

Matthew 19:13-15: Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people,¹⁴ but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."¹⁵ And he laid his hands on them and went away.

Intro: Last week Jesus taught us that parents should diligently bring their children to Jesus, & Jesus comes for the humble, weak, needy, & dependent – He comes for children & all who humble themselves like these little children. In that sermon, one thing we did was mediate on 12 ways parents should bring their children to Jesus.

Ben O'Toole: (Simeon Trust Workshop Leader): How is there grace in Christ for parents who want to bring their children to Christ but are hindered, or are falling short? I was left feeling that there is much to do, but I wanted to hear more about the Fountain of Life who can meet me and help me here and now.

I'd like to use this week to make another application from last week: what should parents do who have either failed to bring their children up in the fear and instruction of the LORD or who are enduring particularly hard circumstances & challenges while parenting their children now? Christian parents get to rest in the everlasting, unchanging, extravagant love, grace, & mercy of God in Christ, & come to Jesus as little children to find help for parenting.

1. What If You Totally Failed As Parents To Bring Your Children To Jesus?

If you were not a believer when you were a parent, then you would not have had the knowledge, strength, wisdom, or spiritual ability to bring your children to Jesus! Or maybe you were a Christian, but just did not have good instruction on godly parenting? Or maybe you were a Christian and did know better, but you just failed to obey? Or maybe, you were/are not a failure as a parent at all, but you listen to Satan accuse you & tell you that you are?

What should you do? 1) You must be absolutely convinced of the everlasting, unchanging, extravagant love, grace, & mercy of God in Christ Jesus for you & for all of your failures in life & in every area of your life!

Sermon: You are chosen & loved by God in eternity. You are predestined & and loved with an everlasting love! You are predestined for sonship in his family! You are a child of the living & true God!

You are ransomed from every evil bondage!

You are purchased for God's precious possession!

Christ has taken your place under the punishment of divine wrath. There is not condemnation for you forever!

God has caused you to be born again; he has taken out the heart of stone and put in its place the heart of flesh!

He has made you alive in Christ Jesus and given you the gift of repentance and faith!

He has forgiven you all your sins, and declared you innocent before God! All your parenting sins are forgiven!

You are irrevocably rescued from the terrors of hell!

You stand righteous in the court of heaven and have peace with God!

He has adopted you as his own child, and made you an heir of eternal life with the inheritance of all things!

He has made his Holy Spirit to dwell in you, and brought you into the fellowship of his beloved Son!

He is omnipotently committed to holding on to you so that nothing can separate you from the love of God!

He will make every pleasure and pain work for your eternal good! Even every parenting failure will be worked for your eternal good!

He will lead you in paths of righteousness for his name's sake!

He will bring you safely to his eternal kingdom and present you blameless before the throne of his glory!

He will grant you to see the glory of Christ and be changed into his likeness!

He will give you a new glorious body for the enjoyment of all the endless delights of the age to come!

He will grant you to sit with him on his throne, and share in his universal rule!

He will give you access to the very presence of God, where there will be fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore!

He will wipe away every tear from your eyes, & there will be no more death, no more pain, no more sin, and no more tears. Everything sad will become untrue as you enjoy increasing joy in God for all eternity!

Paul Tripp: If you are not resting as a parent in your identity in Christ, you will look for identity in your children.

2) You must rest in God's absolute sovereignty over all of your sins & all of your parenting failures: Yes, you are responsible for your failures and sins. Yes, you should confess your sins and forsake them. Yes, you should rest in the total and full forgiveness that are in Christ Jesus. But you must also know that whatever anyone else or even you have meant for evil in your life, God has meant it for good if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ!

- **Genesis 50:20:** As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

- **Psalms 139:16:** your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

- **Ephesians 1:11:** him who works all things according to the counsel of his will . . .

- **Acts 4:27-28:** for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

- **Romans 8:28:** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Thomas Watson: This expression "work together" refers to medicine. Several poisonous ingredients put together, being tempered by the skill of the apothecary, make a sovereign medicine, and work together for the good of the patient. So all God's providences being divinely tempered and sanctified, do work together for the best to the saints. He who loves God and is called according to His purpose, may rest assured that every thing in the world shall be for his good. This is a Christian's cordial, which may warm him — make him like Jonathan who, when he had tasted the honey at the end of the rod, "his eyes were enlightened" (I Sam. xiv. 27). Why should a Christian destroy himself? Why should he kill himself with care, when all things shall sweetly concur, yea, conspire for his good? . . . The worst of things work for good to the godly (The evil of affliction works for good for the godly; The evil of temptation works for good for the godly; The evil of sin works for good for the godly) . . . **Thus our own sins shall work for good.** This must be understood warily, when I say the sins of the godly work for good — not that there is the least good in sin. Sin is like poison, which corrupts the blood, infects the heart, and, without a sovereign antidote, brings death. Such is the venomous nature of sin, it is deadly and damning. Sin is worse than hell, but yet God, by His mighty overruling power, makes sin in the issue turn to the good of His people. Hence that golden saying of Augustine, "God would never permit evil, if He could not bring good out of evil."

3) If you've failed at parenting b/c you're not a believer, you must come to Jesus Christ & be saved: **GOSPEL!**

4) Once saved, you have now! You can seek, by the Holy Spirit's power, to help your children come to Jesus now!

1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. & his commandments are not burdensome

2. What If You Are A Parent In Hard, Challenging Circumstances?

Some parents are in very hard, challenging circumstances. They are single parents & doing this all alone (humanly speaking!). Some have children with disabilities that make parenting even harder. Others are suffering in hard marriages with a spouse who is not a believer & doesn't give the love, support, & help that they should to help bring their children to Jesus. And some even have combinations of all of these hard circumstances all together!

1) You, as a child of God, need to be convinced and trust that God loves you & brings you to Jesus through hard, challenging circumstances in parenting:

The world, the flesh, and the devil may tempt you to believe that when life is hard, it is God's judgment on you or that God is displeased with you, or that God is punishing you. You must resist this temptation!

Ezekiel 14:13-14: Son of man, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, & I stretch out my hand against it & break its supply of bread & send famine upon it, & cut off from it man and beast, even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, & Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord GOD.

Think of how men like Daniel and Job suffered severely! Yet they are the standard of righteous men in the O. T.!

- **Daniel:** Taken captive in Babylon; exiled from all he knew and loved (earthly speaking!); enslaved in the king's court; threatened with death by the king; leaders/high officials sought his death; he was thrown into a lion's den! Yet he's told three times in the book of Daniel that he is greatly loved!

- **Job:** Very rich man; lost everything; lost his 10 children; lost his health; his wife said curse God and die!

- **Joseph:** Hated by his brothers; wanted to kill him; threw him in a pit; sold him into slavery; falsely accused!

- **Jesus' Disciples:** All killed except for John – he was exiled!

- **Jesus:** Suffered the greatest! Like no man ever suffered! But told over and over again: "The is my beloved Son!"

Charles Spurgeon (Beside Still Waters): The more He loves you, the more He will test you. Sometimes He says, "Good woman, I shall take away your husband, on whom you lean, that you may lean the more on Me." I remember Samuel Rutherford, writing to a lady who had lost five children & her husband said, "Oh, how Christ must love you! He would take every bit of your heart to Himself. He would not permit you to reserve any of your soul for any earthly thing." Can we stand that test? Can we let all go for His sake? **Heaven's Favorites:** Jesus loved Martha, Mary, & Lazarus. They were three of His special favorites, & thus He sent them an extraordinary trial. When a dealer in precious gems finds a stone of minimum value, little time is spent cutting it. But when a rare diamond is found, that stone will be cut, & cut, & cut again. When the Lord finds a saint whom He loves much, He may spare others trial & trouble but not this one, His well-beloved. The more Jesus loves you, the more of the rod you will feel. It is painful to be a favorite of heaven, but seek it & rejoice in it. Being in the King's council-chamber involves such work for faith that flesh & blood might cringe from the painful blessing. If a gardener gets an inferior tree, he lets it grow wild and takes whatever fruit it produces. But if the tree is exceptional, he will want every branch in its proper place, & he will cut here & cut there because this produces more fruit. The gardener leaves nothing on the tree that would be detrimental. You who are God's favorites must not be astonished when trials appear. Rather keep your door wide open, & when trials come say, "Welcome messenger of the King! The sound of your Master's feet is behind you. You are welcome, for my Master has sent you."

How are we, as God's children, instructed to respond to hardship and trials?

- **Psalms 119:71:** It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

- **James 1:2-4:** Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- **Romans 5:3-5:** More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

- **Romans 8:18:** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

What about the Lord's discipline? Hebrews 12:5-6: And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. ⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

You, as a child of God, need to be convinced and trust that God loves you & brings you to Jesus through hard, challenging circumstances in parenting:

2) You, as a child of God, get to come to Jesus through His Word for help while parenting:

- **Psalms 119:105:** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

- **Psalm 119:72:** The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.
- **Psalm 119:103:** How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- **Isaiah 43:1-3:** But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ³ For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
- **Isaiah 41:10:** fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
- **John 15:5:** Whoever abides in me & I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing

3) You, as a child of God, get to come to Jesus through prayer for yourself and for your child while parenting:

Luke 18:1-8: And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ² He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' ⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" ⁶ And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.

a. In this parable, Jesus contrasts God with the unjust judge in order to encourage us to pray! Our God is the Righteous Judge! Our God is the Loving Judge! Our God is the all-Wise, all-knowing Judge!

b. The Widow: A stranger; alone; no help; most vulnerable in society; she's been treated unjustly; she is nameless! Her actions: persistence, perseverance, "Give me justice against my enemy!"

In this parable, Jesus also contrasts us with the widow: We are not lonely, helpless, vulnerable, forsaken, nameless widows! We are God's elect! The Bride of Christ! His Chosen! He Loved Ones! The Apple of His eye!

- This widow came as a stranger; but we come as children, as beloved, as the very Bride of Christ!
 - This widow came alone with no one to help; but we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous!
 - This widow came as one of the most vulnerable in society; but we come as those God is for, and if God is for us then who can be against us!
 - This widow came as one treated unjustly; but we come as those free from the just condemnation of God forever because Jesus was punished in our place so that God might be just & the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus!
 - This widow came nameless; but we come as those foreknown by God, chosen by Him, and loved by Him with an everlasting love! Engraved on the palms of His hands!
 - The widow came with no promises to plead; but we have God's assurance that He will hear us and answer us:
- Luke 11:13:** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

If the unjust judge can be won over by the pleading of the widow, how much more will the righteous, loving, wise, all powerful Judge answer His precious children when we cry to Him! Keep crying to him abt. parenting/children!

4) You, as a child of God, get to come to Jesus through the encouragement of the church for help in parenting:

Hebrews 10:23-25: Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how **to stir up one another to love and good works,** ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Parents, you need to be stirred up. You need to be encouraged! This happens in the life of the church. If you are struggling or need help – if you've never done this parenting stuff before – if things are not going well at all in your house, we have numerous parents here who would love to meet with you and talk with you and even shepherd

you and help you parent according to God's Word. We have plenty of books on parenting as well!

5) You, as a child of God, get to come to Jesus as your chief joy for strength in parenting:

- **Psalm 73:25:** Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

- **Philippians 3:8:** Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

Paul Tripp: It is only rest in God's presence and grace that will make you a joyful and patient parent.

Paul Tripp: The Best Parenting Passage In The Entire Bible: **Matthew 28:18-20:** And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Paul Tripp: You will not be punished for your failure, & you are welcomed by grace to new beginnings.

You are not left to your limited resources, & God blesses you with the right here, right now, wisdom of his Word.

You do not have to load the burden of your children's welfare on your shoulders every morning.

God will never close his ears to your cries for help.

Weakness is not a curse; it's a blessing.

Success is about faithfulness, not results.

Nehemiah 8:10: do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

6) You, as a child of God, get to come to Jesus Who deeply loves you as one who He's called to be a parent:

- **Jeremiah 31:3:** I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

- **John 3:16**

- **Galatians 2:20:** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- **Zephaniah 3:17:** The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

Paul Tripp: There is nothing more important to consistent, faithful, patient, loving, and effective parenting than to understand what God has given you in the grace of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

7) You, as a child of God, get to come to Jesus through trusting Him in all your parenting:

Proverbs 3:5: Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

Trust Him with your own past! Trust Him with your marriage! Trust Him with your parenting! Trust Him with your sins and failures as a parent! Trust Him with your hardships, trials, losses, pains, and sufferings! Trust Him with your children! Trust Him with your future, and trust Him with your children's future!

- **Philippians 4:6:** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

- **1 Peter 5:6-7:** Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Paul Tripp: Inability: Recognizing what you are unable to do is essential to good parenting . . . Here's the bottom line for every parent: the change that has to happen in each of your children, you can't create. In fact, nowhere in his Word has God tasked you with the responsibility to create it. Good parenting is about becoming okay with the fact that you are powerless to change your child. In fact, good parenting is about celebrating the fact that God has never and will never put the burden of change on you. Because changing your children is a burden that we could

never bear, God bore that burden for us by sending his Son to be the author of lasting personal change. The burden that caused his death liberates us parents and gives new life to our children. Now that's good news! So our job is simple; it's not to create change, but to be humble and willing instruments of change in the hands of the one and only author of change.

8) You, as a child of God, get to come to Jesus for extravagant mercy to help you parent for God's glory:

Paul Tripp: No parent gives mercy better than one who is convinced that he desperately needs it himself.

- **Jonah 4:2:** a gracious God & merciful, slow to anger & abounding in steadfast love, & relenting from disaster.

- **Psalm 147:11:** The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, In those who hope in His mercy.

Because of Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection, we have extravagant mercy!

Christian parents get to rest in the everlasting, unchanging, extravagant love, grace, & mercy of God in Christ, & come to Jesus as little children to find help for parenting.

Christ Jesus Helps All Parents Thrive
In All Your Work And Labor Strive
He Gives You Strength: His Joy Live
Will Animate And Give You Drive
To Bring Your Kids To Christ Revive
For Jesus Died And Rose Alive
You're Saved! God's Grace Will Sure Arrive
All Parent Sins Your Minds Archive
He Casts Into The Sea They Dive
This Hardship, Parent You'll Survive
For From His Hand All Things Derive
He's Sovereign King Who Won't Deprive
Your Life Of Any Good Conceive
In Christ You'll More Than Conquer Thrive
For He's Your All, Your Joy Drive!