

Children of the Conquest I – *Gen 18:1-19*

Introduction – Psalm 127:3-5 instructs us that “*children are a heritage from the LORD...*” and for the covenant people of God, we are to see children like arrows in the hand of a warrior (v4). Jesus Christ has brought forth a new humanity for the redemption of a culture, securing the promised victory over the earth (v5). God’s plan for the salvation of the world includes the promise of multi-generational faithfulness (Deut 7:9) and it takes generations to establish a long-standing culture. While children are a sweet fruit of the marriage covenant, they are not just for us, but ultimately for God (Mal 2:15). This martial exercise of training up children in the Lord is central to the evangelization and discipleship of the world.

Learning, Remembering, Readjusting, Bequeathing – There are many reasons for our congregation to return to a series on biblical childrearing. Many of us have never learned or are fairly new parents and really need to learn now. In the throws of raising kids, we constantly need to be reminded and encouraged, redirected and admonished as to what the Bible instructs us to do. Parents whose children have grown remain parents and there are new applications. And finally, as a church, these are distinct gifts that have been given to us from our foundation – we all need to embrace them, represent them, and give them to the world (and to the broader church) as well.

The World in Which We Live – Hates children, hates fatherhood and motherhood, hates the biblical teaching on marriage and family, and pours billions of dollars every year to encourage all (sometimes subtly, but recently more and more explicitly) to join them in this hatred. We (our culture) hate long term commitments to anything. We have a view of our life as autonomous, disconnected, and selfishly declare “my life for me.” The modern church teaches more and more that marriage, family, and children are “add-ons,” condiments to the Christian life rather than central to disciple-making and obedience to the dominion mandate. Pessimistic eschatologies discourage long term vision casting and faith in the promises of God to a thousand generations. Sentimentalism (where the goal is a warm, cozy, agreeable family for me) brings discouragement and despair when things go screwy in the home. A lack of biblical knowledge on the nature of children and a compromise over clear teaching in Scripture on the principles and tools for raising our children makes life in the home go sideways. And fathers are not instructed that the final responsibility for childrearing is theirs, a responsibility he may not pass off to his wife.

A Promised Conquest (Gen 18:1-19) - It seemed unbelievable, so unbelievable that she laughed. These two were chosen by God to bring a blessing to the entire world through a nation that would come from them (Gen 12:1-3). But how could Sarah, now far beyond child-bearing age, give birth to a son? Hagar and Ishmael were not the answer God had promised (Gen 17). But where there was weeping and emptiness, God promised laughter and a world full of His blessing (Gen 18:18).

Barren Humanity/Sovereign Grace – The story is a picture to us of the barrenness of humanity, lost in its sin. There is nothing in us to get ourselves out of the place of judgment we find ourselves in. We are dead in our sins, children of wrath by nature (Eph 2:1-3). It is also a picture of the sovereign grace and kind purpose of God in human history (Eph 2:4-10).

The Familial Nature of the Covenant of Grace (Gen 18:19) – God had known Abraham. He is speaking of His covenantal election, a choosing in love, which God had done to Abraham (see Amos 3:2 for another example of this covenantal usage of the word “know”). And here God shows the familial nature of this covenant. God was choosing Abraham and his descendants. Abraham was to command his children and his household in covenant so that they would also keep the commands of God.

POINT – Child-rearing is directly connected to the Abrahamic blessings and to the salvation of the world. Child-rearing is a central part of world evangelization.

We are the Children of the Promise (Gal 3:5-9, 26-29; 4:28) – This was not a covenant with promises only for Abraham, or only for the Jewish people. This was a covenant with promises for the children of Abraham. The true sons of Abraham are those who have the faith of Abraham. If we are baptized, we are Christ’s, and this means we are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:29). The same familial covenant is ours, and therefore the same promises and obligations of the covenant are ours and our children’s.

Our Children are the Children of the Promise (Eph 6:1-4) – The covenant was familial (Psalm 128:1-3, Isaiah 65:22b-23) and remains familial, even to the Gentile children. Paul addresses the saints in Ephesus and directly speaks to the children of that assembly. He tells Gentile children that they are under the same obligations and promises as children in the older administration at Mt. Sinai. The requirements are the same; obey your parents. The promise has been resurrected and expanded; that it may go well with you on the earth and not only in Canaan. The world is Abraham's and all his descendants (Rom 4:13) not according to the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

POINT – Child-rearing is directly connected to the Spirit's church-growth program and the church's discipleship program.

When a Culture Looks Barren – Jesus came to save the world. Jesus commissioned His church to disciple the nations. Scripture and history show that this is the work of generations. Those children in your home are the laughter of God over a rebellious world. They are arrows in your hand. And like Abraham, all obedience to God begins with one thing alone. Believe God.

Dave Hatcher – February 2, 2020