

The Children of the Covenant, the Saviours First Care.

by Edward Payson

Edward Payson's sermon emphasizes the significance of being children of the covenant and the blessings offered through Christ to baptized individuals.

Scripture: Genesis 17:7, Acts 3:25, Romans 4:13, Galatians 3:29, Hebrews 10:36

Topics: "Covenant Theology", "Eternal Salvation"

Description

Edward Payson delivers a sermon emphasizing the importance of embracing the covenant with God, drawing parallels between the children of the covenant in the Bible and baptized individuals today. He urges believers to dedicate themselves and their children to God, highlighting the need for faith and commitment to receive the blessings of the covenant. Payson warns against delaying in accepting Christ, as it may lead to missing out on eternal salvation and the privileges of being in covenant with God.

Transcript

"Ye are the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

Acts 3:25, 26

words compose part of a sermon delivered by St. Peter to an assembly of his countrymen; a sermon, on many accounts highly interesting, and especially on account of the success with which it was attended; for it appears from the context, that it was the means of converting some thousands of the hearers. In that part of it which has now been read, the apostle suggests several considerations which were calculated deeply to affect the minds of his audience. He reminds them, that they were descended from pious ancestors; that, in consequence of this, they were the children of the covenant which God had made with their fathers, and especially with Abraham, the illustrious progenitor of their race; and that, from regard to this covenant, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, had sent him first to them, to bless them in turning away every one of them from his iniquities.

My hearers, are there any in this assembly to whom this address of the apostle to his countrymen is applicable? There are. All the baptized persons here present, who have been dedicated to God by

believing parents, and who have not cordially embraced the Saviour, are in a situation almost precisely similar to that of the audience whom St. Peter addressed on this occasion. To all such baptized persons present then, to all in this assembly, who have been dedicated to God, by believing parents, in the ordinance of baptism, I say, Ye are the children of the covenant which God made with your parents, and to you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, now sends him to bless you in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.

In discoursing farther on this passage, so interesting to believing parents and to their children, I shall endeavor, I. To explain and establish the assertion, that all who have been dedicated to God by believing parents, are children of the covenant which God has made with their parents, and especially with Abraham, the great father of the faithful. With this view I remark, that the blessings of the covenant, which God made with Abraham, were all included in three great promises.

The first was, In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. The second was, To thee and to thy seed will I give this land; that is, the land of Canaan. The third was, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee. Of these promises the first was made to Abraham as an individual. It merely assured him that the promised seed of the woman, who was to bring blessings to all nations, should descend from him, or be one of his posterity. This promise has long since been fulfilled by the birth of Christ, the promised seed, who was born of a daughter of Abraham.

Of course we have nothing to do with it, except to receive the Saviour whose coming it reveals. The second promise was made to Abraham, considered as the progenitor of the Jewish nation, the twelve tribes of Israel; and this promise also has been fulfilled by their being put in possession of Canaan, the promised land. With this promise therefore we have no concern, only so far as it has a typical reference to the heavenly Canaan. The third promise, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee, --was made to Abraham, considered as a believer, in covenant with God; as the great father of the faithful, or of all who should believe with a faith similar to his own.

In this promise, the covenant which God made with Abraham principally and essentially consists; in the stipulations which we find in the 17th chapter of Genesis, where God says to him, I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee. It is this covenant, of which circumcision was the seal, with which we are principally concerned, and to which the following discourse refers. That the Jews were the children of the covenant, it is needless to prove, since it is everywhere asserted by the inspired writers, as well as in our text.

In passages too numerous to mention particularly, they are styled God's covenant people, children of the promise, and represented as being born in covenant, and as enjoying covenanted blessings. Speaking of the Jews in his own day, St. Paul says, Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. This covenant, it may be farther remarked, was perfectly distinct from the Mosaic law, and from the covenant which God made with the Jews as a nation, when he brought them out of Egypt, and which was afterwards renewed at Mount Sinai; for the apostle tells us, that it was confirmed of God in Christ four hundred and thirty years before the law was given; and that being thus confirmed it could never be disannulled.

Agreeably, we meet with various allusions to this covenant scattered through the Old Testament. The children of thy servants, says the psalmist, shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. And as for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth even forever.

And again God says, fear not O Jacob my servant, and thou Jeshurun, whom I have chosen, for I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among grass, and as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's: and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.

Since then it cannot be denied, that the Jews were in covenant with God, the only question is, whether the baptized children of professed believers, at the present day, are in the same situation; whether they, like the Jews, are born in covenant, and stand in the same relation to God, which the Jews formerly sustained. With a view to prove that they are so, I observe, 1. It is frequently predicted by the prophets, that in the latter days the Gentiles should, like the Jews, be brought into covenant with God, and share with them in the blessings of the covenant.

Thus in the prophecy of Hosea, God says, I will have mercy on them that had not obtained mercy. I will call them my people which were not my people. This passage is quoted by St. Paul, to prove that the Gentiles, or nations, as the word signifies, should be taken into covenant with God, and become his people, as the Jews had formerly been. In many chapters of the prophecy of Isaiah, this event is more particularly predicted and described. The Jewish church is there assured, that the Gentiles shall come to her light, that they shall come bringing her children in their arms, and that these shall supply the place of the children whom she had lost. 2.

In the second place, we learn from many passages in the New Testament, that all these promises and predictions were fulfilled. We are there told, that Abraham is the father of all who believe, though they be not circumcised, as were the Jews; that the blessing of Abraham has come upon the Gentiles; that all who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. St. Paul, writing to the Ephesian church, says, Wherefore, remember that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

But now ye, who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. And in the succeeding chapter he speaks of it as a great mystery, which had not been made known, but which was then revealed, that the Gentiles, or nations should be fellow heirs with the Jews, and of the same body. My hearers, reflect a moment on the import of these passages. They teach us, that all true believers, all who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed; but if they are Abraham's seed, they must be Abraham's heirs, heirs of the same promises and spiritual privileges, which he enjoyed.

But one of the privileges which he enjoyed, was the liberty of bringing his children into covenant with God, and one of the promises which was made to him was, I will be a God to thy seed after thee. If then, Christians are Abraham's heirs, they also have the same privilege of bringing their children into covenant with God, and God's language to every Christian parent is, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee. Agreeably, the same passage tells us, that they are heirs according to the promise, and that they are

fellow-heirs with the Jews.

It appears then, that Christians stand in the same place, which was formerly occupied by the Jews; we take up what they laid down; we receive the privileges and blessings which they forfeited; the kingdom of God, which was taken from them according to our Saviour's prediction, has been given to us; and therefore if their children were in covenant with God, so, my Christian friends, are ours. This conclusion is confirmed, and the whole subject illustrated by St. Paul in that well known allegorical passage, in which he compares the church to a good olive tree, of which the Jews were the natural branches.

But these natural branches, he tells us, were broken off, and Gentile believers grafted in their room; and these Gentile believers, he adds, now partake of the fatness and sap of the good olive tree; that is, they enjoy those church privileges, which the Jews lost by unbelief; and, of course, the privilege of bringing their children into covenant with God. That this must be the apostle's meaning, is evident from another passage in the same chapter, in which he says, if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

By the root here he evidently means parents, and, by the branches, their children; and the import of his assertion is, that if the parents be holy, so are the children. It must, however, be observed, that he is here speaking, not of personal, but of relative holiness, of that kind of holiness which results from being dedicated to God. In this sense, the vessels of the tabernacle were said to be holy, because they were consecrated to the service of God; and in the same verse, the children of believing parents are holy, because they have been consecrated to God in the ordinance of baptism.

The passages which we have quoted, are scarcely a tenth part of those which might be adduced from the Scriptures on this subject; but they are, I conceive, abundantly sufficient to show that believers are the children and heirs of Abraham; that, like him they are in covenant with God; that the same promise, which was made to him, is now made to them; that they have the same right to dedicate their children to God, as he had; and, consequently, that all the baptized children of believing parents, are, as the Jews formerly, the children of the covenant which God made with their fathers, and especially with Abraham, the great father of the faithful.

If these truths have been established, it follows, that we are authorized to address every baptized child of believing parents in the language of St. Peter in our text; for if such persons are in a situation similar to that of his hearers, we ought to address them in a similar manner. To all such persons then, in this assembly, to all of every age who have believing parents, but who are not themselves believers, I say, To you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

That you may understand the import of this address, it is necessary to remind you, that one of the privileges which the Jews enjoyed in consequence of being children of the covenant was, the enjoyment of the first offer of that salvation which Christ had accomplished. Thus, when Christ commissioned his disciples to preach the gospel, he charged them to begin at Jerusalem; to preach the glad tidings first to the Jews. Until they should have done this, he forbade them to go to the Gentiles, or to enter into any city of the Samaritans.

This command the apostles strictly observed. They preached the gospel at first, we are told, to none but the Jews only; and St. Paul, addressing the Jews at Antioch, says, It was needful that the gospel of Christ should first be preached to you. These remarks will enable you to understand, why St. Peter, in our text,

says to his Jewish hearers, to you first God sends his Son to bless you. It is the same at the present day. God sends the offer of salvation first, to the children of believing parents.

In this respect he acts as a wise earthly prince would do, Were such a prince disposed to confer distinguishing favors and privileges upon any person, he would doubtless offer them to the children of his obedient subjects, who had sworn allegiance to him before he offered them to the children of rebels, or of strangers, who had not submitted to his government. Now your parents have sworn allegiance to God, and engaged to submit to his government, as obedient subjects. They have also engaged to use all their influence to induce you to do the same.

In token of their readiness to do this, they have solemnly and publicly dedicated you to God, to be his forever; and he has so far accepted this dedication, that he now sends you the first offer of pardon and salvation, through his Son. In his name, then, in the name of your parents' God, of Him into whose adorable name you have been baptized, I now solemnly make you this offer. In his name, I declare that he has sent his Son, in whom all blessings are deposited, and by whom they are conferred, to bless you, to bless every one of you; to bless you with all temporal and spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

At the same time, I inform you, that he can confer these blessings upon you only by turning you from your iniquities; for so long of you cleave to them, it is impossible that Christ should bless or prove a blessing to you; since between sin and misery there is an inseparable connection. I also inform you that you cannot be turned from your iniquities but by your own consent; for so long as you live and are unwilling to renounce them, it is impossible that you and they should be separated.

Christ's language to you is, Turn ye at my reproof, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you. Come ye out from the ungodly world, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Such are the invitations, such the promises of your heavenly Father and Redeemer. And now I ask every baptized person present, what answer will you return to these invitations?

With respect to those of you who have arrived to years of understanding, it is time that your answer was given. It is time that it were known to whom you belong; whether you are for Christ or against him; whether you intend to ratify or to discard what your parents have done in your behalf. While you were infants, God permitted them to act for you; but now you must act for yourselves, and stand or fall by your own choice. And what is that choice? Will you take your parents' God to be your God?

Will you give yourselves up to him as you have already been given up by them? Will you take upon yourselves that covenant which they have made in your behalf, and perform its duties, that you may enjoy its blessings? Will you receive Christ as all must do who would receive power from him to become the children of God? and as a proof of your willingness to receive him, will you turn from your iniquities, and renounce the sinful pleasures and pursuits of which you are naturally so fond?

Before you reply to these questions, permit me to suggest some considerations, which, by the blessing of God, may induce you to return such an answer as your duty and happiness require. In the first place, permit me to remind you that you are this day to determine whether God or the world shall be your portion, whether Christ or Satan shall be your king. One of these masters you must serve; both you cannot serve, and you are now to decide, in the presence of heaven and earth, which you will serve.

Your conduct from this day will show whose servants you intend to be. In the second place, permit me to remind you, that the choice you make will make a complete discovery of your true characters. If you choose to persist in pursuing worldly objects, and the pleasures of sin, it will prove that you prefer sin to holiness, that you are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; nay, it will prove that you are God's enemies, for the Scriptures assure us that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, and that whosoever will love the world is the enemy of God.

What is still worse, it will prove that you are irreconcilably God's enemies, that you are so strongly opposed to his character and government; that the tears, entreaties, and example of your parents cannot induce you to love him. In the third place, remember that your choice is to be made for eternity. You are not to choose whether you will serve sin and Satan in this world, and God in the next; but whether you will be the slaves of sin, and, of course, the enemies of God forever; for what you choose to be in time, you will continue to be through eternity.

On the decision which you this day make, it will probably depend whether myriads of ages hence you shall be angels in heaven, or spirits of disobedience in hell; for it becomes you to remember, In the fourth place, that your choice will decide, not only your character, but your doom. You must receive the wages of that master whom you choose to serve. Now the wages of sin, we read, is death, eternal death; but the gift of God is everlasting life. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

They that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, etc. In choosing between God and the world then, you are choosing between life and death, between heaven and hell, between happiness eternal and ineffable, and misery endless and unutterable. And will you then, can you then choose death and hell and everlasting woe? Will you, by your conduct, say to all about you, I am a wretch so totally devoid of goodness, that I prefer the world to God, the tempter to Christ, sin to holiness, hell to heaven.

If so, surely your guilt will be no common guilt; for you can make no excuse. You cannot even plead ignorance; for you have lived in pious families; you have had a religious education; you have seen the influence of religion upon your parents; you have had good examples placed before you; you have from your earliest years heard much of God and of your Saviour; you have heard many prayers addressed to them; your earthly parents have united with your Father in heaven, in persuading you to love him; and his word has been read in your presence, and placed in your hands.

If then you reject your God and Saviour, you reject him knowingly and voluntarily. You reject a known, and not an unknown God. After seeing the difference between a life of religion and a life of sin, you deliberately choose the latter. Nay more, you reject not only God, but your parents' God; you violate not only the obligations which all his creatures are under to love and serve him, but the peculiar obligations which result from your baptismal dedication to God, and say by your conduct, let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us.

Your conduct then dishonors God more than the conduct of a thousand heathen, who never heard his name; and if they, as the apostle declares, are without excuse, how totally inexcusable must you be, should you follow their example. In addition to this, you will be guilty of the most inexcusable ingratitude. In giving you pious parents, God has conferred on you one of the greatest blessings which he could bestow. He might have caused your souls to inhabit bodies among the heathen, where you would never have heard of a Saviour, where your parents would have dedicated you to false gods, and perhaps have offered

you in sacrifice upon their altars!

And will you requite him for this favor by practically saying, I regret that my parents were pious, or that they dedicated me to God? Would I had been born in an irreligious family, where I should never have been troubled with religion or prayer, but where I might have indulged in the pursuit of worldly pleasures without interruption or restraint. Will you ungratefully undo all that your parents have done for your salvation, and tear yourselves out of the arms of the Saviour in which they have placed you?

Will those of you whose parents have ascended to heaven, do this? If so, remember that as your guilt will be no common guilt, so your punishment will be no common punishment. How awfully aggravated it will be, you may learn from the terrible threatenings denounced against the unbelieving Jews who like you were children of the covenant. Christ declares that the very heathen will rise up against them in the day of judgment and condemn them; that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in that day than for them, and that while many shall come from the east and the west, and the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God, the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In a word, he tells us that they who know their Lord's will and do it not shall be beaten with many stripes. And will you then, by refusing to turn from your iniquities, pull down upon yourselves this terrible fate? Shall all the tears, prayers and exertions of your parents only serve to increase your condemnation? Shall the baptismal water with which you have been sprinkled, be converted into drops of liquid fire? Shall the blessings which Christ was sent to bring, be transformed into curses; and will you, to whom they are first offered, be the first to reject them?

You are like Capernaum, raised, as it were, to heaven by your privileges. Will you, by abusing or neglecting them, be yourselves cast down to hell, to the lowest hell? And now I wait for your reply. What answer shall I return to him that sent me, to him who sends his Son to bless you in turning away every one of you from your iniquities? I suspect that most of you will return no direct answer, but plead for time to deliberate, for a little longer delay. But, my friends, this time cannot be granted.

You have already delayed too long. The Jewish children were required to partake of the passover, and appear before God at the solemn feasts, as soon as they arrived at a proper age; and this, as we learn from our Saviour's example, was the age of twelve years. If they refused or delayed to comply, they were doomed to be cut off from among the people; to lose forever the privileges which they slighted. Now a large proportion of those whom I am addressing, have not only reached, but overpast this period of life.

Not a few baptized persons present have reached the meridian of life, and some have even advanced beyond it. You ought then long since to have embraced the Saviour, and thus have become prepared to appear at the table of Christ, who, the apostle tells us, is our passover that was sacrificed for us. Already are you liable to be cut off forever from his people, in consequence of delaying to receive him; and will you then talk of a longer delay? It cannot be granted. Soon will you, like the Jews, be broken off as withered branches, because of unbelief.

Soon will the kingdom of God be taken from you and given to others. God's language to you is, Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Today, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts. This day then, this very day, must you make your choice. This very day must you choose between God and the world, between Christ and the tempter, between heaven and hell. This day, before you leave this house, must you decide the great, the all-important question, whether you will be happy or miserable forever.

Heaven and hell are now waiting your answer. Heaven is waiting to rejoice in your repentance. Hell is waiting to exult in your fall. To which then will you give joy? The answer is given. Your hearts have uttered it; God has heard it. It is already recorded in heaven, and your future conduct will soon cause its import to be known on earth. At least, some of you have, I hope, answered as you ought. Some of you, I hope are ready to say to Christ's church, as did Ruth to Naomi, Entreat us not to leave you, nor to return from following after you; for where you go, we will go; where you dwell, we will dwell; your people shall be our people, and your God our God.

The Lord do so to us and more also, if aught but death part you and us. Farewell, vain world! farewell, sinful pleasures! farewell, sinful companions! Our Fathers' God calls us, our Saviour invites us, and we have determined to comply with the call, and cast in our lot among his people. And is this your determination? this the sincere language of your hearts? Welcome then, ye once wandering lambs of the flock; welcome to the fold of Christ; welcome to his church, welcome to the good and great Shepherd, who gathers the lambs with his arms and carries them in his bosom.

We bid you a thousand and a thousand welcomes to the ark of safety; and while we congratulate you on your happy escape from the snares of the world, and the toils of the tempter, we would unite with you in blessing him who has set your sin-entangled feet at liberty, and inclined you to choose the wise, the better part. You now ratify what your parents have done in your name; you consent to take their God for your God, and to give yourselves up to him in the bonds of his everlasting covenant.

Remember then, that from this time, your language must be, What have we to do any more with idols? we have opened our mouths unto the Lord, and we cannot go back. Follow on then, to know the Lord, and you shall know him, and in due time reap, if you faint not. But have all, to whom, this discourse is addressed, returned such an answer? Fain would I hope this to be the case; yet I cannot but fear, that some of them have not. I cannot but fear that some are still delaying a reply, and saying to the preacher as Felix did to Paul, Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

But my friends I cannot depart without a direct and decided answer. Indeed, persist in delaying, I have one; for, in this case, to delay, is to refuse. Reflect then, a moment, before you persist in your determination to make a longer delay. Listen to the warning, which God has recently sent you in his providence, as if with a view to add weight and efficacy to the present discourse. Think of the young person whom death, a few weeks since, snatched away from among us. He was, like you, a child of the covenant; he felt the obligation which this privilege imposed upon him, and it is but a few months since you saw him, in this place, publicly ratifying the vows which his parents had previously made in his name.

But suppose he had delayed to embrace Christ as you are now intending to do. A delay of only a few months would have been fatal to his everlasting happiness; for he was deprived of his reason by the violence of disease, almost from the moment in which it arrested him. Had not sickness found him prepared, he must have died unprepared. So some of you may have but a few months to live, and delay may be everlasting death. And even should your lives be spared, delay may be equally fatal.

God may, and he probably will, take from you his holy Spirit forever, and give you up to final hardness of heart, as he did the Jews. Remember the Jews at Antioch. When Paul offered them salvation and they delayed to accept it, he said to them, It was necessary that the gospel should first be preached to you; but since ye put it from you, and count yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles; for so hath the Lord commanded. My friends, if God commanded his apostle to turn from the children of the

covenant, when they rejected his offer, will he not turn from you, if you do the same?

Most certainly he will. Beware then, lest there be among you any profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright; for ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, and found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. My friends, if you, through fear of losing your worldly pleasures, refuse to embrace the Saviour now, you will, like Esau, sell your birthright; and if you do, it will be too late to repent; you will find no place for repentance, though you should carefully and tearfully seek it.

But why should I multiply words? I have fulfilled my commission. It was necessary, first, to offer Christ to you, and I have done it. I repeat the offer. I once more assure you, that to you first God sends his Son to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities. Will you then persist in rejecting him, or, what is the same thing, in delaying to accept his offer? If so, your doom is sealed. You have bid farewell, a long, an eternal farewell to God, to Christ, to his church, to your religious friends, to happiness.

Your blood be upon you, I am clear. From henceforth I turn to others; to those who have not been dedicated to God. It was my duty, my friends, first to offer Christ to others. This duty I have discharged, and am now at liberty to make the same offer to you. Your heavenly Father, is more careful for your happiness than even your earthly parents. They refused or neglected to give you to him in your infancy, but he has provided a Saviour, through whom you may present yourselves to him and be accepted.

The Gentiles accepted Christ, when the children of the covenant rejected him. Will you then imitate their example. Will you give yourselves to that God, whom the children of the covenant neglect? Will you accept the privileges which they despise? If so, the blessing of Abraham will come upon you and your families, as it has on thousands of the Gentiles; and God will make with you an everlasting covenant, as he did with him, to be a God to you. To those of you, who are parents then, this subject is peculiarly interesting.

It shows you the reason, why your children are not admitted to the ordinance of baptism. It is because they are not children of the covenant, and they are not children of the covenant, because you have refused to take hold on that covenant, which God offers to make with you. His language to you has long been, Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear and your souls shall live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David. But it is evident, that the parent, who will not make a covenant with God for himself, cannot covenant for his children.

If he will not give himself to God, he cannot in sincerity give them to God. If he has no faith himself, he cannot present them in faith, and without faith nothing can be done acceptably. But no sooner does a parent become a believer in Christ, and embrace him as the mediator of the new covenant, than he is enabled and entitled to present his children to God through Christ, and claim for them covenanted blessings. This we find was the case under the ancient dispensation. No sooner did one of the Gentiles become a proselyte to the true religion, and receive the seal of the covenant, than his posterity became entitled to share in all the privileges which were enjoyed by the Jews; and to receive the seal of circumcision.

It was the same under the New Testament dispensation. When a Jew or a Gentile embraced Christ by faith, not only he, but his household, were baptized, as we see in the case of the jailor, of Lydia, and Stephanus; but never do we find an instance, in which the children of any but professed believers were admitted either to circumcision or to baptism on their parents' account. This then, if you love your children, affords an additional reason why you should, without delay, embrace the Saviour, that you may present

them to him for his blessing, and thus render them the children of the covenant.

They themselves, if they were acquainted with their best interests, would entreat and beseech you, as soon as they could speak, to dedicate yourselves to God, that you might thus be prepared and entitled to present them. This subject is also highly interesting to those parents, who are professed believers. I need not tell you, that no promised blessing can become ours, unless it be received by faith; or that without faith it is impossible to please God. It is by faith alone, that we can take hold on the covenant for ourselves; and it is only by faith that we can dedicate our children to God in such a manner, as to be accepted, and obtain for them the most precious blessings of the covenant.

But real believers do not always exercise faith, no, not even when they present their children to God. They too often suffer themselves to fall into a cold backsliding state, and then the dedication of their children becomes a mere formality. In addition to this, many professors awfully neglect to fulfil their vows by which they have publicly and solemnly bound themselves to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. By this negligence, they do, in effect, throw themselves out of the covenant, at least so far as their children are concerned.

So did not Abraham. I know him, says Jehovah, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. Here the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, is made to depend upon Abraham's performance of the essential duties of the covenant. It is the same at the present day. If you, my professing friends, forget your covenant engagements, God will forget his promises; he will not give the blessings of the covenant to your children.

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