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Child-rearing: Covenant Child-rearing (*Gen 18:1-19*)

Some Introductory Comments – Some topics need to be reviewed periodically. The state of our memories and our obedience, and the importance of the issues, makes it profitable to hear the Word on these things over and over again.

Long Term Reformation – of a culture is not possible without generations of faithfulness; one generation building upon another and another and another. If our children do not grow up to be faithful men and women, we will lose all we have tried to accomplish for the Lord.

Centrality of Family – The family is the building block of society. This concept is being fundamentally destroyed around us and society is being destroyed. But we must be careful to respond to the scriptures and not overreact. And so, to subscribe to the centrality of the family is never to deny the centrality of the church, which has been another great problem in our society today.

Application for All – Children need to listen to these teachings because it instructs them in knowing what is happening to them and why. Those who have not had children need to listen to these teachings, because most will have children one day, and the theology of covenant child-rearing needs to be a theology of an entire culture. Those who have already raised children need to listen because we all need to give ourselves to examination of the word, we never cease having influence upon our children, and older members need to be instructed to teach the younger members in these things.

A Promise to Abraham and Sarah (*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.

Corollary – We may not detach the work of child-rearing from the work of missions.

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.

Brought Near to the Covenant (*Eph 2:11-22*) – Ephesians 2 explains this as well. We were once outside of that covenant. But through Jesus Christ, a way has been made for both Jew and Gentile to be in covenant with God – through faith. This faith is a gift of God and so the entrance into the covenant is all a gift – it is all grace (*Eph 2:8-9*). This covenant reconciles us to God and to one another. The only answer for peace between God and man is Jesus Christ. The only answer for peace between men is Jesus Christ. In Christ, we are fit together and built up into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (*Eph 2:21-22*).

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

Our Children are the Children of the Promise (*Eph 6:1-4*) – The covenant was familial (*Psalms 128:1-3, Ezek 16:20-21*) 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.

Obedience with a Promise – 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 church's Discipleship Program.

Faithful Christianity – Are you growing in faithfulness? Covenant keeping is first and foremost promise-believing. And it must be in the context of that covenant that we give ourselves to raising up godly offspring. This is God's means of manifesting His glory to thousands of generations and to the ends of the earth.

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