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## Holy Spirit: Restoring Childhood—P10

**“But Jesus said, ‘Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these’” (Matthew 19:14).**

In western history, childhood innocence and vulnerability have always been qualities of immense societal value, worthy of protection. Children are considered treasured human beings. Today, we understand that it is one of our most important societal functions to protect children in their vulnerable adolescence from exploitation, violence, and abuse. But it wasn't always like this. In ancient Roman society, for example, children were considered non-persons. Fathers could kill their children for any reason. Infants could be exposed to die for the simplest of reasons. Sexual abuse was entirely acceptable and even encouraged with one's slaves and children. As we've seen before, slavery and child prostitution were societal institutions throughout the world.

But this cultural attitude has changed. Why? Because of God's work through His Spirit through the Gospel through the Church, which came into this depraved world. And when Christians shared the words of Jesus, people listened. They heard Jesus tell them that God values children so much that He expects us to value them equally too: *“Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, ‘Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these’”* (Matt. 19:13-14). Jesus taught that we are to emulate children and be more like them, for they are considered the greatest in the Kingdom of God: *“An argument started among them [the disciples] as to which of them might be the greatest. But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, and said to them, ‘Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me re-*

*ceives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great’”* (Lk. 9:46-48). Jesus even went so far as to stress that unless we all value and emulated children, we would not see the Kingdom of God! *“And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them. But Jesus called for them, saying, ‘Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all’”* (Lk. 18:15-17).

And He warned in no uncertain terms that anyone who harmed a child would be better off being drowned in a terrifying way:

*“whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea”* (Matt. 18:4-6). Harsh words for the institutionalized child abuse of the day!

The Gospel so radically altered the culture and the world that today Christian values regarding children are almost universally established throughout the world, and they are not even debatable in the west, much to the frustration of modern pedophiles. However, this testimony of the Gospel has always been under threat from critics of Christianity, and there is a growing danger to children today as wicked people in our culture continually promote the sexualization of children and their exposure at younger and younger ages. More seriously, our culture has embraced abortion - murder of children at their most vulnerable and innocent age. They also promote societal behavior that breaks up families, exposing many children to predators, sexual abuse, and harm.

May we pray that people will return to valuing, nurturing, and protecting children as God has commanded in His Word. May the world take note, and may we take care in all these things to *“be imitators of God, as beloved children”* (Ephesians 5:1). Even so. Amen.

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