

The Promise is to Your Children

Acts 2:37-39

Halifax: 29 August 2004

Introduction:

Today, we have the opportunity to welcome the Quick family into the membership of our church.

- Ken and Lori did not confess Christ until several years after their sons (Brian and Daniel) were born.
 - Although the New Testament gives us the pattern of household baptisms in such circumstances—the baptism of the whole family...
 - Brian and Daniel were not baptised with their parents.
 - They are scheduled to be baptised this morning.
- The boys were not baptised before because the church that baptised Ken and Lori did not believe young children are members of God’s covenant people.
 - They believe that children are excluded from God’s covenant people until they are able to profess faith for themselves.

We live in a day when young children are often excluded from God’s covenant.

- It is not at all uncommon for churches to refuse to baptise children at birth.

This state of affairs has come about largely because of the radical social engineers of the 19th century who did so much to reshape our thinking about the family.

- Men like Hall and Dewey believed that they could create a utopian society if they could somehow pull children away from parental influence and put them under the influence of government schools.
 - The idea was that parental influence was keeping people apart, keeping them from sharing in the common goals of the state.
 - They set out earnestly to create such division by isolating the children from their parents and bringing them into peer groups where they could be influenced according to the ideals of the state.
- The work of these social engineers was so successful that by the middle of the 20th century, we had what became known as “the generation gap.”
 - Parents felt that they could no longer relate to their children, and children felt that their parents had nothing worthwhile to offer them.
 - The break up of the family had been successful.
 - The overall result has been a disaster. God has judged us.

Sadly, churches followed this same methodology to create an ideal church.

- As is usually the case, the church was just a few steps behind the world in this.
 - All hope was put in Sunday School programmes and youth programmes that had specialised teachers that could “relate” to the youth.
 - There were youth rallies and women’s groups—all designed to bring about good things through peer influence.
- Most men lost their purpose in the church and only attended if they were docile enough to be pulled along by their wives who were always wishing their husbands would be more spiritual.
 - The whole idea of men being appointed by God to command their household in the ways of the Lord was completely forgotten...
 - Most men, in practical terms, had very little influence on either their wives or their children...and quite frankly, not much to do with them...
 - And most ministers, instead of exercising their authority to uphold God’s truth, became mere programme directors.
 - Instead of representing God in pulpit ministry, they became employed to run the church.
 - The pulpit was exchanged for the stage.

This whole movement has shaped our thinking in the church far more than we realise.

- It is natural for us moderns to just assume that children have no connection with their parents in God’s covenant...
 - This is just the way we think today.
 - The generation gap has found its way into the church!
- Consequently, the more progressive churches have rejected the baptism of infants.
 - The children are no longer identified with their parent’s faith.
 - The father’s responsibility to “command his household to keep the way of the Lord” is completely forgotten.
 - Now the hope is that the right youth leader will stir up a movement among the youth that will spread all of them.
- The more traditional churches continue to baptise infants because that is “the way it has always been done...”
 - But the significance of the promise of the covenant is completely lost.
 - It has become a meaningless ritual that has little to do with anyone’s faith or life.

- This empty traditionalism gives the progressive churches even more confidence that they are right to abandon the notion that children should be baptised...
- After all, the whole thing is nothing but a meaningless ritual!

But my friends,

- Today I want to show you that the baptism of a believer's children is not an empty ritual!
 - It is not empty at all when you understand how it is connected with God's covenant promise to you and to your children!
- In particular, I want to explore the words of Peter found in Acts 2:39:
 - "The promise is to you and to your children."
 - I want us to look four questions pertaining to these words:
 - 1) What is this promise to you and your children?
 - 2) How is this promise obtained?
 - 3) How in particular does this promise pertain to children?
 - 4) How should this promise effect parents?

TRANS> Let's begin with the first question:

I. What is this promise to you and your children?

- Peter mentions two things that embody the promise in verse 38:
 - remission of sins and
 - the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- A. What are these two things?
1. Remission of sins is the forgiveness of sin.
 - It is when God pardons a person who has offended Him by disobedience.
 - Instead of punishing that person, God lifts the sentence and receives Him with favour.
 2. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the giving of the Holy Spirit to cleanse a person—
 - to help a sinful person change his ways and begin to serve God.
 - It is God's giving to him a new nature.
- B. From ancient times, God had promised these two things through the Messiah.
1. God made these two blessings clear to Abraham...

- a. God's promise to Abraham and his descendants was this,
 - "I will be your God and you will be my people."
 - That included both aspects of the promise...
 - For God to be their God surely means that their sins are all pardoned...
 - Until there is forgiveness of sin, He is only their God as Judge.
 - And for them to be His people surely requires that God has renewed them to love Him.
 - They could not be His people if they are rebelling against Him.
- b. God promised that through Abraham's seed (one of His descendants) all the families of the earth would be blessed.
 - That descendant, of course, was Jesus Christ!
 - 1) God revealed Him to Abraham as the ram caught in the thicket, given to take the place of Isaac when God had demanded that Isaac be sacrificed on an altar.
 - Instead of Isaac, God accepted the Ram that He provided, and promised that He Himself **would** provide the sacrifice...
 - That was the promise of Jesus Christ who was to be crucified for the remission of sins.
 - 2) God also gave Abraham the sign of circumcision, which is later interpreted for us by Moses as representing the promise that God will change our hearts to love Him.
 - Though Abraham was to cut the foreskin of his flesh, God explained that He would accomplish the true circumcision of the heart
 - Deut 30:6 "And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.
 - Jesus Christ, we now know, is the one who gives us the Holy Spirit who gives us a new heart to love God.
 - The church baptises with water, but Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit.

TRANS> You see how God promised forgiveness and the Spirit to Abraham.

2. These same blessings were again promised through Moses and David.
 - a. Moses set forth the sacrifices as pictures of the promise God had made to Abraham to provide a sacrifice for His people.

- In the Passover, God took His people to be His own by the shedding of the blood of the Pascal lamb in their place.
 - In the wilderness, God appointed priests and the building of a tabernacle where sacrifices were to be offered on an altar.
 - All this was to promise that Jesus would come to be that lamb that would take away the sin of the world...
 - The sacrifice that God Himself would provide!
- b. Moses also promised Christ as the giver of the Spirit when He spoke of a great prophet that would come to lead the people to God...
- And through David the promise was given of a King who would reign over God's people and lead them into God's perfect way...
 - This was spoke of Christ who reigns as king by giving the Spirit to change our hearts to follow God forever...
 - Christ who gives the Spirit that we might know God and be His people!

TRANS> You see then, how God presented the blessings of His covenant through Moses and David...

3. But the promise of the Spirit and of forgiveness is brought to the clearest expression in the prophets.
- a. These promises are spoken of as being fulfilled in the days of the Messiah—
- They will be brought to us by Him when He comes to visit us with salvation.
- 1) There is the promise of forgiveness through the Messiah in Isaiah 53 where God promises that He will bear our iniquities—
- that all our sins will be laid on Him and that by His stripes we will be healed!
- 2) There is the promise that Peter quotes from the book of Joel:
- Joel 2:28-29: "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
 - Joel tells us that the coming of the Spirit will be marked by all sorts of signs and wonders such as the speaking in tongues that we read about in Acts 2.
- b. Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of both forgiveness and the Spirit together in the last days when God comes to visit His people with salvation:
- 1) Jeremiah 31:33-34: But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write

it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

- Jeremiah stresses in this passage that this is something God will do in the days to come—which of course are the days of Jesus Christ!
- You see that He clearly speaks of the results of the new birth by the Spirit—
 - That God's law will be written in our hearts and that we will all know Him... our blindness will be removed...
 - And of forgiveness—I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

2) Ezekiel 36 emphasises both blessings again, only Ezekiel expressly mentions the Spirit and ties these blessings to baptism.

- He says:
 - Ezekiel 36:25-27: Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*.
 - Sprinkling with water is baptism, and Ezekiel says that baptism that Jesus gives will truly cleanse us from both guilt and defilement.

TRANS> And so you see that the promise of the Spirit and the forgiveness of sin run all the way through the Old Testament!

- This is the promise that Peter is talking about when he says, "The promise is to you and to your children!"

C. How desperately we need the two things that God has promised.

1. We all have this horrid sinful nature...

a. It is a nature that does not love God.

- We were created to love Him perfectly...
- We have every reason to love Him perfectly...
 - There is in Him all perfection and goodness and glory and beauty.
 - There is not the least flaw or imperfection to stifle our love...

- The fact that we do not love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength testifies to how corrupted we are!
 - We have fallen into this miserable ruin until God rescues us.
 - That is why we so desperately need the Holy Spirit to give us a new heart to love God!

TRANS> We need to be changed because we are corrupt...

- But there is also this second problem associated with this...
 - b. This horrid nature of ours is highly offensive to God.
 - He created us to be creatures who loved to perfection,
 - but we ruined ourselves almost as soon as we came from His hands...
 - Adam and Eve chose to rebel against Him by eating the forbidden fruit.
 - God responded to that by sentencing us all to eternal misery in the Lake of Fire.
 - This was no overreaction on His part, but was precisely what we all deserve!
 - To think that dependent creatures like us should rebel against the God of perfection and glory!
 - The very fact that we think we don't deserve to suffer in the Lake of fire for all eternity only confirms how little we love God!
 - If we loved Him as He deserves and saw how lovely and how glorious He is...
 - We would fully understand why creatures with a horrid nature like ours deserve nothing less than this!
 - God is perfectly justified in being highly offended,
 - To not be offended would mean that He would have to deny His own glorious perfection!
 - Let me illustrate...
 - Suppose a man were to mercilessly beat a child to death that had done him no wrong at all...
 - When that man is brought before the court, what would you think of a judge that was not offended with that man?
 - What would you think of a judge that said,
 - "No matter—it is nothing—and refused to charge the man with any offense?"

- That judge would have to deny that this child—
 - and all other children who might have been this man's victims—
 - deserve to live.
 - The judge **ought** to be offended in such a case.
 - In the same way, God **ought** to be offended when He is not loved with all the heart soul mind and strength of human beings...
 - And you can be sure that He is!
 - To not be highly offended would require the complete overthrow of all that is just and good.
- c. This horrid, offensive nature is the nature of every man, woman, and child since the Fall of Adam and Eve.
- How corrupt you and your children are!
 - How you and your children have offended God!
 - How you and your children need what Jesus brought into the world...
 - The forgiveness of sin and gift of the Spirit!
2. The people Peter addresses realised how much they needed forgiveness and a new heart...
- a. They realised it in a very vivid way...
- They had come up to Jerusalem from all different nations to worship the living God at the feast of Pentecost.
 - They represented many different nations, each having its own language...
 - How amazed they were at Jerusalem to hear a company of uneducated Galileans praising God in their own languages!
 - What was the meaning of all this?
- 1) Peter rises to explain the meaning...
- He tells them that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified by their leaders just seven weeks before when they were gathered at Jerusalem for the Passover...
 - is the one who is responsible for this amazing miracle!
 - This has all come about because He has poured out His Spirit upon His disciples!

- Peter tells them that Jesus Christ, the One who was crucified by them, has been raised from the dead.
 - God has exalted Him to sit at His right hand and has declared Him to be Lord and Christ...
 - He is the Messiah, the anointed One!
 - He is the true prophet, priest, and King of Israel!
- 2) Peter's hearers knew that it was the expected time for the Messiah to come,
- and most of them had heard about Jesus of Nazareth and the claim that he had been raised from the dead.
 - They knew that God had promised that when Messiah came,
 - He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh to usher in a whole new age characterised by the Spirit.
 - They knew that God had promised with the coming of the Spirit to take away their stony hearts and give them a heart to delight in God and His ways.
 - They knew that there was also the promise of the forgiveness of sins so that all who called upon name of the Lord would be saved.
 - Peter has reminded them of these things and declared that Jesus, whom they crucified, is the one who is now bringing in this glorious new age!
- b. Their response is given in verse 37!
- Acts 2:37: "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"
- 1) What a horrendous situation!
- There they are with a rejected Messiah who is now reigning!
 - The One they had despised is now sitting at God's right hand, having been made Lord and Christ!
 - And here, before their very eyes, is His kingdom being established by His Spirit!
- 2) Cut to the heart for sure!
- These hearers are desperate!
 - "What shall we do?" they ask...
 - What an appropriate response!

- 3) This is what happens to every person that is every confronted with the kingdom of Christ...
 - You realise that all along you have been opposing God...
 - You realise that you desperately need what He promises in this kingdom.
 - This leads you to ask the question...
 - What shall we do?

TRANS> And that leads us to the second question about God's promise...

II. How is the promise obtained?

A. Peter answer that the promise is obtained by repentance and baptism.

- In verse 38, He says,
 - Acts 2:38: "Repent and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
 - What does this mean?
2. **Repentance** is what you do when you realise that you have been wrong all along and turn against what you were to follow God.
 - a. It is not enough to just realise what you are,
 - You must also turn from it to God.
 - Many people may despair of what they are, but if they do not turn to follow Him, it does them no good.
 - The Jews to whom Peter spoke had to realise that they had been wrong about Jesus of Nazareth—
 - He was the Messiah who had come to save them and they had rejected Him!
 - They saw clearly that they were totally out of step with God in this, and they turned against what they were and were ready to follow.
 - That is the first thing you must do to obtain what is promised.
 3. Secondly, Peter tells them,
 - "let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ."
 - a. By getting baptised in Jesus' name,
 - They were to acknowledge that Jesus was the true Messiah.

- They were receiving Him as the Messiah who came to save His people from their sins.
- They were turning themselves over to Him for salvation.
- Baptism in His name meant that they were looking to Him alone for the promises that God had made concerning Him from ancient times.
 - The promise of the forgiveness of sin...
 - The promise of the Holy Spirit to change their hearts.
- b. No doubt, there are many who are baptised today that are not truly looking to Christ for these blessings.
 - That is not baptism's fault—that is their fault.
 - If they do not receive God's promise by faith...
 - It is not because God has been unfaithful...
 - It is because they are liars.
 - They have the sign of God's covenant, but not the thing signified.
 - Paul spoke about the many Jews who were circumcised outwardly but not in heart,
 - "Let God be true but every man a liar!"
 - The lie is not with God's promise to those who enter His covenant, but with those who enter His covenant externally but have no faith.
- c. The baptism Peter talks about that brings remission of sins is not a baptism of hypocrisy...
 - Hypocritical confession does not save anyone in God's kingdom.
 - It never has and it never will...
 - The baptism that saves is the baptism that honestly and truly rests in Christ alone for salvation...
 - for the promised forgiveness of sin...
 - for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit.

TRANS> Now surely our children need the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit just as much as we do...

- This leads to the next question...

III. How does the promise apply to your children?

- Peter says,

- “Repent and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, **for the promise is to you and to your children.**”

A. Why does Peter add this phrase “to you children” when he has called for repentance and baptism?

1. If he was speaking about children who were old enough to understand what he was saying,

- there would have been no reason to add this statement...
- They would have been included in the “you” when he said “the promise is to **you.**”
- Peter is talking about those who were too young to understand, and about those who were not even born yet...

2. Peter is deliberately using the same language that God had used when He first established His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17.

a. There, God very clearly declared that the children of believers were included in His covenant.

- In Genesis 17:7, He said:
 - Gen. 17:7: “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.”
- Not only does God receive Abraham as His own,
 - He also receives His household with him.
- He makes it very clear to Abraham that He is not just saying that the promise is to them if they choose to accept it when they get older...
 - He commands that the covenant sign be given to them at the age of eight days old.
 - We have seen that the sign of circumcision was the sign of the inward work of God’s circumcising His people’s hearts to make them His own.
 - God was including the infants of His people in this great mercy!

b. And what a wonderful thing this is!

- Every honest parent knows that his children have the same horrid sinful nature that he or she has!
- If God had not included our children in His promise,
 - we would have no reason to presume that they had any interest in God’s promises.

- There would be no answer for them when we said, “what shall we do?”
 - It would be nothing but presumption for us to assume that they were in any other state than under his wrath and curse.
 - They come from the womb in sin, and if Christ is not their Saviour, they have no saviour at all.
- c. But God gave the covenant sign of circumcision to testify to Abraham and all that came after him that their children were included in the promise
- Over and over He promises that this is so.
- 1) Remember the passage I read before about the circumcision of the heart?
 - Notice that it includes children in the promise of the new birth.
 - Deut 30:6: "And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart **and the heart of your descendants**, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.
 - 2) In Psalm 103, God assures us that our children are included in the blessing of His covenant when He says:
 - Ps 103:17-18: But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children’s children, To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them.
 - 3) God has graciously included our children with us in His covenant.
 - He deals with their sins the same way He deals with ours.
 - He forgives them and He cleanses them by His Spirit.
- B. Peter is assuring his hearers that their children are still included when he says,
- “the promise is to you and to your children.”
1. When he says “let every one of you be baptised,” he is inviting them to bring their children for baptism also.
 - a. Just as the covenant sign of circumcision which pointed to the redemption Christ was going to accomplish was given to children...
 - so the covenant sign of baptism which points to the redemption He has now accomplished is to be given to them.
 - b. Peter never would have spoken like this to these people if their children were not to receive the new covenant sign...

- Remember that he was not speaking to people in our day who are pre-conditioned to think there has always been a generation gap...
 - He was not talking to people like us...
 - He was talking to Jews whose children were always included in the covenant with them...
 - They were pre-conditioned to see their children in covenant with them, and that pre-conditioning was grounded in God's word!
 - To exclude children now that the Messiah for had finally come would have required a lot of explanation for these people!
 - But there is not one word about any such exclusion anywhere in the whole New Testament!
 - c. Instead, Peter uses language that confirms that children are included:
 - "The promise is to both them and to their children."
2. We find full confirmation of this in the New Testament!
- a. Jesus commands that little children be brought to Him for blessing...
 - And why so?
 - Because "of such is the kingdom of God..."
 - If their parents are citizens of His kingdom, so are their children unless they renounce their adoption.
 - b. Secondly, when baptisms occur, they are always household baptisms.
 - There is the Philippian Jailer and his family, the household of Crispus and Stephanas that are mentioned...
 - There is no reason to think there is a break from the pattern that was established with Abraham when there was a household circumcision.
 - c. Thirdly, in 1 Cor 7, the apostle Paul says that the children of one believing parent are holy—
 - to be holy means to be set apart to God in His gracious covenant.
 - Paul says that if there is no believing parent, the children are unclean.
 - There is a fundamental difference between the children of believers and unbelievers.
 - d. Fourthly, in writing to the Ephesians, Paul addresses the children as one of several classifications of "the saints at Ephesus" to whom he addresses his letter.
 - and He tells them to obey their parents **in the Lord**...

- assuring us that they are in the Lord as His people...
- and He applies the promise of the fifth commandment to them that they will continue with God's people (in the land) if they honour their parents.

C. The idea of children being included is nicely illustrated for us in Romans 11.

1. Here, Paul speaks of two kinds of branches that are found in Christ...

a. There are **natural** branches that grew on the tree—

- and there are **wild** branches that were grafted in into the tree.
- The natural branches are those who are born in the house of a person who is already in God's covenant family...the Jews.
- The wild branches are those who come into the house from without—the Gentiles.
- The proselytes who came to faith as adults.

b. God has both kinds of people in His kingdom—

- He has those who grew up in the kingdom from birth like Isaac and Timothy who from a child knew the holy scriptures that are able to make one wise for salvation.
- And He has those who were grafted in like Ruth the Moabite and like the Philippian Jailer who was a pagan Roman.

2. But there is a warning in Romans 11 for the natural branches...

a. Some of them pride themselves that they are natural branches and that God must therefore accept them...

- Paul assures them that they will be cut off...
- They are natural branches on the tree that lives in Jesus Christ, but they themselves are not receiving life from Christ...
 - They have no fruit—no fruit of the Spirit...
 - They will be cut off because of their unbelief unless they repent!

b. This is why you cannot boast unless you boast in Jesus Christ!

- Children who are baptised and don't depend on Christ alone for salvation are natural branches on the tree...
 - but dead ones...
 - They will be cut off and cast into the fire because they are not abiding in Jesus Christ.
- It is only those who continue in faith that will be saved.

3. This helps us to understand what God means when He says, “The promise is to you and to your children...”
 - It is not an unconditional promise.
 - a. It is a promise that is restricted to those only who have true faith...
 - Without faith, it doesn’t matter if you grew up in a Christian home or not—
 - You will be cut off from God’s promise—
 - For you there will be no forgiveness and no Holy Spirit.
 - b. But understand that unbelief in covenant children is never a sign that God was unfaithful...
 - It is a sign that the parents and the child were unfaithful.
 - The parents did not believe God’s promise concerning their children and the children did not believe God’s promise concerning themselves...
 - Therefore, they will be cut off.

TRANS> This naturally leads us to our final question...

IV. How will you (as a parent) act differently if you believe the promise is to your children?

- A. You will command your children to keep God’s way.
 1. When God has chosen you and your children, He sees to it that you command your household to keep His way...
 - a. In Genesis 18:18, He says that Abraham will **surely** become a great nation...
 - The reason God is sure of this is because He is going to see to it that Abraham commands his household in the ways of the Lord...
 - In Gen 18:19 God says concerning Abraham:
 - Gen 18:19: For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."
 - b. Because Abraham believed God’s promise concerning His children and his household...
 - He did not give them a choice, but commanded them to keep God’s way!
 - 1) The word **command** that is used here means **command**.

- God's way was not optional if you lived in Abraham's house!
- It is something he commanded and required his wife and his servants and his sons to keep.

TRANS> And let me ask you...

2) What is God's way but the way of faith in God's promise of salvation?

- the promise of forgiveness and the promise of the Spirit?
- Abraham would command His household to keep this way.

3) He would instruct them continually in the way of the covenant...

- First, he would command them to repent and be circumcised...
- He would command them to trust in the promise of God in circumcision—
 - the promise to be their God and to make them His people...
 - the promise of forgiveness and of the Spirit...
- If he saw any member of his house not walking in the covenant,
 - denying the promise or not bearing the fruit of the Spirit...
 - He would command that one to return to God's way!
- The principle was the same as that of Joshua when Joshua said:
 - "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
 - Joshua understand the covenant and included his family with him.

2. You can contrast Abraham with Eli.

a. Eli believed the promise for himself, but he did not believe for his children.

- He seems to have had a personal faith, but it did not extent to his sons.
- Therefore, he did not command his sons to keep God's way.
 - He wished that they would keep God's way...
 - He sometimes encouraged them and advised them, but he did not insist on it.

b. The result was that they **did not** keep God's way and were cut off.

TRANS> If you believe the promise of God to you **and** to your children,

- you will bring them up as those who belong to Jesus Christ in the covenant...
- You will place the covenant sign on them and you will instruct them and insist that they continue in God's way.

B. Notice what God adds in Gen. 18 when He tells us that Abraham will command His house...

1. He says that He has known Abraham
 - in order that that He might command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord
 - **in order that** He might bring to Abraham what He has spoken to Him.
2. Do you see what this is saying?
 - a. It is saying if Abraham does not command his children to keep God's way (if that were possible) then God would **not** be able to bring to Abraham what He has spoken to Him...
 - In other words, God's promise to bless Abraham's descendants depends on Abraham commanding them to keep God's way.
 - God has tied the election of Abraham's children to Abraham's faithfulness in commanding them (which faithfulness God will bring about).
 - b. This means that if God's blessing is to continue in your children,
 - It is necessary for you to faithfully command them to keep the ways of the Lord.
 - If God has elected them to follow you in the covenant, he will see to it that you faithfully command them.
 - Not that He cannot or will not save them through some other means—but this is what He calls you to do...
 - You are to command them to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—
 - To command them to abide in Him always and depend on no one else.
 - This is how God has appointed that the blessing be continued—
 - Eph 6:4: "fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."
 - It is not your ways, but the way of the Lord that you are bring them up in.

TRANS> This is what you will do from day one if you believe God's promise concerning them.

C. Your whole relationship with them will be conditioned by the promise.

1. It will mean that you look in faith for God to save them all along the way...
 - If you see evidence of their ruin,

- if you see them slipping away from God,
 - you will not only command them to repent...
 - you will also plead with God for them!
 - You will say, “But Lord, you promised!”
 - And you will believe the promise and insist that God work in you and in them to bring what He has promised.
2. Once again, I want you to contrast the faith of Abraham with that of Eli.
- a. When Abraham was told of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, what did he do?
- He went to prayer because Lot was there!
 - He said, this can not be that You would destroy the righteous with the wicked!
 - And God didn’t—
 - He delivered Lot!
 - Abraham would not accept the threatened destruction because God promised.
 - This is the same thing that Moses did when God threatened to destroy Israel on account of the golden calf...
 - He interceded and insisted that God could not destroy them because of His promise.
 - This is what Our Lord Jesus does for all His children as our priest,
 - and it is what He commands you to do as the head of your household—
 - you are to a priest to intercede for your children,
 - just as you are to be a king to command them in God’s way, and a prophet to instruct them in His way.
- b. But look at Eli—
- What did he do when God threatened to destroy his sons because of their wickedness?
 - 2 Samuel 3:18 tells us of his response—dripping with piety!
 - “It is the LORD, Let Him do what seems good to Him!”
 - Not a few commentators commend Eli for this, but I cannot commend him!

- His wicked sons were going to be destroyed—sons of the covenant—
 - and Eli says, “Fine, whatever God wants!”
- That is not a response of faith!
 - That is a response of unbelief!
 - The reason Eli’s sons were the way they were is because Eli had not brought them up with respect to God’s promise!
 - From the time they were little babies, he had not insisted that there be fruit in their lives!
 - He did not look for God’s grace for himself to train them and for them respond to his training
 - when they were seven months old...
 - or when they were two years old...
 - or when they were five...
 - or when they were twelve...
 - or when they were twenty...

Conclusion:

Understand that this is not the kind of faith that simply presumes that someone will be saved...

- This is a faith that looks to God to work in you as a parent and in your children in particular because the promise is to you and to your children.
 - It is not a faith that says, “O I don’t have to worry about it anymore because I am trusting God for their salvation...”
 - But it is a faith like that goes to work to command them in the ways of the Lord in order that he Lord may bring to them what He has promised!
 - It is a faith that interacts with them where they are and cries out to God for them when it seems that they are drifting away.
 - The promise is to you and to your children!
 - They are not detached from you...
 - They are together with you in God’s covenant.
 - See to it that they bring forth the fruits of salvation!
 - Trust God for the grace you need to command them in the ways of the Lord...
 - And trust God for the grace they need to respond to you.