

# SELFISH AMBITIONS REBUKED

**BIBLE TEXT** : Matthew 18:1-20

LESSON 116 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4)

## **BIBLE TEXT in King James Version**

### **Matthew 18:1-20 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

<sup>2</sup> And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>5</sup> And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

<sup>8</sup> Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

<sup>9</sup> And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

<sup>10</sup> Take heed that ye despise not

## **BIBLE REFERENCES:**

### **I The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven**

1 Everyone must be converted, Matthew 18:1-3;

**John 3:3 (KJV)**

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

2 The humble are great, Matthew 18:4; 5:5;

**Proverbs 22:4 (KJV)**

<sup>4</sup> By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *are* riches, and honour, and life.

### **II The Seriousness of Stumbling Blocks**

1 To receive or offend a child is to receive or offend Christ, Matthew 18:5, 6, 10;

**Luke 9:48 (KJV)**

<sup>48</sup> And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

**Mark 9:36-37 (KJV)**

<sup>36</sup> And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

<sup>37</sup> Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

2 It is better to lose a hand, foot, or eye than to go to hell, Matthew 18:7-9;

**Matthew 16:26 (KJV)**

<sup>26</sup> For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

### **III The Ninety and Nine**

1 Jesus seeks the one that goes astray, Matthew 18:11, 12;

**Luke 15:4 (KJV)**

<sup>4</sup> What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

**John 10:11 (KJV)**

<sup>11</sup> I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

**John 10:15 (KJV)**

<sup>15</sup> As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

2 There is great rejoicing over the return of the lost sheep, Matthew 18:13, 14;

**Luke 15:5-7 (KJV)**

<sup>5</sup> And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing.

<sup>6</sup> And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

<sup>7</sup> I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

### **IV Discipline of an Erring Brother**

1 First, if your brother sins, deal with him in private, Matthew 18:15;

**Matthew 5:23 (KJV)**

<sup>23</sup> Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

**Colossians 3:13 (KJV)**

<sup>13</sup> Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup> For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

<sup>12</sup> How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

<sup>13</sup> And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

<sup>14</sup> Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

<sup>15</sup> Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

<sup>16</sup> But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

<sup>17</sup> And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

<sup>18</sup> Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

<sup>19</sup> Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

<sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

2 Second, if necessary, call in one or two more as witnesses, Matthew 18:16

3 Third, if the witnesses are not heard, bring the matter before the church, Matthew 18:17

4 Fourth, if he refuses to hear the church, separate from him, Matthew 18:17

5 The Father recognizes the unity of the church, Matthew 18:18-20;

**Luke 12:32 (KJV)**

<sup>32</sup> Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

## **NOTES:**

### **Seeking Position**

To reach an exalted position has ever been an ideal in the mind of carnal man. This thought seemed to be in the minds of the disciples when they asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" An earthly kingdom has as its top-ranking man a king; next in line it has princes, dukes, and lords. These men of title are often proud and consider it beneath them to associate with the common people. In the United States we do not have royalty, yet the same attitude prevails in societies where wealth and power exist. Jesus said that the Gentile princes and they that are great exercise authority over their subjects, but He said, "It shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matthew 20:26-28).

### **Meekness**

When Jesus, the King of Glory, brought the Kingdom of God to earth, He did not come in the manner of an earthly king surrounded by a court and attendants, but was born of poor parents and lived in a humble home. He carried His Gospel to the common people and preached hi the market places, by the seashore, and upon the mountainside.

Jesus taught that the meek were blessed and should inherit the earth. Fallen, sinful man has nothing of which to boast. His position is that of a condemned man pleading for mercy. It is when man realizes his lost and helpless state and calls upon God for mercy that he **is** converted and enters the Kingdom of Heaven. Using a little child as an example, Jesus said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

### **Like a Little Child**

There are several points in which it is necessary to become as **a child in order to** be converted. A small child thinks not in terms of merit or having earned that for which he asks. A sinner cannot earn salvation through good works, or merit it by a moral life. Salvation is conditioned upon repentance and faith in God and the atoning Blood of Jesus Christ. "Repent ye, and believe," was a common injunction of the disciples to those who sought salvation. A little child has faith in his parents and trusts them for that which he asks. When a promise is given by the parent the son depends upon it and expects to receive that which is promised.

If we have that same degree of faith and confidence in God and retain the humility of a little child we shall be truly great in the Kingdom of God. "By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life" (Proverbs 22:4). If a child is not instructed in the ways of God, as he grows up he faces many

disappointments in life and soon his faith is shaken. Later, perhaps he begins to pride himself in his own attainments and thus loses that simplicity with which it is easy to enter the Kingdom of God. How much better it is for a child to be taught to know God before that faith is lost. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

### **Examples and Responsibility**

A great responsibility rests on parents and on all those who come in contact with children, to be careful that nothing may be done by word or by example to shake the faith of the young who believe in Jesus. Jesus said, "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." Christ loved the young who were tender and innocent, and He desired that they should be shielded from offenses. To receive, guide, and protect such a one, in the name of Jesus, reaches to the very heart of Christ Himself.

A woe is pronounced by Jesus upon those who offend "one of these little ones which believe in me." A shepherd says that a wolf will never take a sheep so long as it can get a lamb. Surely the devil lays traps for the innocent. The world is full of those who set ungodly examples before children. Children's faith in God as the Creator is being shaken in almost every grade in school by the teaching of evolution and related subjects that deny God as the Creator of the universe and deny His Holy Word.

An eight-year-old child who attends our Sunday School regularly recently had an opportunity to voice his opinion against modernistic teachings. From a very young age he had been taught from the Bible the story of creation, and just recently had the opportunity in his Sunday School class to learn the fallacy of evolution. This young child overheard his fourth-grade teacher in the public school tell another child her evolutionary version of how man came into existence: first a tiny speck of dust, then an insect, and so on into the larger species, to a gorilla, and then a man.

The little boy repeated the incident to someone and said, "I thought that if they wanted to believe that kind of stuff — let them go ahead." He said he knew better than to believe that. That teacher would have been a stumbling block to the child by robbing him of his faith in God, the Creator of the universe, and faith in God's Holy Word which declares that "without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). How thankful we are that in our Sunday School the Word of God is still taught in its entirety: our teachers, one and all, believe its doctrines, embrace its principles, and have a heartfelt knowledge of salvation wrought out in their life. Such an experience with God removes all desire to deviate in the least degree from the truth of the Word. "Woe unto the world because of offences!" The world is truly in a woeful condition today because of sin and a rejection of God.

### **Hell**

Jesus wanted His disciples to see the seriousness of losing the soul. The loss of a hand, a foot, or an eye is a serious loss; but it is as nothing compared with the loss of one's eternal soul. A lost soul is condemned to spend eternity in hell. Some claim that hell is the grave, or that the soul is annihilated; but Jesus said, "Everlasting fire"; and "into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched" (Mark 9:45). In Luke 16:24 we read that the word of the rich man who went to hell was, "I am tormented in this flame." In several places the Scriptures speak of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" and leave no room for the doctrine of annihilation. Heaven is real; hell is just as real. Self-seeking and

worldly ambition can cause a man to lose his soul and be cast into hell.

### **The Ninety and Nine**

It is not the will of God that any person should go to hell Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Jesus said, "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost" (Matthew 18:11). He gives as an example, a shepherd leaving the ninety and nine to seek the one sheep that has gone astray. It is hard for us to fathom how much the Savior went through to rescue those who have gone astray. He left the glory of Heaven, came to earth to suffer and die that we might escape hell.

### **Fellowship and Discipline**

In this lesson *Jesus* also deals with a method of handling difficulties that might arise between brethren. If a point of difference arises between you and your brother, if you are a Christian you will not pout about it or go around condemning your brother to every one you meet. You will go to him alone and try to reason with him. When necessary you will take one or two more to help arbitrate the difference. If he refuses to listen you will take the matter to the ministry of the church. If he will not come under church rule he is no longer to be regarded as a brother. Such cases are serious, for Jesus gives us to understand that decisions made here by the true Church are recognized in Heaven. If we are in fellowship or bound to the body of believers here, we are in fellowship with Heaven. If we are disfellowshipped, or loosed from the body on earth, we are out of harmony with Heaven. The united body of believers, although only two or three, have the promise that Jesus will be with them and that the Father will grant their petitions. Let us place value on the fellowship which we enjoy with God and with the brethren rather than on a worldly ambition to have wealth, fame, or power.

### **QUESTIONS**

- 1 Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?
- 2 Look up other passages of Scripture on the subject of "Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."
- 3 In what respect should we become as little children?
- 4 Name some ways in which offenses come to children.
- 5 What truths may be learned from the story of the ninety and nine?
- 6 Is there another account of the ninety and nine in the Bible?
- 7 What steps are to be taken if a brother trespasses against you?
- 8 What is meant by "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven"?
- 9 Find a promise that is frequently quoted from this chapter.
- 10 Look up other verses of Scripture that speak of hell.