

love, that little children would instantly take to Him, and all true motherly mothers too, and such fatherly fathers as were not sophisticated by the demon of prejudice. The children would like to be touched by Him—it would be delightful to feel His hands upon their heads as He invoked a blessing on them, and mothers would instinctively be delighted too.

III. *Why were these infants brought to Jesus.*—Not to be healed, for there is no evidence that they were diseased or healed; not to be instructed for they were incapable of instruction, being mere infants, and we have no indication of anything of the kind being done; not to be baptized, for there is no reference to it in the history of this transaction. But they were brought to be blessed. This is expressly stated. "That He would put His hands on them and pray" according to this evangelist; that He would touch them according to Mark and Luke. They were capable of being blessed though not of being taught—capable of being saved, although not of believing. Jesus blessed them by invoking on them a blessing from the Divine Father, His own will being evermore in harmony with His Father's.

IV. *Who interposed to prevent their presentation to Jesus.*—"But the disciples rebuked them." They chid the children and those who brought them. They chid them all back. "Keep off there! Be considerate, mothers! Why trouble ye the Rabbi with your children? Don't you see that there are scribes and doctors of the law to be attended to? He has more than enough to do without wasting his precious time on children. The disciples, no doubt, on this occasion, were actuated by feelings of respect and veneration for their Master, and regard to the importance of the work in which He was engaged. They deemed it an intrusion and an impertinence for these mothers to interrupt and trouble Him with their babes. But they ought to have known better. From the love and tenderness He had always shown even to the very outcasts of humanity, those most deeply sunk in sin and error; from His constant readiness to help the helpless, to comfort the sorrowful, and above all from the radiant looks and inexpressible gentleness and ineffable sweetness with which they had doubtless ever seen Him hail and welcome children and babes, they ought to have known how grateful to His loving heart such a scene as now opened to their view would be. They ought to have remembered the prophetic teachings concerning the coming Messiah King. "He shall gather the lambs in His arms and carry them in His bosom." "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast ordained strength," or perfected praise.

V. *The rebuke which Jesus administered to those who hindered, and the encouragement which He gave to those who brought the infants.*—"But Jesus said suffer little children": in the original it is the little children—the little children that were there. Suffer them, that is let them alone. Let go the little children, let them come. Off your hands! The disciples had evidently put forth their hands to restrain the concourse. The word here rendered suffer is often rendered leave (Mark iv., 20-26). It means leave alone. It is often rendered let alone. Suffer is scarcely the proper term. The Saviour does not ask His disciples' sufferance. Neither does He ask them to condescend to the little ones. Permit, too, is not strong enough. Jesus was speaking authoritatively, though no doubt with mild authority. "And forbid them not," literally, and hinder them not, "to come unto me"—these words are to be connected closely with the immediately preceding expression "hinder them not," but not with the foregoing expression; and hence it is an error in punctuation to insert a comma after "and hinder them not" as if "to come unto me" were to be co-ordinately connected with the two clauses. Mark says here "He was much displeased"—literally *very indignant*. This marks the deep and tender interest He felt in the infants, and the beautiful appropriateness of their being brought to Him, and His grief and anger that the disciples should have so forgotten His well known character, and the grand design of His mission. The severity of this public rebuke is the highest proof of the depth and tenderness of His love to the infant race of man.