

Genesis 17:1-10 | When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” ³ Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, ⁴ “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ⁸ And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

⁹ And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

Gn 17.1-10 | Covenant Family

We are constituted by the family. When we talk about this duty bound relationship that is both natural by blood, and legal by declaration and spiritual as it is divinely instituted, we are talking about the covenant. God made his covenant with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity. That is us. So when Adam fell in sin all mankind descending from him sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression. Our fallenness coming to us because of Adams fallenness can seem unfair. But beneath this is something like an assumption of our autonomy. When we grasp that individuals are constituted by the family we see that its of course inevitable. We are family constituted creatures. When the head of our family fell we all fell in him. There is no other place we could come from.

Q. 16. Did all mankind fall in Adam’s first transgression?

A. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression.

So we have the God given nature of the family. But this good and essential structure has been radically corrupted by sin. So the structure of the family remains in tact but now what it passes down, instead of knowledge righteousness and holiness, we receive and pass along original sin.

But God did not throw away his good creation, saying, “look those families only lead to death.” Instead God by his grace determined himself to restore the family to his glorious intention at creation. God in his grace does not transcend the family rendering it obsolete, nor does he transgress the family, instead he restores the family to its glorious ends by his grace in Christ. This is the covenant of grace. The family in a state of salvation.

Q. 20. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?

- A. God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into the estate of salvation, by a Redeemer

This morning I want us to see how the covenant of grace transforms our families restoring them to the position of function.

1. The Covenant of Grace In Families

Genesis 17:6-7 | I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

When the covenant God entered into with Adam at creation was broken by Adam plunging all of his posterity into an estate of sin and Misery, God did not leave mankind to parish but out of his good pleasure he established a covenant of Grace. And the way that he established the covenant of grace was by picking one man to be the father of a people that God chose for himself.

God chose Abraham and he gave him this promise of exceeding fruitfulness, that nations would come from him. But more than that is this promise of restoration to their position before God as he says, he will establish his covenant to be God to you and to your offspring after you. God in effect intervenes into the course of human families and he interrupts the trajectory of death handed down from family to family, and he chooses one man among them whose family he promises to give a trajectory of eternal life.

This is the covenant of grace. But notice that the covenant of grace does not circumvent or abandon the structure of the family, but restores the family to its proper ends. Imagine if God established a covenant with Abraham that did not include his posterity. It would in essence mean this essential aspect of humanity constitution would be unredeemed. Yes you were meant to be a covenant people before God, but sin has fractured the family so deeply that I cannot restore it. Essentially we would be admitting a level of corruption beyond God's gracious ability to restore.

So God establish a family under his covenant of Grace. It is a gracious rescue which is received by Abraham's faith so that by faith he would orient the whole of his family towards the highest ends of the promises of God. God is over all his family and his family is the people of God. This means that Abraham would even offer up his own son whom he loves for the sake of God, because he trusts God's promises for his family.

Genesis 17:9-10 | And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their

generations. ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

The sign of this families covenant status which is given to Abraham is the sign of circumcision. It is a patrilineal marker of inclusion in the covenant of grace.

2. Covenant of grace fully realized in Christ

Acts 2:38-39 | And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

This pattern of the restored family is fully realized in Christ. Because Christ is the true promised offspring of Abraham. And this offspring is cut off by blood on the cross. A bloody right like circumcision. But by his being cut off, he becomes the propitiation for the sin of Adam. He perfectly fulfills on our behalf the requirements not met by our first father, so that in him we might be adopted into the family of God. And this promise which was given to Abraham and fulfilled by Christ takes the same pattern of restoring the families of the world to God as it took with Abraham. The promise is for you and for your children.

That means that the children born of Christian families are born members of the covenant people of God. They receive the sign of baptism to show that these are proper recipients of the promises of God. And the new covenant restores what was lost in the fall so that families are oriented to eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. His blessings flow far as the curse is found.

3. What does this mean for our children?

So if you are a Christian, all of the promises of Christ belong to you children. They are set apart from the world into the covenant people of God. But does this mean that all the children born of believing parents are saved? What does it mean that these promises are for you and your children? I want us to understand what our families are.

1. Your children, like you, must be born again.

David confesses in Psalm 51 “behold I was brought forth in transgression and in sin did my mother conceive me.” You didn’t have to teach your children to sin. Hey son I noticed when I caught you with your brother’s toy and your brother was crying you told me you took it from him and I disciplined you. Next time you should try lying about it. You might deceive me and I won’t discipline you. Jesus teaches us in John 3 that we must be born

again. The only way this is possible is by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and this belongs to God. Therefore our highest calling as parents is to evangelize our children.

We should teach them that they stand condemned in their sin. They must connect sin to misery. And they must be shown the grace and mercy offered to them in Jesus Christ.

2. God ordinarily works salvation among his covenant seed. He has promised blessings upon the offspring of his people. He has promised to raise up generation after generation to serve Christ. God of course draws people from without his covenant people so that those who are not of the family of God may become a part of the family of God. You should be encouraged in your heart that God delights to save your children. You can trust God with your children, and he has given them his promises.

3. God is sovereign over all. This means we ought to entrust our children and our parenting to the Lord. This is the dynamic nature of God's sovereignty and our responsibility. The thing your children need most is the saving work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. You cannot reach into your children's hearts and enliven them. Only Christ can do that by his Spirit. But this is not the responsibility that God has given to you. God merely requires you to be a parent under his salvation.

The gospel restores and reorients our parenting by showing us our calling and our limits. Our highest hopes for our children are not less than raising competent citizens but far more. We do not desire mere outward conformity but transformed hearts by the grace of Jesus. Therefore we are to spread before them a constant feast of the goodness of Christ. Not in fear, but in hope of the promises of God.

We may pray alongside Alexander Whyte,

“O God, give us our children. A second time, and by a far better birth,
give us our children to be beside us in Thy holy covenant.”

And then we will pray that God would give us wisdom and confidence in his promises to shape our homes so that they might be called Christian homes, covenant families, as Christ has promised to create.