

## THE CHILDREN AND THEIR HOSANNAS NO. 1785

A SERMON  
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AT UNION CHAPEL, ISLINGTON.  
(BY REQUEST OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION).

*“And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?  
Matthew 21:15-16.*

THESE scribes and Pharisees always come in very conveniently as a sort of shadow to bring out the bright lights of the picture. One feels glad that they are not alive to worry us now, but somewhat glad that they were alive just then to put some of their queer cross questions to the Savior, and to arouse His spirit to utter precious truths, which are all the better understood because of the occasion which called for them. Here was their question, “Hearest thou what these say?” I suppose that if interpreted at full length the question means, “Do You permit these mere children to salute You with hosannas? What do You think of Yourself when Your name is in the mouths of noisy boys and girls who make the temple courts to ring again?”

I have met with that spirit in these days, for the Pharisees are not all dead, nor the scribes either. They may be dead literally, but their spiritual successors, are they not still among us? Listen to their criticism—“It is true that the good man has many converts, but they are only a parcel of young people, mere boys and girls.” Oh yes, I know you, my old friend, I have met with you before! This is the very language of the ancestors of your house, they also inquired sarcastically—“Hearest thou what these say?” A despising of true religion when it is found among the very young is a pernicious evil which springs up again in each generation however diligently we may pull up the weed.

Explanations are sometimes given of the light esteem in which men hold juvenile godliness, they say, “It is not the children’s youth that we look down upon so much, but they are of course ignorant, and therefore do not know what they are saying.” No doubt the Pharisees would have exclaimed, “They do not even know the meaning of the word ‘Hosanna,’ and how can they know that it is proper to apply the term to the man of Nazareth? They have never read the Talmud or the Gemara, what should they know?”

I have heard the same thing said of certain people in these modern times. The polite and intelligent, or rather, those who think themselves so, cry—“Oh, it is a congregation of quite the lower orders. They are ignorant, uninstructed people. Very earnest, very prayerful, very sincere, but still so poor and illiterate that it takes a large quantity of them to make up anything very considerable.” That judgment tallies with the criticism of the Pharisees of old, and I would recommend all friends to steer as far away as they can from the track of those ancient cavilers.

The spirit which looks down upon any class of people who sincerely love the Lord is not from heaven, neither would the Lord Jesus sanction it for a moment. One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren, and if some people do not know quite so much as we do, it is just possible that there may be a little conceit in our knowledge, and it were far more commendable to seek their edification than to sneer at them.

Then, again, I suppose that the Pharisees would have said, “We do not condemn their youth or their ignorance, but their excessive enthusiasm is quite annoying. If they walked steadily through the court

and chanted 'Hosanna' in a subdued tone, one could bear it, but to shout at that rate is going too far. These children cry 'Hosanna' in the temple in quite a tumultuous fashion. Everything should be decorous and proper there." Yes, yes, I have heard the same thing often, but there is not much in it. We can be overdone with propriety. Some of us are hampered and hindered by it and in proportion as we get into that state we, of course, resent anything that looks like enthusiasm.

No doubt, fanaticism is a bad thing, but it is the exaggeration of something which is good. When zeal grows to madness it is dangerous, but the stuff that it is made of, if it could be kept in order, might be just the one thing needful in many a church. Fire is a bad master. We all admit that. It is, however, an exceedingly good servant, and it would be a pity to quench all the fires that burn upon our hearths because perhaps they might produce a conflagration. Enthusiasm is of God, let us not repress it because we are fearful that it may grow into fanaticism. Is not the very suggestion suspicious? It is so like what the Pharisees would have done. We are pretty sure to be on the down track when we say, "Hearest thou what these say?"

I remember what Zwingli said in time of battle, and I have sometimes felt inclined to say the same, though I have not said it. He cried, "In the name of the Holy Trinity, let all loose." When we get contracted and official, when red tape and decorum tie us hand and foot, I feel inclined to cut the bonds, and let men and women shout and sing as they have a mind to. Especially let the children in the fervor of their spirits have full liberty to cry "Hosanna" in the temple and anywhere else. I demand liberty for life, and double freedom for young life, which will not else be fresh, and bright, and beautiful.

I have nothing more to do with that point just now. I was asked to speak on behalf of the Sunday School Union, and I must make my discourse suitable to the occasion. I remember hearing a sermon preached on a missionary Sunday which was about everything in the world except missions. I believe the brother thought that as the Missionary Society had the occasion, he needed not give it anything more, but might use the opportunity for discussing something else. Although I may seem to be somewhat confined in my run of thought, I cannot help it, I must keep the service sacred to its purpose. I have never learned the art of hitting two targets with the same shot. I must therefore keep to one theme and preach about the children, to those who are endeavoring to teach them the right way. It is upon the children that the brunt of this sarcastic question still falls, "Hearest thou what these say?"

There are still among us those who hardly think that children can be truly converted. They put on their magnifying glasses when there is a child before the church, and they look hard for a flaw in its character! they put the child under a microscope and examine him much more particularly than they would a person of adult years. When the child is received into the church, it is with a kind of feeling that only the generous spirit of Christianity would enable us to be so wonderfully condescending, and so purely unselfish, for of course such young people cannot add much to the church, and it is by no means an occasion for killing the fatted calf, and beginning to eat and be merry. That spirit still lingers among us, I wish we could exterminate it!

The Savior's answer to the Pharisees was splendid. Even in its opening words He smote them, "Have ye never read?" Why, they were always reading. They lived on the letter, and reckoned the reading of Scripture to be a very virtuous act. Reading and writing were the business of the scribes and Pharisees, and it hit them hard when the Savior said to them, "Have ye never read?" Might He not even hint that they did not read after all? They were readers or nothing, yet the Savior hints that they were not readers in the true sense.

"Have ye never read?" You have never reached the inner sense. You have not read so as to understand. Have you never read that wondrous passage in the Psalms, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength"? It was well to carry the war into the enemy's country, and to charge them home in such a telling style, and they evidently felt it, for they gave Him no answer. Jesus, having silenced them, being satisfied that nothing could be done with them, left them and went to Bethany. They were barren ground given up to burning, it was useless to sow them with good seed.

Jesus stopped their mouths, prevented their hindering the children, and then went His way to His village retreat.

That text which He quoted seemed to say to them—God is most glorified in weak things. If praise shall come out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, then God is greatly honored. If the heavens are telling of His glory, that is something, but if babes are doing it, that is somewhat more. There is more of power displayed in the Lord's raising up the weak things to confound the mighty than in His using the great things to set forth His majesty.

It is very remarkable under the Old Testament dispensation what care the Lord always took of the poor and despised. There was an appointed gift for rich men, the offering was also arranged to suit persons of moderate position, but this was not all, the sacrifice was also accommodated to those of the humblest rank, so that the poorest woman might bring her pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. I think four times in one chapter in Leviticus we read, "He shall bring an offering of what he can get." The Lord thus accepted the sacrifices of the poor, and we may rest assured that He accepts the offerings of the children. It is according to the spirit of our great Lord to dwell with the lowly and the humble, and to be pleased with the praises of the little ones. Others may despise them, but He never does, for He even enrolls them in His kingdom.

And now to our work of dealing with this matter of questioning the blessedness of children's piety. May the Holy Spirit help me!

### I. Our first head is this, CHILDREN ARE CAPABLE OF A VERY DEEP PIETY.

Instead of saying, "Hearest thou what these say?" with a kind of contempt, we would cry with holy delight, "Lord, we know that You hear what the children say. If You do turn Your ear away from us by reason of our pollution, yet do You hear *their* simple cries and eager notes of praise, for they are true and hearty."

I am sure that children are capable of that early grace with which true religion usually begins, namely, that of deep *repentance*. Have you never heard the sobs and cries of little ones when they have been convicted of sin? I have almost wondered when I have seen their pure lives, and yet have marked their solemn sense of guilt. Outward sin in its grosser forms was scarcely known to them even by name, and yet when they have felt the power of God's Holy Spirit boys that were usually gay and thoughtless have sobbed and wept as if they could not be comforted, when they felt the evil of their hearts. They have mentioned their little deeds of disobedience to their parents, or their acts of passion with their brothers, or some other fault, and they have cried greatly, as if their hearts would burst. Foolish persons have said, "Do not fret, my dear, I am sure you have never been a bad child," but the child has known better. The conscience aroused within him has revealed to him much more of sin than the unrenewed trifler could perceive, infinitely more than the child ever showed in his outward life.

I cannot help remembering how the Lord dealt with me as a child. If ever any lad knew the guilt of sin, I did. I was tenderly cared for, and kept from all sorts of evil company, yet the great deeps within my nature were broken up, and rose in vast waves of sin and rebellion against God, and I was amazed at my own sinfulness. I have met with scores of persons, converted in riper years, who, I am sure, never felt a hundredth part of what I felt as a child when I was under the hand of God's Spirit. I experienced a thorough loathing of myself, because I had not lived to God and loved and served Him as He deserved. I speak upon this point what I do know, and testify what I have seen and felt in myself.

Grief for sin and a holy dread of the consequences can be felt by children quite as well as by their seniors. In many children whom I have known, repentance has been true, thorough, deep, intelligent, and lasting; they have found their way to the foot of the cross, and seen the great sacrifice, and have wept all the more to think that they should have offended against the love which so freely forgives.

As to faith, I am sure that no one who has seen converted children will ever doubt their capacity for *faith*. In the hand of God's Spirit, a child's capacity for faith is in some respects greater than that of a grown-up person, at any rate, the faith of children is usually far more simple than that of adults. They take the word of God as they find it, and they believe it to be the very truth. They read it fairly, and they

do not put glosses thereon, or degrade it with interpretations gathered from the schools or from the current philosophies. God's Book means to them just what it says. No undertone of doubt mars the music of the promises, but they accept the word as it ought to be accepted—as the sure testimony of God's mouth. They believe, and have little unbelief to struggle with, they believe and are sure, and therefore, theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

You must have noticed how vivid their faith is. The gospel is all fact to them, and they seem to see it before their eyes. They feel it and believe it, and in their childlike way they act upon it. They expect great things, and look for them in everyday life. They sometimes look for them in a shape in which they will never see them, but still that is much better than never to expect at all, and so to miss seeing the glory of God. Jesus is to children no mere character in history, He is with them, and their eye beholds Him. The Master's word is to them what He meant it to be, and they expect to realize it and to see it fulfilled in their own experience, hence some holy children are far in advance of us poor questioners, who are cracking the nut while the little ones have eaten the kernel.

And how effective their faith is! Have you never known a child in whose holy life you have seen the reality of his faith? He was a child—God forbid that he should be otherwise—but he was a holy child. For a boy to put on the air and manners of a man is not sanctification, that is to spoil him, not to sanctify him. And for a girl to be other than a girl, and to assume the air and tone of her careful mother, would be very mischievous. God does not sanctify children into men, but He sanctifies children in their own childlike way.

I have noticed especially the struggles of some children with whom it has been my great joy to converse. They have been to school, and they have met there with almost the same temptations which you encounter in business, on the market, or in the Stock Exchange, only the temptations have been adapted to their state, according to the subtlety of the evil one who knows how to fit his snares to the birds he would entrap. Converted children have a horror of wickedness. A bad word that they have heard has made them sob themselves to sleep. They have been disturbed by the look of sin, and some wicked thing that has been said about the divine Lord has cut them to the quick. They have not acted quite rightly, they have felt it, and they have not again been easy till they have mentioned it to mother or father, or perhaps to their teacher, and obtained a sense of forgiveness. The dear ones wanted to be clear with everybody, that they might not seem to be better than they were.

Oh, the sweet simplicity of childhood! The dear child has said, "Jesus has forgiven me, I know. I stole away into a corner, and I told Him that I had done wrong, but that I did love Him, and I believe that He has even now blotted out my sin. I hope that I shall not do wrong again. Pray for me that I may be kept right, and may be pure and good, like the holy child Jesus." Does anybody here despise such desires in a child? If so, my friend, as far as it is right to do so, and perhaps a little farther, I despise *you*. I cannot help it, for there seems to me something so beautiful in youthful faith that you might as well sneer at a lily for its purity as despise a child for his artlessness. Children may teach some of us how to believe in God.

I am sure they may put us all to shame by their unfeigned confidence in the result of prayer. I have smiled at the story of the child who went to a prayer meeting, which was summoned that they might pray for rain, *and took her umbrella with her*. Ah, but that is the marrow of true prayer. We pray, but we do not take our umbrellas, yet it is the essence of faith to expect to be heard and to be prepared to be answered. Children often remind us that faith is not to be a show thing, a theme for pious talk, a source of gracious emotion, but a matter-of-fact force, operating upon the ordinary concerns of everyday life.

I am sure that I am not wrong when I say that children are capable of repentance and of a very high degree of faith.

As to *love*, my dear friends, is it not one of the matters in which children excel? When they learn to love our blessed Lord, they copy closely the love of Mary of Bethany, they sit at His feet and receive His words. They are not Marthas yet, nor cumbered with much serving. I had almost said, "God grant that they may never grow to be such, but having chosen the good part, may they keep to it, and still sit

and look up into that dear face which they realize in all its beauty far better than we do." They do love Jesus, and there is no room to question the fact! The Lord never said to a child, "Lovest thou me?" He did say it to Peter, and there was good reason for His doing so, but a child once becoming a disciple of Christ is sure to love with a pure heart fervently. Childhood is all heart.

I have noticed in children other virtues besides these, when they have been brought to Christ. For instance, *courage*. We do not always look for that in children, yet they have shown it. This was seen conspicuously when the martyr Laurence was burned at Colchester. The Popish tormentors had so tortured him in prison that he had to be carried to the stake in a chair, and all the grown-up people were afraid that they might be burned too if they were seen to associate with him, but the little children had no such fears, and so they came round the man of God and cried, "Lord, strengthen thy servant! Lord, strengthen thy servant!" So they were his comforters while he confessed his Lord amid the flames.

When one was burned in Smithfield, a boy was seen going home after the burning, and someone said, "Boy, why were you there?" He answered, "Sir, I went to learn the way." Those were brave days surely, when boys learned the way to witness for Jesus at the stake. Yet they were children, you know, and children like ours. The Brentwood martyr was a holy boy of whom one said to his mother, "Will you not urge him to forsake the faith?" She said, "I have had many children, but I never thought one so well bestowed as this dear boy, though he is to be burned to the death, seeing it is for the Lord Jesus." He cheered his older companion who stood back to back with him in the flames, and then he died unflinchingly.

Children have taken their fair share all along in martyr days. Read the old stories of church history. When the good ship of the church ploughed her way through seas of blood, the children on board bravely endured their share of the tempest and the tossing. Grace made them heroes before nature had fully made them men.

So, to come nearer to your own hearts, there is another grace which is akin to courage, but more often required by children now, and that is *patience*. Oh, the patience of pious children! I have known one lie for years upon his back, the most cheerful person in the house. He could never stir, by the order of the doctor he was forced to lie in one position, but never a murmur escaped his lips. You must have seen children behave splendidly when they have had to go to the hospital, or to undergo a painful operation. They have resigned themselves to the great Father, and they have trusted in Jesus in a way that must have made you blush, certainly, if you have been guilty of impatience yourself you must have felt reproved.

Oh, dear friends, I plead for the children's piety with all my heart, for I am sure that they are capable of being *quick of understanding* in the fear of the Lord. They are not necessarily ignorant, nor even shallow. It has been my great privilege of late to admit to the church a large number of little children, and I have done so with unreserved confidence in their intelligent apprehension of the Gospel. I have talked with them, I hope with gentleness, but I have put questions to them concerning the deep things of God, and wherever the question has been vital there has been no hesitancy as to the answer.

I had years ago a good brother in our number who at church meeting usually felt it necessary to ask a young child some testing question. I did not admire his habit, but I thought he would grow out of it, as indeed he did. He asked this question of a child—"Have you a good heart?" It was a little boy, and he at once replied, "Yes, sir." My friend looked at me as much as to say, "There, you see the child's ignorance!" I knew better and therefore said to the boy, "What do you mean when you say that you have a good heart?" "Sir," he said, "the Lord Jesus Christ gave me a new heart when I believed in Him, and I am sure that it is a good one." My venerable friend who put the question was greatly delighted, but completely shut up, he asked no more questions of children for a very considerable time. If he had done so, I might have had more good illustrations to give you.

It is not true that godly children come into the church believing something or other, not knowing what, for I have marked a maturity of understanding in some children that, I am sure, I have not always seen in persons of riper years. God instructs the babes, He teaches the young men wisdom, He gives the

youths knowledge and discretion. Age is wise, undoubtedly, but not always, youth is foolish, but yet the Lord grants a considerable share of wisdom to young Samuels and youthful Davids.

Frequently, also, what they know is truer wisdom than that of their elders. I read some time ago that the Jews permit children to read the Scriptures when they are five years old, but they may not read a word of the Talmud till they are fifteen. God help me to keep on reading the Scriptures, and never get to the Talmud at all. Alas, many professors are so old that it is all Talmud with them, the Bible is buried under a heap of novel theories. With the children there is no Talmud and much Bible. They just keep to the simple word, and what they know is worth the knowing; whereas much of what others of us know never was worth the knowing, and it would be a great blessing if we could forget it altogether. Children can be quick of understanding in the fear of God.

If you inquire for anything else, “Can children know *joy in the Lord?*” Oh can they not? Would God we had their joy and their delight in divine things. Have you ever seen them on the brink of death, when they have been within hail of heaven? when the golden gate has been in sight? What words they have uttered, priceless as rare gems! A half-a-dozen words from a dying child have been worth a Bodleian for the weight of meaning that has been concentrated therein. If their heavenly Father can bless them in dying, He can bless them in living with joy unutterable, and so indeed He does.

One thing strikes me very strongly about children—that, when men grow old and ripen for heaven, they usually enter upon a child-like career before they die. Their mature tastes and purified hearts bring them into a childhood which is not childish but child-like. Where childhood begins ripe manhood ends. The last words that were said by old Dr. Nott were—

*“And now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”*

A child’s verse that his mother taught him served him for a watchword at the gates of death. It is very pleasing to read of our late dear friend Dr. Guthrie, that, just before his departure, he said, “Sing me one of the bairns’ hymns.” Oh, yes, when we become old we grow like children again, we want the children’s hymn and the bairns’ faith. The child is in some respects our model and example. “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” What need of more argument as to the excellence of child religion?

**II.** But now, secondly, as children are capable of deep piety, so CHILDREN ARE CAPABLE IN THE HANDS OF GOD OF RENDERING GOOD SERVICE.

Some children have been chosen for very special service, not many, but some. It would prove the capacity of a child if there were but one Samuel. He ministered before the Lord, and thus was a child priest. He spoke the word of the Lord to Eli, having received it in a vision of the night, and thus was a child prophet. He was a messenger of God when Eli’s sons were men of Belial.

Little children can, and often do, convey healing messages to those about them. The little maid that waited upon Naaman’s wife did good service to the Syrian hero when she said, “Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.”

Little children I have no doubt, often guide blind souls into the light, and even great believers have been indebted to children. Can we ever forget Samson, that brawny, strong-sinewed man, who became blind as the result of his own folly? He could not serve his God without the help of a boy, and therefore, he said to the lad that held him by the hand, “Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them,” and the boy led the blind hero to the place where, bowing himself with all his might, he avenged his blindness upon the Philistines.

How often strong men have been guided to great actions by a child! Most of you can remember times when to you, also, it was true, “A little child shall lead them.” You had not thought of it, had not the boy suggested it to you. You could not have done it aforesaid, but somehow the words he said, as he

looked up archly into your face, quickened you to energy. A Christian man had never set up family prayer, but his little boy went to visit an uncle, and when he came back he said, "Father, why do you not do as uncle Isaac does?" "What is that, child?" "Why, he reads a chapter every morning and every evening, and prays with His family." Father attended to family worship after that. The child's remark was a great help.

You may have beheld a scene like that which comes up to my memory—At a temperance meeting a drunk came in with a little boy whom he greatly loved, and both of them listened to the speeches. The little boy, turning round, said, "Father, do not drink any more. Come up to the platform and let us both sign the pledge." "That I will, child." Putting the boy on his shoulders, he forced his way through the crowd, and they both signed, and put on the blue. He was true all his life to it—nay, he became a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ after being saved from his drunkenness. Oh, little children, you have done much, and you will do more. We cannot, therefore, thrust you away, and say to our Master, "Hearest thou what these say?" God forbid that we should.

Little children serve the Lord wondrously by their *prayers*. There are no prayer meetings to my mind more touching, or more likely to prevail, than the prayer meetings of little children when they get together and cry unto the Lord. Melancthon thought so, for he said to Luther, when he found him down in the dumps, "Courage, brother, the children are praying for us, and God will hear them." Mr. Whitefield mentions in his diary the great encouragement that he received at Moorfields from the children. He says that he was pelted with mud and stones, but he was greatly comforted, for a company of little children always sat around the platform and passed him up the requests for prayer. When mud and stones fell fast about them they never stirred, but still kept looking up to the man of God, and offering their prayers that God might help him.

The Lord God will hear children, He hears young ravens when they cry, will He not much more hear the young of the human race? That perfect praise which He brings out of their mouths He must accept, for He has Himself put it there. He will accept their childish pleading, blessings must descend when children pray.

The children of London, I do verily believe, are the best city missionaries that we have, and the best evangelists that we shall ever find. They come to our schools, and everything is happy and holy there, but they often go home to houses from which they have been sent to get rid of them, and for no better reason, but when they go home what do they do? If you were to turn into a singing pilgrim, and visit certain homes with the wish to sing gracious hymns, the door would be shut in your face. But little Tommy will sing at home, and Father will say, "Come and sing me one of your little pieces," for in his opinion Tommy's voice is much sweeter than yours.

And little Ruth, when she goes home, tells her father what her teacher said. Father does not care for parsons, and he does not believe in religion, but then, you see, he is very fond of Ruth, and Ruth prattles so prettily that he loves to listen to her, and even tells his mates what she says. Even her breakings down and her lispings are pretty to him, his heart must be impressed now that Ruth sings to him. In many hundreds of cases it has been so.

When children are converted, they do more than sing and tell what they have heard. I heard of a little child whose father was wont to curse and swear, and when he had indulged in a fit of horrible language, she went behind the door in terror. Her father fiercely demanded, "What are you doing there? Come out." When she came out her eyes were red with weeping. "What are you crying for, child? What are you crying for?" "Because, dear father, I could not bear to hear you swear!" "Well, child, you never shall hear me swear again. Mother, I think that child goes to a good school. What school is it? I must go and hear the minister." How many cords of love God is binding about hearts by means of the children from our Sabbath schools!

If you ever become weary in teaching, because you think you are not doing much, recollect that you do not know how much you are doing. You are teaching the children, but you are also teaching the fathers and the mothers, and through them the word is entering where none of us can go. God will bless

the word which the children carry home. They are capable of great service, even as children. Therefore do not pray that they may be converted when they grow up, but pray that they may be converted while they are children. Pray that while they are yet little ones they may be spiritually girded with a linen ephod, and may spend their earliest days in the house of the Lord.

**III.** Lastly, lest I weary you, the third head shall be this, CHILDREN'S PIETY AND SERVICE ARE PECULIARLY GLORIFYING TO GOD.

It glorifies God's *condescension* when He takes a little child and instructs it in His fear, and manifests Himself to it as He does not unto the world. I have heard some speak of condescending to children. Oh, brothers! we go up when we talk to children. It is almost condescension on the little children's part to consort with such poor creatures as we are. But for *God* to stoop to children is indeed wonderful. His great condescension is seen in the nursery and the infant class.

So, too, I think is His *sovereignty*—that while He permits the wise of this world to be foolish in their wisdom, and not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are called, He has chosen the weak things of this world. I feel deep sympathy with our blessed Lord tonight, while I say, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." He passes the towers of haughty princes, and He comes down to accept a babe kneeling at its mother's knee, and there works a miracle of grace. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He wills to give that mercy to children. Condescending sovereignty takes a child from its little cot and leads it to the eternal throne.

And oh, what *power* is manifested in the conversion of a child! Perhaps that did not strike you. I will tell you how it may strike you. If you have any doubt about it, will you kindly try to convert a child yourself? There are teachers here, perhaps, who have performed the experiment. You have found yourselves baffled at every point. You find the little sinner as hard to subdue as the greatest rebel on earth. You find the same unbelief in its little heart as in your own, though it takes its own peculiar form. There, too, you see the same waywardness, the same fickleness, after their own form and fashion. You find the same hardness of heart, the same forgetfulness, the same carelessness, the same indifference in a child as in those who are grown up.

For a child to become a saint is a mighty instance of divine power, as you will say after you have once tried to make your child into a saint by your own endeavors. The wisest and most tender efforts, apart from divine grace, must end in utter failure, and therefore when God works the miracle let His name be praised.

By the conversion of little children the Lord gets to Himself much glory, because they so admirably rebuke His enemies. Do I address any man who has not yet given his heart to God? You will be rebuked, I am sure, if you find that your children have done so. I know fathers now whose children, though they are but little, pray for them every day, saying, "God save dear father." I know mothers who gather their little children about them, and they pray together for father, perhaps father is very kind, but yet not a Christian, or else father is cruel when he is intoxicated, and they are all afraid when he enters the house in such a state. Oh, how they pray for Father that he may come home sober! The prayers of the mothers and the children are bringing the fathers and the husbands to Christ, for who can see what some of us have seen in children and not feel ashamed of living so long in opposition to the Redeemer's love?

Ay and I may add, I think, that children sometimes rebuke God's own people, and so glorify God. Some of God's people here tonight have never made a confession of their faith. What would you think if I introduced six children to you whom I saw one after another last week, and who all came forward with eagerness to say, "We have been washed in the blood of Jesus, and we want to join His church." I said, "Come along, my children, I am glad to see you." When I talked with them, and heard what God had done for them, I had great confidence in proposing them to the church. I have not found young converts turn back. I usually find that these young ones who are introduced early to the church hold on, and become our best members.

Do not refuse to receive them, lest it should ever happen to you as it did to one who was cruelly prudent. A child had loved the Savior for some two or three years, and she desired to make a confession of her faith. She begged her mother that she might be baptized. The mother said that she thought she was too young. The child went to bed broken-hearted, and in the morning a great tear stood in her eye. She had joined the church triumphant above!

Do not let your child ever have to complain of you that you will not believe in its truthful love to Jesus. Do you expect perfection in a child before it joins the church? Then I hope you are perfect yourself, and if you are, pray go to heaven, because I am sure you will fall to quarrelling with everybody here on earth. Few of the perfect people are agreeable neighbors, I suppose they are so good that they have no patience with us who are not up to their standard. No, dear friend, a converted child will give you evidences of true religion, not of perfect religion, for that you ought not to expect. Let the child avow its faith in Christ, and if you have not confessed Him yourself, stand rebuked that a child is ready to obey its Lord while you are not.

Dear Sunday school teachers, allow me to congratulate you upon the blessed work in which you are engaged. It is very hard work if you do it thoroughly, especially to you who are busy all the week, and really want the Sabbath for rest. You teach the children while suffering from a headache, and they do not always behave as you would wish, but pray work on for poor London's sake, for the church's sake, and for Christ's sake, and for the children's sakes. I put that in last because it has most to do with my sermon.

Labor on for the children's sake. Do, for the love of them, never give up Sunday school teaching. "Oh, but I am getting into middle life!" Do you think that Sunday school teaching ought to be done by nobody but boys and girls? "Oh, but I have done enough!" It is a mercy for you that the sun does not say that he has done enough, or else he would not shine tomorrow, or that God and His Christ do not say they have done enough. What would become of you if the Lord ceased blessing you?

We are wanting Sunday school teachers almost everywhere in London. Our people who get on in the world are too respectable to teach children. What a wretched pride is this! Those who talk so are disreputable creatures, I am sick of them! In America, a president has taught a Sunday school, it was to His honor. In England chancellors and prime ministers have thought such service no disgrace. Let queens and princes teach Sunday school, it shall be for their renown. If you are the most wealthy man in London you are the person who should take a class, that is to say, if you are a true Christian.

You of knowledge, you of understanding, you of intelligence, you should come to encourage the rest. Do not leave this sacred service to our second-best people. I do not say that you have done so, but do not begin to move in that direction. Let those who know most, teach most, and let those who have grown most in Christ themselves be most earnest that others should grow up in His fear.

If you love my Master, I leave this subject with you in fullest confidence. If not, I do not ask you to attempt to teach what you do not know. Jesus does not say to Judas or to Pilate, "Feed my lambs," but He does say it to you, Peter, because you can say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 78:1-35**

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Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at [www.spurgeongems.org](http://www.spurgeongems.org).