

Bible Text: Isaiah 59
Preached on: Sunday, August 28, 2022

Grace Protestant Reformed Church
O-11225 8th Ave NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

Website: www.graceprc.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/graceprc

We turn in scripture to Isaiah 59. The scripture reading this morning is Isaiah 59. We read this in connection with Lord's Day 27 of the Heidelberg Catechism where we focus on infant baptism. We read Isaiah 59 especially because of the last verse, and we will be treating that verse in the preaching so it will be profitable to keep our scriptures open to this passage of scripture this morning. Isaiah 59, and really what we just sang about is what we're reading about here, God is faithful to his covenant. Even though his people rebel against him, he is faithful. Isaiah 59.

1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. 3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. 4 None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. 5 They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. 6 Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. 7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. 8 The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. 9 Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. 10 We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. 11 We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. 12 For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; 13 In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the

heart words of falsehood. 14 And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. 15 Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. 16 And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. 17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. 18 According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence. 19 So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. 20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. [Now this verse,] 21 As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word. We're going to look at that last verse in the preaching but we turn also to Lord's Day 27 of the Catechism found on page 15 in the back of the Psalter. Lord's Day 27, where we continue the Catechism's treatment of the sacrament of baptism.

Q. 72. Is then the external baptism with water the washing away of sin itself?

A. Not at all; for the blood of Jesus Christ only, and the Holy Ghost, cleanse us from all sin.

Q. 73. Why then doth the Holy Ghost call baptism "the washing of regeneration," and "the washing away of sins"?

A. God speaks thus not without great cause, to wit, not only thereby to teach us that, as the filth of the body is purged away by water, so our sins are removed by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ; but especially that by this divine pledge and sign He may assure us that we are spiritually cleansed from our sins as really as we are externally washed with water.

And now especially this Question and Answer.

Q. 74. Are infants also to be baptized?

A. Yes; for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church, and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant.

Beloved congregation in our Lord Jesus Christ, why do we baptize infants? That's a real question. I think for the young people and the young adults even who are going off to college, this is a real question. I remember when I was in college, I met a fellow Christian who was a Baptist and he went to the popular Baptist church on the north side of town and he invited me to his church. And I knew I couldn't go. I knew there were doctrinal differences. I knew there were doctrinal errors that Baptists held to, one of which was that Baptists do not baptize infant children and I knew that was wrong. But at the time, as a young adult, I don't think I could have explained very clearly why it was wrong and why infant baptism was biblical, especially when the Baptists made the remark that there is no explicit command in the New Testament to baptize our children. So it's a real question, why do we baptize infants? It's a real question, even for young people and, by the way, this is why we continue to go through the Catechism; even though you have a new minister, we continue with the same practice of going through each Lord's Day of the Catechism because we need to know what we believe and why we believe it so that we are ready to give an answer and we can share the hope we have of the gospel in Jesus Christ, even with regard to the little children in the church.

It's also a real question in light of where we are in the Catechism itself, and let's be reminded of where we are in the Catechism this morning. We are in the second section of the Catechism. We are looking at how God delivers us from our sin and misery. And right here in this second section in Lord's Day 27, we are in a subsection in which we are looking at where this true faith comes from. Earlier in the Catechism, earlier in the second section, you looked at what true faith is, Lord's Day 7, what is true faith? A certain knowledge and an assured confidence. Then you looked at the question what does true faith belief? And that's when you looked at the Apostles' Creed, Lord's Days 8 through 22. Then you looked at the question, what does it profit us that we believe all of this? Lord's Days 23 and 24. It profits us in this respect, I know that I am righteous in Christ and an heir of eternal life. And then, starting with Lord's Day 25, the Catechism brought up this question: where does that true faith come from? And that's why in Lord's Day 25 you looked at the preaching with Prof. Gridders and you began to look at the sacrament of baptism. Because the Holy Spirit, that this is the answer, where does true faith come from? The Holy Spirit works true faith in us by the preaching of the gospel and confirms it by the use of the sacraments. That's why we're looking at the preaching and now we're looking at baptism.

But now, as we look at baptism and we understand how God uses baptism to strengthen us and to confirm faith in us, and the Holy Spirit uses the sacraments together to confirm our faith, the question naturally arises, "Well, what about infants?" And I think you can

appreciate the question. If God uses the sacrament of baptism to confirm our faith so that the sacrament of baptism is a sign and a seal, a picture and a guarantee to us who believe that we are as certainly washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ, washed from all our sins by the blood and Spirit of Christ as we are externally washed with the water of baptism, then why should infants get baptized? Infants don't have a conscious faith. Infants aren't old enough to make sense of what the minister is saying in the preaching. And when infants are baptized, infants don't really have a clue what's going on. So isn't the practice of baptizing infants out of place because if baptism is for the confirming and strengthening of our faith, how does baptism strengthen or confirm the faith of the little infants? Our children do not understand these things. Doesn't that mean we should therefore exclude them from baptism and wait at least until they're old enough to understand? After all, that's what we do with the Lord's Supper, kind of, isn't it? Shouldn't we do the same thing with baptism? And isn't that exactly what the Baptists are doing?

So you see, this is a real question, and that's exactly why in Question and Answers 74 we have the question and answer that we have. We need an explanation for this peculiarity, infant baptism. Why should our infants to be baptized as well? Why do we baptize infants and the Catechism goes right to the heart of the matter and gives a beautiful answer: because the infants of believers, although they don't understand what's happening to them in baptism, infants of believers are special because what God has taught us in his word is this, the infants of believers are just as much heirs of salvation as the parents are. God saves us and he saves our infant children. No, not head for head, but nevertheless, God has promised that he saves our infant children just as much as he saves the adult. He establishes his covenant of grace with our children just as much as with us, and for the sake of the elect children whom God has promised that he will raise up from among our midst, for the sake of those children with whom God establishes his covenant, we baptize all our children. Since the infants possess the reality, they also ought to receive the sign. We receive our children as from the hand of the Lord, and we view them and treat them as covenant children, and therefore we also give them the sign of entrance into the covenant of God, the sign of baptism. Really, this whole question of infant baptism revolves around the question of the covenant. What is God's covenant? With whom does he establish his covenant? Does he establish his covenant with our children? If so, then they ought to receive the sign of entrance into the covenant. It's really as simple as that.

This morning we're going to look at Isaiah 59:21 to explain the practice of baptism in the New Testament using an Old Testament passage to explain our New Testament practice. This is a verse that's not so well known. We know other verses, Acts 2:39, Genesis 17:7, but this is also a very powerful verse that establishes that God establishes his covenant with the children of believers in the New Testament. We take as our theme this morning, "Jehovah's Covenant with Christ's Seed's Seed," and we look at three things. First, we look at what God's covenant is; second, the people with whom God establishes his covenant; and then third, the blessings God promises.

First, then, what is God's covenant, and I find it to be my privilege that as we begin the Catechism together, this is the question that I get to start off with. What is God's covenant? I've got two things to point out here. First of all, when we speak about God's

covenant, we are speaking about a relationship of friendship. God's covenant is a relationship of friendship. He will show them his friendship, we already sang that. And that definition of God's covenant with his people is really rooted in God himself because within God himself as a Triune God, God is a God of friendship. His covenant relationship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a covenant relationship of friendship. He lives a life of friendship within himself, within his divine being, Father, Son and Holy Spirit enjoying perfect union, perfect life with each other in an eternal, unconditional relationship of friendship and love.

And now that's the pattern, and that's what characterizes the covenant that God establishes with his people outside of himself. Who he is inside himself or within himself is reflected in what he does outside of himself, and so the covenant that he establishes with his people is also a relationship of friendship. That's why, for example, Abraham is repeatedly called in the Bible the friend of God. Why is Abraham called the friend of God? Because Abraham is the one with whom God established his covenant, "Abraham, I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee." God establishes his covenant with Abraham, and from henceforth in the scriptures Abraham is known as the friend of God.

That's what God's covenant is, a relationship of friendship in which God shares his thoughts with his people. He shares his secrets with his people. That's what friends do. He walks with his people and talks with his people. And second of all, when we speak of God's covenant, the second thing I need to point out is that the covenant God establishes with his people is emphatically God's covenant, and what I mean is this: the covenant belongs to God so that God says, even as we read it very emphatically in Isaiah 59:21, "This is my covenant." God is the one who establishes that relationship of friendship between himself and his people, God is the one who maintains that relationship of friendship between himself and his people, and God is the one who perfects and will perfect that relationship of friendship between himself and his people. It is emphatically his covenant.

And another way of emphasizing this is simply to say that God's covenant is an unconditional covenant. It rests upon God because the reality is, if the relationship that God establishes with his people depended upon us in any way, it would fall away. It would be broken and it would dissolve, but God doesn't let that happen because it's his covenant. God didn't say to Abraham. "Abraham, would you like to enter into a covenant with me? Would you like to be my friend?" No, God, said, "Abraham, I will establish my covenant between me and thee." That's forceful language.

And then the glorious reality is God not only establishes that covenant, but he maintains it. The promises that he speaks to Abraham, he fulfills. The friendship that he establishes, he's faithful in that friendship. Even though you and me as God's covenant people, as his friend servants, we are not faithful. He is always faithful. He always remembers his word, and he always does things for the good of his friend servants, and that's part of the joy of being the friends of God, and let this be a reminder to us this morning, who we are as the friends of God, as we talk about this doctrine of the covenant. I am the friend of God.

So two things: God's covenant is a relationship of friendship and, second, God's covenant is emphatically his covenant. It's not an agreement or a bargain that we've entered into with God, some kind of pact that we've made with God, as if God's covenant is partly his covenant and partly our covenant. No. Certainly, we do have obligations in this covenant. God gives us obligations and he also gives us beautiful promises and we live in fellowship with God and we enjoy that personal relationship with God. We're not stalks and blocks in this relationship. God works within us so mysteriously and graciously that we are alive in Christ and by faith we see the Lord, our God, our friend, we take him to ourselves, we live before him in all good works and we walk with him and talk with him. But the point is, the covenant of God is a relationship of friendship that God has sovereignly chosen to establish with his elect people in Christ. God's establishment of a covenant relationship with us in Christ was a wonder of sovereign grace in which we were entirely passive, and even infant baptism is a picture of that, that's kind of a tangent, but they're passive when they're baptized, reflecting the fact that our entrance into God's covenant is an entrance into which we are passive, and it's a covenant of grace which he maintains and which he will perfect. It all depends on him.

Now when we turn to Isaiah 59:21, we see those two ideas in this passage itself. First, we see in this passage that God's covenant is a relationship of friendship, and we might ask, "Well, where do we see that in this verse?" Well, we see that especially when God says "My spirit is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth." God puts his spirit upon the one with whom he establishes his covenant, and God puts his words in their mouths, and part of what that means is that God is their friend. So close is this relationship, so intimate is this relationship that he puts his own words in the mouths of his people. And of course, if his words are in their mouths, what that implies is that his words are even in their hearts. He shares his words and his thoughts and his secrets with them to such a degree that his own words fill their mouths and fill their hearts, and that implies the idea of friendship. That's what happens when you have friendship. You have each other's words even on your mouths. You finish each other's sentences. So the idea of intimacy and fellowship and friendship.

So, first, the idea of friendship is found in this verse, and then second, we see in Isaiah 59:21 that God's covenant with his people depends entirely upon him. It is his covenant. And where do we see that? Well, we see that very clearly at the beginning of verse 21 where God says, "As for me, this is my covenant," not this is our covenant, "this is my covenant with them." And God is very emphatic with that language and intentional and you get the sense of that when you read this verse in the light of the whole chapter that comes before it because in the context in the first part of the chapter you read of how God's people have been so unfaithful to God's covenant. For example, verse 7, "Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths." And that description goes on for a few verses. God's describing his covenant people and the sin that they're walking in. And then you go to verse 16 and in verse 16 you read, "And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor," God sees that there's no one to deliver his people from their sin and iniquity, so then what do we read? "Therefore his arm brought

salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him." And then in verse 17 you have God describing himself as one who puts on armor, and God goes to battle rescuing his people, rescuing them in a grand and glorious fashion. And now, here at the end of the chapter in verse 21, God is summing it all up with this explanation. He says, "As for me, this is my covenant, saith the LORD." And the whole point is, the covenant God has established with his people doesn't depend on his people in any way. It can't depend on his people in any way, but since it is his covenant, since it is entirely his and belongs to him, he will maintain it and he will rise up as a soldier in the battle to deliver his people, his people, his friends with whom he has established his covenant.

That's the idea. That's a very beautiful idea, congregation. When you think of all the sins of God's people and then you have this at the end, that's very comforting for us who see the reality of our sin. God keeps his covenant. And why is it this way? Why does the covenant depend entirely upon God himself? Well, this whole section of Isaiah really emphasizes as well that God does it in order that he might receive the glory and he alone might receive the glory. That's ultimately why God establishes a covenant with his people, because he loves his people and because he has also chosen them as the people through whom he will show forth his glory, his own covenant glory. Isaiah 43, "This people have I formed for myself. They shall show forth my praises, my glory." And here in Isaiah 59 that's coming out to you, "my people are sinful. I am the glorious covenant-keeping God." That's why it is that way in the way of sin and grace, in the way of revealing over and over again that the covenant which God has established with his people depends entirely upon him, God showcases his glory, his compassion, his grace, his mercy, his goodness, his power, his faithfulness so that we see his glory and we praise him. That's God's covenant very briefly.

Now, having seen God's covenant, the question comes with whom does God establish his covenant? With whom does God make his covenant? Well, the teaching of scripture is very clear on this matter. Listen to this: God establishes his covenant with Christ. Jesus Christ is the head of the covenant. We sang that too this morning. And in establishing his covenant with Jesus Christ, God also establishes his covenant with all those who are in Christ. I'm not going to prove that right now, but Galatians 3:16 and 17 is a good passage to go to, the promise of God's covenant God made to Jesus Christ and to all who are in Jesus Christ. If ye be in Christ, then are ye heirs of the promise.

The Westminster Larger Catechism puts it this way, "With whom was the covenant of grace made? The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed." And that language is significant for this morning too, all the elect as his seed. And this makes sense because left to ourselves we are sinners and we are full of iniquity, and God is the Holy God. And the question needs to be asked, how can the thrice Holy God have fellowship and friendship with sinners? How can the Holy God have fellowship with and be intimate with guilty sin-stained sinners? And the answer is he can't. You must first have your sins blotted out. You must first be cleansed of all your sins, and you only have that in Christ. You only have that if you are one of Christ's. In a word, for you to enter into a covenant relationship with God, you need to be

spiritually baptized into Christ and only the elect are baptized into Christ because Christ died, he shed his blood only for the elect.

So God establishes his covenant with Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one, and with all those who are in him, those who are the seed of Christ. But now here's where we need to turn again to this verse in Isaiah 59, because in Isaiah 59 it goes further than what I've just said, and Isaiah 59:21, along with many other passages, teaches us that God establishes his covenant not just with Jesus and not just with those who are the seed of Jesus, but God establishes his covenant with those who are the seed of the seed of Jesus. God establishes his covenant not only with believers but with their seed, their infant children. They are included in God's covenant as well.

Let's look at this verse again, Isaiah 59:20, and let's begin at verse 21, or let's beginning at verse 20. "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee," notice that difference between them and they and thee, "My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever." Notice a few things. First of all, who is the word the word "thee" and the word "thy" referring to here in verse 21, "My spirit that is upon thee and my words that I've put in thy mouth," who is that referring to? Well, that's referring to Christ, the servant of the Lord. Refer back to verse 20, it's referring to the Redeemer that shall come to Zion. It's referring to Jesus who is the Redeemer, who comes to Zion, who comes to the church in his incarnation.

And Jesus is also the one upon whom God places his spirit, "My spirit that is upon thee." Right, you have that language elsewhere in the latter part of Isaiah, Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for he has anointed me to preach the gospel." We know that verse, and then Isaiah 42:1 as well, "Mine elect, in whom my soul rejoices, I have put my spirit upon him." So it's talking here about Jesus, and then we also read, "My words which I've put in thy mouth." That's also talking about Jesus. God puts his words in the mouth of Jesus. And that's also spoken of elsewhere in Isaiah, Isaiah 50:4. Jesus says, "God's words are in my mouth."

So the point is God is speaking to Jesus and then, secondly, God is speaking to the seed of Jesus. God says, "My spirit that is upon thee," Jesus, "and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth nor out of the mouth of thy seed." Well, who is the seed of Jesus? Well, they are the children of Jesus, and as we know, Jesus never had any physical children, the idea is they are his spiritual children. And that language of Jesus having a seed, that's also found elsewhere in Isaiah, Isaiah 53:10. Isaiah chapter 53 on the suffering servant, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed."

So again, elsewhere we read of the seed of Jesus, it's talking about believers. The point is the reference to the seed of Jesus is a reference to the elect people of God. They are the ones whom the Father gives to Jesus. They are the ones for whom Jesus died. And they

are the ones unto whom God imparts salvation, and with them God establishes his covenant. "As for me, this is my covenant with them." So God establishes his covenant with Christ and in Christ with all his elect, the spiritual seed. But now, as we continue to look at this verse, we notice that it says more, "My spirit that is upon thee and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of their mouth nor out of the mouth of thy seed," and now, "nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed," and what's that a reference to? Well, maybe it's obvious, it's a reference to the children of believers. It's a reference to the elect children of elect believers. With them God establishes his covenant too.

So what God is teaching us in this passage, it's really something that the whole of the Old Testament assumes, but it comes to beautiful expression in this verse, what God is teaching in this passage is that he establishes his covenant with the children of believers. The covenant of God, that relationship of friendship, will continue from one generation to another forever. From one generation to another, God will establish and maintain his covenant with his people. That's why in the Old Testament, the little boys of God's people were circumcised. It was a sign of the covenant. And God didn't wait until they were older either, they were circumcised as infants eight days old. And now we might say, well, this is familiar, we understand this but what is so striking about all of this is this: although this is a passage found in the Old Testament, and we might say, well, it's an Old Testament passage, it applies to the Old Testament. No, the beauty about this passage is that it's a word that God speaks to Christ. What I mean is that this Old Testament passage is speaking not just about an Old Testament reality, it's speaking about a New Testament reality, and the simple question that we need to ask ourselves is this: are you and I not the seed of Jesus? We who are New Testament believers, who live in the New Testament era, the New Testament dispensation, are we not the seed of Christ? Yes, we are. That's the language of the New Testament itself. But you see if we are the seed of Christ and this passage is talking about us, which it is, that also means that this passage is also talking about our children and this passage is telling us, it's speaking to us in the New Testament, and it is telling us that God establishes his covenant not only with us believers, but with our seed, our children. And the main point is simply that this passage teaches that God's covenant is a covenant he establishes not only with believers but also with their seed. Our children are to be viewed as members of God's covenant on the basis of such a passage as this.

Now, this is not to say, we understand, that each child born to believer's head for head is an elect child of God, or that God truly establishes a covenant with all the baptized children of believer's head for head. We know they are not all true spiritual Israelites that are of the nation of Israel, but what the passage is saying is that God will continue his covenant with our children. That's the norm. That's what we can hope for and expect on the basis of what God has said in his word. You know, God could have said here in Isaiah 59, he could have said, "From this day forward until the day that I establish the new covenant, I will put my words in thy mouth and in the mouth of thy seed, and in the mouth of the seed's seed." And that, perhaps, would be what the Baptists would say about this passage. But God doesn't say that. There are not ultimately two covenants. That's the flaw of the Baptist. There's one covenant and God doesn't say that. God uses strong language. He even says at the end of the verse, "from henceforth and forever." The point

is that children are included in the covenant of God is not merely some Old Testament phenomenon. No, from henceforth and forever, that includes the New Testament, meaning thus the children of believers living today are to be viewed and treated as members of God's covenant just as much as we view adults who are brought to a living faith and confess faith in Christ. We view them as God's covenant people and that's also true with infants born to believers.

And of course, if the children are members of God's covenant, then they deserve to receive the sign of being members of God's covenant. In the Old Testament, that sign was circumcision. In the New Testament, the sign is baptism. And there's no argument about that either. The sign of the covenant is baptism. And so the only conclusion we can come to is that infants of believers in the New Testament ought to be baptized. And we need to ask ourselves, this is an important point too: how can our children enter into a covenant relationship with God? Our children, just like us, are conceived and born in sin, shapen in iniquity. They have the sinful natures that we gave them. So the question stands for them just as much for us: how can our children possibly enter into a relationship of friendship with God? It's the same answer: only through Jesus Christ, only through the blood of Jesus Christ, and only through the spirit of Jesus Christ. And so if they are the covenant children of God, upon whom God bestows his rich blessings, it means that they had been washed with the blood and spirit of Christ because there's no other way to have a covenant relationship with God.

And so now you see how all this lines up with what the Catechism is teaching us here in Question and Answers 74 of the Catechism. "Are infants also to be baptized? Yes, for since they as well as the adult are included in the covenant and in the church of God, and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult, they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers, as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant." You see, it all goes as a package. Either our children are included in God's covenant and that means they have the spiritual realities that make that covenant relationship possible, or they are not included in God's covenant and we must view our children as little unregenerated lost vipers. And, congregation, I can assure you that is not how God instructs us to view our children. Even in the New Testament it's spoken of very clearly. Ephesians 6, what does God say to the children in the church? Paul writes the letter of Ephesians and he looks now at the children of the church and he says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." And right there the apostle inspired by the Spirit assumes, the language implies that you children in the church are children in the Lord. In the Lord Jesus Christ. It implies that children can obey their parents in a God-honoring fashion precisely because they have the Spirit of Jesus Christ, because they are in the Lord. Children, obey your parents in the Lord. You are covenant children. This is your calling and duty before the Lord, your Maker, your Father, and your friend. And this is your privilege that you're given the strength to do it.

Again, it's not as if we're saying that head for head all our children are elect and therefore are truly brought into a covenant relationship with God. I'm not saying that this is some

kind of conditional promise God gives to each baptized child head for head. No, but what we are saying is that God has said in his word that he will establish his covenant with the elect children he has promised to raise up from amongst our children, and for the sake of those children with a view to those children, as I teach the Catechism students, those children call the shots. The elected children called the shots in the church. With a view to those children who will be there, whom God has promised will be there, who deserve the sign of the covenant, we baptize them all. We live by the promises of God. That's how it was in the Old Testament with circumcision. That's how it is in the New Testament with baptism.

Now, everything we've said becomes even clearer when we continue to look at Isaiah 59:21 and we look at the blessings which God promises. What are the blessings God promises here in Isaiah 59:21? Well, I have three. First, "My spirit." That's the blessing God promises, "My spirit that is upon thee," Jesus Christ. That spirit, of course is the Holy Spirit. God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit, and now those who are in Jesus Christ, members of him by faith, they are also partakers of his anointing and are given the blessing of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to you and me as the seed of Christ.

And now this passage also teaches us that the Holy Spirit is also given to our seed, the seed of the seed of Christ. "My spirit shall not depart out of thy mouth, or in my words," we'll get to that in a moment, "nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed." And what does the Holy Spirit do who is given to our children? What does the Holy Spirit do? Well, he regenerates us. He washes us clean from all our sins. He imparts to us a true and living faith. He brings us into that covenant communion with God. Congregation, our children are given the Holy Spirit. We sang it this morning, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has thou ordained strength." Where does that strength come from? Not who they are by nature, from the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Holy Spirit who is given to us by Christ, we have no strength.

So that's the first blessing, "My spirit." Second, "my words. My words which I have put in thy mouth," in Jesus' mouth, "shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed." And of course, if God's word is in our mouth and in the mouth of our children, that also implies that God's word is in their hearts because if it's only in their mouths and not in their hearts, that's sheer hypocrisy. God's word is in the hearts of our children and having God's word in our hearts and our mouths means that we speak God's praises and we love God's truth, and that's true for us and our children. And you see it in the children. Our children know God. They love God. You hear God's word on their mouth and you see God's word in their heart. They know Jesus as their Lord and Savior and they praise his name.

That's the second blessing and then the third blessing that this passage gives, very end of verse 21, "from henceforth and forever." And the idea of those words is this: God will keep his covenant people. He will never cast them off. Though their sins are great, he is faithful. From one generation to the next, even until the day of Jesus Christ, his second coming, God will keep his covenant.

Beloved, that's really what explains the survival of the church. That explains why your children are growing up praising the Lord. It's not because of you. It's not because of this church. It's because of the Lord. It's because of the Lord and his covenant faithfulness. And it's because of all these realities that the New Testament church can continue to baptize her covenant children even until the day that Jesus Christ comes again on the clouds of glory because God is faithful, he keeps his promises.

That's why we baptize our children and when our little children get older, we are confident too that their faith will be strengthened as they are reminded of their baptism, and they consider what that means for them as God's covenant people, your sins are washed away by the blood and spirit of Christ. God has delivered us from our sin and misery and he preserves us in that deliverance. Congregation, let's praise the Lord for his covenant goodness to us. Amen.

Let us pray.

Our Father, it is good to be reminded of the relationship of friendship we have with thee and we are impressed with just how great that relationship is because not only is thy covenant with us, but in thy sheer grace thou has chosen to save the children as well. Lord, there is no bounds, no boundary to thy mercy, thy grace is exceedingly great. We pray that we might rest in thy grace and thy mercy in this day, that we might be filled with joy and we might enjoy the covenant friendship we have with thee and live faithfully as thy friends. To thy name be the glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.