

Suffer the little children to come unto me

by William MacDonald

Transcript

“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.” (Mark 10:14)

The death of children is always an especially severe trial of the faith of God’s people, and it is important to have some solid moorings to hold us at such a time.

The general belief among Christians is that children who die before they reach the age of accountability are safe through the blood of Jesus. The reasoning goes something like this: the child himself has never had the capacity to either accept or reject the Savior, so God reckons to him all the value of the work of Christ on the Cross. He is saved through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, even though he himself has never fully understood the saving value of that work.

As far as the age of accountability is concerned, no one but God knows what that is. It is clearly different in each case since one child may mature earlier than another.

While there is no Scripture that says specifically that children who die before the age of accountability go to heaven, there are two lines of Scripture that support this view. The first is our verse for today: “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). Speaking of children, Jesus said, “...of such is the kingdom of God.” He didn’t say that they had to become adults to enter the kingdom of God, but that they themselves are characteristic of those who are in the kingdom of God. This is a very strong argument for the salvation of little children.

Another line of proof is as follows. When Jesus was speaking of adults, He said, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lu. 19:10). But when he was speaking of children, He omitted any mention of seeking. He simply said, “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost” (Matt. 18:11). The implication here is that children have not wandered away as adults have, and that the Savior sovereignly gathers them into His fold at the time of their death. Although they have never known about the work of Christ, God knows about it and reckons all the saving value of that work to their account.

We should not question the providence of God when He takes children away from us. As Jim Elliot wrote, “I must not think it strange if God takes in youth those whom I would have kept on earth till they were older. God is peopling eternity, and I must not restrict Him to old men and women.”

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