

## **LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #84**

### **“Election of Dying Infants - The Silent Testimony”** (Scriptures from NKJV)

Matthew 18:14 -

***Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.***

**INTRODUCTION:** This is the fifth lesson in the sub-series on the “Election of Dying Infants.” In the lesson before us we will seek to give the reason why the Scriptures are so silent on the subject. In so doing, rather than silence being a negative factor in the discussion, we will turn the argument around and show that silence is a most positive explanation as to the destiny of infants and the mentally deranged. In all of my studies and discussions over some fifty-seven years of ministry, I have never had one person raise this question:

“Why do we not have recorded in Scripture one example of a mother going to either Moses or one of the prophets, or to Jesus or one of the apostles, and ask the question, ‘where is my infant who has died?’”

Since countless tens of millions of mothers and fathers have raised this question throughout human history, why is there not one example listed in the Bible of someone doing so? This question deserves an answer to the grieving parents of deceased infants. It also deserves an answer to establish and complete our theology on the topic. Back in lesson eighty-two we quoted Lewis Sperry Chafer, noted past professor and theologian as saying:

No theology is established or complete which does not account for the salvation of those who die in infancy. (Quoted by Curt Daniel in *The History and Theology of Calvinism*, p. 334).

I find it most interesting that there are some of the most gifted Bible teachers and theologians who say that they just don’t know what happens to infants who die in infancy. They may think they have acquired a complete understanding of their theological position, but until they can explain the destiny of a dead infant, they cannot say their theological system is complete! Chafer is right!

In the previous lesson, we dealt with the issue of what is known as the “age of accountability.” I stated that the term would be better worded as the “state or condition of accountability or responsibility.” While all infants are conceived in sin and acquire a sinful nature which places them under the condemnation of God, no one shall be judged for their original sinful nature acquired from Adam. Instead they will be judged for their actual sins. We quoted John Calvin as saying:

I everywhere teach that no one can be justly condemned and perish except on account of actual sin; and to say that the countless mortals taken from life

while yet infants are precipitated from their mother's arms into eternal death is a blasphemy to be universally detested. (Quoted from Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 663).

We move now to the lesson at hand. We look first at:

#### **A. THE DOCTRINE OF GOOD AND NECESSARY CONSEQUENCE.**

1. Just because there are no explicit texts of Scripture which tell us what the fate is of infants dying in infancy, we are not driven to the "we don't know" conclusion which so many reach. There are two main Confessions of Faith which address the issue. They are *The Baptist Confession of 1689* (also the *Philadelphia Confession of 1742*), and the *Westminster Confession of 1647*.

2. *The Baptist Confession* states:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scriptures . . ."

3. *The Westminster Confession* further clarified the issue when it states:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.

4. Dr. R. A. Webb states the following on what is meant by "good and necessary consequence" with these words:

It is unimpeachable logic that whatever is deducible from a preposition by good and necessary inference, is of equal authority with what is expressly set down in it: that is, whatever is implicitly contained is of equal truthfulness with whatever is explicitly stated. All reasoning consists in unfolding the contents of the premises, and whatever is truly drawn out is as sound and correct as that which was expressly set down. There may be slips in the reasoning, but if the reasoning be correct, the conclusion is as valid as the premise upon which it rests. A vast proportion of human knowledge consists in good and necessary inferences from reliable data; so, though the doctrine of the salvation of infants dying in infancy is not "expressly set down in Scripture," it is there by "good and necessary consequence" - there theologically, logically, suggestively, and he who is willing to trust his reasoning from Scripture data may be confidently assured as to the fate of the dead child. (Webb. *Theology of Infant Salvation*, pp. 11, 12, Sprinkle Publications).

5. Thus, if it can be shown from good and necessary consequence that all infants who die in infancy are elect, redeemed, and regenerated, then it can be deduced they are saved and enter heaven in possession for eternal life. On the other hand, using the same formula of "good and necessary consequence" it can be deduced there are no passages

which teach infant damnation. Dr. Curt Daniel states it in this manner:

By definition, then, an infant is one who has not reached the age of accountability. He is guilty by nature, but not by act. Is he saved? Scripture clearly says "yes." First, there are no passages that say explicitly or implicitly that dying infants are damned, reprobate, go to hell, or any such thing. But positively, there are several passages which leave no other legitimate interpretation than that dying infants are saved. (Daniel, *History and Theology of Calvinism*, p. 338).

## **B. SILENT TESTIMONIES - DAVID'S CHILD - II. Samuel 12.**

1. The first silent testimony which confirms that all infants dying in infancy are elected unto salvation and go to heaven upon their death is seen in the story of David's child who died. We will cover the details of the story first and then present the argument which the details require.

2. The story goes like this: David had an affair with a woman named Bathsheba. He committed adultery with a woman who was not his wife. She conceived a child. In order to cover up his sin, he has her husband, Uriah, killed while in battle. David was not only an adulterer, he was a murderer. While David had committed his sins in secret, the Lord told him, through Nathan the prophet, that He was going to expose David's action before all of Israel. (II Samuel 12:12). When confronted with his sin, David confesses his sin in verse 13 - **"So David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.'" His penitence is recorded in Psalm 32 and Psalm 51. God forgave him of sin. In verse 13, Nathan says to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin: you shall not die."** But sin has its consequences. David will suffer. In verse 14 we are told **"However, because of this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child who is born to you shall surely die."**

3. In verse 15 we read that **"the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill."** Even though David was told that the child would die, David loved the child with a fatherly love and wanted the child to live. In a desperate frame of mind, he prayed for the child's life. In verse 16 we read, **"David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground."** Out of concern for his well-being, his household servants tried to get him to eat. In verse 17 we read, **"So the elders of his house arose and went to him to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor would he eat food with them."** David is in a state of intense grief and pain.

4. Then in verse 18, it happened! The child died! We there read, **"Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, 'Indeed while the child**

***was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!"*** Note that the child died on the seventh day, the one day before it was to be circumcised! This will be addressed in a later lesson as this presents a huge problem for those who hold that infant baptism is necessary to remove original sin. The servants were afraid to tell David that his son had died. They had seen how David was suffering so profoundly over the prospect of the child's death, they were afraid that he might take his own life! He has mourned, fasted and prayed for seven days. This is probably the most intense example of prayer to be found in the Bible. We can appreciate the servants' concern.

5. In verse 19 the end comes. The little baby dies. We read ***"When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, 'Is the child dead?' And they said, 'He is dead.'"*** Then an amazing transformation in David's outlook takes place. We read in verse 20, ***"So David arose from the ground, washed, and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate."*** David did not kill himself! He got up from the ground, took a bath, put on body lotion, put on clean clothes and went into the Lord's house and worshiped. Then he said that he was hungry and asked for food to eat. What had changed his grief into hope? The death of the child!

6. David's servants were astonished at David's radical change of behavior. In verse 21 we read, ***"Then his servants said to him, 'What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food.'"*** David's actions seemed backward to them. Usually tears and mourning come after the death of a loved one, not before. David's reply is given in verses 22 and 23, ***"While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said 'Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me that the child may live? But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.'"*** David wanted his son to live, even though he was conceived by David's sin. Even though God had said he would die, David held out hope that God might yet be gracious unto him and let the child live. He said, "who knows, I don't." So during the period of seven days, God was not speaking to David. Heaven was silent! Even when the child died, God did not tell David that the child was taken to heaven! But the death of the infant spoke silently, and David was given the answer as to where his infant had gone. If David had gone to Nathan the prophet and asked where his son had gone, what would Nathan have said? Would he have said, "Well, we just don't know!" Would he have said, "David, the child went to hell because he had not received the sign of the covenant, which is

circumcision!" Would he have said, "David, he went to hell because even though he committed no sinful actions for which he could be judged, he still must pay for his original sin in Adam!" Nathan never had to say a thing. David knew where his son was. How did he know that? It was a "given revelation" from God that infants who die in infancy go to heaven.

7. **"I shall go to him."** David's sorrow was instantaneously replaced with hope and comfort the moment the child died. The death of infants is the revelation of their being elect of God! David was a believer. He had sinned, he was forgiven, and he was chastised so that he might not be condemned with the world. Where was the child? David didn't say, "I'll meet him in hell!" He didn't say, "Well, we will go to the grave together!" There is only one logical answer that can explain what caused David to change his composure. He knew where the child was and that he would be united with the child in the after life. And that place was heaven!

8. David knew where he was going when he died. David believed in life after death. He addresses this in Psalm 17:13b-15 when he contrasts the life and death of the righteous and the wicked. **"Deliver my life from the wicked with your sword, with your hand from men O Lord, from men of the world who have their portion in this life, and whose belly you fill with your hidden treasure. They are satisfied with children, and leave the rest of their possessions for their babes. As for me, 'I will see your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.'"** In the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, David said, **"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."** Where did David think he would be when he died and left this life? In the house of the Lord! Where did he think his little son was? In the house of the Lord! That is why there was no longer any reason to fast and pray. That is why there was no reason to weep and mourn. He is with the Lord and I will soon join him. This phase of my earthly life is over -- I can't change it. I will move on with the hope of a heavenly reunion.

9. David had another son named Absalom. He was a wicked, selfish, rebellious son who plotted to murder his own father. He was an adult son, a rebel against God and his father. In II Samuel 18, we have recorded how he died and David's response to his death. In verses 1-3 David sends out three divisions of soldiers to put down Absalom's rebellion. In verse 4 he commands the three captains to **"deal gently for my sake with the young man, Absalom."** Perhaps he held out hope that his son might be converted from his rebellion and be forgiven. In verses 5-18, the death and burial of Absalom take place. In the heat of the battle, Absalom is riding a mule and his head is caught in the bough of a tree. When Joab heard what had happened, he had Absalom killed and buried in a pit

covered with stones. When David was informed what had happened, he entered a state of mourning. In verse 33 we read, **"Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: 'O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!'"** In chapter 19:1 we read, **"Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom."** This is the exact opposite as to what he did when his baby son died. He stopped mourning when the baby died. He started mourning when Absalom died. Why? What is the difference? David knew his infant son who died was in the presence of the Lord. He also knew that his adult son was not there, but in hell. He had a hope of a reunion with the infant son. He had no hope of a reunion with his adult son.

10. The theological argument: Upon being confronted with this logic and the exegetical details, there are still those who reject the conclusion that all infants dying in infancy are elect and saved and go to heaven. Those who continue to hold to the agnostic view labeled, "we don't know" reply that David's child was an exception made by God to David and does not prove that all infants dying in infancy go to heaven. The reply to this is that we neither have an implicit or explicit Biblical statement to this effect. I find it interesting that those who argue against the certainty of all infants dying in infancy going to heaven, do so by appealing to the fact there are no explicit statements in the Bible which confirm this. But at the same time, they turn right around and argue that David's child was an exception, and while it was saved, it does not prove that all infants dying in infancy are saved. God help our inconsistencies! Let us return again to the text in I Samuel 12.

First there is no evidence in the text that God ever informed David that his child was going to be an exception. If God had done so before the child died, then David could have been consoled before the child died, but he was not consoled.

Secondly, David did not know the future destiny of his child until the child died. In verses 22 and 23, David clearly says this. There we are told, **"While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me that the child may live? But now he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.'"**

Thirdly, God says nothing to David, after the child has died that He was making an exception in revealing the destiny of the child.

Fourthly, it was only the death of the child that confirmed to David the destiny of his child. This shows that only the belief that all infants dying in infancy go to heaven could be the source of comfort and hope for David!

Dr. Curt Daniel makes this observation:

Had the baby recovered, David could not know if he would live and become right with God and go to heaven or not. But when he died, David knew at once that he went to the same heaven where he himself would one day go . . . David knew this, and so is moved by God to realize that all dying infants, including his own, are saved." (Daniel, *Ibid*, p. 338).

Dr. Webb gives us this powerful summary of the data and the logical conclusion:

It was this thought of reunion with his dead child which cheered David; but where did he think the reunion would be? In the grave? In hell? In heaven? He believed that he himself would go to heaven after death and consequently meant to express the belief that his child had but gone on before him to that blessed abode. The idea of meeting his child in the unconscious grave could not have rationally comforted him; nor could the thought of meeting him in hell have cheered his spirit; but the thought of meeting him in heaven had in itself the power of turning his weeping into joy. But did not David have this thought of a heavenly reunion before the child died? And why did it not comfort him during the sickness of the child as it did after death? The answer is clear and easy: While the child is alive he cannot know what its ultimate destiny will be, whether heaven or hell; because the child is unable to make any conscious manifestation of its relations to God. If the child lives, it may, as far as he can foreread the future, live to be a very wicked man; if it dies, God has made known to him his will through death concerning the final fate of his child. In other words, the living of the child was not *revelatory* of its future destiny, but its dying was *declarative* of a happy and heavenly destiny. There is no other way to make rational and commendatory David's sudden change from inconsolable grief to calmness and satisfaction at the moment the death of his child is reported to him. This incident verges very nigh to a dogmatic proof-text for the assertion *that all infants dying in infancy are finally saved*.

Let me state the argument very compactly: David knew all before the death of the child that he knew after the death of the child—*except whatever thing death itself disclosed*; before he got this additional item of knowledge he was disconsolate, but when death told its story he was cheered; what was this thing that the child's death told him? It was this: Death said, your child has gone to heaven and you shall join it there. And David was rejoiced. (Webb, *Ibid*. pp. 20-22).

11. Summary: This material explains the reason why no parent in the Bible, or anyone for that matter, ever asks the question relating to the death of an infant and its destiny. It was a "given revelation" from God that the death itself spoke silently, "your child is in heaven. Look forward, as a believing parent, to a reunion one day." But to all unbelieving parents, who have had a child or children die, let this warning be considered. If you die in unbelief, you will not be reunited with your child. You will be in hell and your child will be in heaven. Repent and trust Christ today as He is presented in the Gospel.

This topic will be continued in the next lesson as we consider more "silent testimonies."