

## Children in the Church

3-9-14

In Matthew 19:13-15, we see a scene where Jesus is beset by small children. His disciples attempted to run them off, but Jesus rebuked them, seeking that the children not be hindered from coming to Him. The disciples thought children were a burden, but Jesus saw them as a blessing. It is a question to many whether children are a blessing or a burden.

According to God, they are most certainly a blessing. In Psalm 127 we are told they are a gift from God to be treasured. Having children (for the right reason, which is not for selfish purposes) is a blessing from God to mankind. This is how Jesus saw it, and we ought to as well.

At the same time, the World suggests they are a burden. "Children are for my happiness and should fit conveniently into predetermined roles I have set for them. When such expectations are exceeded (such as by having one more child), life will quickly become an unbearable chore." The world claims that children burden parents, they burden society, they even burden the earth.

Our concern in this lesson is that there are two clearly opposed ideas in viewing children, and yet sometimes the world's view creeps into spiritual minds, corrupting them. In regards to children in the church, the Lord's philosophy is that the church is made for children, and those who hinder them are accursed.

There are two common concerns of parents. First, many parents with young children in particular are unable to be completely attentive to services. This is a natural experience. Second, they fear that their children are frustrating others. The end result is that they may ask "why am I here?" We ought to be clear - there is great reason to be here.

First, it is God's desire that our children be with us in worship. In Deuteronomy 6:7, Moses instructed children to be taught of spiritual things while with their parents. We give our children their most important example by being at worship. We also give others the same important teaching - this is the place we need to be. Second, brethren can, should and are commanded to deal with distractions. We are commanded repeatedly (Titus 2:2, Ephesians 4:2) to show patience towards one another. Scripture speaks to ADULT distractions rather than children (I Corinthians 11:18, 14:26, James 2:2-4). God NEVER rebukes children from crying, but He often rebukes adults from their whining.

Second, we set a dangerous mindset by suggesting children ought to be restrained or removed from worship. Worldliness creeps in to our mindset when we separate children from us in worship; things like "Kid's church" or "Nurseries" are the solution denominations and unsound brethren use. The goal seems to be entertaining children rather than edifying. They have forgotten that worship is for them too! God made it clear that there can be no divisions in worship (I Corinthians 1:11, 11:18).

Another problem is that we antagonize parents of young children. God said that we ought to have many children; the world says that is not true. So what mind is present when a brother in Christ suggest to another that "You have too many kids"? Obviously, the world! If someone has five children, having a sixth is a GOOD thing! DO NOT be deceived by the world or worldliness to think otherwise.

We antagonize young parents by comparing our experiences with theirs. "I kept my children in line" or it was "Good enough for my kids" are both the statements of fools. Things have changed in the last 20 years in society; now parents must face dangers from elements such as school or government that once were helpful. It is a different world children are raised in today, and we need to realize that. We need to have enough sense to see that nobody has the same experience in raising children.

Finally, Brethren need to act as a family. Sometimes our annoyance with children is because we have not put on Christ. We need to see children of the church as ours. We need to want to be teaching classes or having "guests" in the pew. Ultimately, our children are OUR CHILDREN. If we had that mindset, we might totally destroy the worldliness that creeps in when viewing children.