

PRELIMS. In the morning service I mentioned how Paul did **not shrink** from telling the Ephs the **whole counsel** of God and how he held **nothing** back which was **profitable** to them. I also mentioned that **I shrank** back from saying some truths which I believe the Bible teaches! Maybe I should change! **Here goes!**

I have been disturbed quite often in hearing some parents talking about the troubles they have with their families. A hassled, troubled neighbour said recently ‘Some people just should not have children’! I also know of young women who do **not want** a family. That may be because they are **selfish** and believe that children **inhibit** personal achievement, **happiness** and fulfilment. But very often you get the message that children are **not a blessing** – and the Bible says they most definitely are.

Xns fall into the same category! I have heard Xn parents sigh ‘Who would have children?’ Because their children **have** indeed caused them problems and to an extent, impeded and hampered their lives! \*As we view the future, some of us are very anxious! With the new laws that are coming out, and the new values and ideals they will create, the future looks bleak. Let us turn to **God’s Word for guidance** and help.

Our Psalm tells us that children are a **blessing** and they belong to Him! *“children are...from the Lord...a reward...Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!”*[3,4] I have read it correctly, haven’t I? The Bible says that children **are** a blessing from God, not a **curse/nuisance** that we have to put up with!

When two **rebellious** children met years after one had ran away in fear of his brother), one asked the other *“Who are these with you? Jacob said ‘The children whom God has **graciously** given your servant”*[Gen 33:5] Jacob considered his large family as a **gracious gift** from God! **Undeserved gift! Despite the trouble** which Jacob’s family caused him - **Dinah** and the Shechemites,

‘almost killing’ **Joseph** and all the **arguments** in the home, Jacob still saw a large family as a gracious gift from God!

Yet Jacob seems to be **confident** that he is blessed and that **God** is with him **and** his family – that **all** of them are blessed! **Why** is this? There **is** a **very good reason** why Jacob, and all the OT saints rejoiced over their families. The answer is the **Covenant** which God gave to the children of Jacob, the **seed!**

God, of course **foresaw** the issues which children would bring into a home! And since the **Fall**, He knew that would make things very much **worse!** So God, in **His grace provided** a wonderful **means** to **relieve parents** of the worry and concern about the **salvation** of their children! Yes, God knew the **worry** parents would have about their children being saved and having a worthwhile life serving God and people! So He **has** provided a wonderful way of **helping** parents **enjoy** bringing up their children being **filled** with **hope** and **promise** of success!

So here it is: God has **promised** to **bless** the **children** of those who **truly trust in Him**, those who **keep His covenant**, those who **join themselves** to the Lord - covenant members!

Now the Bible makes clear that salvation is by **grace** – **all** of grace **100%!** You do not have to do anything to **earn** or make yourselves ‘acceptable’ to God – for we have all sinned and come short of His glory. God is a Sovereign who has **chosen** His people according to His good pleasure!

And God is the God of **miracles** (which means, He does **not** need to use **means!**) So that applies to **conversion** as well as everything else! Now what God does in **regeneration** is, He **‘injects’** spiritual life into a spiritually dead body. As a result, that body become ‘alive’ to God and spiritual things. Salvation is truly a **‘gift’** from God. That is why we read in ‘testimonies’ such things as ‘all of a sudden, it became clear – I saw everything so plain – Christ had died for me, He bore my sins

on the cross! Well, nothing changed apart from spiritual life being imparted and a new vision and perception given! **Eyes** were **opened** to ‘see’ what was there all the time! It is **entirely** a work of God – in His grace ‘**He chooses** us to be His friends’!

Now God has revealed to us that covenant members who are joined to Him in covenant relationship have a special privilege – they are blessed in a special way, and that way is that He has promised to **save** not only them, but their **children also!**

Of course there are **conditions** – but still this is a wonderful. Conditions do **not negate** or **diminish** the virtue of a promise. I can promise to give every one of you £100 if you come to church next Sunday morning. Its very nice of me to do that (if I were to do it!), but making the condition that you must come to church next Sunday morning does **not negate** the kindness of my freely giving you £100. It would still be **gracious** of me!

Now the **conditions** that **God makes** regarding the blessing of our covenant children is that **we** remain **faithful** to God and **keep** the covenant terms regarding children. If we (or our children when they become of age) ‘**allow**’ our **unsanctified** natures to **dominate** and **control** our lives instead of God **leading** us so that we either **abandon** the faith, or refuse to repent after being disobedient, then it won’t happen – our children will not be blessed. We must keep faith with God. We must **never turn away** from Him.

God is **not** saying you have to be perfect before He will save you, He is saying remain faithful to the covenant and I **will give** you a new heart – **and** the heart of your children!!!! Now **that** is a **big deal!** That promise has **relieved** so many **parents** and given them hope. God **intended** that it should. God knows the agony a parent goes through with disobedient children.

We cannot give ourselves nor our families a new heart – but God can – and will – **if** we remain **faithful** to the covenant.

**That's** the **promise** Peter referred to, when speaking re the forgiveness of sins "**for the promise is to you and your children**" [Acts2:39] What promise? The promise made to Abraham and **expanded** to Moses. Listen to it "**And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God**"[Deu 30:6] ('Lord' in caps, meaning **covenant** God! Not just God as Creator and judge, but as **Father**)! In other words God **chose** the **children with** the **parents**! Look: "**the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them**"[Deu 10:15]

I take that, and the covenant blessing in Scripture, to mean this, God promises to save our children as well as ourselves – but **only** if we **remain faithful** and keep the covenant. Ie, as long as we do **not reject** and **turn away** from God and put our trust in Him. **Also** of course, to bring our children up, as God has commanded. That means bringing them up **not** as **pagans** but God's children – for children are **God's heritage**!

We **ought** to **encourage** our children in the wonderful promises/blessing of being chosen by God, rather than instructing them that God is Someone who is out to **slay them** for their **sins** as soon as possible. We have to teach them about **repenting** every time they sin and disobey. That is the lovely thing about Xnity – we repent every day in **full assurance** we accepted. We sometimes teach our children to **hate** God instead of **loving** Him and pointing out to them how gracious He is!

Trouble is, too many Xns, including presbyterians, treat their children as **pagans** telling them they must have a **certain experience** and be able to **articulate** in certain terms, a turning from darkness to light, when God has **already planted** His seed in their hearts! God **can** and has **done**, plant His seed **in the womb**! John Baptist + David +Jeremiah + Moses + Samson were all regenerate from the womb! Much of the **confusion** is because God **has regenerated** but we have not **nurtured** them!