

FAITH OF A 'PAIDION' CHILD

In response to a doctrinal problem among His disciples regarding positions of rank and authority in the messianic kingdom, Jesus taught the following principle about spiritual greatness – ***“If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”*** (9:35)

To illustrate the doctrinal principle of Servant of All, Jesus chose the least of importance to rank and authority among those present. Jesus chose someone the disciples might consider insignificant. He chose a child, a paidion.

Jesus was trying to teach His disciples about spiritual greatness through this paidion child. They had missed an earlier lesson in the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:9/ lad’s lunch).

- **“WHOEVER receives** (dechomai/ welcome, appropriate reception) **one child** like this, in My name **receives Me**
- **WHOEVER receives Me** does not **receive Me**, but **Him who sent Me.**”

Note the chain of three events when the Servant of All receives one such child in Jesus’ name: *to receive the child in the name of Jesus is to receive Jesus and to receive Jesus is to receive God.*

This lesson will study FIVE aspects of what it means to achieve spiritual greatness through the Faith of a 'Paidion' child

- 1. Jesus chose to illustrate what it means to be a Servant of All by selecting a 'paidion' child from the audience not only because he was the least significant to adult promotion but also because of his normal faith orientation to life.**
 - A 'paidion' child doesn't earn or deserve his keep (food, shelter, and clothes). These things are provided normally as a result of the child's family relationship.
 - The Bible gives stern instructions regarding this principle. **“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.”** (1 Tim.5:8) Christian, dead-beat dads need to heed this warning!
 - America is in big trouble and the Church of Jesus Christ is not setting a good example for the nation to follow. A 1993 report stated that 8.7 million single mothers are raising 1.6 million children. “Only 23% of child support has been collected. \$3 billion is owed annually. Which if paid, would relieve 80,000 children from poverty each year.” (B’ham Post-hearald, Feb,93)

- 2. Christian parents should embrace the importance of the responsibility of family unit in developing a child's faith system.**
 - “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Prov.22:6)
 - This training is expected to be a positive influence upon the child's life. However, negative training also has a negative influence upon a child's life.

- Therefore Paul issue these warning - **Col.3: 21** – “Do not embitter (erethizo/ p.a.impv.2pl) your children, or they will become discouraged (athumeo/ p.a.subj 3pl).”
 - And this one in **Eph.6: 4** – “Do not provoke (parorgizo/ p.a.impv.2pl) your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”
 - Good parental training orients the child from dependency upon the earthly parent to the heavenly Father (Phil.4: 10-20/ God will provide for you). This is the Christian’s rite of passage. *This was a key in going Joseph’s survival and success from the pit to prime minister.*
- 3. Jesus used the 'paidion' child because he is typically the least self-sufficient and the most dependent upon divinely delegated authority for the development of his faith and grace orientation in life.**
- God has established the divinely delegated authority of divine institutions 3 and 4 to protect children.
 - Because of the child's vulnerability to the authority system, Jesus issued this stern warning to those who deal with the training of paidion children. *“If anyone causes ONE of these little ones who believes in Me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck.” (9:42)*
- 4. Jesus used the 'paidion' child because his normal perception is faith (non-meritorious acceptance and trust).**
- We are physically born with an innate dependency upon our caregiver during the 'paidion' years of training. Faith is the normal response of the child to those entrusted with the authority of training (Luke 2:40,52).
 - Faith is the only system of perception that is offered apart from human merit. 'Paidion' children have it as a natural system of perception (**Read - Mark 10:13-15**). This is seen in our story as the 'paidion' child willingly came to the beckoning of Jesus.
- 5. Because faith is non-meritorious, it must trust the working object to complete it.**
- The working object may be reliable or unreliable. If the working object is a person, the reliability is based on the virtuous character of the person.
 - Don’t be disillusioned only God is perfect! (Rom.4:17-21/ the object of Abraham’s faith was the character of God behind the promise).

Let me show how doubt and disbelief can effect faith in our lives.

Suppose you believe that a chair will hold you so you sit down on it. When you sat down, the chair collapsed and embarrassed you. Now you doubt your judgment, which affects your perception of faith. Now suppose a trusted friend says to you, sit in this chair. You believe in this trusted person so you sit in the chair. The chair collapses and once again you are embarrassed. Now you doubt not only your own judgment but also your friend’s. This undermines your perception of faith / trust.