

Ps 103:7
 Hy 1A
 Ps 78:3,4
 Ps 145:2
 Ps 89:1; Hy 47:2
 Genesis 17:1-14
 Romans 4:6-17
 Ephesians 6:1-4
 Lord's Day 27

Yarrow, August 8, 2010

Beloved Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Last week, Lord's Day 26, re baptism: sacrament draws our attention to blood of Christ as well as to Spirit of Christ.

- Very rich because:
 - We aware that we sin, deserve judgment, need mercy – and Christ obtained it through His blood. Comforting!
 - We aware that we transgress God's commands and this bothers us; we'd love to do better, but find we can't.... Then to be assured of presence of renewing Spirit → encouraging!
- But what about the children gathered around our kitchen tables? Same promises? How we to view them?
 - In holiday season some of us enjoy them being at home so very much; others look forward to September so we can send them off to school again.... They a pleasure, and sometimes a real pain.... Then we even have some choice names for them..., not to be repeated....
 - So: who are they? What's our task wrt to them? How do it??

Lord's Day 27: our children belong to God's covenant and congregation, and so Christ's blood was shed for them too and His Holy Spirit granted also for their benefit. *And we parents get to tell them this wealth in life's ups and downs!*

THE CHILDREN OF BELIEVING PARENTS ARE GOD'S CHILDREN BY COVENANT.

1. The identity of the children,
2. The task of the parents,
3. The promise of the Lord.

1. The identity of the children

Turn first to Romans 4.

- Rich quote in vss 7f from Ps 32 re forgiveness of sins. Q: for whom this promise? Ie, vs 9: only for Jews (ie, Abraham's offspring) or also Gentiles?
 - Q important, since we of Gentile descent. ∴ our children are too.
- Paul's argument: this wealth is for those who *believe*, cf 9b re Abraham's faith. Abraham received sacrament of circumcision in obedience to God's command, ie, he believed and ∴ circumcised.

- ∴ Paul 11b: Abraham is father of all who believe, whether circumcised or not, ie, Jew or Gentile.
 - Note: Romans were Gentiles. Yet Paul can say in vs 16: Abraham is “father of us all”, ie, Paul & Romans, ie, Jews and Gentiles – if *believe*.
- But if Abraham our father, God's words to Abraham relevant for us.
 - Cf Genesis 17:7: covenant between God and Abraham, *and descendants*. Ie, wealth of Romans 4 not just for adults but for their children too.
 - Content of covenant: “to be your God and the God of your descendents after you” → all promises as caught in Baptism Form re Father, Son, Holy Spirit. ∴ Romans 4:7ff also for Roman Christians – including children.
 - Clear to us how God told Abraham re covenant, ie, 17:1: “appeared to him and said....” But this not something God does with us, ie, we not received vision....
 - No surprise: how Isaac know God make covenant with him? Father Abraham told him! Explained that evidence lay in his circumcision. Isaac rich because God had said so a couple of decades before he born.
 - Ibid re Jacob & Esau. Rich identity, rich promises
 - Since believers today are children of Abraham, our children have same promises Isaac, Jacob, Esau had. See Acts 2:38f; 1 Corinthians 7:14
 - This gives rich identity to little ones around our kitchen table, and not only to little ones.
 - So: all we heard last week re blood & Spirit of Christ valid and true for them also. Wonderful!! Ie, Romans 4:7f valid for them.
- These children not by nature know re this identity. ∴ Q: how find out??
 - This 2nd point:

2. The Task of the Parents

God mighty to work faith/knowledge of covenant promises through instinct, cf nursing, animals, etc.

- But God uses different means.
 - Cf Genesis 18:19. So we envision: Abraham to make point of telling Isaac re God's promises as caught in covenant.
 - See also Deuteronomy 6:6f. We conclude: every moment to be willing to speak with children re Lord.
 - ∴ psalmist in Ps 77:18; 78:4ff.
 - Same in New Testament: Ephesians 6:4
 - ∴ Q at baptism of our children: promise to instruct.... We understand the need for it... This the task of parents....
- But how do it?? What makes Christian parenting different from other parents?
 - Is it that take children to church? Teach them to pray, read Bible, Christian school where Bible taught, Catechism classes? Tolerate no swear words, be nice?? Put net-nanny on computer?
 - A in Ephesians 6:4b: “in training and instruction of the Lord”.
 - What this?? Teach them *about* Lord God? Of course.... But there more here.... Ie, how Lord God a parent for His children?? Notice Ephesians 5:1: “imitators of God”
- Cf what God did for Israel.

- Israel in Egypt: My child, cf Exodus 4:22 .: pity/care, ie, worked deliverance, ie, plagues on Egypt for son's benefit – defended own.
- Exodus, yet not directly to Promised Land, though shorter, cf Exodus 13:17. Taught trust, cf Exodus 14:21f, ie, Ps 78:7
 - .: manna, thirst, enemies – cf Deuteronomy 8:2f
- Tabernacle: in pictures and preaching – how reconciled to God
 - Leviticus → taught holiness, how live.... Very practical, daily life situations. This gives colour to Deuteronomy 6:6ff.
- But more: also discipline, cf Numbers 11, 12, 14, etc. Also Judges....
- This where Solomon gets his wisdom. Cf
 - Proverbs 1:8f – for parents expected to teach..., as God taught Israel through revelations on Mt Sinai and through instruction of Levites.
 - Proverbs 22:15 – for parents expected to administer discipline..., as God administered discipline to Israel.
- This is why God gave children 5th commandment – for covenant Father wants children to get to know Him through labours of parents. And parents are to imitate God, learn style of parenting from how God was/is parent.
 - This is why all parental teaching is futile if parents' lifestyle does not reflect what God is like. Teaching truths of Scripture is so critically important, but faith not so much taught as caught; ie, parents to *show* children who God is, ie, be examples of God's care, love, holiness, justice, mercy, etc.
- Your children are God's children, so you to show them who *He* is.
 - Clear: this a glorious task. But: Who up to this task??

3. The Promise of the Lord.

Feel overwhelmed by the privilege of parenting. How approach??

- Know God well yourself. Ie, busy with Scripture! Yet not as theory, but in midst of life's concrete joys and sorrows.
 - For Lord today still leads us through desert, ie, though delivered from Egypt (Satan), we not brought directly to Promised Land of New Jerusalem.
 - Today Lord teaches us re His care, His holiness, mercy, justice, etc. See Hebrews 12:7ff
 - So we to use His promises revealed in Scripture as we analyse why things happen to us as they do, and seek to grow as more mature children of our heavenly Father.
 - In process, speak of these things with our children, ie, how Lord is teaching/moulding us; more, as learn more re Him pass that on to children.
 - That is why it not good enough simply to read Bible at kitchen table, then no longer to think/meditate on God's word. Rather, analyse all that happens in light of that Word. Hence discussions with spouse..., also older children.... Family Bible study, congregational...
 - You cannot image God to your children, cannot parent as He parents, if not know Him well, see His continuing parenting in your life today.
 - That's why in His care for children-by-covenant He gives parents His Word/preaching....

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- But Lord who entrusts His children to care of believing parents not only give obligations/commands/tools. Also gives promises to parents. Ie,
 - Blood of Christ – for forgiveness of sins of parents – and we all need that forgiveness so much. Each day again can start our task with clean slate before God, children's Father!
 - Spirit of Christ – for ongoing renewal of parents (and children). We *can* grow through way heavenly Father keeps on parenting us in school of life. We need not remain midgets; can be confident that Lord supplies, blesses.
 - So: keep trusting. Keep eye on heavenly Father, imitate Him well, analyse how He parents. Leave results to Him....