

# The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,  
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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## Characteristics of a Child

**T**here are those who teach that we are born in sin. We have, they say, inherited the corrupt nature of Adam. The Bible does not teach such a thing. There are many places we could turn to in the word of God to show that children are not born sinners. However, one of the best arguments that can be made against this false teaching is that Jesus admonished his disciples to become like little children. In Matt. 18:3 Jesus said the following: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Would Jesus exhort us to be like little children if they were totally depraved? The statement of Jesus is based on the innocence of children, not their sinful nature.

The words of Christ still stand true. To go to heaven we must develop or redevelop some of the characteristics associated with little children. Let's notice a few of those characteristics.

1. Children are humble. The question that caused Jesus to consider children was, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" This question was asked by the disciples of Christ and sprang forth from a consciousness of greatness. Each wanted to be the most important disciple with the most power. This consciousness of greatness is still being expressed by most people today. People want to be great and, in some cases, it doesn't matter who they have to step over or hurt on the way. Selfishness and pride are at the seat of this desire for greatness. This attitude towards greatness is precisely what moved Jesus to say, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Children have no consciousness of greatness. At that stage of their lives they are not concerned with who is greater than whom. Children are humble, and it is that characteristic that we must gain back in order to go to heaven. James said, "...Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble...Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up" (Jas. 4:6, 10).

2. Children are constantly growing. We all know this to be so. It is sometimes amazing just how quickly our children or grandchildren grow. We expect them to do so, don't we? If our children stopped growing, we certainly would not ignore it. We would have them examined by the best physicians possible to ascertain the problem. Furthermore, children themselves have a desire to grow. It is exciting for children to grow. When my children were younger, they liked to measure themselves up against their mother and me to see how close they were getting to us. The taller they got the more exciting it was for them. We should have that same attitude spiritually. We should desire to grow, and when we do, it should be exciting to us. Also, we must realize that if we do not grow, there is a problem. The Bible gives us a command to grow and tells us how to accomplish it. Peter said, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). So growth is accomplished by feeding and meditating on God's word. To grow is to add

to our faith (2 Pet. 1:5-11). Without growing we will not make it to heaven.

3. Children have the willingness to forgive. No matter what is said or done to little children, they do not hold grudges. Even when children are brutally abused by parents, be it physically or emotionally, they most often forgive. Do children get mad at each other over silly things? Yes, at least mine did when they were growing up (they still do). But before you know it, it is forgotten. Forgiving is certainly something we should learn from children. Jesus said, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive your trespasses. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you" (Matt. 6:14, 15). The greatest danger to any body of people is an unwillingness to forgive. Let's become as children in this realm.

4. Children love family fellowship. When our children lived at home, we had family night from time to time. Our children looked forward to it. For them it didn't come often enough. They were constantly asking, "Can we have family night tonight?" They enjoyed spending time with family. Surely we should imitate children in this realm as well. We should desire to be with brothers and sisters in Christ just like families in the physical realm desire to spend time together.

5. Children desire to imitate their parents. It is wonderful how children at a young age begin to imitate their parents. Whether it is in the area of behavior, speech, or some other area, children want to be like mom and dad and so they imitate them. We should imitate our Heavenly Father. Being like God should be the aim of us all (1 Pet. 1:15, 16).

While we spend our life trying to teach our children, there is a lot we can learn from them. Let's become as little children.

*Don*

## **The Perfect Law of Liberty**

Paul C. Keller

**S**tressing the importance of being doers of the word, and not hearers only, James writes, "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25). What James calls "the perfect law of liberty," Paul calls "the gospel of Christ" and "the law of the Spirit of life" (Romans 1:16; 8:2). It is the provision God has made by which men obtain liberty, salvation, freedom from sin. James speaks of this law by which men are made free as "the perfect law." It is altogether fitting that the gospel be spoken of as "perfect."

It is perfect, first, because of its source. While Jesus is the giver of the law of liberty, it originated with God. Our Lord attributed all that he said and did unto the Father. Jesus said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me" (John 7:16). Again he taught, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). Hence, we could expect the law of liberty to be perfect because it originated with a perfect God.

Second, this law is perfect because its giver was perfect. There was nothing lacking in Jesus the Christ, either as to the life he lived or as to the sacrifice he made. Inspired writers present Christ as the perfect sacrifice for our sins and the perfect example for our lives. Hebrews 5:8,9 teaches that through suffering he became "perfect" and thus, "the author of eternal salvation."

Third, the law is perfect because of the perfection of its revelation. Before his ascension, Christ promised the apostles he would send the Holy Spirit unto them as a Comforter (John 16:7) He further promised, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13). The apostles were told that when the Holy Spirit was come "he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

The Holy Spirit was sent to teach them, guide them, and bring to their remembrance the things Jesus had taught. Paul said the reason they had received "the spirit which is of God" was that they might "know" the things that were freely given to them of God (1 Cor. 2:12). Thus, the promises were fulfilled and as the apostles spoke and wrote, they did so with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Hence, they gave to us a perfect revelation of the gospel—a revelation "wanting nothing necessary to completeness."

Fourth, this law is perfect because of what it accomplishes for man. The gospel does all for man that can be desired in giving the truest and noblest liberty that can be obtained. It is, truly, "the law of liberty" because: (1) It delivers men from the slavery of their lusts and passions; gives them a higher code by which to live; and offers the highest incentives for pursuing such a course. (2) It is a law of liberty because it freed the Jews from the law of Moses, a "yoke of bondage" which men were unable to bear. Paul taught the Romans that men have been "delivered from the law." He warned the Galatians against becoming "entangled again" in it (Gal. 5:1). It is a law of liberty because by it men are delivered from the punishment of sin. Paul said to those who had rendered obedience to the gospel that they had been "made free from sin" (Romans 6:18).

Finally, since the law of liberty is a "perfect law," it is one to which no additions nor subtractions can be made. To do so is to destroy its perfection, making it imperfect. If one attempts to add anything to a perfect circle, he makes it an imperfect circle. The same is true if one seeks to subtract from it. This is true of the gospel of Christ. "Men must accept it just as God intended it, Christ gave it, and the Holy Spirit revealed it. Failure to do so brings woeful results (Gal. 1:8,9). Let us, therefore, accept the gospel just as it was given—for it is "the perfect law of liberty."