their welfare. We do not condition them to live with guilt. That is a poor base for relationship with God if we have conditioned them to live with guilt. If we have that relationship that touches their heart’s need and sees where they are at, then we can clear the guilt with them and the thing is over. It is done.

With a good relationship, we can see that enmity against God like it says in Romans 8:7, “The carnal mind is enmity against God,” we see that building and rising in their experience. We can see them making fun of sacred things and we can see like it says in Psalm 38:10 that the

light is gone out of their eyes, and that they have become guilty before God. We can, as Eli, help them to see that “I cannot clear this with you child. This is something that is because of Romans 3. It is because you are a sinner. It is because of Romans 7 that you have no power. I have no power to clear this.” We can bring them into a Romans 8 experience, where they experience Holy Spirit conviction and Holy Spirit power to live the Christian life. They can know that “by the grace of God I am what I am (1 Corinthians 15:10), and not by the pressure or the emotion of an evangelist but by the convicting power of the Word of God.

I would like to say something to us as ministers. Preach with power but leave the emotion out of it. Too long our churches have been fraught with a message of condemnation without positive direction. Do not leave your audience guessing as to what you mean, and especially related to children. I have seen children who have sat under the preaching that condemned sin and how wrong and how bad it was and ended there and they came home confused and wondering, “Am I all right? Am I safe?” However, they have listened to the same message preached with power

(and we need to preach about hell and heaven and future life and condemned sin) but it gave the remedy for that and that child came home and was satisfied. They understood that there is a remedy and they made no relation to their accountability to God through that kind of positive preaching.

The same principle applies here to preaching as to our discipline as parents. We must give the remedy. We must clear the guilt in our preaching. We must make the choice there. God did not close His revelation at the end of Malachi but He opened up the whole New Testament. He opened the whole mysteries of the Gospel to us — the storehouse of Christ and the whole storehouse of grace to us. He does not leave the message in a state of gloom, but He leaves it in a state of victory.

We have a responsibility to preach that positive to our children. Parents, remember the Shunammite woman. Her son was dead. She said, “slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee” (2 Kings 4:24). We need parents with an urgent need that their children will find life, and a conscious relationship of sins forgiven, of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, of communion with the source of life. Like it says of

Cornelius, “Thy prayers . . . [are heard]” (Acts 10:4). We need parents with the conviction that this is an urgent matter, and “I will not bring them into conflict with God and make them accountable to God. I will allow that to be the Spirit’s work but I will do my part as a parent to show them the law and to live the law so that when they come to that choice they will know how to choose.”

I would like to think yet of Elijah in 1 Kings. He took that dead boy and he prayed, “O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul come into him again” (1 Kings 17:21). We need ministers in our churches with that burden, to present every son and daughter to their parents to their church, to the community, to God with sure, spiritual life. We must be sure and convinced that they know that they were dead in sin and that now they are alive. We do not want this hazy experience where they do not know whether they have been dead, but the genuine religion that grips the heart of the sincere seeker.

We need to discern for that as ministers. We need to see the vitality that comes only from God and His call and the Spirit’s infilling and the Spirit’s guiding, or our churches will be fraught with the constant thing of people who

do not have victory and who do not truly know the Lord. May we as ministers take up this work.

### Scripture References

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<b>Nehemiah</b>				<b>Galatians</b>	
8:2	3	1:12	17	3:24	20
		<b>Psalms</b>			
		3:5–7	13	<b>Ephesians</b>	
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		<b>Acts</b>		3:20	11
<b>Jeremiah</b>		10:4	23	3:20, 21	21
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		<b>Romans</b>			
<b>Jonah</b>		3:23	17		
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		5:12–21	8		
<b>Matthew</b>		5:13	15	3:8	16

### From the Previous Issue:

#### Significant Anabaptist Distinctives

From a message by Jesse Neuenschwander

Good Friday, April 09, 1993

Spring Bible Conference

Wellesley, Ontario Canada

#### Understanding Our Distinctive Practices

From a message by Harold Good

Thursday, January 19, 2006

Winter Bible School

Richland Mennonite Church



## Youth Book Reprint

### Andrew Dunn: An Irish Story *continued*

Lord. May God help us to that end.**Praying to Saints.**

*Andrew.* “What authority, sir, have you in the Word of God for praying to saints?”

Father Dominick was now fairly aground, and could find nothing in Scripture to countenance praying to saints. He just hinted at the rich man in Hell praying to Abraham. But, unluckily, the example of a lost soul is a bad subject of imitation for the pious on earth, and he saw this, so taking refuge again behind the infallibility of the Church, he bid Andrew go on to the next objection.

#### **The True Way.**

“I could,” said Andrew, “speak much about the impious titles given to the Virgin Mary, such as ‘mother of mercy,’ ‘refuge of sinners,’ ‘gate of Heaven,’ and such-like. I could show the absurdity of beads, holy water, and so forth. But I shall come to what I think the worst of all, and that is the way in which sinners are to obtain the favor of God. I always used to think, before I read the Word of God, that if I did not commit any very great sin, and went regularly to my duties, I

was a good Christian; and if, when I came to die, I enjoyed the rites of my Church there was no fear of me. This was what I learned, and all I learned, at the chapel. But since I have read the Testament I find the case is very different from what I thought it was. That Book, which contains the wisdom of God, tells me, first, that I and all mankind are sinners before God; that we all, on account of sin, deserve eternal misery; and that our nature is entirely corrupt and wicked, according to those passages: ‘That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God’ (Romans 3:19); ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God’ (Romans 8:7); ‘The flesh lusteth against the Spirit’ (Galatians 5:17); and ‘Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness’” (Mark 7:21, 22).

“It tells me, secondly, that those who are saved are saved freely by the grace of God, through the death and merits of Jesus Christ, without any merit of their own, according to what follows: ‘Being justified freely

by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His Blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God' (Romans 3:24, 25). And, again, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost' (Titus 3:5).

Again, it tells me that those who partake of this Salvation are made partakers of it by faith, according to many passages which I could mention, but of which the following will be sufficient for the present purpose: 'Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith' (Romans 3:28). And, again, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 5:1). And, again, 'By grace are ye saved through faith' (Ephesians 2:8). That Book tells me, moreover, sir, that those who are made partakers of this precious faith are by its means united to Christ, as a branch is united to its tree, or a limb to its body; that they are zealous of good works, and devote themselves to God."

Here Andrew was interrupted by Father Dominick, who got up

from his seat with much anger, telling him at the same time that if he had known how it would have been he would never have set foot in his house. Then turning to the rest of the family, he said to them: "Are you all determined to follow this fellow in his wicked apostasy from the Church?" All but the eldest daughter answered without hesitation, "that *if* they had any doubts before, what they saw and heard that day had convinced them that Andrew was right and that he was wrong."

*Father D.* "Since this is the case, I give notice that unless by your repentance You prevent it, I will cut you all off from the Church next Sunday."

### **Excommunication.**

So saying he took his hat, closed the door violently, got upon his horse, and rode away. Father Dominick said within himself: "This last argument will convince him, or if not, it will at least frighten his wife and Children; but if this should not be the case, for example's sake they must be dealt with in this way to deter others from the like practices." Andrew, however, was not at all affected by the menaces of Father Dominick, knowing that he had no power to hurt him; but

he was distressed to see a man, under the character of a minister of Christ, so ignorant of the true meaning. Father Dominick, finding that Andrew and his family held out, did cut them off (except the one of whom he had yet some hope) from the communion of the Catholic Church on the following Sunday.

When Andrew was made acquainted with this, he could not but pity the man who could suppose that his state was really affected by such an exclusion as

this. He knew that if he had continued in his sins he would never have been excluded, and that it was only since he became acquainted with the Gospel that he became an object of dislike to Father Dominick. He rather rejoiced, therefore, that he was accounted worthy to suffer shame for the sake of his heavenly Master, and earnestly prayed that he might be enabled to bear insult and opposition without anger and impatience.

#### A TALK WITH CHURCH MEMBERS BY DANIEL KAUFFMAN (*Contd.*)

##### LIBERAL GIVING.

What the Bible says — Amount of Giving — Motives in giving — Tithing — Blessedness of Liberal Giving.

##### THAT “UNRULY MEMBER.”

Idle words — So called white-lies — Filthy communication— Neighborhood gossip — Scolding — The tongue the index of the heart.

##### HOLD YOUR TEMPER.

Things not to be found in an enraged man — Why seek to control the temper — We can if we will — How to get rid of a high temper.

##### SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT.

Egotism — Extravagance — Personal adornment — Ambition — Covetousness and self-righteousness,

##### SELF-DENIAL.

Bible doctrine — Self-denial exemplified — Bearing the cross — No cross, no crown — The power of self-denial.

##### THE SABBATH.

Remember the Sabbath — Keep it holy — Rest from your work — Make it a rule.

##### PRAYER.

“Pray without ceasing” — God answers prayer — Family worship — Prayer in church — The blessedness of prayer.

##### OUR YOUNG DISCIPLES

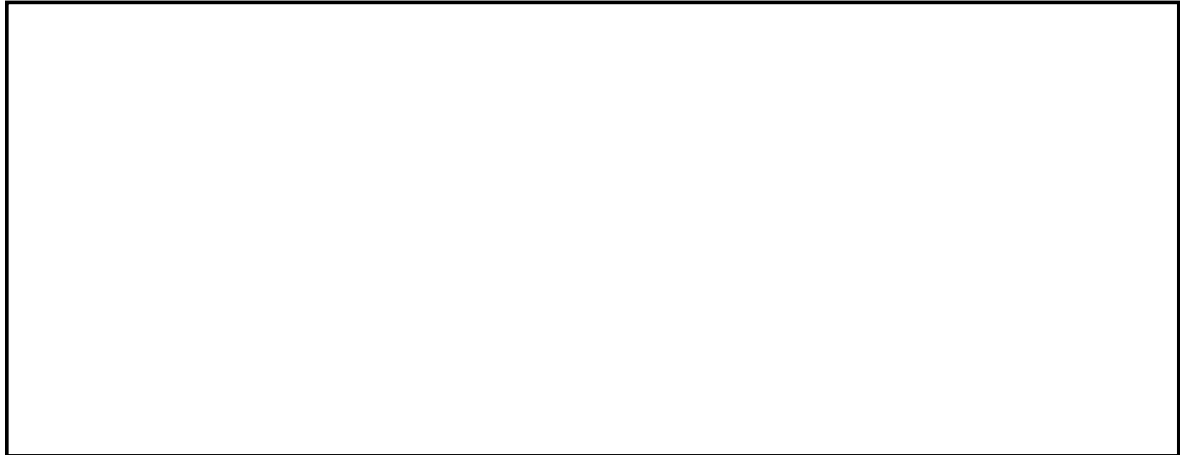
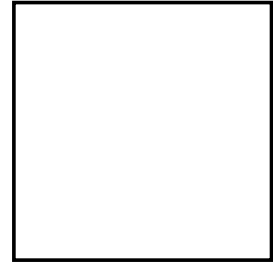
“Let no man despise thy youth” — “Be thou an example” — “In word” — “In conversation” — “In charity” — “In spirit” — “In faith” — “In purity” — Young people the hope of the church.

##### EVERY CHRISTIAN A WORKER.

Reasons why we should be active in His service — Diversity of gifts for divers kinds of work — Do what you can — Necessity for Christian work.

##### CONCLUSION.

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