

The Gracious Gospel and Childrearing – *Rom 3:9-24*

Parenting in the Promises #1

Introduction – As we continue to grow and mature as a church, the Lord continues to bless our congregation with many children. Many of you are new to the church, many of you are new to parenting, and almost all of the parents constantly find themselves in new stages of parenting. It's on our mind – a lot – and that's a good thing. Knowing that we must stand on the promises of God as we raise these children, we must constantly fight the temptation to forget that bringing up faithful children in the Lord is all of grace. It is grace that they are born; sheer grace that they are born again. It is grace that they know the Lord; sheer grace that they walk in His ways. While we certainly can teach principles in childrearing from the Scriptures, we must always remember that success in childrearing is all grace, from grace to grace; and our boasting must always be in the Lord (Gal 6:14). There is a good reason to begin a series on Childrearing on the following passage.

The Nature of the Situation (Rom 3:9-20) – Humans are not basically good; not since the Fall. The Gentiles are under sin as well as the Jews, and this is what Paul has been arguing up to this point (v9). He then quotes from all over the OT (Psalm 14, 53, Eccles 7, Psalm 5, 140, 10, Isaiah 59, and finally Psalm 36) to prove that this has always been declared by God (vv10-18). He then points out that the law accomplished its purpose in stopping every mouth (Jew and Gentile) from ever claiming one's own righteousness before God. We are sinners by nature, and the law simply reveals that to us (v19). There is no way to be justified by the deeds of the law, not because of something inherently wrong with the law, but because of something now inherently wrong in us - our nature (v20).

For Both the Parents and the Children – Paul is reasoning from the Jews to the rest of the world. If the Jews cannot be justified in this way, then nobody can. And while we might agree with this with regard to adults, we must not forget to include the children as well. In other words, this has application to all of us, adults and children.

Objects of Wrath (Eph 2:1-3) – We are all by nature “dead men walking.” Our race (Adam's) all begin alive in the flesh but dead in the spirit. We didn't choose our way into this nature. We choose to sin because of who we are (Gen 6:5, Psalm 51:5, Jer 17:9).

Adam, Our Covenant Head (Rom 5:12, 14) – In God's wisdom, we are all well represented in Adam, who fell on behalf of all of us. We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners.

Implications in Childrearing – While childishness is due to a child's frame, selfishness is due to his nature. We must distinguish between the two and this takes wisdom and grace for we are from the same stock. There is no such thing as a “good child.” We are all born in sin and simply need time, intelligence, and enough strength to begin acting out our nature (hence the appearance and myth of the “terrible twos”). Fathers and mothers with a sentimental, Pelagian view of their children (or arrogance over their namesake) are often shocked when, all of a sudden, their perfect little boy or girl starts throwing temper-tantrums, lies, or bites the neighbor's kids. There is a problem to be addressed, but the shock is due to their theology and not with the child. Your children need Jesus – just like you. Baptism and the Lord's Supper declare these truths and nurture our faith in these truths.

The Righteousness of God (Rom 3:21-24) – Paul's argument takes a wonderful turn. While there is no righteousness to be found in the law, there is the righteousness of God that is ours through faith in Jesus Christ. And this is all by His grace. His argument is the same in Eph 2:8-10. This is true with regard to our position and life in Jesus Christ. It must be embraced, believed, and lived out as we build our homes and raise our children in the Lord. Far too many Christian homes act like the foolish Galatians who “...*having begun by the Spirit*” are now trying to make their homes and their children perfect “*by the flesh*” (Gal 3:3).

Grace and Your Children – You need the gracious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not simply as an event in your life, but the ongoing grace to walk in Christ (Gal 2:20-21). And we must think this way about our children. Their salvation and sanctification are not founded upon this method or that. It is not rooted in this theological concept or that one. It certainly is not grounded in your perfection or theirs. That there are promises for you and your children (and there are) is the grace of God. That there are principles and commands to follow in raising your children is the grace of God. That they will be effective is the grace of God.

Consider who you are; consider who your children are – according to the Word. Then this will be clear – Bringing up faithful children in the Lord is all of grace. And our God gives grace.