

## **Gen. 17:7 (WCF 10:3) "To You and Yours"**

**For the Children:** Is the Lord interested in young children, or is He only interested when they grow older and understand much of the Bible? We know He is interested, because He speaks to young children in His Word. He gives commands to them and makes promises to them. For example, the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment has instructions about obeying parents and a promise about living in the Promised Land. He also shows His mercy by placing you in a Christian home and church so you get to hear those commandments and promises. That is what it means to be "covenant children": to receive God's mercy in placing you where you will be brought up in His Word and called to believe and obey it as a witness to Him. **Questions:** How would your parents feel if they thought you were like any other person who hates God in the world? Is everyone in the church automatically saved? What is the greatest comfort for little children in life and in death?

---

### **Introduction:**

#### **First Point: Children in the Covenant**

- 1) Established by God: The covenant is established by the God of infinite power and grace, not by man. He can place anyone in it He wishes, no matter how impossible it may seem to man. See Mt. 3:9. His hands are not tied by the inability of a child to express their faith in a visible way. He is able to elect, regenerate and save whomever he wishes
- 2) What God has Chosen to Do: RC's argued that the Reformed doctrines meant that believers' children dying in infancy must be reprobate. WCF 10:3 and CD 1:17 deny this accusation. So does the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith. However, Reformed and Baptist part company over whether God has chosen to place the children of believers in the new covenant. We appeal to Gen. 17:7 that includes the believer's "seed" in the covenant of grace. This has remained so from Abraham until now, for the arrangement is "everlasting" and "throughout their generations." Compare the meaning of "everlasting" in Gen. 9:16. See also the quotation of this verse in Acts 2:39, where it is applied to the "you and your children." There are some changes from Old to New Covenant, but the status of the believer's children is not one of them. Hence the NT also addresses children with covenant obligations e.g. Eph. 6:1-3
- 3) The Day of Greater Mercy: This is what we would expect in the New Covenant: a greater outpouring now Christ has come. The covenant is expanded to Gentiles. Women are given greater privileges. Why would children be *excluded* in the Day of greater grace? This is a mercy also to parents, who do not need to treat their children as unclean, but as holy/set apart (1 Cor. 7:14)

#### **Second Point: The Spiritual Nature of the Covenant**

- 1) God Is God to You and Yours: The promise that God would be God to Abraham and his "seed" is the heart of the covenant. It is a spiritual matter, - then and now - that creates spiritual obligations on all members, young and old; it creates a spiritual obligation to give a holy witness and implies a call to faith
- 2) Not All the Same: However, not all members of the covenant respond the same to these obligations. See Mt. 13:3-23. We are not to try to remove the "tares" *from the kingdom* prematurely (Mt. 13:24-30). Undetected hypocrites and as-yet-unregenerate elect persons are to be regarded as members of God's kingdom. See Mt. 8:12, where unbelieving Jews are called "sons of the kingdom." This is so because the covenant, church and kingdom are broader realities than election and regeneration. Some are "sons" in an outward sense who are not "sons" in the full sense
- 3) Some Implications: Covenant children - and adults - should therefore be called upon to "ratify" the promise that has been extended to them as members of the covenant. Presuming that covenant-membership automatically guarantees election or regeneration is a great danger. On the other hand, we ought not to be pessimistic about covenant children who die in infancy (CD 1:17). The merciful God, who has already shown them favour by bringing them into the covenant, can regenerate elect infants before they hear the Gospel and respond consciously. See Lk. 1:41. We regard the departed covenant child on the basis of what the Word says about the covenant and its promises, not by trying to see into God's secret counsel

### **Conclusion:**