

Becoming Like Little Children

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I would like to ask you all a question. The question is: how was this past year in the “pressure cooker?” Was this past year especially trying for you? Was it hard to deal with? Was this past year frustrating for you? Did this past year try your patience and even your very faith? Did you ever feel like giving up, did you ever say, “I’m all done, I can’t go on anymore?” Did you ever feel like God had abandoned you and was not answering your prayers?

Brethren, I talked with a lot of God’s people this past year, from many different churches of the greater church of God. Just about all of them had one thing in common; they were all going through trials. Some minor, like Michelle and Nick experienced on the way to the Feast this year. It is minor trial, but it is an irritant.

I am going to tell you a little story here. They left at 7:30 Sunday morning; they got to the airport and had breakfast there. Now, Noah, took two bites of his food and said, “Mom I’m all done” but mom and her wisdom said “Eat your breakfast” because she knew they were not going to eat anything for a while. So Noah listened to her and finished eating. When they got on the plane, and shortly after take off, he threw up, all over mom, in her purse, on the seat in front of them, and all over his sister Sophia’s doll. Now how do you think the people around them felt? Not very good I imagine and they had to smell that for the next 3 ½ hours!

This is a minor irritant, but some of us had major trials this year. Some went through trials that were even life threatening due to illness and disease. I think most of us would agree that this past year was difficult and very trying due to all sorts of different trials. Some of us had illnesses and disease, like I said, some of us cannot find jobs or are underemployed, some of us have already lost our homes. Some of us had to deal with hurricanes, tornados, crop failures, or even floods like the Zach’s had to deal with. None of us are insulated from these trials at this particular time.

Debbie and I had a small dose of frustration and trials of our own. But really nothing compared to what some others went through and endured this past year. I am going share some of them with you. They all started about three months before the Feast this year. This year was a third tithe year for us. I am not saying that is a bad thing, just that we have less money. The first thing that happened was the hot water heater went bad, that cost \$550. That was not too bad. The second thing that happened was the septic

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tank failed, well that was \$7,400! The next thing was Debbie needed dental work, and that cost \$2,000. Then the transmission in my Durango blew up. That cost me \$1000. But that was a bargain because my son put it in for me, he is a mechanic. If I had to take it the dealer it would have cost me \$2500-\$3000. Then five days before the Feast, as you all know my wife fell over and hurt her knee. She was in excruciating pain right up until the Feast. As I loaded her in the car and took her to dialysis and lifted her, she would yell and scream. People would ask us if we were going to be able to go the Feast, and we said "We'll be there."

I think we all realize that God is still with us even though He is allowing us to be tried. Now He tells us that He will not allow us to go through anything more then we can handle, but brethren I think we are going to get all that we can handle, every bit of it.

II Corinthians 4:8-10 We are hard-pressed on every side, [and brethren we are] yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—[we are not destroyed, we are all here, brethren] always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifested in our body.

I think these verses have a lot of relevance for all of us today. Next year probably will not be much better, brethren. It is not going to get better, but God is working with us because He loves us. He is allowing you and me to be tested and tried and He expects us to keep moving forward one day at a time.

J.B., my son, (as another part of our trials this year) had five eye surgeries. Two of them were minor. They were laser surgeries, but they were not minor to him because they put him in quite a bit of pain. Three were major surgeries that took all day. And as we transported him back and forth to the hospital, and did all the things he needed us to do, it consumed our time and on top of that we had to watch him go through and endure all the pain he had. But you know through all this, he and I were talking, and I told him, "Hey, take it one day at a time and if you can't take one day at a time, move it to one hour at a time. Do not look to the next month. If you get the rent paid this month, then good, you have thirty days. So don't worry about it." One day at a time, brethren. Keep stepping forward.

God also expects us to keep growing. We are going get to the growth here in just a moment. Now we have all traveled to Topeka, from all over the country and from all over the world, in spite of all of our trials and hardships to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and to celebrate the Second Coming of Our Savior and our King Jesus Christ.

Revelation 20:1-6 (LNT) Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with a key to the bottomless pit and a heavy chain in his hand. He saw the dragon, that old serpent the devil Satan, and bound him in chains for a thousand years. And he threw him into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked so that he could not fool the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished. Afterwards he would be released again for a while. Then I saw thrones sitting on them were those that have been given the right to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Christ, for proclaiming the word of God and who had not worshiped the creature or his statue. Not excepting his mark on their foreheads, or their hands. They had come to life again and now they reign with Christ for a thousand years. This is the first resurrection, the rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection, for them the second death upholds no terror, for they will be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with them a thousand years.

So we are celebrating the imprisonment of Satan for one thousand years, we are also celebrating the Kingdom of God, the first resurrection, and the one thousand year reign with Christ as kings and priests. Now you know what, you and I would not have saved second tithe, we would not have made the trip to beautiful downtown Topeka, we would not have endured the trials we go through and went through, if we did not want to have a part in the Kingdom of God, the Millennium, and the Millennium reign with Christ as kings and priests. Now this is where the growth part comes in. Here is the big question, brethren. What do we have to do to qualify for the Kingdom of God?

Matthew 18: 1-3 At the same time came the disciples to Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? [They asked him a question.] Then Jesus called a little child to Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Assuredly, I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Christ was telling his disciples, “don’t worry about who’s going to be who in the kingdom of God.” That does not matter. He is saying you are not even going to be there unless you become as little children. Christ also made the statement in John 3:3

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Now Christ was talking to Nicodemus who did not understand what Christ was saying. Nicodemus said, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" We all know that is impossible. Nicodemus did not understand baptism. Most of us have been born again that are here today. We have been submerged, and had hands laid on us. Nicodemus did not understand this. You and I have no trouble understanding being born again. It is not a problem to us.

So how do you and I become as little children, so that we can become part of the very Kingdom of God? Do we understand that statement? Now I have asked quite a few brethren how you become like a little child and the best answer I received was, "You need to be innocent." So I looked up the definition of innocent: free from moral wrong; without sin; pure; harmless, and the last definition is a simpleton or an idiot.

Five days a week I hang out with little children. That is my job. And in the summer time, I have my grandchildren Noah, who is 6 years old and his sister Sophia, who is 18 months. Now why would anyone want to become like a small child? I know what my grandchildren can and cannot do. And there is a lot they cannot do. They cannot hold a job. They cannot make money. They cannot paint a house. They cannot pay the mortgage. They cannot drive a car. They cannot make me dinner. They cannot wash my clothes. They cannot even change their own diapers. There are a lot of things that a small child cannot do, so why should we become like small children?

Now you and I can do all kinds of things. Some of us are very talented. Some of us really understand finances and money and how to be successful financially. Some of us are carpenters and can build things. Some of us are good fishermen or hunters. Some of us are good cooks. Some of us are good homemakers, nurses, or salesmen. We can do a lot of different things that small children are not capable of doing. So why should we become like little children?

Deuteronomy 5:7 You shall have no other gods before Me.

Now, you and I struggle with this commandment, we really do. We struggle with this commandment because we are busy. We have all kinds of things that come between us and God. We can do all kinds of things that consume our time. All this gets between us and God. We have to train ourselves to put God first through Bible study, prayer, and meditation. It is a training process and it does not come natural or easy to any of us.

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What about small children? Put mom and dad in the place of God. Children go to mom and dad for everything. For food; for warmth; for protection; to get their diapers changed; for comfort when that are hurt, for love. They put mom and dad first in everything! A small child would die without care from mom and dad.

You and I can do so many things for ourselves and that is why we have a hard time putting God first a lot of the time. You and I as adults do not always look at God as little children look at their parents. It is not what little children can do that God is trying to teach us, it is what little children cannot do that is what is important to you and I. Little children do not put anybody before their parents. Their parents are everything to them and if you and I raise our children correctly, that child will try to please us their entire lives. You and I know we should always be trying to please God.

Matthew 6:25-26 Therefore I say to you, Do not worry about your life, [do little children worry about their lives? No.], what you will eat, [do little children worry about what they are going to eat?], or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than meat, and the body than clothing? Look at the fowls of the air for they neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Little kids are like birds, brethren. They do not worry about anything. Little children rely completely on mom and dad for everything. You and I need to become as little children. Now what else do little children not do? They do not gossip. A lot of people in the greater churches of God have this problem. We have all gossiped at one time or another, all of us.

Leviticus 19:16 You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people, nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord.

We should not gossip, yet that is a pretty common problem in God's church today. You know what, I have never had a small child, or even one of my grandchildren say, "Did you hear about Chad, he still wets the bed. He still wets his pants, and when he eats, he gets food all over his face. He's just a gross little pig and I don't want to hang out with him, I don't like this kid." Now what I just said sounds ridiculous, did it not, but you know what a lot, of the gossip that goes around the church is just as ridiculous. Gossiping does not do us any good. It does not do the talebearer any good and it does not do the person that you are talking about any good.

What else do little children not do? They do not get even when they are wronged or offended. Most people really struggle with this one too. We cannot wait to get even, a lot of times. If someone offends us, we stew over it and sometimes for quite a while. We hold grudges sometimes for years. That is our way of getting even. You know I have had a problem with this most of my life too. I made it my duty to get even with people at all costs.

You know this summer Debbie and I took Noah and Sofia to a park that is by our house, a number of times. Let me tell you a story here. This park we like to go to has a water area in the middle of it and it has water cannons for the kids, and spouts that shoot up out of the ground, and it has buckets on the polls that pour water. All kinds of different water gadgets for the kids. And there are always a lot of moms and kids there playing in the water. Now on this particular day, Noah and Sofia were out playing in the water and I was watching them and Noah came whining to me, so I asked him, "What's wrong with you?" And he said, "Some kids over there have a big sponge." They had four of these great big sponges. And he said, "They wrung water out all over my head." You know I laughed and said, "You're already wet, you're out in the water, what's the big deal?" He said, "Papa, you don't understand they had soap in the sponges and it got in my eyes." I laughed again and said, "Get out there and get in the water and the soap will come out." Well I was watching Sofia and 10 minutes later you now what Noah was doing? He had one of the sponges, he had made friends with the boys, and they were playing together. Ten minutes later, that is all it took!

Little kids do not hold grudges brethren. They do not get even. They just go on with life. It was over just that fast. That is how you and I have to be. You and I must become like little children and not let ourselves become offended, especially in the times we are living in. I think we are living in the end times, brethren. I do not think it is tomorrow, or it may be next year or 5, 10, or 15 years, but we are truly living in the end time. Christ gives us a warning about becoming offended in Matthew 24:10. This is the Olivet prophecy. But I just want to pick out this one verse, but this whole chapter is talking about the end time.

Matthew 24:10 And then many will be offended, [and He is talking directly to us] will betray one another, and will hate one another.

You and I need to understand what this is saying here. If you read this whole chapter, it tells us what to expect in the end time. You will see that little children do not get involved in any of this. You and I really need to look at little children and observe what they do not do. What else do little children not do? They are not ladder-climbers. They do not

jockey for position. They do not care about fame and glory. If you have been part of God's church for any time, you have seen people that wanted to be deacons, they wanted to be elders, or they wanted to speak. And some of the people who have had the opportunity to speak were offended if they did not get to speak enough. I have seen men leave God's church and give up on the Kingdom of God because they were passed over and someone else was ordained a deacon over them.

Little children are not trying to be anybody. They do not care about position. Now my grandson Noah, (I am using him as an example, because I hang out with him), goes to Taekwondo twice a week. He takes a class there, and is now a green belt. He is the highest belt in his class right now. Now the teacher told him just a few weeks ago that he wanted him to stand on his left side and be the leader of the class. The reason for this is that this position leads the class in Taekwondo creed, which goes like this: "I promise to be a good person, with knowledge in the mind, with strength in the body, and to make good friends." So I asked Noah, when he first got to lead the class, what he thought about being the leader, he said, "Nothing papa, it's not a big deal." And you know what all the other kids there feel just like him. None of the other kids said, "That's not fair. I should have that position."

As Noah was earning his 8 belts, other kids had that leadership position. Those kids have now moved on to a more advanced class and during that time as we took Noah back and forth to class, he never said to me or his parents, "I want that position, it's just not fair, I am the best in the class." He never said that. Little children are not interested in position.

Now what else do little children not do? They do not bad mouth other people. This is different than gossiping. In some cases it is probably even worse. At this time in God's church, this is really rampant, brethren. Especially when it comes to the ministry. People nowadays take frequent potshots at the ministers, at the sermons, and even at the way the church is run. But you know what, when you say to them, "Go talk to the minister and maybe he'll let you speak," you know what they say, "Oh, that's not my responsibility, I don't want to do that." You know there was a man named Korah who felt he could do the same thing.

Numbers 16:2-3 And they rose up before Moses, with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, men of renown. [They wanted to be more than they were, brethren.] They gathered together against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the

assembly of the LOORD?

Now we all know this cost Korah and all the other men, the very princes of Israel, their lives, but yet we think it is ok for us to do it today. Little children do not run people down; they do not bad mouth people.

I am going to tell you another little story about Noah, here. This is probably the worst thing I have heard him say in 6 years. When he was 2, maybe 2 ½, his mom and dad took him to California, to visit our relatives and they went with my sister and my side of the family; my nephew, niece, and all their kids, to Disneyland. And when they came home, I asked Noah how he liked Disneyland and how were things and we talked about it. Now my nephew has a son named Cooper, he and Noah are about 6 weeks apart. This was the first time he ever met Cooper. So I asked Noah, "How did you like your cousin, Cooper?" He said "I don't like Cooper, he is not a nice boy." I said, "Why?" He said, "He slammed my fingers in the door." That was the worst thing I have heard him say about anybody. He does not bad mouth people. Little kids do not do that.

What else do little children not do? They are not alcoholics. My grandkids have never asked me for a beer. They do not frequent the bars. We live a couple of houses apart and I have never seen Noah walking into the house with a six pack. They do not do that, brethren. What else do little children not do? Little children do not fornicate. They do not commit adultery. They do not covet. They do not murder. They do not do drugs. Little children do not do a lot of things that we live with and do every single day. They lack vanity, what about that one? They are not political. They get over things very quickly.

You and I are living in a very unique time in the history of the world. We are living in a very stressful time, brethren, a time when the country we love is coming apart economically, mentally, and spiritually. Our government has become absolutely corrupt; big business and the banks are also corrupt. All this affects us mentally, spiritually, financially, and physically. It tries our very faith. It tries our resolve as first fruits, and it puts doubt in our minds.

As we try to become little children, remember all the things that little children do not do. As we go through our daily lives, we need take it one day at a time. The future of God and what He has in store for us is beyond belief, brethren. It is absolutely awesome! That is what we are celebrating at this Feast of Tabernacles. We are celebrating the very Kingdom of God in the Millennium.

Isaiah 65:17a For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth . . .

Brethren can you imagine. New heavens and a new earth. That is what we are going to have a part of. This present earth and heavens are pretty awesome. They are absolutely intriguing and beautiful. But He is going to create new heavens and a new earth. It will probably blow our minds. I cannot even explain it to you.

The best way I can explain it is: let us say you owned a '51 Dodge with a 110 horsepower, six cylinder in it. The air conditioner was: you roll down the window and you hope you had enough strength to roll it back up when you got cold! Those cars did not handle, they did not go, they could not get out of their own way, and they could not stop either. And you traded that thing in for a brand new '11 SRT Dodge Challenger, 450horsepower, six speed transmission, all the bells and whistles. It has a global positioning system on it, you know all the goodies. Would you look back at that old Dodge? It did the job; it got you from point A to point B. The new car is incredible, and that is what the world that we are going to be part of—the Kingdom of God—is going to be like for us, brethren! It is unimaginable. Let us go on here:

Isaiah 65:18-20 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people [Do you think God has joy right now? And do you think He is rejoicing over Israel? I doubt it. I am talking about all Israelites worldwide]; the voice of weeping shall be no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. [That is a pretty awesome promise right there. Think of all the misery that is in the world today.] No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old; but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.

You know what, brethren? I have two little children I am praying about now. One of them is on the prayer list. A very good friend of mine, his granddaughter, who is only about 3 years old, already had cancer of the eye and she had one eye removed and now the cancer is moving to her brain. And my neighbor up the street, who Michelle and Nick also know, their daughter who comes down and plays with Noah, is full of cancer too and her prognosis is even worse. She already has no hair, very thin and very pale. Can you imagine kids that will not die prematurely? No one will, they will live for a hundred years.

Isaiah 65:21-25 They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they

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shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. [I love these verses.] The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, says the Lord.

Think about what God is telling us in these verses? He is telling us that what He is calling us to is different from what we know and experience right now. It is something that we really cannot even imagine. It is awesome! These verses are only talking about the Millennium, brethren. What about the Kingdom of God? What is in store for us after the Millennium? Now we can get an idea of what this will be like in Revelation 21.

Revelation 21:1-4 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth [like we just talked about], for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; [just like the '51 Dodge] and there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from of heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them [we will actually live with God, brethren], and they shall be His people. God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things are passed away."

Let us get another glimpse of the Kingdom of God. Let us look at the New Jerusalem, which Bill Onisick spoke about. I want to add something to that.

Revelation 21: 16 The city is laid out as a square, its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.

It is a cube, brethren. One furlong is an eighth of a mile, so 12,000 furlongs equals 1,500 miles. Do you realize how big that is? The city stretches from Mexico to Canada and from about the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. It is huge! And it is 1500 miles tall! And we are so proud of our super cities, like Mexico city, Shanghai, and the

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big cities here in America. But, can you imagine 1,500 miles? You cannot comprehend a city that big.

Revelation 21:18 The construction of its wall was of jasper [Do you know what jasper is? It is a quartz material. Do you know what that is like when it is polished and refined? The city is going to be beautiful!]; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

Now I did not know there was that much gold in the whole world to make a city 1,500 miles square and 1,500 miles high out of pure gold! We really cannot imagine what God is calling us to. But what He has called us to will last forever and ever. Brethren, that is what Revelation 21:18 says.

Daniel 7:18 But the saints of the most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.

But first we must become as little children, brethren. It is not what they *do*; it is what they *do not do* that is important. We also must be tested and tried. Which includes, suffering, frustrations, hardships, and the everyday wearing down of the saints.

Now, I want to say something to all you young people that are not baptized yet. You still get to choose. You either get to choose this way of life or you get to choose the ways of the world: drugs, pornography, alcoholism, sex. But, you know what? You are going to suffer either way. But the way of the world leads to death, and it can lead to eternal death. And all of you young people are sanctified through your parents, so I hope that you would choose wisely, and choose the way of life.

II Thessalonians 1:5 Which is a manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.

Brethren we are going to suffer, but we need to take it one day at a time. When we look back on the suffering we are going to endure in this lifetime, it is going to be like a pin prick. It is going to be like John Ritenbaugh said—it is going to be a vapor. And again for you young people have your whole lives in front of you, but let me tell you, life is short. In my mind I think I am 18 or 19, but my body and the mirror tell me that I am closer to 100. Life goes by quickly, so choose wisely. Let us turn to Acts 14:22, as we bring this

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to an end.

Acts 14:22 Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

God says that through much tribulation we will inherit the Kingdom of God. So when the Feast of Tabernacles ends this year we will return to the "pressure cooker." We need to remember that God is always with us though. We need to remember that we are qualifying for the Kingdom of God. We need to remember what little children **do not do** and if we can do all this, brethren, all we have to do is wait until Christ says these words in Matthew 25:

Matthew 25:34 Then the King will say to them on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."