

Grace to a Thousand Generations – *Deut 5:9-10, 7:9*

Children of the Conquest #2

Introduction – We began this series on The Children of the Conquest noting that child-rearing is a martial exercise, deeply rooted in the Covenant of Grace and the promises made to Abraham and his descendants. We saw that we are the descendants of Abraham by faith, and thus God has given us many promises as parents. Faith is a gift of God, and not of our own works. That faith is a belief in the faithfulness of God. That same faith that believes that Jesus is Lord is the faith that believes the promises of God, the grace of God, to a thousand generations.

Grace to a Thousand Generations (Deut 5:9-10, 7:9) – In Deuteronomy, Moses gives the same Ten Commandments to the next generation, because His covenant is generational. In the second commandment, the effects of iniquity fall upon future generations. However, because of the character of God revealed in His merciful promises, the flow of blessing is to a thousand generations. How long is a thousand generations? Ezekiel, using a prophetic synonym, says, “...they, their children, and their children’s children, *forever...an everlasting covenant*” (Ez 37:24-26). While we see that covenantal faithfulness is something we must keep, the foundation of the success of the covenant is God’s faithfulness, established through Abraham, the father of all who believe (Gen 17:7-9, Gal 3:26-29). And so we can see that the heart of covenant-keeping is promise-believing.

God’s Abilities and Intentions (Psalm 102:25-28, 103:15-18) – The creation (in 102) and the works of man (103) are both contrasted to the everlasting mercy of God and His covenant to generations. The former fade, crumble, or change; the latter ever remains steadfast. But notice particularly what the intentions of that steadfast covenant are (102:28). This is not merely a statement about God’s abilities; it is a promise about what He *intends* to do. Notice what He *wants* to do.

Standing on the Promises of Grace (Acts 2:37-39) – The Psalmist declares that we must keep covenant, and what is that? Peter, explaining the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, preaches the gospel. Men, convicted by that Spirit, cry out in response and Peter replies that they must repent and be baptized. He says this because of the same promise which is again to them and to their children: a transgenerational blessing assumed throughout the Old and New Testament. The Holy Spirit will efficaciously and sovereignly regenerate countless generations.

Faith - Like Abraham, our response is to believe the gospel, that is, the promises of God. And we are instructed, like Abraham, to believe them, not simply as individuals, but for our future generations because of what God is doing. As His Word and promises settle in our hearts, we rest in them, stand on them, relying on His faithfulness and completed work. That evangelical rest is what God is working in and will result in godly, trusting, faithful parental work.

Walking in the Promises of Grace (Eph 2:8-10) – You may be comfortable with the truth that faith is a gift and not of ourselves. It is true that this applies to our individual salvation at a moment in time. But the reason this is true for you is because Gentiles have been brought into the covenants of promise (2:12-13). These generational promises are why Paul can address the children of believing parents in Eph 6:1-3.

There is a tension between believing (standing) and obeying (walking). The key is to do both in the Promises. There is a fundamental *being* before *doing*; but there is a *doing* that flows out of *being*. Walk in the *doing* without *being* betrays your view of faith, grace, and God’s character. Sit in the *being* without *doing* betrays that you really don’t have the *being*.

Faith Working (Gal 5:6) – “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*” That’s the phrase – “*faith working through love,*” or simply, “*faith working...*” The faith that Paul is commending is a faith that is given by the Spirit who then gives men power to lead a holy life. That is the faith that saves, and that is the faith that believes the promises of God – even for the children and grandchildren and generations yet to be born.

Faith Without Presumption/Faith Without Fear – The Westminster Confession of Faith says the “*principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.*” Faith is how you stand on the promises of God and faith is how you walk in the promises of God. For the parent, this means that child-rearing, like all aspects of Christian duties, flows from faith. We must not do our duty in order to earn our way into the promises. The promises are freely given to all parents who believe them. And the mark of those who believe them with evangelical faith are those who are bearing the fruit of diligent and careful parenting.

This kind of faith never *presumes* upon God as though there were no conditions for keeping covenant with God. It does believe that God gives the grace to keep the conditions. Faith looks to the perfect work of Jesus and to the inner working of the Spirit for the ability and desire to do so.

This kind of faith never *fears*, because “*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear...*” (1 John 4:18). It looks to the object of that faith, to Jesus Christ, and sees His perfect faithfulness, and rests there.

Who is Your God: Some Challenges and Applications – While God is holy and utterly demanding of perfect righteousness before Him, His perfect righteousness is not miserly when it comes to grace, mercy, forgiveness, tenderheartedness, and longsuffering. Open yourself wide (an act of faith) and find yourself nearly drowning in the ocean of grace that is yours in Jesus Christ. Then start applying...

Walk ON (not just in) the Promises – If God has prepared these good works for you, then like a sturdy-built bridge, find yourself not just parenting *in* the promises, but parenting *on* the promises. In other words, that’s always your floor, your foundation, your path.

Cultivating Grace – If He’s working these promises into you, cultivate them with the means He has given. His Word and sacraments in this Covenant Renewal Service, the body of Christ, your own devotions – these are not work-based obligations, but the places to receive and cultivate the grace of God.

Parenting by Faith – This grace leads us to thankful humility when things are going well, acknowledging the Giver of all things. It keeps us looking first to Him to plead His promises when things are not going well (with me or with my children). Our covenant-keeping God is good. “*For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth to all generations*” (Psalm 100:5).

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