

Standing on the Promises

A Series on Biblical Principles of Childrearing

February 8, 1998

I - Overview of Covenantal Childrearing

Raising children in a particular context - family. Duty / principles must be understood in light of context. - What is a family? Must begin here. Prevailing assumptions are incorrect. Family is instituted government, established by God at the very beginning of human history. Constitution written by Him, revealed in His word. Husband is head, wife is chief advisor, children are subjects - temporary. Because husband is head of family, he is responsible for everything that goes on in the family.

Biblical Pattern of Value Transfer

- Family is the primary locus of cultural experience.

Education environment poses challenge to maintaining primacy of home. Crucial for parents to be intimately familiar with the school environment that they place their children into. Monitor vigilantly

- Family culture is thoroughly biblical in its worldview.

Romans 12:1-2 Minds of the fathers and mothers must be constantly renewed or will be conformed to world. Husband responsible for washing wife with word. Covenantal consequences can only be curses for those who do not renew their minds and therefore cannot faithfully walk in broader covenantal obedience.

- Now ready to receive little ones. Important to understand the magnitude and gravity of the task. Matthew 18: 1 - 14. Take heed that you don't stumble a child. Who is warning primarily against? Parents!

Foundational Assumptions

- Bible is sufficient - (Deut 6:4-9, Eph 6:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17) Pop psychology / medicine is not necessary.
- Discipline is no substitute for regeneration. Need to get beyond "well behaved kids" (Romans 5:12,19; Eph 2:1-3) Children are by nature objects of wrath. We need regeneration.
- Godly child-rearing is covenantal. Covenant is a sovereign bond, sovereignly administrated, with attendant blessings and curses. Central covenantal entity or person in covenantal association with God. Blessings and curses associated with the covenant attach to all of the constituents of the covenantal entity or person. Children of believers have great covenantal privileges (1 Cor. 7:13-15). Children of unbelievers are unclean. Covenantal privilege is a ground for confidence.

The Promises of God to Parents

Many promises - all must be viewed in the covenantal context in which they are given to us. From the beginning, Godly offspring sought as result of godly marriage covenant. (Mal. 2:15)

- Heart of covenant keeping is promise believing. Centrality of faith throughout all of scripture. Abraham (Father of us all) declared to be righteous because he believed. But faith without works is dead. True faith will produce works. We rest in the promises and evangelical rest always produces works. We work out what God has worked in. We walk in the works He has prepared for us.

Old Testament Promises

- Psalm 102:25-28) Children of servants will continue. Based upon unchanging character of God. Deut 5:9-10, 7:9) Blessings to a thousand generations and familial covenantal attachment.
- Abraham is the paradigm. (Gen 17:7-9). God's covenant not just with Abraham. Also with family and subsequent generations. Promise that Abraham's descendants would inherit land of Canaan is fulfilled expansively in New Testament. (Romans 4 - Now heir of the world.) New Covenant is not result of God scrapping the old He made with Abraham. It is the fulfillment. It is fulfilled expansively and does not omit our children.
- Ezekiel 37:24-26, Isaiah 59:21, 65:23 More familial expansion of blessing.

New Testament isn't silent.

- Ps 103:17:18. Mary quotes the generation promise in this Psalm in her magnificent (Luke 1:48-50). Mary does not believe that the son of God is coming to introduce a new approach to dealing with families.
- Ephesians 5:31 - We see Paul operating from a similar worldview when he explicitly applies an OT promise and commandment to NT Christians and their children. How does Paul get there? Eph 2:11 - 22. We were *once* strangers to the covenants of promise, outside of the commonwealth of Israel. Not any more.
- Acts 2:37-39. Peter preaches gospel, conviction, repentance, baptism - why? The promise is to you and your children...The advent our Lord in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ does not reduce the family into convenient housing arrangements in the sight of God. The family is still the core covenantal object of our covenant keeping God. The promise is the you and to your children.

Duties of Parents Before God

Psalm 103:17-18 Three main elements of parental duty; keeping covenant, remembering his commandments, doing them.

- First duty - to believe the promises of God. Remember - failure to believe is a sin. (John 3:18) When we believe, we do. Keeping covenant - Remember - Heart of covenant keeping is believing. Romans 4:3 - Abraham declared righteous by faith.
- Personal obedience - Col 3:21 - Nothing will undermine your children more at home than your hypocrisy. Children should see your obedience to your heavenly father in every realm of your life.
- Intercession for your children - Job prayed for his children as their representative. He prayed for sins they might have committed in their hearts. He was thorough. What of the sacrifice. Appeal to the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of your children.
- Instruction in God's standards - Deut 6:4-9. Greatest commandment given in the context of a passage on raising children. We are to teach our children diligently the law of God.

Specific Commands Regarding Parenting.

Illustration - If we desire a garden full of weeds - do nothing. Likewise, if we want a home full of grief. But God clearly instructs parents in how to avoid this. Guess what? It requires hard work and sacrifice!

- Prov 29:17 - Correct your son - delight to your soul.

Prov 13:24 - Spare rod = hatred. Prompt discipline = love. Emotional love can be objective hatred.

- Prov 19:18 - While there is still time. Do it now. Do not set your heart on their destruction.

Prov 22:15 - Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. Rod of discipline drives it far from him.

Remember foundations. Word of God is sufficient. Pop psychology hates this. Does not say rod of discipline will produce a child seething with resentment.

- Prov 22:6 - Train up a child in the way...

Parental Shame = Parental Responsibility and ability to Control Outcome

- Prov 29:15 - Rod and rebuke give wisdom, unattended child brings shame.
- Prov 28:7 - Law keeper is discerning son, companion of gluttons shames father.
- Prov 10:5 Lazy son shames father. Why should one man be ashamed of the behavior of another? Because he is responsible for it.
- Prov 19:26 - Children who treat parents disrespectfully bring shame. (Curse parents is a capital offense.)