December 18, 1989

^F1^
^F3^
^F4^
^F5^

Dear ^F2^:

"Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe unto that man by whom **the offense** cometh!"
- Matthew 18:7

This is the season that most definitely commands the song, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come!" I surely don't want to dwell on the theme of "woe" as expressed in the Scripture above, but the words spoken by Jesus come in the midst of fourteen verses explicitly related to the theme of children. Children were always anxious to know the truth and to experience the warm feelings that came when seated upon the lap of Christ. Even today, our little ones become angels, shepherds, wise men, and maybe even the pretend parents of the Baby of Bethlehem. The joy and sparkle of these days is unmistakeably real.

What is this "offense" that Jesus warned about? It is the offense of hindering children from knowing and enjoying a love and fellowship with God. The word "offense" actually means "scandal" in this context. It is scandalous to hinder the little ones from turning their hearts to the Savior.

> "And Jesus called a little child unto Him and set him in the midst of them, and said, Truly I say unto you, except ye be turned around in your hearts and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven...whosoever shall offend one of these little ones who believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea... Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father Who is in heaven. For the Son of man (Jesus) is come to save that which is lost."

You might say, "Jack, isn't this a little less than a Christmas theme?" I almost agree, but the original Christmas story began in Bethlehem where the Savior was born. History records in Matthew 2:16 that King Herod sought to kill the newborn Savior. In doing so, he brought a great slaughter against the infant children of his own borders of Bethlehem. By God's providence, the Christ Child was taken into Egypt and thereby spared. Thirty-three years later, however, this same Roman regime would crucify the tender life of the Savior.

When I think of Christmas, I am reminded of millions who never will know the joys of knowing the Christ. I am also stirred to remember the privilege of being one of millions who does.

In a world of offenses, let us guard against the most tragic one of all: that of hindering the children from knowing the Savior. This offense is the root of all offenses.

I am convinced that deep in the heart of every prisoner is still a little child's heart that longs to sit on the lap of a Savior!

May God grant you a peaceful refreshing!

Jack Crans
Director

JC:al