

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

January 11, 2009 Crowning Our Families with Glory

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Dear radio friends,

You and I are people who are prone to take for granted the good things that God has given to us. God gives to us good health. He gives to us food. He gives to us work. He gives to us prosperity. And we do not acknowledge Him as the giver of those things, and we do not use those things as we should in the thankful service of His name.

We do this also with the blessings that God has given to us in our Christian homes. We do this with our children. We do this with our parents. We do this with our husband and our wife.

In the text that we want to look at today we see that we should value the gifts that God gives to us in our Christian homes. In Proverbs 17:6 we read, “Children’s children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.” This text tells us especially this, that believing parents ought to value their children and grandchildren; and that children ought to value their believing parents.

As we seek to understand what this verse means, we should not simply be sentimental. It is very nice to have children and grandchildren around. It is very nice to have a full house for a holiday. It is very nice to have peace in your home and in your family, between husband and wife and parents and children. But the text does not simply mean that this is a nice thing. Rather, the text wants us to look at this in view of the promises of God and the calling to live as His people in our Christian homes: the calling of children to crown their parents with glory; and the calling of parents to be the glory of their children and their grandchildren.

You see, the opposite can be true (and this implies the calling). It can be that a man and a woman are a shame to their children—they have godly children but they have sinned in a very gross way and this is a shame to the family. It can be that children are a shame to their parents. In Proverbs 19:26, “He wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.” So this text calls us to examine the calling that we have in the godly home to be a crown of glory and a blessing to the other members of the family.

The first thing that we should notice as we look at this text is that the text has in view the covenant family. It gives a very rich description of the covenant family. In this verse there are three believing generations. There are children, and children’s children, and old men (the fathers or grandfathers). This is describing the covenant family unit that includes believing parents, children, and grandchildren and that involves the promises of God to the grandparents and the parents concerning their children and their children’s children.

This is something that we should rejoice in as the people of God. What a wonderful thing that God would not only save us, but also save with us our children. This is a rich part of the

Reformed faith. God's covenant is a covenant of friendship. And when we say that the covenant comes into our homes and that our homes are covenant homes, we mean that we have in our homes the kind of spiritual relationship with each other that reflects God's relationship with His people. In fact, the home is used in Scripture to describe to us the relationship between God and His people. In the Christian marriage, a man and a woman live together in the most intimate relationship. And the Bible tells us that Christ is also the husband of His church. The Bible lays before us the rich relationship of a father and a son. And over and over it will compare that relationship with the relationship of God to His people.

What is so rich about this text is that this covenant (this relationship of friendship) is something that God continues with His people in their generations. This is a beautiful and a marvelous truth. We do not believe concerning our children that these are just like the children of the world. We do not believe concerning our children that these children need to be the object of mission work or need to be treated as ungodly and unbelieving and unregenerate and reprobate children. Rather, the promise of God is to believers and their children, as Peter lays out in Acts 2:39.

Sadly, this is missing in much of the church world today. And because of this lack of understanding of the important truth that God saves the church in its generations, parents and grandparents and churches are not doing today what they should for the younger generation in the church: instructing them and being an example to them. And because of this, churches are aging and there are no young or very few young who remain in the church.

The text speaks of a glory and a crown. The word "glory" in the text is used in other places in Scripture to describe the adornment, or what someone would put on, to make something attractive and desirable. That is the idea here in the text. "Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers."

The other word that is used in the text is "crown." A crown usually makes us think of a king who wore a crown as a symbol of his royalty and his authority. But the crown in the Bible, and also in ancient literature, had the idea not only of something worn by royalty but something used to honor someone else. For example, when an athlete would win a competition, he would be crowned. When a soldier would come home, he would be crowned as a hero. Special guests at a feast were not only given as a symbol of honor the best seats in the house, but were also often given a crown. This is the idea here in the text. Children's children are the crown of old men. Old men are honored by the reputation that their children and grandchildren give of them.

In the text this is applied to people. And the idea is that, through your association with someone else, that person brings honor and glory to you. This is the way that Paul the apostle uses the idea of crown in I Thessalonians 2:19 and 20. There he says, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." The apostle Paul means that when he stands before Christ on the day of judgment, the Thessalonian Christians among whom he labored will pay compliment to him.

That is the point of the proverb. In the covenant home, grandchildren are a crown that brings honor and glory to their grandparents. Children are a crown that brings honor and glory

to their parents. And parents and grandparents give honor and glory to their children.

In II Timothy 1 the apostle Paul gives an example of this. Speaking to Timothy, whom he calls his own dearly beloved son, he says that he calls to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in Timothy, and that dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice and now, he is persuaded, in Timothy also. Timothy had a mother and a grandmother who, you might say, did him proud. They were not parents and grandparents of whom he should be ashamed. But they were a crown and a glory to him.

That is the way it should be in the covenant family. The grandchildren should not be ashamed of their parents and their grandparents. The father is not one to be held up for ridicule but to be prized and appreciated as a treasure. Children, covenant children, are a great value and a gift to believing parents. Believing grandparents say of their grandchildren: "I'm honored to have you as a grandchild." Children say of their aged grandparents, "What an honor to have you for my grandparents."

Now, this is not, as we indicated earlier, a universal truth. It is certainly not true that every parent and every grandparent or every child is a crown of rejoicing and glory to the other members of the family. That is not even true in the church. You see examples of that in Scripture. Rehoboam, because of his sin, was a shame to his father Solomon and to the house of David. Think of Manasseh, the son of good king Hezekiah. For fifty years his reign was filled with wickedness and he destroyed the good reputation of his father. Think of the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, and what a shame they were to their godly father. And you have that the other way around as well. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, was smitten with leprosy for his sin, and this disease was passed on to his children and grandchildren, reminding them of their father's shameful deeds.

There are two reasons that this happens even in the Christian home.

The first is that not all who are born into Christian homes are true members of God's covenant. There is always a carnal and a reprobate seed born into the Christian and the covenant home. And that reprobate seed will show itself as it did in the case of Esau.

The second reason is that the true members of the covenant do not always live in a way that brings honor to the Christian home. Solomon is not envisioning in the text a perfect and a sinless people. He knows what we are like. Some of the clearest descriptions of man's sinful nature are found in the book of Proverbs. Solomon says in chapter 20:9, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Of course, no one can! Solomon says in chapter 22:15, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child." He is realistic. He is under no delusions here. And so it is only by the grace of God and with His blessing, that we can be a crown of glory and rejoicing to our homes.

This is clear in Proverbs 3:33, where we read, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just." It is by God's grace, with His blessing, on account of His faithfulness and the strength of His covenant promises, that it can be said that children are a crown to their parents and parents to their children.

Now, the question is, How do we crown our families with glory? Many would say that

someone brings honor and glory to his family when he accomplishes things that are considered great in the eyes of the world. For example, in our society, great value is placed on athletic ability. It is considered an honor to have a son or a daughter who excels in sports in high school. And if he goes on to college sports or sports on the professional level, that is even better. Think of how much honor it is considered to be to have a son win a gold medal in the Olympic Games. The same is true for wealth and status and education in our society. What an honor to have a child who has made it on his own in this business world. What a glory to have for your father a congressman or a senator, a judge or a lawyer.

Even though these things are not wrong in themselves, all too often in the church we begin to think exclusively along these lines. Those who are honored and held up and receive attention in our families or in the church are often the ones who have become prominent because of something that they have achieved in this world. Sometimes believing parents will even push their children in the area of achievement.

But it should not be this way. The measure of a man's greatness is not to be in the eyes of the world. The measure of a man or a woman is not in athletic achievement or riches or power or position. On the day of judgment, when we stand before the Lord, these things will mean nothing. They will not be the crown of old men or of children. If all we have to hold up before the Lord are our achievements and riches, we will certainly perish.

And so we should not be judging greatness this way in the home and in the church, either. These are not the essence of true greatness and honor before the Lord. We should not take glory to ourselves. And we should not find our glory in such things. The measure of a man, of a child, of a church member is his godliness. God has chosen, James says in chapter 2 of his epistle, those who are rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom to be great in His sight.

So how do we crown our families with glory? We do it by living in godliness. And by that godliness we bring honor not just to our home but to the Lord through our home and family.

This means, in the first place, that we must keep the world out of our homes—the world and its ideals and its sinful corruption and departure from the ways of the word of God.

There are all kinds of ways that the world makes inroads into the home. Think of media and its influence on the home. Think of the television and the Internet, the magazines and books and all kinds of ideologies of this world that are pressed into the minds of the people of God. If we let this into our homes, then the world's methods and goals for living will impact the lives of our children. Our homes ought to be a refuge from these inroads.

And this means, to parents and grandparents, that if you are going to be a crown of glory to your children, and if you would have them be a crown of glory and rejoicing to you, then you must keep these things from your home. The psalmist David gives us a beautiful example of this in Psalm 101. This is a Psalm where he as king sets forth his resolves. And he says these things, for example, in verses 3 and 4, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me." He says, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." David is setting here resolves as a father so that he may be a glory to his children.

This also means for us that we must meet our responsibilities in our homes in the different roles that God has given to us. God has set up the home with different members and given to each member a unique responsibility. And the home is going to operate in a smooth and in a God-glorifying way only when those roles are acknowledged and followed by the different members in the home. The Bible gives a role for the husband, a role for the wife, a role for parents, a role for the child, a role for the father, and a role for the mother.

Two of those come out in the text. The text speaks of fathers and of children. For the father to be the glory of his children, he must be a teacher to his children, an example to his children. He must love his family. He must be a good husband. How many children are not destroyed in our world by a man who is, maybe not so bad a father, but a terrible husband? The father must be a man in his home who patterns himself after our Father in heaven and after His Son who is the husband of His bride, the church, and who lives towards His church with, according to Ephesians 5, a sacrificial and a selfless love. When the father lives this way in the home, his children will become his crown and glory in later life. They will grow up to fear the Lord and they will become an honor to him. And what an honor it is for us to have God as our Father. That is a crown of glory! And so it is, to have a father like this in a Christian home.

For the son or the child to be a crown to his father, they must follow the way of their godly parents. Proverbs is full of this kind of instruction. If we turn to Proverbs 1, we find that this is one of the main themes or the main emphases in the book of Proverbs. In Proverbs 1:8, 9, Solomon says, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck." Children honor their parents and become the crown of glory to their parents by following their good instruction. To do the opposite of this is to become a shame to parents.

This is not just about listening to parents. It is not just about following a tradition. But in the context of the covenant home, this means that children must come to know the Lord. They must live by faith in Him. They must walk in the godliness of their parents and their grandparents. And in that way, they become a crown of glory.

Children should pattern themselves after the Son of God. When Jesus came to the earth it was very clear in His life that He came not to bring glory to Himself but to obey the Father's will and to bring glory to God.

What an honor and a privilege to have children like this: to bear and train covenant children and to see the fruits of that in their lives. What a blessing in the Christian home to have such parents and such children.

This is important. It is important because it is about the glory of God in the church and in this world. We should understand that this is not about family pride. It is not about us receiving credit for our family name. But this is about the honor of God in our home. We should not be concerned, first of all, about what people are saying about our homes, but about what God says? How does God evaluate our home? Are we honoring the name of God as believing family members in our home? Unless God is glorified in our home, there is no glory and there is no crown in our home. God is glorified when the church is made up of homes and families where this happens.

The calling in the text is also important because this has to do with the salvation of the family members. I want to take you back, now, to something I said at the very beginning. We take for granted the good gifts that God has given to us in our homes. One thing, though, that certainly is implied in this text is that children are a gift from the Lord. In Psalm 127, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is his reward." There are many things that we receive in this life. But among all the things that we can receive, there is nothing so precious as a covenant child. Someday, when you come to the end of your life, there are only two things that you will be able to take with you. The one is your own soul. The other is your children, the souls of your children. This is how important it is, especially for parents now, to be a crown of glory to their children.

May God help us and give us grace to be faithful to Him in this.

Let us pray.

Lord, we are thankful for the blessings in our Christian homes. We pray that we may have the strength to continue to serve Thee and to be an honor and a glory to Thee in the way that we live with our children in the Christian home. For Jesus' sake we pray, Amen.