



Made Right with God-Part 2
Biblical Faith
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Well, Jesus, the Messiah, I'm sure you would agree, is a very important person. And in his first coming he was busy talking about very important things, eternally important things. He wasn't a politician, he didn't need to schmooze anyone, he didn't have to have receptions, he wasn't garnering votes, he didn't have to go around kissing babies, he was a serious figure talking about some very serious and somber things. Heaven and Hell, no less. And if you keep that in mind when you read the Gospel of Luke, it may be helpful, particularly when you get to passages like the one we're going to study today in Luke Chapter 18. Because in a passage like this, because you know where it ends, you think the disciples are being kind of stupid. Take a look at this text with me if you haven't already turned there, Luke Chapter 18 verses 15 through 17 is all we'll get through today. As we think about a time and a place where the infant mortality rate is much, much higher than it is here or anything we're used to in our country, and they're coming to Jesus who has been known, of course, in this area, this region, of being a healer or someone having divine power. Even parents with robust and healthy toddlers, of course wanting the best for their children, coming to the one who is apparently possessing all the authority of heaven. It makes sense that they would come to Christ. As a matter of fact, it wasn't an unknown custom. Last night ended Yom Kippur here on the calendar this year and maybe some of your Jewish friends were at the synagogue last night.

And at the end of that day of fasting, the one day of fasting that they're supposed to engage in, the custom was, even back in the time of Christ, was to bring their young children at that break-the-fast meal that took place at sundown on Yom Kippur and bring their kids there to have the priest, the rabbis bless their children. The elders and even the scribes were involved in this. And that made sense. They had just thought about some of the most profound things, things that relate to their own need for atonement, the problem of sin in their lives and so they thought of the good of their children and they want what's best for them and so it was a natural time for them to come and bring their kids to the leaders of Israel and that's basically what's going on here. These people wanted the Messiah's blessing, his favor upon their children that they dearly loved.

But the disciples did what you and I suppose would do if you had just heard Jesus talking about issues of sinners pounding their chest and wanting mercy and the issues of justification and people that will miss justification because they don't see themselves properly. And you've got all these issues of salvation and justification and they're saying, "Listen, we don't have time to have your babies passed around on Jesus' knee right now. I mean this isn't the time for a child dedication or a baby shower and don't start pulling out pictures of your kids to show everyone. This is a serious thing that we're doing talking about heaven and hell." And yet Jesus, in this passage, does something very firm, very resolute and denies the expectation of the Apostles, and teaches us two very important things that we're going to look at today.

Let's read this text and then jump into the first one. In verse 15, it says, "Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them," verse 15, the middle of the verse, "and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them." They said, "Don't bring your children to us right now, don't bring your children to Jesus. This is not the time for that." Verse 16, "But Jesus called to them," the parents, saying, "'Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them,'" he says to the disciples, "'to such belongs the kingdom of God.'" Now that's what we've been talking about, being justified, being qualified for the kingdom of God. "'Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.'" Now, you want to talk about the seriousness of

joining these two things together? He says, listen, I'm telling you and nothing could be more serious than you entering or not entering the kingdom. Nothing is more... That's all you'll care about a hundred years from now. You won't care about your job, you won't care about anything on earth. All you care about is am I qualified for the kingdom. And Jesus says these children provide a perfect illustration of what I've been talking about. So let them come. Now, that's the first thing we learn.

We want to see this as an illustration. Jesus is putting them before them and he's done this before and he'll do it again in his ministry saying, children will provide a great illustration of what I'm teaching and in this case, he's been teaching about justification. He's been teaching about forgiveness. He's been teaching about sinners that need God's mercy and he says, you know why, you need? You need to embrace the kingdom, you need to embrace salvation just like a child.

Now, the child is not the child who is being held up having all these wonderful virtues. It's about the indicative realities of who they are. In other words, it's not about a time for us in this message, as many preachers do when they hit this passage, to become grandpa and get very sentimental about how wonderful children are and say, "You know, let's just be like them, they're so receptive and open minded and they accept everybody and they love life and..." It's not about that. It's about the objective reality of what they are, and what they are is helpless. They don't have any capacity to care for themselves. Number one, if we just want to camp on this lesson for a minute, let's put it this way, number one, we need to "Helplessly Embrace Salvation." That's the lesson coming out of what we've just studied, that at the Temple Mount in Jesus' parable, you've got someone who sees himself as helpless before God and he gets justified. And you got someone who sees himself not as helpless. He's got some things to offer, "I'm glad I'm not like other men. I'm glad I don't do those bad things. I tithe. I do all that I'm supposed to do, I fast twice a week. I'm not helpless, God. You should be glad to have me on your team. Now, I need you and I need your help but I'm not helpless. That guy's helpless over there." And he admitted it. He beat his chest. And he said, "Have mercy on me a sinner. I can't even look up to the Temple Mount, I can't even look up the columns and see this majestic building and think about going in to the courtyard or the holy place." He saw himself as helpless.

We need to have that response. The Bible pins all of that into one basic word in the New Testament. It's the word we translate, "Faith." That would be a good word to jot down. You want to talk about what it means to helplessly embrace salvation? That's something that is codified in this word faith.

Now faith, unfortunately, is misunderstood in our day. Faith is misunderstood because faith is even a word that has less strength than the word "believe" and that certainly is a synonym, at least in our translations of the Bible. You see the Greek word of the New Testament, "pisteuo" or "pistis", the verb and the noun, they translate it "faith" or "believe" or "belief". And so a lot of people see, well that's what faith is, believing something, but faith is even weaker than believing somebody is believing something that you have no evidence for believing and that's how people define faith today. And some people say, "Well, just believe, have faith in God and then you'll be saved," and we know that that promise is attached to it, we see it all the time. We read it in yesterday's Daily Bible Reading in Ephesians Chapter 2 verse 8. It is by grace that you're saved, right, through faith. If you want to be saved, you got to know it's a gracious gift and you need to accept it by faith. And so faith is something everyone needs to define and, unfortunately, it's defined by most people in our day as simply believing the truth about what God said, and believing it without a lot of facts. And we've talked a lot about rational faith in the past, but let's just focus on this fact that it's far more than you agreeing with the facts.



Biblical faith is much different than you getting a test at the end of your life when you stand before the great tribunal of God and he passes out some kind of true or false test saying:

"Do you believe Jesus lived?" True.

"Do you believe Jesus was the Son of God?" True.

"Do you believe that he died on a cross?" True.

"Do you believe that he died for you?" True.

Great. Welcome into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

It's not a test of what you assent to. It's not a test as to what you agreed to. Faith in the Bible is always something much richer than that and one of the clues we have that should forever keep us from thinking it's believing the facts, is the little word that comes after it. The little Greek preposition we see and there are two of them. We always translate them the same way though, and that is that we translate them in the little English word "i" "n" - "in." We always see this connection to have "faith in" or to "believe in." And that's a far different thing than believing. If I make some statements and you say, "I believe you, Pastor Mike." See, that's stating that you agree with what I said or you at least, in terms of the veracity of what I've said, you've evaluated in your mind, you say, "I think you're right." That's believing.

But to say, "Pastor Mike, I believe IN you," if I've said something, that's a whole different thing. If I said, "Yeah, you know that air show that is going on here? You know, I'm telling you, I am a great fighter pilot. And I just got the keys to an FA-18 out there in the airport, Orange County, and you got to know I am fantastic. The things that the Blue Angels are doing? Nothing. Just wait till I take you up in this plane. Amazing, the things that I can do, crazy. I can get so close to the ground, inverted, barrel rolls, hammer heads, just things you just can't even believe. The Blue Angels are nothing. I'm a great pilot." Now you may just to shut me up say, "I believe you Pastor Mike," then move on to get your donut and coffee. But if you said to me, "Pastor Mike," after saying all that, "I believe in you." Right? I doubt they'd be very many people who would say that but let's just say that you said that. Then I know this, if I said, "Why don't you come with me? There's not a lot of space in the cockpit of this FA-18 Hornet but I'm going to stuff you in the back here and you can go up with me in the air in the jet."

If you said, "I believe in you," you understand what you're saying is something completely different than I believe you. You're not assenting to the facts, at that point you're willing to put your trust in me. That's really a better way to translate the word "pisteuo", I trust, or "pistis", a matter of my trust, I trust you. There is a trust that God is requiring of you to be able to say you're helpless, I can do this for you. It's not, "Would you help me fly the plane?" It's, "I can fly the plane. Why don't you get in it and trust me to take you where you need to go." The man beats his chest on the Temple Mount and says, "I'm a sinner, have mercy on me. I can't come into your presence."

And here, God says, "You need to be humble." Isn't that how the passage ended? I mean, look back up at it in verse 14. If you "humble yourself, you'll be exalted." That's how it ended. It started here in verse 14, "I tell you this man," this man beating his chest, this tax collector, "went down to his house justified," he's right with God, he has mercy, he enters the kingdom, "rather than the other.

For whoever exalts himself will be humbled." See, if you think that you're capable, you're going to find out how incapable you are. But, the one who humbles himself will be exalted. If you're going to put sub-point to this, let's put it this way, Letter "A." When I talk about helplessly embracing salvation, I'm talking about this, a "Humble Faith", a humble faith. You need to have a humble faith that God saves you because you can't contribute anything to your salvation other than the sin that made salvation necessary. That is a humble faith, a faith that says, "I am not qualified, I do not, in any way in my own self, have any kind of righteousness that is acceptable. Remember I quoted last week for you Isaiah 64, that passage about "my righteousness is as filthy rags?" And the concept there, again, it started with this, it's like we're all unclean. Because of our unrighteousness we are as one who is unclean. Now that doesn't mean much to us if you're not in the Jewish mindset in the context of the temple.

You can be the high priest and have access to the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement every year. But if you had a skin disease break out on your body, you were unclean and you could not enter. And the Bible says our unrighteousness has made us unclean. That middle box there, the Ark of the Covenant, where God's glory was symbolically said to reside and all the curtains around that in the Holy of Holies and all the curtains around that in the holy place, you cannot get in there to have any kind of connection with God if you are unclean. Our unrighteous behavior is like broken us out in a skin disease, we're unclean. All of our righteousness is as filthy rags, is as polluted garments. So you have no access to God. And yet the Bible says, if you would, and I'm just quoting now Philippians Chapter 3 verse 9, if you would just put your faith in Christ, you get his righteousness clothing you instead of your own. That's the Mike Fabaraz paraphrase, but here's what it says, "And I want to be found in him," Paul says, "not having a righteousness of my own that comes from keeping the rules, that comes from a Law, but that which comes through," here it is, "faith," oh, a pre-position, in Christ Jesus, "faith in Christ," trust in Christ Jesus. The righteousness that comes from God, it depends on that faith. It depends on faith. Faith in.

A lot of you have come to church for many years and you believe Christ. You believe even some of his teachings, you believe maybe all of his teachings, you believe that he existed and you believe that, maybe, his claim about being the son of God is true. But you do not trust IN Christ because you're not willing to let him do all the work for you, not only to save you but to lead you between now and the time that you enter the kingdom. You have to trust him with a humble faith. A humble faith recognizes that we are helpless before a Holy God. We have nothing that can make us right before God. We have to trust that he has provided everything to fix the problem. Oh, and by the way, if you're sitting here saying, "Yawn, I know all that, I've known that from fifth grade." You understand that what I'm proposing to you, because you're so connected with the truth of the gospel that it no longer in any way stands out as distinct in your mind and you say, "I don't need this. I know all this. I hear this all the time." Well, listen, if you hear it all the time, you're blessed, because every other religious system in all of the world says just the opposite. It says, you know, I was talking last night about Islam. You can have someone who believes that God is holy and they want to be in paradise with him. But they have no other mechanism to be right with the living God in their minds except for me to be a good person and do enough good things to overshadow my bad things and hope that God is merciful enough without any mechanism to solve my problem. And they're just hoping that God will be kind enough to let them in the kingdom. And they will stand around like every other religious system in the world and say, "I'm glad I'm not like that guy, because now I got a shot at being with God." And the Bible says, listen, it's the man who realizes he has no shot of being with God. At that moment of helpless, humble faith, God says you're justified. That's unique. You don't understand, there are many, many churches that have the label "Christian" in front of them but they're teaching basically, "Be good enough and if you're good enough God will

help you with what you're not good with and you'll be qualified." That's not the gospel of grace. The gospel of grace by faith is a gospel that requires a completely humble faith that says, "I am helpless before a Holy God." So I don't get bored with the distinctive feature of Christian theology.

And then test yourself in terms of that faith and your theology by asking this: Is it an expectant faith? Letter "B". If you're taking some notes that you would want to put down. Real Biblical faith is a faith that knows that I am not the contributor to the solution and therefore I know that when I put my trust in Christ, I am now fully expectant. Now listen to how the Bible often puts this, Hebrews Chapter 11 verse 1, and you know this verse if you've been around. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for." Now that's a strong word, is it not, "and the conviction of things not seen." Now again, that's not a cross-your-fingers, I don't have any proof, I'm just trusting and that's faith. No, this is, "I know whom I've believed and I'm convinced that he's able to do what he says he's going to do," to quote and paraphrase the Apostle Paul. I am sure that if I trust that he can do what he says he can do, then I'm at peace. I recognize it's settled. That's why Christians are the only people who really, if they know the elements of what the problem is and what the solution is, they're the only people who are going to have an assurance of their salvation. They're the only people because they realize it doesn't depend on them.

Keep your finger here in Luke 18 and turn with me if you would to Hebrews 6 for just a few minutes. Hebrews 6. You need to know that this is an evidence of real helpless embrace of salvation. If your faith is an expectant faith, that you are confident, that you can say, "For me to live is Christ but to die is gain." I know where I'm going and it isn't because of my performance or anything that I can do. Hebrews Chapter 6, drop down a verse 13. God goes to great lengths to make it clear to you that he's got this thing covered. Your access to him is settled. You've got to trust him. And if you trust him you'll have an assurance of things you hope for and the conviction of things you don't see. You don't see your file folder transferred from the "damned" file cabinet to the "saved" file cabinet. You can't see your sins appended to the cross. You can't see these things, you have to imagine them. But the Bible says they are true if you trust in Christ. Start in verse 13 for a little context here, Hebrews 6:13. "When God made a promise to Abraham." What was the promise? Well, you'll see in verse 14, "Surely I'll bless you and multiply you." "Since God had no one greater to swear by he swore by himself. "And people swear by someone greater than themselves, as it says there in verse number 16, because they say, "You know, I swear to God that this is true," because, in other words, God can slam me and hurt me and God knows the truth and God is powerful and may God strike me dead if I'm not telling the truth.

That's the concept of swearing. I have to invoke that someone more powerful than me that can enforce the truthfulness of what I say. Well God doesn't have anybody greater, so he swears by himself, which is strange. And what did he say to Abraham? "I'm going to bless you and multiply you." Now what's the irony of Abraham and even his name, Abram, when he met him, a "Great Father." Well, he wasn't a great father because he had a barren wife and they didn't have any children and they're old, they're past childbearing age. But God said I'm going to bless you and multiply you, so the promise was you are going to have a kid.

Matter of fact, I'm going to change your name from "Great Father" Abram to Abraham, "A Father of a Great Many." Really? We don't have any children, I don't know if you noticed that God. No, you're going to have to trust me. Verse 15, "Thus Abraham, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise." You can put it there in brackets if you want. The promise was, in the context here, the birth of Isaac, that was the promise. Isaac was born in his old age. He was a hundred years old, the Bible says, when he had Isaac. For people swear, now back to this whole point of why God would

go to such great lengths to assure him that he would do it, by someone greater than themselves. And in all disputes a oath is a final confirmation. You swear an oath, BAM you are settling all disputes, at least back in the day. Verse 17. "So when God desired to show more convincingly," listen to these words, "more convincingly to the heirs of the promise." Now that's not the promise of having a kid. The heirs of the promise is what he goes on to say in Genesis Chapter 12, which is all the nations of the earth will be blessed in him. So you're going to have this lineage and then, ultimately, read between the lines, Christ is going to come, solve the sin problem and all the nations of the earth, even the Gentiles, the barbarian the Scythian, the slave, the free, they're all to have access to God because of the promise that came through Abraham's covenant. That, he says, is us, as you'll see in a minute. That's us. God wanted to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise, that's us, the unchangeable character of his purpose, that he purposed something, he guaranteed it with an oath.

So he doesn't go on to quote the rest of it but the promise that people of the earth are going to be blessed because of the descendants of Abraham, he saying, God wanted to make sure that if you trust to step into that by faith, he wants you to be convinced, completely sure and to show you, convincingly, the heirs of the promise, he made an oath that sat at the beginning of this whole covenant and he made an oath and he said that, so that you could look at this saying, "Well wait a minute, I'm a child of Abraham by faith..." Right? "Oh, I know I'm not an Israelite, but I'm trusting in God to get the righteousness that is provided through Christ. I want to be sure of that." Well you can be. Verse 18, "So that by two unchangeable things," he makes a promise and then he seals it with an oath, those are two things you cannot change. When someone promises something and puts an oath, swears an oath on top of it and God did both, and then he adds a third, "in which it's impossible for God to lie." So he can't lie anyway, his character is that he can't lie. And then, "We," now we know he's talking about Christians now, "we who have fled for refuge," from what? Now, think back to the illustration that Jesus told, the man beating his chest, he wouldn't even look up to God. Why? Because he's a sinner. "God have mercy on me." What do you need refuge from, what do you need protection from? "The penalty of my sins."

He fled there. I need a solution. Now he didn't really have one spelled out there in the Temple Mount other than an illustration of animal sacrifices. But when John said, "Here comes Christ, the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world," and he points everybody's attention to Jesus, and Jesus says, "I'll die," just as Isaiah 53 says, "as a guilt offering so that your sins can be forgiven," everyone's attention now went to Christ. You are the solution to my sin. And here he says, you can have refuge and if you fled to Christ for refuge, for the penalty of your sin, you can have, love this, underlined it, "strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope." That's not a cross-your-fingers hope. That's a confidence, that confidence that is "set before us." What's the confidence? "If you trust in me I'll forgive your sins. By grace, through faith, you're saved. Trust me, I'll do it." You're going to have strong encouragement to hold fast to that hope and say, "I know I'm saved."

"We have this as a sure and steadfast," now introduces an illustration, "anchor of the soul." What a great picture, an anchor. When the boat is tossing around, you got a storm, turbulent, let's drop that anchor, we're going to stay here, we're not going anywhere. You can have a lot of things happen on the surface of your life. You can have good days, bad days and sit there and scratch your head and say, "How in the world can I be a Christian, how can God save me, how can God love me, I'm so unlovable. And I was pretty lovable last week but this week it looks bad." You can have all that, but you can have an anchor that holds you to the rock, that says, you know what? God's got you. You have refuge from the penalty of your sins. You can be strongly encouraged. Now this anchor

illustration, it divides right into the history of the Temple, look at it. It's "a hope that enters in to the inner place behind the curtain." Think about that. Here was a sinner standing off from the holy place, from the Holy of Holies, divided by two sets of curtains and he was out there beating his chest and saying, "I can't even look in that direction. I can't even look up to see any of this. I can't look to heaven. I'm a sinner, I can't approach." He's standing far off. And here's a man, that if he knew the mechanism of his forgiveness, which is Christ's own body, a curtain that Hebrews says was torn for him so that he could have access, that he can have strong encouragement and that anchor will hold behind the veil. And it says, I love this, look at it, verse 20, "Where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf." He had access to God because he was God and as God's son he says, "Listen, I'll have access, you trust me and I'll take you right in there. As an anchor for the soul, Christ has gone in "having become a high priest," because only the high priest can go in. On yesterday's celebration on the Jewish calendar, the day of Yom Kippur, which is the day of atonement, he goes in there one time. Well, we have a high priest forever, access to the presence of God, symbolically represented by that Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, Christ is there and he says, "I've got access to God. I'll give you access to God. My righteousness will make you righteous. I'll credit that to you, trust me, and you got access to God. That way you could be a criminal dying on a cross, and if you transferred your trust to Christ, Christ could look at you and say, "Taken care of, fully qualified, today you will be with me in paradise." And that's a confidence religious people don't have. Ask your religious friend, "Are you going to heaven when you die," and you know what they'll say. Right? "I hope so, I hope so." Well, then you're trying to have Jesus help you get there. That doesn't work. See, I don't care how religious you are, how many bumper stickers you have, I don't care what your T-shirts say about Christ, if you say, "I hope so," then you've got a concept here that thinks I'm contributing, I'm not a helpless person embracing salvation. My faith certainly isn't a humble faith, a faith that is an expectant faith. My faith is a "I wish" kind of faith. What a great picture for us to remember in light of the illustration that Jesus gave us, that Christ has got access, he grants us access and what we do, as Paul said in Philippians 3, is trust him. The righteousness that I need is provided to me by faith IN Christ Jesus. Do you trust in him, humbly, as a helpless person?

And if you know you're helpless, then if he said he'll do it and he swore to you that he'll do it, are you confident? Do you say with the Apostle Paul, "For me to live is Christ but to die is gain." I know I'm going to glorify God whether by my life or by my death. I'm no longer a slave afraid of death. Are you ready to meet God? "Well, I got to do some good things before I get there..." You understand what I'm saying to you? The gospel is unique in that regard.

One more thing, just based on verse 17 of our passage, Luke Chapter 18 verse 17, it's printed there on your worksheet. Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." Let me just add this, Letter "C". It's a "Desperate Faith." It's a desperate faith. A faith that says there is no other option. John 6, when the Apostles were watching all the disciples who were would-be disciples and fair-weather disciples leave when Jesus started giving hard teachings, Jesus turns to them and said, "Are you guys going to leave me too?" And Peter speaks up, do you remember what he says? "Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone, you are the only one that has the words of eternal life.'" There is no other way to get right with God. There is no other possibility for a person to get right with God than to have Jesus Christ provide the access. John 14 verse 1, "Let your hearts not be troubled. Believe IN God," trust in him and "believe also IN me." God has made a promise. He's provided the solution to me, trust him, trust me. "In my father's house, many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you, but I'm going to go and prepare a place for you." What is this context? Chapter 14 of John, the upper room discourse, he's about to go to the

cross and he's leaving his disciples with this long discourse that he gives us in John 14 through 16 and he's getting all these last minute instructions and so all this, "I'm going away and I'm on my way." He's going to the cross, everything he told them about. "I'm going to be betrayed by the chief priest and scribes, I'm going to be persecuted, I'm going to the cross. I go to prepare a place for you. Going to the cross. And if I go and prepare that place for you then, you know what, I'm going to come again. I'm going to take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also, that's a promise. And you know the way where I'm going. I kept telling you I got to be betrayed by the chief priests and scribes." And Thomas says, "Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way? And Jesus says, you may not know all the details but listen, "I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." I am the only way. You trust me Thomas, you trust me disciples and I will solve your problem. It's a desperate faith. We trust in Christ not as the best of many options to kind of clean up our lives so that will be acceptable to God. We trust in Christ as the only option, as the only way. And you can call that narrow-minded. You can call that, you know, whatever you want to call it, exclusive, but it's a kind of exclusivity that's available to every single person in the room. It's available to every person in the world. God is saying, listen, the ship is sinking, I understand that. If you want to stand around on the deck while there is a lifeboat that is prepared for you to take you to safety and say, "Well, I'd really like a helicopter and why aren't there other opportunities, I want a submarine." You need to recognize the Bible says very clearly, it may be an exclusive and only way to be saved, but the Bible's very clear about the fact that it is available to you and to me. We need a humble faith, we need an expectant faith, we need a desperate faith.

Now, if you look at this passage again, particularly the first two verses, verses 15 and 16, we'll see that when we're talking about the issues of heaven and hell here, children become a great illustration of that. But it's not just that kids are an illustration. As a matter of fact, look at this again. Infants are coming so that Jesus might touch them. The parents are bringing them. Now the disciples say, "No, don't do that, now is not the time for it." Jesus says, "Hey, let them come to me. Don't hinder them, to such belongs the kingdom of God." Now, there are a lot of things that Jesus employed as illustrations of salvation and faith. He talked about sheep, he talked about doors, he talked about all kinds of things. But if people were bringing in their doors or their sheep to Jesus I guarantee you, if they said, "Here, bless my sheep," Jesus isn't going to do it. I know that's modern Christianity in many ways but that's not what would have happened. Christ is doing something that shows us some kind of value or some kind of special regard that he has for those kids. And I need you to think this through with me for a few minutes. Number two on your outline. Let's just set this up with a title and think this through. We need to consider "God's Regard For Children." God's regard for children. If you think this through, you'll need to understand why this becomes an important and pivotal passage as we think about God and kids. Why? Because we have a theological problem when it comes to children. Let's think this through. It's an unpleasant concept to think about but I'd like you to think about it for a few minutes with me. And it's basically this problem: that children die, you understand. And that's a problem. Children die. And if you don't recognize that or never felt that or that hasn't touched your family, your extended family, spend some time at some of the children's hospitals in Southern California and recognize the pain, the suffering, the difficulty that we all face theologically with the death of children. Why is that a theological problem? Here's why it's a problem. Kids die because the Bible says death has come as a result of Adam's sin. Right? That's what Romans 5 is all about. We don't even have to talk about death. Can an infant get sick? If an infant can get sick, we know sickness and death are a part of the penalty for Adam and Eve's sin at the beginning of the Bible. So in Genesis Chapter 3, we've got a promise to all mankind that all mankind is going to be subject to sickness and to death because of sin. Here you have children who are subject to the consequences of Adam's sin. They get sick and they die. These are symptoms, by

the way, according to Genesis 3, of their alienation from God. They have natural proclivities to be born in a state of sinfulness. Now, kids have the consequences of sin that are evidenced in their sickness and their death. They show their alienation from God even in their initial proclivities and natural tendencies to do things that are not in keeping with God's law. All of that is evident. We don't need Romans 5 to tell us that, we can see that just by seeing the kids in our world and grieving their pain and their suffering and their death. Kids need a solution to that problem.

If they're alienated and they show the consequences of sin, there needs to be a solution if they're going to not suffer for those things. And the Bible just said in John Chapter 14, that Jesus is the only way to make this right. Over and over again in the Bible the Bible says the only way to solve the problem of alienation and sin and its consequences is for you to repent of your sins and put your trust in Christ. It is the exclusive and only way to solve the problem. Naturally, children are incapable of responding that way. They can't respond that way. They can't do anything. They're just blobs when we bring them home from hospital and they slowly turn into people. So what's going on here? Now we know the intrinsic value and sacred nature of life, but, man, they're not doing much or deciding much, let alone repenting and putting their trust in Christ. This will seal the theological problem we have to deal with for tracking these. Kids are subject to the consequence of Adam's sin. Kids need a solution. Christ is the only solution, they're incapable of responding the way the Bible says you appropriate that solution. Here's the last thing, there's no clear verse in the Bible telling us that kids are saved if they die before they're capable of responding to the call of the Gospel. I can't look to a verse and show you one, therefore, we seem to say, that doesn't seem to make sense. This is why people reject the doctrine of original sin as it's called, that we have consequences from Adam.

Well, I don't think you need a verse to tell us we have consequences from Adam's sin because kids get sick and die. And if that's the case, we've got to figure out what's the deal with that. Now, when it comes to the real problem, which is the second death, how about some hope that they won't incur the second death. That's the problem. This passage, I suggest to you, is starting to give us some of the solution that we need.

Now Luke, admittedly, in Luke 18 verses 15 through 17 is focusing on the lesson, but in Matthew 19 and Mark 10, where we see the same exact historic situation played out, Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark Chapter 10 verses 13 through 16, Matthew 19, Mark 10, that's the two chapters you need in your mind or in your notes, we get a little bit more of the historic context. When I say historic, I just mean some elements about how this took place. Matthew, for instance, adds this feature. Now, I don't know that we need it in Luke to assume that it's there, but in verse 15 of Luke it says, "Now they were bringing their infants to him that he might touch them." Now it's not just about him touching them, you understand that. Here's how Matthew portrayed the situation. "The children being brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray." Ok, I can assume that and I even said that at the opening of the Yom Kippur sundown meal, they would have their leaders pray for them to bless them, so let's just start with that. We know their intention is, "Listen, I want you to pray for my kid. Lay your hands on them," which was the traditional way to show that kind of prayer. So pray for them. Whatever that means. More on that in a minute. In Mark Chapter 10, when Jesus responds to the disciples who are saying, "Don't bring your kids anymore to me," we can kind of read between the lines. Here's how it plays out in verses 15 and 16 of our passage. The disciples saw it, they rebuked the parents, "Don't bring these kids," but Jesus, with a strong contrasting conjunction and the statement, "Let the children come to me." So, it's a very strong turn of events. Well, Mark adds this descriptive word: "When Jesus saw that they were keeping the kids from him, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the children come to me.'" So, Mark gives us this

insight, Jesus is mad. Now, I guess we could have read between the lines and figure that out, but now we know he's mad, he's angry for them holding them back. So we know, this is not just about an illustration, "Oh, this is great. I'm talking about justification and being humble and crying out for mercy. Give me a kid, that will be a great illustration. OK. Come on. It's about being helpless like a kid." No, it's more than that. He's angry. They wanted Jesus to bless these kids, and now he's mad that they're holding them back. And then in Mark, instead of just ending with the teaching of Christ, when the red letters stop, when it says, "If you don't receive the kingdom of God like a child you shall not enter it," Mark adds this little note, "And he took them," that is the children, "into his arms and blessed them laying his hands on them." In other words, he did exactly what they were asking and more than that. And it uses this word "blessed".

Now follow me. I know this sounds like a little bit like a Compass Night on Thursdays, but follow me on this. OK? We've got a problem, theologically. There's nothing in the Bible I can look to to show you a verse that says, listen, when kids die they go to heaven. I can't give you that verse. I've got to figure out what the reality is because I already see their suffering from the effects of Adam's sin and they didn't make any decisions to that. They're unwilling participants in this. In this passage, Jesus says, give me those kids and then it says, when he was done, he blessed them. Now they asked for prayer. I need you to follow this carefully.

This is [00:37:32] a hapax legomenon [1.0] to throw some Latin at you here. It's the only time this word is used in the New Testament. The word "blessed" in Mark. Now again, it's not our passage but it explains what Jesus did.

Mark Chapter 10 verse 16. "He took them up in his arms and he blessed them." Blessed. It's a three-part word. Now I hate to do Greek so early in the morning. [00:37:52] "Kata", [0.5] that's a preposition. [00:37:54] "Eu", [0.4] now I going to tell you and you know most of these words. OK? [00:37:59] "Laleo". Laleo. [3.8] Those three words. [00:38:03] Laleo. Laleo, [0.7] you may know, let's start at the end, you know the word [00:38:06] "logos", [0.6] perhaps. Right? You all know the word [00:38:08] "logos". [0.2] Smile at me if you know the word [00:38:09] "logos". "Logos" [0.7] means what? "Word." That's the noun. The verb, [00:38:15] "laleo" [0.7] is the verb "to speak." Right? Speak a word. To say something. [00:38:22] "Eu", [0.4] you know that word. You call yourselves evangelicals, I hope, right, and we know the Greek word [00:38:27] "euangelia", [1.0] "angelia" is "message." [00:38:29] "Eu" [0.3] is what? "Good". The good message, the good news. So [00:38:33] "eu" [0.2] is good. Then there is this intensifier in the Greek language. This preposition [00:38:38] "kata" [0.8] and as I preach on words sometimes we'll have the compound [00:38:41] "kata" [0.3] in front of them, you'll see the intensity of the word. So [00:38:43] "kateulogeo". [1.5] You've got this compound three-part word that Jesus... It's only used once in the whole New Testament. We see [00:38:51] "eulogeo" [0.9] often and that usually translated "bless." But here he is intensely doing's this strong statement of blessing. Now, three ways the word [00:39:02] "eulogeo" [0.6] is used. Three ways. And you still use the word "blessing" in three different ways. Are you still with me on this? Just me and a couple of people left. OK. [00:39:10] Eulogeo.

Eulogeo, [5.7] the first way we use it is the way we transliterated into English. [00:39:19] "Eulogeo". Eulogeo. [1.7] We use this word "eulogy". You ever heard of that word? Eulogy is a transliteration from [00:39:27] "eulogeo". [1.5]

Eulogy. And if I die, I get hit by a bus this afternoon and my wife calls you next week and says, "Hey, we're having a service for Pastor Mike, would you come and give a eulogy?" What she's

asking for you to do is to get up on the platform at my funeral and to do what? Say a good word about me. Right? Make it a whole paragraph, make it a page, just say a lot of good things about me. OK? That's a eulogy, to give a good word about a person. OK? Now, you don't usually use the word bless when you talk about that but we know what that means, speak well of someone. They were not asking Jesus to speak well of their children. Right? And Jesus wasn't just speaking well of the children. So there's a second way [00:40:08] "eulogeo" [0.8] is used. OK? It used this way: "to bless". In other words, when someone speaks a blessing in the Bible, knowing that only God can really bless someone, bring good and favor and good things to them. I can't really do that. I'm often asked, I shouldn't say that, but let's just say I was a leader in another time, to bless people. Well I can't directly bless people so [00:40:33] "eulogeo" [0.6] means I'm asking God, it's a prayer, to bring good to you, which is exactly what they were asking him to do in Matthew 19, "Would you pray for my kid?" That is how the word [00:40:44] "eulogeo" [0.6] is used, to pray for someone. I want you to ask God to do good to that person. And we, in that sense, bless one another all the time. In what sense? We're asking God, as we pray for you, he'll do good to them. But then there's a third way that it's used, and this intensifier, "kata" at the beginning the word makes it clear. I mean this is what Jesus is doing. He's not saying, "Father, would you bless these children? Would you do good to these children? Bring good to these children?" Right? He's pronouncing authoritatively good on these children. He is saying, "I give you favor. I authoritatively grant you favor." That is the blessing you and I can't do, we can only ask God to do that kind of thing, and God, in human form, is doing that in this passage. Now, Luke didn't take time to give us that information because he's just focused on the illustration. But since we will be a long time until we get around to Matthew 19 or Mark 10 I assume, I want to tell you that in this situation Jesus did that very thing.

Now what does that mean? What are you doing? What is going on here? To seem indignant that these kids were kept from him and purposing and resolving to bestow divine favor authoritatively on these helpless children, who are helpless physically and therefore make a good illustration of us being helpless spiritually, reminds us also that they are also helpless spiritually.

Now here's the thing about kids. If I were going to Angel Stadium and I had a 2-year-old and I pulled up to the front where everyone's pulling in trying to get in the parking lot and I reached into my wallet and I handed \$20 to my 2-year-old and I opened the door, tossed him out, said, "I'll meet you at the seats. Oh, by the way, here's your ticket and here's \$20, get us popcorn and a couple of hot dogs and I'll meet you at your seat, I'm going to go park out where it's cheaper outside of the stadium." And you saw me do that as I drive away, as my 2-year-old sitting with a ticket and a \$20 bill in his hand. I assume you'd help him. Am I right?

Why? Because you'd say, "That kid is helpless. He ain't going to find his way through all the, you know, the traffic, he's not going to get through the crowd, he's not going to go through the scanners at the gate, you don't know if he can keep his ticket to get to the front, he can't climb up all those stairs, he's not going to find his seat, he's not going to coordinate the ticket to the seat, he's not going to get your hotdog and your popcorn. There is no way that's happening. If a kid is helpless in the hallway of our auditorium, adults are going to scurry to help him. They're physically helpless. OK? Here are kids that are spiritually helpless and they're physically helpless. And here is Christ doing something that I think is telling. It's not a chapter and verse about the salvation of kids that die, but it is a statement of God's purposeful resolve and even indignantly motivated blessing, favor, divine favor upon these kids. That's a statement I think that deserves our attention. It's Christ seeming to show a kind of response, a help to the helpless, spiritually.

And here's why this makes sense. Romans Chapter 8 verses 20 and 21. Hear the plight of children.

The plight of children is they're subject to the consequences of sin without being contributors to the problem of sin. That's the problem. They've had no conscious decision to affirm that they, in fact, are sinners even though their decisions are being made from birth that show that they are sinners from birth, conceived in iniquity. But just like in Romans Chapter 8 verses 20 and 21, the inanimate objects of creation are said to be subject to futility because of Adam's sin without volitional decision, because they don't make volitional decisions. I'll read it for you. God subjects them but only for a time. Romans Chapter 8 verse 20. "Creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him whose subjected it." God did it because of Adam. But here are the next two words in that verse, "in hope." What do you mean? I know you didn't decide to do this, I know you're not a willing contributor in this, but you're going to suffer the consequences, you are going to suffer some of the consequences but it's only temporary, it's only temporal and it's "in hope." In hope that what? "That creation itself," because you didn't make any willful decisions, "will be set free from the bondage," that you're under and "to the corruption," that you're under and you'll "obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." So you're going to have this removed from you. It's just for a time that you have to suffer the consequences of Adam's sin.

Let me remind you what happened in the desert. Numbers Chapter 14. If you've been with us in Old Testament survey you know this is so critical. Kadesh-barnea, sent in the twelve spies, ten come back saying, "We can't do it," and all but Joshua and Caleb said, "We shouldn't do this." And God says, "Well then here's the thing, twenty and over, you're all going to die in the wilderness." And it's an interesting statement at the end of this passage. In verse 33, it says, "And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness." I know they were supposed to be farmers in the land of milk and honey but they're going to "be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your unfaithfulness." But, I might add these words, the rest of the text tells us "in hope". In hope that what? In hope that one day this suffering, because of your sin, is going to be reversed and they will be led into the land, if they were less than 20 years old in the census, then they would be ones who would inhabit the land. The exceptions are Caleb and Joshua, of course. And in that, they were freed from that bondage. Now that's just an historical illustration but it follows the pattern of those who are subject, I say "those" because it's "it" in Romans, subject to corruption without a willful contribution to that, but they're only for a time, then they'll be freed. And so it is. In Deuteronomy Chapter 1 verse 4, because of the incapacities, if I can use that word, the incapacities of the young, the Bible puts it this way, verse 34: "The Lord heard your words and he was angered." You didn't believe him at Kadesh-barnea. "Not one of the men of this evil generation shall see the good land that I swore to your fathers except for Caleb," and except for Joshua. Why? "Because they were wholly following the Lord." But the rest of you weren't. As for your little ones, your children, those who don't have the capacity to make a decision about this, you didn't have third graders standing up at Kadesh-barnea, "Well, mom or dad aren't going but we're going, give us a spear, we're going in." They didn't say that. They would just subject to whatever their parents were doing. "As for your little ones, who you said would be prey," you were afraid they're going to die out here. No, "Your children, today, who have no knowledge of good or evil," they can't make moral, discerning decisions, "they shall go in. And to them I will give it and they will possess it. But as for you, head back to the Red Sea, go back into the wilderness." Here is God saying because of the lack of capacity for moral discernment, their suffering is for a time, they will be shepherds and they won't be farmers in Canaan, at least not for the prime of their lives, but they're going to get the promise, because they can't be culpable for the decisions that they are not able to make. And the decisions that they should make when it comes to salvation can't be made because that should come with a man beating his chest and saying, "I'm a sinner, have mercy on me."

That takes conviction. There are three things the Bible says that bring conviction consistently to

humanity. Two of them are universal. The first one is conscience. Romans Chapter 2. The second is creation, Romans Chapter 1. And the third is Scripture. The Scripture codifies the message of a you're a sinner, you need to repent, you need to cry out for mercy. The difference between a child who doesn't have moral discernment and the Aborigine in the outback of Australia, you're going to want to make the connection but you can't make the connection, because one has moral capacities and the ability to know the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. And he looks at his conscience and looks at creation and says, "Yeah, I know, I should do the right thing but I'm not." He is, as the Bible puts it in Romans 1 and 2, without excuse. That's different than someone who has no moral capacity and cannot have the effect of creation and conscience or Scripture and, therefore, they don't have that. They are without the moral guilt. They're still affected by Adam's sin.

This, by the way, is illustrated to me in a vivid way in Nehemiah Chapter 8. When Ezra the priest brings the law out there in Nehemiah, he says he going to assemble all the people, all the men and women and all, here it is, "who could understand." If you can't understand the Scripture then you cannot be led to conviction and you cannot be led to repentance. What we need now is repentance. We need to get right with God. Well you can't even understand the mechanism of conviction. And so it is with conscience and creation. If you can't understand what these things are leading you to grasp, then you shouldn't even be exposed to it. Well, in this case, at least, because it was a long day of preaching, it says, he starts there "on the first day of the seventh month, he reads from it facing the square of the Water Gate from morning until midday in the presence of all the men and women and those who could understand. And all of the ears of the people were attentive to the Book of the Law." That means there are some people without these capabilities, by the way, who may never get these capabilities. Most children do have the capabilities eventually but some are mentally incapacitated for the entirety of their lives. Where does that lead us? I think it leads us back to Romans 8. People subjected to the penalty of Adam's sin, but in hope, because they are not contributors to the problem. And God seems to provide in a passage like this, he shows the paradigm, at least, it's not a central passage that can be quoted in any argument, but it is a passage that helps me understand that God looks at the helplessness of children and he doesn't say, "Feed these kids, they need food." He says, "Here's God's blessing for people that don't know their spiritual need." Now you can say, "Well, what about the guy who doesn't have a church on every corner? He's out in the backwoods of some jungle." Right? He does know his spiritual need and he is without excuse. There are some, the Scripture, I think, would lead us to conclude that do not understand and cannot understand and therefore they are with excuse and that excuse is met by a Christ in this passage who invokes a strong blessing from God, the favor of God upon their lives. Well, the spiritual helplessness is obvious to Christ. He rushes in to provide it. But this assurance of God providing his spiritual assistance to those who are spiritually helpless should only be something that resonates in our hearts until people are capable of moral discernment, until people are capable of conviction, until people are capable of responding rightly to that conviction. See, you may not rush to help a guy who's 25 years-old with a ticket and money in his hand who very well can find his own seat. You got your seat to find. He very well can stand in the concession line and get a couple of hot dogs and popcorn. He can do it and he can do it and he should do it. Someone who's walking around in the hallway, you don't think twice about, but a little baby that's crawling around in the hallway, you stop, take notice and help. And the difference is, at some point, we have to recognize God expects the response that he's demanded as the only response that will fix the problem of their sin. And while there is silence on a passage that would tell us God fixes the problem of every child who dies before they're capable of faith, I think we can assemble that argument from a passage like this. And if that sounds like too much explanation for something that you just lean back at the beginning when I posed the question, "Well, of course God's going to take

care of it." See, we don't derive our theology based on our gut instincts, you understand. We don't sit around and say, "Well, I think that's what God would do." If you want to live that kind of game, you're going to come up with crazy theology.

But we need to find answers in the Scripture and in this case, like many things in the Bible that are important for us to know, it's not spelled out explicitly, we have to assemble it by precept and principle. And so that's what I've tried to do in the second half of this message.

In 1776, the year the Declaration of Independence was signed, there was a pastor in England who penned some enduring lyrics to a hymn that you may know called the Rock of Ages. He captured, in essence, the principle of what we've been trying to talk about. The physical helplessness of children that illustrates the spiritual helplessness of every adult. And it's something that I think is worth repeating, perhaps you know some of these words.

He writes: "Nothing in my hand I bring." Here's a helpless, humble, desperate, expectant faith.

"Simply to your cross I cling."

"Naked, I come to Thee for dress;" I can't do it.

"Helpless, looked to Thee for grace."

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,"

"Let me hide myself in Thee."

"Let the water and the blood," that has to provide this for me. Right?

"From Thy wounded side which flowed."

"Be of sin the double cure," What's the problem? Wrath and unholiness in my life.

"Save me from wrath and make me pure." There's the double cure.

"Whilst I draw fleeting breath," This fleeting breath, I'm going to die.

"And my eyes shall close in death."

"When I soar to worlds unknown."

"And see you on your judgment throne."

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me."

"Let me hide myself in Thee."

"Truly I say to you," Jesus said, "if you don't receive the kingdom of God like a child," helpless, with nothing that you can provide, if that's not your mindset and that's not the nature of your faith, he says, "You shall not enter it." I pray there are lots of people in this room that understand what



that kind of faith is like and it is firmly resting in Christ and, because of that, you have an assurance, like an anchor to your soul, to let you walk out of these doors confident that Christ has provided for your salvation.

Let's pray. God, we want to celebrate the provision of salvation in our lives. And as we construct in our minds even the assurance for those that have lost children physically to death, I think we can leave this message even with some assurance that the provision, a special provision of your grace and favor is given to those who are incapable of faith. God, there are people who are incapable of faith who are not young. They are severely impaired and yet buried underneath all the crossed wires in their brain, there is a spirit that is of worth and value made in your image. And we're grateful that one day all the noise of their impairment will be removed and that spirit, in all of its beauty and sanctity, will be redeemed, we trust, because of your willingness to help the spiritually helpless. Of course we know we are spiritually helpless but we're called to acknowledge it, if we don't acknowledge it we're lost. There are some who cannot acknowledge it. They're not capable of acknowledging it. And for those in this room who have known and had to bury children, have lost children in infancy, God I pray that we can leave today with a hope, a hope of your salvation, an assurance of your provision. Such a strong word in this passage used of God purposing with indignant motivation to make sure that he is there to signify his grace and favor upon those who are incapable of reaching out to it through that cry of mercy and helplessness.

So God, I pray this will help us in many ways in our counseling and our help, not just with ourselves but with those who are hurting around us. And I pray too, most importantly and primarily, that we would recognize our need to have that kind of faith that realizes we were helpless before you. Thanks so much that brings us a kind of assurance and provision that no other religious group can have. Everyone else is trying and striving and hoping and crossing their fingers, and we can leave today saying that we are fully qualified for our inheritance because of the righteousness of Christ and what he's done for us. We trust in that and not ourselves. Make that real clear and give us the joy that results from it.

In Jesus name, Amen.