

THE CHILDREN

I

Comrades and Friends, — I want to speak this morning to the fathers and mothers belonging to this Corps, and to those members of my audience who, while not having children of their own, nevertheless entertain an affectionate interest in the welfare of the young.

My subject can be fittingly introduced by the words of our Saviour when He said: 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Now the children are about us every way we turn. We cannot get away from them if we would; and we would not, if we could. Full of life and energy, readily amused, and easily influenced for good or evil, they are always interesting. What shall we do with them?

1. Well, first, I would say, consider the possibilities of happiness or misery that lie before them.

To help you to do this, look for a moment at the men and women around you. Glance at them in their haunts of pleasure and recreation, in the drinking saloons, and gambling hells, in the houses of shame, and the prison cells, laughing, dancing, toiling, weeping, cursing their way to the left hand of the Throne, and the Hell of everlasting woe.

Once these wretched men and women were just such boys and girls as your children are. Just as innocent, affectionate, and promising, and just as easily influenced in favour of honesty, truth, and goodness, as the merry little creatures who are now playing in the fields or amusing themselves in your homes.

Why should not your Bob become a swindler or a thief, a drunkard or a blasphemer, and why should not your Sally be led away to a life of sin, or become the partner of some human wastrel, or the willing occupant of some black hole of infamy?



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But should you, however, reject the possibility of any of your dear ones becoming the slaves of these open vices, or of their being led into the commission of any of these disgraceful crimes, is there not a terrible danger of their growing up into habits of indifference and unbelief, living godless lives, and dying with hearts hardened in selfishness on hopeless beds of despair, and finishing up in the sorrow and darkness of Hell?

What is to hinder such a future? It is constantly coming to other people's children. Why should it not come to yours?

Now, if you can bring yourselves to realize this awful possibility, it will help you to deal more earnestly with every boy or girl who comes within your influence.

2. On the other hand, look at the crowds of brave men and women, who, when children, had no better chance than your children and those around you, but who, with the blessing of God, are today possessed of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and fighting the evil forces of earth and Hell. Look at some of the Officers and Soldiers in our ranks, who are lessening the sorrows that oppress human hearts, delivering the victims of sin, and pressing forward to hear the 'Well done' of their Lord, and to receive the 'Crown of Glory, that fadeth not away.'

Why. Oh, why, should not your children join this God-inspired, Blood-washed multitude? It was my supreme ambition when I first looked on the faces of my children that this should be their portion. Does not that ambition possess and control your hearts as fully as it did mine? It ought to.

3. In order to encourage you in seeking with all your hearts the Salvation of the children, I want you to realize several things:

a. I want you to believe that Jesus Christ is really anxious for their Salvation. He says in this passage, 'Let the children come unto Me. I am their Friend. I want to be their Saviour.'

If He wants them, won't you help them, with all your hearts, to get to Him?



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b. I want you to realize that the children are His property. They belong to Him, He has bought and paid for them with His precious Blood. They are not given to you to be your playthings, or to feed your vanity, or to add to your income, or to render you some personal service merely, regardless of the Kingdom of God. Your children are the property of Jesus Christ. They are intended to follow in His footsteps, and to be lovers of souls and saviours of men.

c. I want you to realize that Jesus Christ loves your children. When He said 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me' – and He is saying it still – He meant your children. He loves them. They were included in the compassion that brought Him from Heaven to earth, and that carried Him to the cross. For some mysterious reason His heart goes out after them. If He can win them, they will increase His happiness and deepen His satisfaction. Oh, let Him have them!

d. I want you to realize still further that Christ has planned a happy, holy, useful life for your children, and provided the means by which they can reach that life, and to maintain it when they have reached it.

e. And I want you to see and feel that upon your shoulders He has placed the obligation of making His plans a success.

He will intercede for them. He will mention their names to His father. His Spirit will strive with them, and His Providence will work in harmony with His purpose.

f. But I want you specially to realize that the fulfillment of your Saviour's wish depends upon your earnestly taking your part in the work of their Salvation. That is —

i. You must pour the necessary light into their minds.

ii. You must shield them, as far as you can, from temptations likely to lead them astray.

iii. You must present to their youthful eyes, in your own conduct, an example of what you want them to be.

iv. You must hold them to lives of purity, love, and duty with all the force you can command.

v. You must never rest until you are convinced that they are really and truly converted.



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4. Now, you fathers and mothers, are you doing your duty by your children? If not, what a sad reckoning there will be in the Great Day of Accounts! And, Oh, my Comrades, are you carrying on your hearts the children who, within the range of your influence, are being ruined by the neglect and example of their own fathers and mothers? Oh, save them!

In a remarkable Meeting I held in one of the large cities of Japan, during my visit to that country, a dear woman came to the Mercy-Seat. She found forgiveness for herself, and went straight from the Registration Room to the place where she had been sitting; brought her two children to the Penitent Form; and, kneeling between them, pointed them to the Saviour, whom she had just found.

While engaged in this work a Salvationist came along, and thinking she would be better able to lead the children into the Kingdom, offered her assistance; but, gently pushing her aside, the mother said: 'Leave them to me; I am their mother.'

In this, the mother was perfectly right. The first obligation for the discharge of that duty was upon the mother's heart, and she was qualified for its discharge before every other individual.

Oh, that every mother and every father would accept this obligation for themselves! But when fathers and mothers neglect this task, it must be the duty of every lover of souls to take it up, as far as they have the opportunity.

Brother, Sister, Comrade, Friend, are you doing your duty by the children? If not, start upon it today!

Your affectionate General,
William Booth