

Review

The disciples were arguing among themselves about which of them was the greatest. Jesus' response was to sit down, take a little boy into His arms, and say, "You need to become humble like this little child."

For the next ten verses, we will be hearing about "such a child," and "these little ones." In order to understand the next ten verses, it is vitally important that we keep the context in mind. Is Jesus talking about receiving children, or people who have converted and become like little children?

The context is clear. He is not talking about all children, for He will say in verse six, "those WHO BELIEVE" (Matt. 18:6). Jesus is talking about those who have come to Him in faith, with humility like children.

So, as we read these verses, and see the words "child" and "little ones," remember that He is talking about believers that have come to Him, being converted, having become like a child.

18:5 Receiving One Such Child

Jesus says that when a humble, insignificant Christian is received, Christ Himself is received.

But the church doesn't often receive the insignificant, humble person. We often behave just like the world: respecters of persons, and admiring the beautiful.

- When we put on a men's retreat and have a famous pastor come in to teach it, the place fills up. But the next year, without a big name, we've suddenly got lots of room.

- When someone that everyone likes needs help, there are lots of volunteers. But when an unattractive or unpopular person needs assistance, we lack the necessary help.

- The talented person in our midst is surrounded by people wanting to fellowship with them. But the wallflower stands alone.

The treatment we give to the most insignificant person in our midst is the treatment we give Jesus. Remember that when Saul of Tarsus was persecuting Christians, Jesus said,

Acts 9:4 ...“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

The believers were being persecuted, and Jesus said it persecuted Him.

In chapter 25, Jesus will tell us,

Matt. 25:45 “...to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.”

Keep your eye out for the neglected and unreceived believer. Because it's really Jesus in disguise.

18:6-7 Stumbling Blocks

The world is full of stumbling blocks, things that make people fall into sin. It is inevitable, and until Jesus comes back, we will always be surrounded by them. But just because stumbling blocks have to be here doesn't mean we have to be the stumbling blocks.

How are we a stumbling block to another believer? Doing anything that trips them up in their walk with God.

- When we instruct someone with corrupted truth (Mal. 2:8).
- When we counsel them in an ungodly way (Matt. 16:23).
- When we exercise our freedom in Christ in front of a person who is weaker in faith (Rom. 14; 1Cor. 8).
- When we cause someone to fall into sin (Rev. 2:14; Eze. 44:12).

There will always be stumbling blocks that people will trip over, but if we are the ones who are putting them there, we will be in big trouble with God. It would be better to be quickly drowned than to have to face His judgment for causing someone else to stumble.

18:8-9 Cutting It Off

Sometimes the source of stumbling isn't coming from other people. It's coming from us. We can make ourselves stumble.

- When we're envious of others (Psa. 73:2-3).
- When we're prideful and haughty (Prov. 16:18).
- When our speech or actions are against the Lord (Isa. 3:8).
- When we set up idols in our hearts (Eze. 14:3).
- When we harbor iniquity in our hearts ().
- When we walk in darkness (John 11:10).

Now, we're not dumb. We know what makes us stumble. You know that certain things are tempting to you. You know that there are certain situations where you are almost guaranteed to fail and fall.

Jesus says that if something is causing you to sin, you must cut it off, gouge it out, remove it, extract it, amputate it. Get rid of it!

- Does your TV eat away at hours of your life that could be spent in the Word, in prayer, and having devotions with your kids? Sell it.

- Is your credit card keeping you in debt, so that you're not being a good steward of God's money? Cut it up!

- Are you in a relationship that is dragging down your walk with God? Break up!

- Is your vice or addiction keeping you in condemnation? Go cold turkey!

- Are romance novels or soap operas focusing your mind on immorality and adultery? Cut them out of your life!

Whatever is making you stumble, cut it off, rid your life of it! You may think that's a bit extreme. But do you remember Aron Ralston of Aspen, Colorado? Last May, he was hiking in the Utah desert when a 1,000lb boulder fell on him. After five days without rescue, he was out of water and out of options. Aron realized that he was going to die if he didn't do something drastic. He used his pocketknife to cut off his arm below the elbow. He sacrificed his arm in order to live.

Was that extreme? Absolutely. But he decided he'd rather live without an arm than die in one piece.

Is that boyfriend or habit worth your very salvation? Is the TV really a good replacement for eternity? That's the decision you are faced with.

2Pet. 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble

18:10-14 Not Despising, But Seeking After

You are one of Jesus' little ones, and so are the people around you. Don't despise them by making them stumble. Don't despise yourself by

making yourself stumble.

And if you have stumbled, be reminded of this: Jesus makes a practice of finding lost sheep. He searches for the ones who stray. And He's not looking for you to hunt you down, to beat you down. He wants to find you, and bring you back, rejoicing.

Listen to Luke's quote of Jesus here:

Luke 15:4-6 “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’

If you are one today who has stumbled, who has wandered away from the Lord, be found today. Give God a reason to rejoice.