

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 224

BABIES

*“And God blessed them, and
God said unto them,
Be fruitful, and multiply.”*

Genesis 1:28

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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BABIES

#224

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GOD'S IMAGE AND GOD'S BLESSING

John Calvin (1509-1564)

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.—Genesis 1:26-28

MAN is a creature noble above all others and has in himself worth that exceeds all visible creatures. That is why God deliberates when He prepares to create him. It is true that the angels are above us because they enjoy the presence of God. And their position is more honorable than we can imagine because they are God's messengers. They are even ministers of His power and the governance that He exercises in this world. But of all things above and below, nothing approaches man.

That is why the philosophers have also called him "a little world." If you wish to ponder what is in men, you will find so many wondrous things that it would be like taking a tour of the whole world. It is noteworthy, then, that God begins to consult at this point; not that He encounters problems, but He does so in order to express better the infinite kindness He wanted to extend to us. Therefore, if Moses had simply stated that God finally created man, we would not be so moved or touched by knowing His grace, such as He has revealed it in His nature. But when God compares man to an excellent and singular work and engages counsel as if He were thinking about a matter of great importance, we must be touched even more deeply by knowing that *man* is where God wanted His glory to shine. Otherwise, why is it important that we differ from brute beasts? Is it a part of our substance? We have been taken from the ground. Like oxen, asses, and dogs, our origin is all the same. How is it that we come by a status so high that we approach our God, that we have the capacity to reason and understand, and then have lordship over all? Where does that come from, except that it pleased God to set us apart? Now that difference is pointed out to us when God declares [that] He wishes to make a major work that is greater than everything else He had done. Although the sun and the moon are such noble creatures that they appear to be divine, although the heavens also have an appearance that astonishes and delights men, although the great diversity of fruits and other things that we see here on earth are designed to declare unto us a divine majesty, the fact remains that if we

compare all of that with man, we will find in man much grander and more exquisite¹ features...

At this point, we could ask, "With whom does God consult?"...The Father was the sovereign cause and source of all things, and He here enters into consultation with His wisdom and His power...Our Lord Jesus Christ is the everlasting Wisdom that resides in God and has always had His essence in Him. He is one of the Trinity! The Holy Spirit is God's Power. Things will flow very well if we say that the Person of the Father is introduced here because we have the starting point for talking about God when He says, "Let us make man in our image and likeness"...When it is said here that man is to be created in the image of God, after His likeness, it is to declare that there are to be in him such powers and gifts that they serve as signs and imprints to show that the human race is like God's lineage,² as Paul proves with the Gentile poet's saying in the seventeenth chapter of Acts: "For we are also his offspring" (Act 17:28)...

We must now understand wherein lie that image and that resemblance or that likeness and conformity with God. Is it in the body or in the soul, or is it in this lordship that has been given to men? Many are they who relate this to the body. In truth, there is such creative skill manifested in the form of the human body that one can say it is *an* image of God, for if His majesty appears in every part of the world, greater is the reason that it should appear in what is much more exquisite. But the fact is that we will not find such perfection in the human body as the image and conformity Moses speaks of. Far from it!

Consequently, neither the hair nor the eyes, the feet nor the hands will lead us to where Moses is guiding us. As for the superiority and the pre-eminence that have been given to man above all creatures, those human features do not convey the image of God, for those are external features that will not lead us very high. Yet for all that, we must come to the *soul*, which is the most worthy and precious part of man. Although God has displayed the great treasures of His power, goodness, and wisdom in forming us, yet the soul, as I have said, has reason, understanding, and will, which is much more than anything to be found in this external body.

Now, since the point that the image of God is principally in the soul and extends to the body as an accessory has been exhausted and resolved, we must now consider what the image of God consists of and in what respect we conform to it and are like it...

¹ **exquisite** – extremely beautiful, so as to excite delight or admiration; brought to a high degree of perfection.

² **lineage** – descendant of a specified ancestor.

Our father Adam, being alienated from his Creator, was given over to shame and ignominy,³ and God stripped him of the excellent gifts with which He had previously adorned him...But because God repairs His image in us through our Lord Jesus Christ, that image which had been effaced in Adam, we can better understand the import of that conformity and likeness that man had in the beginning with God. For when Paul says in Colossians 3 that we must be renewed according to the image of the One Who created us (Col 3:10), and then in Ephesians 4, when he mentions righteousness and true holiness as the characteristics to which we must be conformed (Eph 4:24), he shows that the image of God is important: that our souls as well as our bodies must be guided by a certain uprightness and that there is nothing in us that approaches the righteousness of God. It is true that Paul does not give a complete enumeration⁴ there, and then he does not speak in general terms either, in order to include everything that testifies to the image of God. But when speaking of the principal characteristics, he tells us what the accessory characteristics are.

In short, the soul must be cleansed of all vanity and all falsehood and God's clarity must shine in it so that there will be a capacity for judgment, discretion, and prudence. That is why God repairs His image in us when He conforms us to His righteousness and renews us by His Holy Spirit so that we can walk in a holy manner. Because that is true, we see at what point we must begin if we want to determine what the image of God is. Such is the beginning of God's image in us, but that is not all there is...When mention is made of the image of God in man and we are blind to the cause of the confusion caused by sin, we must note those passages of Paul and at the same time find in Jesus Christ that which is no longer in us because we have been deprived of it through the ingratitude of our father Adam. Then we will see that man was created in such purity and integrity of nature that his soul possessed a wondrous prudence and was not shrouded in falsehood, hypocrisy, and ignorance, as we see now that there is in us only vanity and darkness. Consequently, there was a sincere longing to obey God and take pleasure in everything good, wherein were no unwholesome desires that urge us to evil, for all our affections are acts of rebellion against God. Then the body was so well and appropriately balanced that every small segment was ready and prompt to serve and honor Him. Such was man, disposed to walk in holiness and in all righteousness. In him was such an array of divine gifts that God's glory would shine everywhere, within and without. That, then, characterizes that image...

Moses adds, **“He made him in the image of God, and he created him male and female in his image.”** That repetition is not superfluous, for if we assembled all the fine words in the world to adorn that excellent work of God, it would be im-

³ **ignominy** – disgrace.

⁴ **enumeration** – numbered list.

possible to come close...Moses had good reason to want to give us an opportunity to consider more attentively the fact that we were created in the image of God. If we consider our bodies, they are formed from the earth...with the intention of making [them] a dwelling place for His good favor and the gifts of His Holy Spirit so that we would bear His image. That then is the intention of Moses' repetition. It is so we will be able to glorify our God often for being generous with us and ranking us among His creatures and even giving us superiority over them, but also for imprinting His marks on us and wanting us to be His children...

Now it is said that **“male and female were created.”** And Moses sometimes speaks here using the plural number and sometimes using the singular to refer to both sexes, as when he says, “Let us make man in our image,” then adds, “Let them have dominion.” Now we could say that the men who come from Adam will have dominion, but so as not to exclude women, he adds “male and female,” and that they were so created. At this point, we could contrast Paul's passage where he says that man alone, not woman, is the image of God (1Co 11:7) and think that there was some contradiction. But the answer is very easy to come by because Moses is speaking here of the gifts that were communicated to both sexes. Now there is reason and understanding in the man as well as in the woman. There is *will*; there is the ability to discriminate between good and evil. In brief, everything that belongs to the image of God...It is noteworthy that it is said in other passages that there is in our Lord Jesus Christ neither male nor female (Gal 3:28). That means that His grace extends to the man and the woman so that we all become sharers in that grace. Since we have resolved that point beyond contradiction, we can see that man was created not as male only, but also as female, and that both have borne the image of God...

Then the text speaks of the *blessing* God gave Adam. He first says to him and his wife, “Be fruitful and multiply on the earth,” and then adds, secondly, “Have dominion over the animals, over the birds and the fish, and subdue them.” The first blessing is the same for humans, animals, fish, and birds. They are to multiply by generation.⁵ Now we have already stated that man is not to attribute his origin to some inferior cause of nature, but he must have a Creator. Why so? *Because we are all the products of His blessing!* That is why Scripture often tells us that the fruit of the womb is a compensation from God, that is, *a special gift* (cf. Psa 127:3) so that we will not be so brutish⁶ as to think that the man begets by his power and the woman conceives and that God is not the author of their lineage.

So we must take note of God's blessing here spoken of, for [we see in Gen 30:2] that Jacob said to his wife Rachel, when she was importuning⁷ him to give her a

⁵ **generation** – the act of producing children; begetting offspring.

⁶ **brutish** – stupid.

⁷ **importuning** – harassing with troublesome insistence.

child, “Am I God?” Therein he shows that men are not to speak this way, but that God must be glorified since He grants them the grace to be *fathers* and the women to be *mothers* ... This, then, is the result of that blessing: that we will know that God declared at the beginning that He wanted the human race to multiply and that, in our day and time, when He provides a lineage and children, *it is a special blessing He bestows on fathers and mothers and a treasure they must acknowledge as being from Him and for which they must pay Him homage.*

In addition, let us understand that sin produces the inequality we see in the fact that all men will not always father children, that all children emerging from a mother’s womb will not always be alike, that there will be some who are already feeble and headed for the grave, and that some will even be bent, one-eyed, blind, hunchbacked, and crippled. God shows in all that is disfigured and deformed that His blessing is diminished, even though it is not completely extinguished. We will even see women often abort.⁸ What is the reason? Adam’s sin is given as the reason so that we will lower our eyes in the realization that we are rejected and cast far from the grace that was conferred upon us by God at the first creation. With regard to God’s blessing, this is what we are to observe: by virtue of that word that He spoke once and for all, children are born now, the world is sustained in this way, and generations succeed one another from age to age.

In addition, this blessing carries with it a much greater privilege than the beasts have; for the oxen, asses, and dogs will beget young, as will the wolves and all the rest. But do their offspring enjoy the same dignity as man’s? Therefore, when God gives men and women offspring, He establishes them as His lieutenants;⁹ for a man cannot be a father unless he is there as one representing the Person of God. There is only one Father, properly speaking, as our Lord Jesus Christ said (Mat 23:9). And that is understood to mean Father of both souls and bodies. That very honorable title, therefore, belongs only to our Creator. That is, He is our Father, yet we are permitted to say “my father” and “my mother” in this world, though that results from God’s gift whereby He is pleased to share His title with creatures as frail as we. Therefore, let us know that the privilege God gives those who produce a posterity¹⁰ is that He wanted to make them His lieutenants, as it were. Therefore, we ought to prize and magnify His grace all the more...

Now, that being the case, Moses rightly proposes the second blessing, which had previously been given by God to the world, I mean, among creatures. Until man was brought forth, there were plants and pasturage; there were lights in the heaven. But even though the sun is called the guide by day and the moon the guide by night, they are not said to *rule*, properly speaking. In fact, it is impossible for them

⁸ **abort** – suffer miscarriage.

⁹ **lieutenants** – persons representing or performing the work of a superior.

¹⁰ **posterity** – descendants.

to do so. For what good would it have done the earth with the many good things provided on it if there had not been someone to possess them? So Adam had to be created to live on it, and he had to have God's grace to produce a lineage and in this way be multiplied.

From *John Calvin's Sermons on Genesis*, Vol. 1, The Banner
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John Calvin (1509-1564): French theologian, pastor, and important leader during the Protestant Reformation; born in Noyon, Picardie, France.



BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.—Genesis 1:28

THIS is a *command* of God added for the creature. But, good God, what has been lost for us here through sin! How blessed was that state of man in which the begetting of offspring was linked with the highest respect and wisdom, indeed with the knowledge of God! Now the flesh is so overwhelmed by the leprosy of lust that in the act of procreation¹ the body becomes downright brutish and cannot beget in the knowledge of God.

Thus, the power of procreation remained in the human race, but very much debased² and even completely overwhelmed by the leprosy of lust, so that procreation is only slightly more moderate than that of the brutes. Added to this are the perils of pregnancy and of birth, the difficulty of feeding the offspring, and other endless evils, all of which point out to us the enormity of original sin.³ Therefore, the blessing, which remains until now in nature, is, as it were, a cursed and debased blessing if you compare it with that first one. Nevertheless, God established it and preserves it.

So let us gratefully acknowledge this “marred blessing.” And let us keep in mind that the unavoidable leprosy of the flesh,⁴ which is nothing but disobedience and loathsomeness attached to bodies and minds, is the punishment of sin. Moreover, let us wait in hope for the death of this flesh that we may be set free from these loathsome conditions and may be restored even beyond the point of that first creation of Adam...

¹ **procreation** – the activity of conceiving and bearing children.

² **debased** – ruined in character.

³ **original sin** – Original sin, in its full extent, is the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want [*lack*] of original righteousness, and the corruption of the whole nature. All and every one of Adam’s natural race are born or conceived in it: Rom 5:12, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Psa 51:5, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” It is derived to us from Adam, the original of mankind, Rom 5:12 forecited. And it is conveyed to us by natural generation: Job 14:4, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.” Psa 51:5 forecited. Even holy parents convey it to their children because they procreate their children after their own natural image: Gen 5:3, “And Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth.” Now, our natural state is a sinful state, in respect of original sin; inasmuch as original sin, being a fountain of sin, remains entire in its guilt, filth, and power on every man as long as he is in that state. (Thomas Boston, *Works*, Vol. 7, 9)

⁴ **leprosy of the flesh** – the destructive power of lust.

Although Adam had fallen because of his sin, he had the promise...that from his flesh, which had become subject to death, there should be born for him a shoot of life. So he understood that he was to produce offspring, especially since the blessing, “Be fruitful, and multiply” (Gen 1:28), had not been withdrawn, but had been reaffirmed in the promise of the Seed, Who would crush the serpent’s head (Gen 3:15). Accordingly, in our judgment, Adam did not know his Eve simply because of the passion of his flesh; but the need of achieving salvation through the blessed Seed impelled him too.

Therefore, no one should take offense at the mention of the fact that Adam knew his Eve. Although original sin has made this work of procreation, which owes its origin to God, something shameful at which we see pure ears taking offense, nevertheless, spiritually- minded men should make a distinction between original sin and the product of creation. The work of procreation is something *good* and *holy* that God has created; for it comes from God, Who bestows His blessing on it.⁵ Moreover, if man had not fallen, it would have been a very pure and very honorable work. Just as no one has misgivings about conversing, eating, or drinking with his wife—for all these are honorable actions—so also the act of begetting would have been something most highly regarded.

So, then, procreation remained in nature when it had become depraved; but there was added to it that poison of the devil, namely, the prurience⁶ of the flesh and the execrable⁷ lust that is also the cause of sundry adversities and sins, all of which nature in its unimpaired state would have been spared. We know from experience the excessive desire of the flesh; and, for many, not even marriage is an adequate remedy. If it were, there would not be the occurrences of adultery and fornication that, alas, are only too frequent. Even among married people themselves, how manifold are the ways in which the weakness of the flesh displays itself! All this stems, not from what was created or from the blessing, which is from God, but from sin and the curse, which is the outgrowth of sin. Therefore, they must be kept separate from God’s creation, which is good; and we see that the Holy Spirit has no misgivings about speaking of it.

Not only is there no disgrace in what Moses is saying here about God’s creation and His blessing, but it was also necessary for him to impart this teaching and to

⁵ This blessing of God may be regarded as the source from which the human race has flowed. And we must so consider it not only with reference to the whole, but also, as they say, in every particular instance. For we are fruitful or barren in respect of offspring, as God imparts His power to some and withholds it from others. But here Moses would simply declare that Adam with his wife was formed for the production of offspring, in order that men might replenish the earth. (John Calvin, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 97-98)

⁶ **prurience** – having an excessive interest in sexual matters.

⁷ **execrable** – detestable; deserving to be cursed.

write it down because of future heresies, such as those of the Nicolaitans,⁸ Tatian,⁹ etc., but especially because of the papacy. We see that the papists are in no way impressed by what is written above (Gen 1:27): “The Lord created them male and female.” The way they live and the way they bind and obligate themselves by vows, it seems that they regard themselves as neither male nor female. It makes no impression on them that it is written above: The Lord brought Eve to Adam, and Adam said, “This is bone from my bones” (cf. Gen 2:22–23). The promise and the blessing make no impression: “Be fruitful, and multiply” (Gen 1:28). The Ten Commandments make no impression on them: “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exo 20:12). Their own origin makes no impression on them, namely, that they were born as the result of the union of a man and a woman! Passing over, disregarding, and casting aside all these considerations, they force their priests, monks, and nuns into perpetual celibacy,¹⁰ as if the life of married people, of which Moses is speaking here, were detestable and reprehensible.

But the Holy Spirit has a purer mouth and purer eyes than the pope does. For this reason, He has no misgivings about referring to the...union of husband and wife, which those [Catholic scholars] condemn as execrable and unclean. Nor does the Holy Spirit do this in only one passage. All Scripture is full of such accounts, so that on this score, too, some have restrained young monks and nuns from reading the holy books. What need is there of saying more? Such was the devil’s raging against holy matrimony, God’s creation, that the papists compelled men to forswear married life...One should, therefore, guard against those doctrines of demons (1Ti 4:1) and learn to hold matrimony in honor and to speak with respect of this way of life. For we see that God instituted it, and we hear it praised in the Ten Commandments, where it is stated: “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exo 20:12). And to this is added the blessing, “Be fruitful, and multiply” (Gen 1:28). About this, we hear the Holy Spirit speaking here, and His mouth is chaste. But the vices and the ignominy,¹¹ which through sin became attached to what God had created, we should not ridicule or laugh at; but we should cover them, just as we see God cover naked Adam and Eve with garments after their sin. Marriage should be treated with honor; from it, we all originate because it is a nursery not only for the state but also for the church and the kingdom of Christ until the end of the world.

⁸ **Nicolaitans** – followers of a deviant form of Christianity in Asia Minor, who were sharply condemned by John in his letters to Ephesus (Rev 2:6) and Pergamum (2:15) and who apparently practiced immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols.

⁹ **Tatian** – founder of the Encratites, a group who practiced an ascetic mode of life, including permanent abstinence from eating meat, drinking wine, and marriage.

¹⁰ **celibacy** – the state of living unmarried.

¹¹ **ignominy** – disgrace; shame.

The heathen and other godless men do not understand this glory of marriage. They merely compile the weaknesses that exist both in the life of married people and in the female sex. They separate the unclean from the clean in such a manner that they retain the unclean, but what is clean they do not see. In this manner also, some godless jurists¹² pass a wicked judgment on this very book of Genesis and say that it contains nothing but the lewd activities of the Jews. If, in addition to this, there is contempt of marriage and an impure celibacy, are not these men worthy of being exposed to the crimes and punishments of the people of Sodom? But let us disregard these men, and let us hear Moses.

It is not enough for the Holy Spirit to state, “Adam knew Eve”; but He also adds, “his wife.” For He does not approve of dissolute licentiousness¹³ and promiscuous cohabitation.¹⁴ He wants each one to live content with his *own* wife. Although the intimate relationship of married people is in no respect as pure as it would have been in the state of innocence, nevertheless, in the midst of that weakness brought on by lust and of all the rest of our misery, God’s blessing persists. This is written here, not because of Adam and Eve (for they had long since been reduced to ashes when these words were written by Moses), but because of ourselves, so that those who cannot contain themselves might live content with their own Eve and might not touch other women.

The expression “he knew his wife” is unique to Hebrew, for Latin and Greek do not express themselves in this way. However, it is a very apt expression, not only because of its chasteness and modesty, but also because of its specific meaning; for the [Hebrew verb] has a wider scope than “to know” has among us. It denotes not only abstract knowledge but, so to speak, feeling and experience. For example, when Job says of the ungodly, “They will know what it is to act contrary to God,” he wants to say, “They will experience and feel it.”¹⁵ So also Psalm 51:3: “For I know my sin,” that is, “I feel and experience it.” Likewise Genesis 22:12: “Now I know that thou fearest God,” that is, “I have learned the fact and have experienced it.” So also Luke 1:34: “Seeing I know not a man.” Mary indeed knew many men, but she had experienced and felt no man. In this manner, Adam, in this passage, knew Eve, his wife—not objectively or speculatively, but he actually experienced his Eve as a woman.

The addition “and she conceived, and bare Cain” is a sure indication of a better physical condition than there is today. For at that time there were not so many ineffective cohabitations as there are in this declining world; but when Eve was known only once by Adam, she immediately became pregnant.

¹² **jurists** – experts in or writers on law.

¹³ **dissolute licentiousness** – unrestrained indulgence in sensual pleasure.

¹⁴ **promiscuous cohabitation** – living unmarried with various sexual partners.

¹⁵ Apparently either Job 9:5 or Job 19:29 is meant here.

Here the question arises why Moses says, “She bore Cain,” and not rather, as below, “She bare a son, and called his name Seth.” Yet Cain and Abel were also sons. Why, then, are they not called sons? The answer is that this happens because of their descendants. Abel, who was slain by his brother, perished physically; but Cain perished spiritually through his sin, and he did not propagate that nursery of the Church and of the kingdom of Christ. All his posterity perished in the Flood. Therefore, neither blessed Abel nor cursed Cain has the name of son; but it was Seth from whose descendants Christ, the promised Seed, would be born.

From “Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1-5” in *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 1, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, Concordia Publishing House; used by permission, www.cph.org.

Martin Luther (1483-1546): German monk, former Roman Catholic priest, theologian, and influential leader of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation; born in Eisleben, Saxony.



In the propagation of the human race, [God’s] special benediction is conspicuous; and, therefore, the birth of every child is rightly deemed the effect of divine visitation.—*Martin Luther*

THE HERITAGE OF THE LORD

Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.—Psalm 127:3

IN the words [above], children are represented as a *blessing*, in which are two things: (1) The author from whom children come: the Lord. (2) The quality in which we receive this blessing, set forth by a double notion: (1) as “an heritage”; (2) as “his reward.”

The word *heritage* is often, by a Hebraism, put for “a man’s portion,” be it good or bad. It is used in a *bad* sense, as Job 20:29: “This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God.” In the *good* sense, Isaiah 54:17: “This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD.” *Reward* is put for any gift that cometh by promise or with respect unto obedience because in a promise there is a contract implied: if we will do so and so, God will do so and so for us.

DOCTRINE: *It is a blessing that we have from God—and so it should be accounted—that we have children born of our loins.* It is not only a bare gift: so it is to the wicked; but [it is] a *blessing*, one of the temporal¹ mercies of the covenant: “Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways” (Psa 128:1). One of the blessings is verse 3: “Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.” This is a part of our portion and heritage. The saints have so acknowledged it: “Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant” (Gen 33:5). Jacob speaketh like a father, and like a godly father. Not only given, but *graciously* given. As a father, he acknowledged it a gift—as a godly father, coming from mere grace.

This may be gathered from the story of Job. Compare 1:2-3 with 1:18-19. Observe, when his blessings are reckoned up, first his numerous issue² is mentioned before his great estate. The chief part of a man’s wealth and prosperity *is his children*—the choicest of outward blessings...But observe again, in the 18th and 19th verses, the loss of children is mentioned as the *greatest* affliction...

1. THERE IS MUCH OF GOD’S PROVIDENCE EXERCISED IN AND ABOUT CHILDREN.

[1] **In giving strength to conceive.** It is not everyone’s mercy. Sarah obtained it by faith: “Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed” (Heb 11:11). Though bringing forth children be according to the course of nature, yet

¹ **temporal** – pertaining to the present life as distinguished from a future existence.

² **issue** – offspring; children.

God hath a great hand in it. Many godly [couples] have been denied the benefit of children and need other promises to make up that want: “For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off” (Isa 56:4-5).

[2] In framing the child in the womb. It is not the parents, but God. The parents cannot tell whether it be male or female, beautiful or deformed.³ They know not the number of the veins and arteries, bones and muscles. “For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them” (Psa 139:13-16)...

[3] In giving strength to bring forth. The heathens had a goddess that presided over this work. [Yet, God’s] providence reacheth to the beasts. It is by the Lord that hinds do calve: “The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve” (Psa 29:9). And there is a promise to them that fear Him: “She shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity, and holiness with sobriety” (1Ti 2:15). It must be understood, as all temporal promises are, with the exception of His will. But thus much we gather: it is a blessing that falleth under the care of His providence, and that by promise, so far as God seeth fit to make it good. Rachel died in this case; every godly woman hath not this deliverance. So did Phinehas’ wife (1Sa 4:20). God might have taken this advantage against you, to have cut you off. If deliverance were not so ordinary, it would be accounted miraculous. The sorrows and pains of travail are a monument of God’s displeasure: “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen 3:16). To preserve a weak vessel in great danger, women’s pains are more grievous than the females of any kind. And for the child, a sentence of death waylaid it as it was coming into the world.

[4] The circumstances of deliverance. In every birth, there are some new circumstances to awaken our stupid thoughts to consider the work of God. For God doth all His works with some variety, lest we should be cloyed⁴ with the commonness of them.

³ Modern science now permits us to know the sex or health of our babies before birth.

⁴ cloyed – filled to excess.

2. THEY ARE A GREAT BLESSING IN THEMSELVES, AND THE MORE OF THEM THE GREATER BLESSING. Therefore, they should be acknowledged and improved as *blessings*. Certainly, there is a more special favor showed us in our relations than in our possessions: “House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD” (Pro 19:14). So for children. By them, the parent is continued and multiplied: they are a part of himself; and in them, he liveth when he is dead and gone. It is a shadow of eternity; therefore, the outward appurtenances⁵ of life are not as valuable as children are. Besides, they are capable of the image of God. By them the world is replenished, the Church multiplied, a people continued, [in order] to know, love, and serve God, when we are dead and gone. We read of [Wisdom] “rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men” (Pro 8:31). In the habitable parts of the world, there are great whales; but men were Christ’s delight. Especially to God’s confederates—*parents in covenant with God*—are children a greater mercy. David was such a one. [We read of] “thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me” (Eze 16:20). These are...in a most proper sense, a heritage from the Lord. It is said, “The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose” (Gen 6:12). [Shem] begat sons and daughters to God: “Unto Shem also, the father of the children of Eber, the brother of Japhet the elder, even to him were born children” (Gen 10:21)...

God hath implanted affection in parents to their children: He hath a Son Himself, and He knoweth how He loveth Him, and He loveth Him for His holiness. “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Heb 1:9). So many times, in a condescension to good parents, He bestoweth [the privilege of having] godly children. To a minister, those whom he converts to God are his glory, his joy, and his crown of rejoicing at the day of the Lord (cf. 1Th 2:19-20). To those whom we have been a means to bring into the world: if they are in the covenant of grace, it is a greater blessing than to see them monarchs of the world...

USE 1: To reprove those who are not thankful for children, but do grudge and look upon it as a burden, when God blesseth them with a numerous issue. These murmur at that which is in itself a *mercy*. When we [lack] them, we value them; when we are full of children, we are full of distrust and murmuring. It was counted an *honor* to be a father in Israel. Surely, those that fear God should not count a happiness to be a burden! “Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD” (Psa 128:3-4)...

USE 2: Reproof to those who do not acknowledge and improve this mercy. Surely, parents should acknowledge God in *every* child given to them. Much of His

⁵ **appurtenances** – belongings.

providence is seen in giving and withholding children. We have songs of thanksgiving very frequent in Scripture upon this occasion. It is a thing wherein God will have His bounty taken notice of by solemn praises; and for *every* child, God should have a new honor from you!...Oh! It will be a great happiness to be parents to such as shall be heirs of glory! As children ought to be looked upon as a great mercy, so also as a great trust, which as it is managed may occasion much joy or much grief. If parents dote⁶ upon them, they make them idols, not servants of the Lord. If they neglect education, they will surely prove crosses and curses to them, or if they taint them by their example.

USE 3: To exhort parents to bring up their children for God. For if they be a heritage *from* the Lord, they must be a heritage *to* the Lord. Give them up to Him again, as you had them from Him at first; for whatever is from Him must be improved for Him. Dedicate them to God, educate them for God,⁷ and He will take possession of them in due time...Now, if the dedication be sound, it will engage you to a serious education. God dealeth with us as Pharaoh's daughter did with Moses' mother: "Take this child away, and nurse it for me" (Exo 2:9).

MOTIVES: 1. The express charge of God, Who hath made it your duty. "Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deu 6:7)...Now we should make conscience of these commands, as we will answer it to God [in the Day of Judgment].

2. The example of the saints, who have been careful to discharge this trust. God presumeth it of Abraham: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen 18:19)...Surely they are unworthy to have children that do not take care that Christ may have an interest in them.

3. The importance of this duty. Next to the preaching of the Word, the education of children is one of the greatest duties in the world; for the service of Christ, of the church, and state dependeth upon it. Families are the seminaries of church and commonwealth. Religion dwelt first in families; and as they grew into numerous societies, they grew into churches. As religion was first hatched there, so there the devil seeketh to crush it...

4. To countermine Satan, who hath ever envied the succession of churches, and the growth and progress of Christ's kingdom. [He] therefore seeketh to crush it in the egg by seeking to pervert persons while they are young and, like wax, capable

⁶ **dote** – to bestow excessive love or fondness on.

⁷ This means instructing them in the faith, especially in family worship. See FGB 188, *Family Worship* and 204, *Biblical Parenthood*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

of any form and impression. As Pharaoh would destroy the Israelites by killing their young ones, so Satan, who hath a great spite at the kingdom of Christ, knoweth there is no such [comprehensive] way to subvert and overcome it as by perverting youth and supplanting family duties. He knoweth that this is a blow at the root. Therefore, what care should parents take to season children with holy principles that they may overcome the wicked one by the Word of God abiding in them!

From “Sermon upon Psalm CXXVII.3” in *The Works of Thomas Manton*,
Vol. 18, Solid Ground Christian Books, used by permission,
www.solid-ground-books.com.

Thomas Manton (1620-1677): Nonconformist Puritan preacher; born in Lawrence-Lydiat, county of Somerset, England.



LOVING AND CARING FOR BABIES

J. R. Miller (1840-1912)

GOD has so constituted us that in loving and caring for our own children the richest and best things in our natures are drawn out. Many of the deepest and most valuable lessons ever learned are read from the pages of unfolding child-life. We best understand the feelings and affections of God toward us when we bend over our own child and see in our human parenthood a faint image of the divine Fatherhood. Then in the culture of character, there is no influence more potent than that which touches us when our children are laid in our arms. Their helplessness appeals to every principle of nobleness in our hearts. Their innocence exerts over us a purifying power. The thought of our responsibility for them exalts every faculty of our souls. In the very care that they exact, they bring blessing to us. When old age comes, very lonely is the home that has neither son nor daughter to return with grateful ministries to bring solace¹ and comfort to the declining years!

It is a new marriage when the firstborn enters the home. It draws the wedded lives together in a closeness they have never known before. It touches chords in their hearts that have lain silent until now. It calls out powers that have never been exercised before. Hitherto unsuspected beauties of character appear. The laughing, heedless girl of a year ago is transformed into a thoughtful woman. The careless, unsettled youth leaps into manly strength and into fixedness of character when he looks into the face of his own child and takes it in his bosom. New aims rise up before the young parents; new impulses begin to stir in their hearts. Life takes on at once a new and deeper meaning. The glimpse they have had into its solemn mystery sobers them. The laying in their hands of a new and sacred burden, an immortal life, to be guided and trained by them, brings to them a sense of responsibility that makes them thoughtful. Self is no longer the center. There is a new object to live for, an object great enough to fill all their life and engross their highest powers. It is only when the children come that life becomes real, that parents begin to learn to live. We talk about training our children, but they train us first, teaching us many a sacred lesson, stirring up in us many a slumbering gift and possibility, calling out many a hidden grace and disciplining our wayward powers into strong and harmonious character...

Our homes would be very cold and dreary without the children. Sometimes we weary of their noise. They certainly bring us a great deal of care and solicitude.²

¹ **solace** – pleasure; enjoyment.

² **solicitude** – a feeling of excessive concern.

They cost us no end of toil. When they are very young, they break our rest many a weary night with their colics³ and teething; and when they grow older, they well-nigh break our hearts many a time with their waywardness. After they come to us, we may as well bid farewell to living for self and to personal ease and independence if we mean to do faithful duty as parents.

There are some who therefore look upon the coming of children as a misfortune. They talk about them lightly as “responsibilities.” They regard them as in the way of their pleasure. They see no blessing in them. But it is cold selfishness that looks upon children in this way. Instead of being hindrances to true and noble living, they are helps. They bring benedictions⁴ from heaven when they come, and while they stay, they are perpetual benedictions...

When the children come, what shall we do with them? What duties do we owe to them? How may we discharge our responsibility? What is the parents’ part in making the home and the home-life? It is impossible to overstate the importance of these questions...It is a great thing to take these young and tender lives, rich with so many possibilities of beauty, of joy, of power, all of which may be wrecked, and to become responsible for their shaping and training and for the upbuilding⁵ of their character. This is what must be thought of in the making of a home. It must be a home in which children will grow up for true and noble life, for God and for heaven.

Upon the parents the chief response rests. They are the builders of the home. From them it receives its character, whether good or evil. It will be just what they make it. If it is happy, they must be the authors of the happiness; if it be unhappy, the blame must rest with them. Its tone, its atmosphere, its spirit, its influence, it will take from them. They have the making of the home in their own hands, and God holds them responsible for it.

This responsibility rests upon *both* the parents. Some fathers seem to forget that any share of the burden and duty of making the home belongs to them. They leave it all to the mothers. They come and go as if they were scarcely more than boarders in their own house, with no active interest in the welfare of their children. They plead the demands of business as the excuse for their neglect. But where is the business that is so important as to justify a man’s evasion of the sacred duties that he owes to his own family? There cannot be any other work in this world that a man can do that will excuse him at God’s bar for having neglected the care of his own home and the training of his own children. No success in any department of the world’s work can positively atone for failure here. No piling up of this world’s

³ **colics** – acute abdominal pain.

⁴ **benedictions** – blessings; favor.

⁵ **upbuilding** – development.

treasures can compensate a man for the loss of those incomparable jewels—*his own children*.

In the prophet's parable, he said to the king, "And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone" (1Ki 20:40). May not this be the only plea that some fathers will have to offer when they stand before God without their children: "As I was busy here and there, they were gone." Men are busy in their worldly affairs, busy pressing their plans and ambitions to fulfillment, busy gathering money to lay up a fortune, busy chasing the world's honors and building up a name, busy in the quest for knowledge; and while they are busy, their children grow up, and when they turn to see if they are getting on well, they are gone. Then they try most earnestly to get them back again, but their intensest efforts avail not. It is too late then to do that blessed work for them and upon their lives that could so easily have been done in their tender years. Dr. Geikie's book, entitled *Life*,⁶ opens with these words: "Some things God gives often: some He gives only once. The seasons return again and again, and the flowers change with the months, but youth comes twice to none." Childhood comes but *once* with its opportunities. Whatever is done to stamp it with beauty must be done quickly.

Then it matters not how capable, how wise, how devoted the mother may be: the fact that she does her part well does not free the father in *any* degree from his share of the responsibility. Duties cannot be transferred. No other one's faithfulness can excuse or atone for my *unfaithfulness*. Besides, it is a wrong and an unmanly thing for a strong, capable man who claims to be the stronger vessel, to seek to put off on a woman, whom he calls the weaker vessel, duties and responsibilities that clearly belong to himself. There is a certain sense in which the mother is the real homemaker. It is in her hands that the tender life is laid for its first impressions. In all its education and culture, she comes the closer to it. Her spirit makes the home atmosphere. Yet from end to end of the Scriptures, the Law of God makes the *father* the head of the household and devolves⁷ upon him as such the responsibility for the upbuilding of his home, the training of his children, the care of all the sacred interests of his family.

The fathers should awake to the fact that they have something to do in making the life of their own homes besides providing food and clothing and paying taxes and bills. They owe to their homes the best influences of their lives. Whatever other duties press upon them, they should always find time to plan for the good of their own households. The very center of every man's life should be his home. Instead of being to him a mere boardinghouse where he eats and sleeps, and from which he starts out in the mornings to his work, it ought to be the place where his heart is anchored, where his hopes gather, to which his thoughts turn a thousand

⁶ Cunningham Geike, *Life: A Book for Young Men*.

⁷ **devolves** – transfers.

times a day, for which he toils and struggles, and into which he brings always the richest and best things of his life. He should realize that he is responsible for the character and the influence of his home-life, and that if it should fail to be what it ought to be, the blame and guilt must be upon *his* soul ...Even in these Christian days, men are found—men professing to be followers of Christ and to believe in the superiority of life itself to all things else—who give infinitely more thought and pains to the raising of cattle, the growing of crops, the building up of business, than to the training of their children. Something must be crowded out of every earnest, busy life. No one can do everything that comes to his hand. But it will be a fatal mistake if any father allows his duties to his home to be crowded out. They should rather have the first place. Anything else had better be neglected than his children: even religious work in the kingdom of Christ at large must not interfere with one's religious work in the kingdom of Christ in his home. No man is required by the vows and the spirit of his consecration to keep other men's vineyards so faithfully that he cannot keep his own. That a man has been a devoted pastor or a diligent church officer...will not atone for the fact that he was *an unfaithful father...*

Something must be said concerning the training of children. It is to be kept in mind that the object of the home is to build up manhood and womanhood. This work of training belongs to the parents and cannot be transferred. It is a most delicate and responsible duty, one from which a thoughtful soul would shrink with awe and fear were it not for the assurance of divine help. Yet there are many parents who do not stop to think of the responsibility that is laid upon them when a little child enters their home.

Look at it a moment. What is so feeble, so helpless, so dependent as a newborn baby? Yet look onward and see what a stretch of life lies before this feeble infant, away into the eternities. Think of the powers folded up in this helpless form and what the possible outcome may be. Who can tell what skill there may be lying unconscious yet in these tiny fingers, what eloquence or song in these little lips, what intellectual faculties in this brain, what power of love or sympathy in this heart? The parents are to take this infant and nurse it into manhood or womanhood, to draw out these slumbering powers and teach it to use them. That is, God wants a man trained for a great mission in the world, and life puts into the hands of a young father and mother a little baby, and bids them nurse it and train it for Him until the man is ready for his mission; or at least to have sole charge of his earliest years when the first impressions must be made, which shall mold and shape his whole career. When we look at a little child and remember all this, what a dignity surrounds the work of caring for it! Does God give to angels any work grander than this?

Women sigh for fame. They would be sculptors, and chisel out of the cold stone forms of beauty to fill the world with admiration of their skill. Or they would be poets, to write songs to thrill a nation and to be sung around the world. But is any work in marble so great as hers who has an immortal life laid in her hands to shape for its destiny? Is the writing of any poem in musical lines so noble a work as the training of the powers of a human soul into harmony? Yet there are women who regard the duties and cares of motherhood as too obscure and commonplace tasks for their hands. So when a baby comes, a nurse is hired, who for a weekly compensation agrees to take charge of the little one, that the mother may be free from such drudgery to devote herself to the nobler and worthier things that she finds to do.

Is the following indictment too strong? “A mother will secure from the nearest intelligence-office a girl who undertakes to relieve her of the charge of her little one and will hand over to this mere hireling, this ignorant stranger, the soul-mothering that God has entrusted to her. She has mothered the body—anyone will do to mother the soul. So the little one is left in the hands of this hireling, placed under her constant influence, subjected to the subtle impress of her spirit, to draw into its inner being the life, be it what it may, of this uncultured soul. She wakens its first thoughts, rouses its earliest emotions, brings the delicate action of motives to bear upon the will—generally in such hands a compound force of bullying and bribing, mean fear and mean desire—tends it, plays with it, lives with it; and thus the young mother is free to dress and drive, to visit and receive, to enjoy balls and operas, discharging her trust for an immortal life by proxy! Is there any malfeasance⁸ in office, in these days of dishonor, like unto this? Our women crowd the churches to draw the inspiration of religion for their daily duties, and then prove recreant⁹ to the first of all fidelities, *the most solemn of all responsibilities...*”¹⁰

Oh, that God would give every mother a vision of the glory and splendor of the work that is given to her when a baby is placed in her bosom to be nursed and trained! Could she have but one glimpse into the future of that life as it reaches on into eternity; could she look into its soul to see its possibilities; could she be made to understand her own personal responsibility for the training of this child, for the development of its life, and for its destiny—she would see that in all God’s world there is no other work so noble and so worthy of her best powers, and she would commit to no other hands the sacred and holy trust given to her...

⁸ **malfeasance** – wrongdoing; evil doing.

⁹ **recreant** – unfaithful to duties.

¹⁰ Richard H. Newton, *Motherhood: Lectures on Woman’s Work in the World* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1894), 140-141.

What we want to do with our children is not merely to control them and keep them in order, but to implant true principles deep in their hearts which shall rule their whole lives, to shape their character from within into Christlike beauty, and to make of them noble men and women, strong for battle and for duty. They are to be trained rather than governed. Growth of character, not merely good behavior, is the object of all home governing and teaching...

But when a little child in a mother's bosom is loved, nursed, caressed, held close to her heart, prayed over, wept over, talked with, for days, weeks, months, years, it is no mere fancy to say that the mother's life has indeed passed into the child's soul. What it becomes is determined by what the mother is. The early years settle what its character will be, and these are the mother's years.

O mothers of young children, I bow before you in reverence. Your work is most holy. You are fashioning the destinies of immortal souls. The powers folded up in the little ones that you hushed to sleep in your bosoms last night are powers that shall exist forever. You are preparing them for their immortal destiny and influence. Be faithful. Take up your sacred burden reverently. Be sure that your heart is pure and that your life is sweet and clean. The Persian [fable] says that the lump of clay was fragrant because it had lain on a rose. Let your life be as the rose, and then your child as it lies upon your bosom will absorb the fragrance. If there is no sweetness in the rose, the clay will not be perfumed.

History is full of illustrations of the power of parental influence. It either brightens or darkens the child's life to the close. Either it is a benediction that makes every day better and happier, or it is a curse that leaves blight and sorrow on every hour. Thousands have been saved from drifting away by the holy memories of happy, godly homes, or, when they have drifted away, have been drawn back by the same charm of power. There are no chains so strong as the cords that a true home throws about the heart.

When I think of the sacredness and the responsibility of parents, I do not see how any father and mother can look upon the little child that has been given to them and consider their duty to it, and not be driven to God by the very weight of the burden that rests upon them, to cry to Him for help and wisdom. When an impenitent man bends over the cradle of his firstborn, when he begins to realize that here is a soul that he must train, teach, fashion and guide through this world to God's bar, how can he longer stay away from God? Let him, as he bends over his child's crib to kiss its sweet lips, ask himself, "Am I true to my child while I shut God out of my own life? Am I able to meet this solemn responsibility of parenthood all alone, in my unaided human weakness, without divine help?" I know not how any father can honestly meet these questions as he looks upon his innocent, helpless child, given to him to shelter, to keep, to guide, and not fall instantly upon his knees and give himself to God.

From *Homemaking*, The Vision Forum, used by permission, www.visionforum.com.

J. R. Miller (1840-1912): Presbyterian pastor and gifted writer; Superintendent of the Presbyterian Board of Publication; born at Frankfort Springs, PA, USA.



God determines the numbers and names of every man's children.—*Thomas Boston*

SAVED IN CHILDBEARING

Stephen Charnock (1628-1680)

Notwithstanding she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety.—1 Timothy 2:15

THE fall of man was the fruit of the woman's first doctrine, and therefore she is not suffered to teach anymore (1Ti 2:12). The woman was deceived by the serpent, and so drew her husband and whole posterity into ruin (1Ti 2:13-14)...And because, upon this declaration of the apostle, some might be dejected by the consideration of the deep hand the woman had in the first fall [and] in the punishment inflicted upon them for it, the apostle in the text brings in a "notwithstanding" for their comfort.

Notwithstanding [Eve's] guilt in defection¹ [and] her punishment in childbearing, she hath as good a right to salvation as the man. So, by way of anticipation, the apostle here answers an objection that might be made: whether the guilt contracted by the woman and the punishment inflicted might not hinder her eternal salvation. The apostle answers, "No." Though [Eve] was first in the transgression and the pain of childbearing was the punishment of that first sin, yet the woman may arrive to everlasting salvation notwithstanding that pain, *if* she is adorned with those graces that are necessary for all Christians. Though the punishment remains, yet the believing woman is in the covenant of grace² [and] under the wings of the Mediator³ of that covenant, if she has faith (*the condition of the covenant*), which works by love and charity and is attended with holiness and renewal of the heart.

Observe: God hath gracious cordials⁴ to cheer up the hearts of believers in their distress, in the midst of those cases that are sufficient of themselves to cast them down. The apostle here alludes to that curse upon the woman: "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou

¹ **defection** – falling away from faith, i.e., eating the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:6).

² **Covenant of Grace** – the outworking in time of God's eternal purpose of redemption in Christ, in which God promises life eternal to His elect, on the ground of Christ's merits, by faith in Him.

³ **Mediator** – a go-between; "It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all Eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified." (1689 London Baptist Confession 8.1)

⁴ **cordials** – foods or medicines that comfort, gladden, or cheer the heart.

shalt bring forth children” (Gen 3:16). The punishment is peculiar to the married woman, besides that punishment that was common to her with the man.

Thy sorrow and thy conception: Hendiadys,⁵ say some: “the sorrow *of* thy conception.” The word *conception* (Gen 3:14) signifies the whole time of the woman’s bearing in the womb. [It] includes not only those pains in the very time of labor, but also all those precursory indispositions,⁶ [such as] the weakness of the stomach,⁷ heaviness of the head, irregular longings, and those other symptoms that accompany conceptions. Though this pain seems to be natural from the constitution of the body, yet since some other creatures do bring forth with little or no pain,⁸ it would not have been so with the woman in innocence because all pain, which is a punishment of sin, had not been incident⁹ to a sinless and immortal body.

We will consider the words [individually]:

Saved: It may note either the salvation of the soul or the preservation of the woman in childbearing. The first, I suppose, is principally intended. For the apostle here would signify some special comfort to women under that curse.

But the preservation of women in childbearing was a common thing, testified by daily experience in the worst as well as in the best women. Christianity did not bring the professors of it into a worse estate in those things that immediately depended upon God...yet a temporal preservation may be included. For when an eternal salvation is promised, temporal salvation is also promised, according to the methods of God’s wisdom and goodness in the course of His providence. There [is] in all such promises a tacit reserve,¹⁰ viz.,¹¹ if God sees it good for us and the manner of their preservation also, wherein the preservation of a believer differs from that of an unregenerate person. Others are preserved by God, as a merciful Creator and Governor in a way of common providence for the keeping up of the world. But believers are preserved in the way of promise and covenant, in the exercise of faith and by the special love of God as a tender Father, and their God in covenant with them through Christ.

In childbearing: *dia teknagonias*,¹² “through childbearing.” The preposition *through* is often taken for *in*, as Romans 4:11: “that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be [*dia*] not circumcised”—“believing in uncircumcision,” where it notes the state wherein they shall be saved. So it notes here,

⁵ **hendiadys** – a figure of speech in which two words, joined by *and*, express a single idea; for example “nice and warm,” instead of a noun and a modifier, “nicely warm.”

⁶ **precursory indispositions** – the bodily conditions and ailments that precede giving birth.

⁷ **weakness of the stomach** – nausea.

⁸ Aristotle (384-322 BC), *The History of Animals*, I.vii.c.ix.

⁹ **incident** – likely to happen.

¹⁰ **tacit reserve** – unspoken exception.

¹¹ **viz.** – abbreviation for Latin *videlicet*: that is; namely.

¹² Διὰ τεκνογονίας

not the *cause* of the salvation of the woman, but the *state* wherein she shall be saved. [It] amounts to this much: the punishment inflicted upon the woman for her first sin shall not be removed in this life; yet notwithstanding this, there is a certain way of salvation by faith, [even] though she passes through this punishment. For by “childbearing” is not meant a simple childbearing, but a childbearing in such a manner as God hath threatened [in Gen 3:16] with sorrow and grief.

If they continue: By *they* is not meant the children, as some imagine, because of the change of the singular to the plural. The sense then [would] run thus: she shall be saved, if the children remain in faith, etc. That would be absurd to think that the salvation of the mother should depend upon the faith and grace of the children, when it is sometimes seen that the children of a godly mother may prove as wicked as hell itself! But by *they* is meant the woman: the name *woman* is taken collectively for all women, and therefore the plural number is added. The apostle passes from the singular number to the plural, as he had done from the plural to the singular, verse 9: “In like manner let the women adorn themselves” in modesty, where he uses the plural. But verse 11 reassumes the other number again in his discourse. The graces that are here put as the conditions are *faith, charity, sanctification, sobriety*, where the apostle seems to oppose those to the first causes or ingredients of the defection: (1) *Faith* opposed to unbelief of the precept of God and the threatening annexed (Gen 2:16-17). (2) *Charity* opposed to disaffection to God; as though God were an enemy to their happiness and commanded a thing that did prejudice their happiness, whereupon must arise ill surmises¹³ of God and aversion¹⁴ from Him. (3) *Sanctification*.¹⁵ In opposition to this filthiness and pollution brought upon the soul by that first defection, there must therefore be in them an aim and endeavor to attain that primitive integrity and purity they then lost. (4) *Sobriety*, temperance, because giving the reins to sense¹⁶ and obeying the longings thereof was the cause of the fall (Gen 3:6). She saw that it was pleasant to the eye. Original sin is called concupiscence¹⁷ and lusting; and to this is opposed sobriety.¹⁸

1. Faith: This is put first, because it is a fundamental grace. It is the employer of charity, for it works by it; the root of sanctification, for by faith the heart is purified. By faith is chiefly meant the grace of faith: (1) faith in the habit, (2) faith in the exercise.

2. Charity: The first sin was an enmity against God, therefore there is now necessary a love to God. The first sin was virtually an enmity to all the posterity of

¹³ **ill surmises** – evil suspicions.

¹⁴ **aversion** – turning away morally.

¹⁵ See FGB 215, *Sanctification*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁶ **giving the reins to sense** – giving up self-control to be guided by one’s emotions.

¹⁷ **concupiscence** – eager desire for the things of the world.

¹⁸ **sobriety** – moderation; self-control.

man, which were to come out of his loins; therefore, love to mankind is necessary; and faith always infers love to God and man.

3. Sanctification is here added because, by that, both the truth of faith and love appears to ourselves and others; and justification by faith is thereby ratified (Jam 2:24). By sanctification is not here meant a particular holiness or chastity due to the marriage bed, as some of the papists assert, but a universal sanctity of heart and life.

4. Sobriety: This is a natural means for preservation. Intemperance makes bodily [diseases] more dangerous in their assaults. True faith is accompanied with temperance and sobriety in the use of lawful comforts...

Observations: (1) The *punishment* of the woman: “in childbearing.” (2) The *comfort* of the woman: “she shall be saved.” (3) The *condition* of the salvation: “if they continue,” wherein is implied an exhortation to continue in faith, etc.

Doctrine: Many observations might be raised. (1) The pain in childbearing is a punishment inflicted upon the woman for the first sin. (2) The continuance of this punishment after redemption by Christ doth not hinder the salvation of the woman, if there be the gospel-conditions requisite. (3) The exercise of faith, with other Christian graces, is a peculiar means for the preservation of believers under God’s afflicting hand.

I shall sum them up into this one:¹⁹ *The continuance of the punishment inflicted upon the woman for the first sin doth not prejudice her eternal salvation, nor her preservation in childbearing, where there are the conditions of faith and other graces...* This very Scripture is a letter of comfort, written only to women in the state of childbearing.²⁰ Claim it as your right by faith! What comfort is here to appeal from the threatening to the promise, from God as a *judge* to God as a *father*, from God *angry*

¹⁹ For detailed studies of this passage, see Richard Adams, “How May Child-Bearing Women Be Most Encouraged and Supported against, in, and under the Hazard of Their Travail?” in *Puritan Sermons*, Volume III, xi (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers, 1981); Thomas Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15” in Andreas J. Kostenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2005), 85-120.

²⁰ Referring to childbearing is also appropriate because it represents the fulfillment of the woman’s domestic role as a mother in distinction from the man...To select childbearing is another indication that the argument is transcultural, for childbearing is not limited to a particular culture but is a permanent and ongoing difference between men and women. The fact that God has ordained that women and only women bear children indicates that the differences in roles between men and women are in the created order...One indication that women are in the proper role is if they do not reject bearing children as evil but bear children in accord with their proper role...Paul is not asserting in 1 Timothy 2:15 that women *merit* salvation by bearing children and doing good works. He has already clarified that salvation is by God’s mercy and grace...I think it is fair to understand the virtues described here as evidence that the salvation already received is genuine. Any good works of the Christian, of course, are not the ultimate basis of salvation, for the ultimate basis of salvation is the righteousness of Christ granted to us. (Thomas Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 118-119)

to God *pacified* in Christ!...You can never be under the curse if you have faith, as long as God is sensible of His own credit in the promise. In the material part of the punishment, there is no difference between a believer and an unbeliever. Jacob [was] pinched with famine as well as the Canaanite; but Jacob [was] in covenant and [had] a God in heaven and a Joseph in Egypt to preserve him. God directs every pain in all by His providence, in believers by a particular love; every gripe in all the [remedies] He gives us. He orders even His contendings with His creature in such a measure as the spirit may not fail before Him (Isa 57:16).

From “A Discourse for the Comfort of Child-Bearing Women” in
The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock, Volume 5, The Banner
of Truth Trust, www.banneroftruth.org.

Stephen Charnock (1628-1680): English Puritan Presbyterian pastor, theologian, and author; born in St. Katherine Cree, London, England.



FOUR NECESSARY GRACES

Richard Adams (1626-1698)

Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.—1 Timothy 2:15

THOSE necessary and eminent graces to perseverance or continuance wherein the promise of salvation is made by the apostle unto childbearing women, on which they live for support *against* and *in* their travail, are these four: namely, “faith, charity, holiness, sobriety.”¹

“**FAITH**”—which we may distinctly conceive of as comprehending both that which is divine and moral, or Christian and conjugal.²

1. A **divine faith, which is “precious and saving”** (2Pe 1:1; Heb 10:39), [is] a grace of the Holy Spirit, whereby the enlightened heart, being united to Christ, doth receive Him and resigns up itself to Him as Mediator and so is “espoused to that one husband” (2Co 11:2), depending entirely upon Him. By this faith, receiving the Son of God, Who is also the Son of man, born of a woman, is the good wife to live in subjection to Christ, her spiritual Head. Then, though her pains be never so many, her throes never so quick and sharp, she may be confident that all shall go well with her, either in being safely delivered of the fruit of her womb, as “the Lord’s reward,” out of His free love (Psa 127:3); or having her soul eternally saved, being taken into covenant with the Almighty God (Gen 17:1–7).

It was this faith that the pious childing³ women, mentioned in the story of our Savior’s genealogy (Mat 1:1-17), did exercise. Continuance [in this faith] is required of every just, Christian woman that she may live by it in the pains that threaten death.⁴ For by this principle, she may be the best supported and derive virtue from her Savior for the sweetening of the bitterest cup and strength for staying her up, when “the anguish of bringing forth her first child” is upon her (Jer 4:31), as Sarah, the notable pattern of pious women, in this case did. Concerning [her,] it is recorded, “Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised” (Heb 11:11). A staying⁵ and living by faith upon

¹ [**Editor’s Note**]: Due to its original length and verbosity, this article has been edited more than usual. Edits are purposefully visible in other articles, but due to the large number of edits, they have been omitted for readability.

² **conjugal** – having to do with marriage.

³ **childing** – pregnant.

⁴ Death in childbirth was common during the time this was written.

⁵ **staying** – continuing in.

God's providence and promise will revive the drooping spirits of otherwise weak and fearful women in their good work of childbearing. Though impending danger to mother and child may make even good women to quail⁶ when their pangs are upon them, yet "by faith" they can fetch relief out of the faithfulness of the Promiser, as Sarah did or out of this good word [that] He hath recorded in my text.

Hereupon the upright woman, though frail, can resign up herself to God, "being fully persuaded" with [Abraham,] "the father of the faithful," that "what he hath promised, he is also able to perform" (Rom 4:21) in His own time and way, which is ever the best. Hence, in her low estate, the pious wife who lives by faith above nature, when "she spreadeth her hands" and utters her doleful⁷ groans before the Almighty (Jer 4:31) concludes, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good" (1Sa 3:18; 2Sa 15:26; Luk 22:42). If it seems good unto Him to call for her life and the life of her babe, she can say, "Lord, here am I, and the child which thou hast given me," as the prophet speaks upon another account (Isa 8:18). She trusts to that good and great promise that the Seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). [She] therefore comforts herself that the serpent's sting is taken away by Him that is born of a woman. If she hath been in such a condition before, she can say, "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope" (Rom 5:3-4). So by faith, [she may] conclude, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice" (Psa 63:7). This saving faith, I might further show, doth presuppose and imply repentance⁸ and expresses itself in meditation and prayer.

(1) *It doth presuppose and imply repentance.* Which, from a true sense of sin and an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth cause "a loathing of ourselves for our iniquities" (Eze 20:43; 36:31). [This] is a very proper exercise for a childbearing woman, who is eminently concerned antecedently to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance" (Mat 3:8) that God may receive her graciously, upon her hearty turning from sin and returning to and trusting in Him.

(2) *This saving faith doth usually express itself*—in those women who are really espoused unto Christ and in whom He dwells—*by meditation and prayer.* [These] are also very requisite for the support of childbearing ones at the approaches of their appointed sorrows. (i) *Faith doth express itself in meditation.* Bringing the soul to contemplate upon God doth (as wax is softened and prepared for the seal) make the heart soft for any sacred characters or signatures to be imprinted upon it. Further, (ii) *Faith doth exercise itself in prayer to God,* [it] being the mouth of faith in God through Christ, in Whose prevailing name Christians are concerned to lift up their hearts unto Him for relief in all their straits. [When] her heart is sore pained

⁶ **quail** – to lose heart; to give way through fear.

⁷ **doleful** – full of pain, grief, or suffering.

⁸ See FGB 203, *Repentance*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

within her and the terrors of death are fallen upon her (cf. Psa 55:4), her precious faith should fervently utter her most necessary and affectionate requests unto Him, Who hath freely given by His apostle the good word of support in my text. [Christ] is able to save to the uttermost, deliver effectually, and keep in perfect peace all that fly to Him and stay themselves upon Him in that good work [that] He hath appointed them. The next grace required here in my text is

“CHARITY” OR “LOVE.” This, in a good wife, I take, as I did faith, for that which is *Christian* and *conjugal*, [that is], respecting *Christ* and *her husband*.

1. **[To] be sure, every Christian wife should love the Lord Jesus Christ.** She should sincerely love Christ *in Himself*, [and] her faith toward Him should “work by love” (Gal. 5:6). It behoves⁹ her to give the primacy of her affection unto Christ Himself. She is obliged, above all, most entirely and heartily to love the Lord Jesus Christ, her spiritual Husband. Let this be the chief care of the Christian wife, and she may conclude upon good grounds [that] Christ is hers, and she is His (Song 2:16). Now, if the good wife hath Christ present with her in her travail—as *they who love Him with a prevailing love certainly have in all their affliction*—she hath *all*, having Him Who will “command deliverances for her” (Psa 44:4) and a “blessing upon her” (Lev 25:21).

2. **Next to Christ, the good wife is, above all others, dearly and constantly to love her own husband, and that “with a pure heart fervently”** (1Co 7:2; Ti 2:4; 1Pe 1:22). Yea, and she should never entertain low thoughts of him, in that relation, whom she could once think worthy of embracing for her husband. Where this *conjugal* love is consequent upon the foregoing *Christian* love, all will become easy. So did Mrs. Wilkinson, “a most loving wife, whose patience was remarkable in the midst of very sore pains, which frequented her in the [conception] and bearing of children. Yet then her speech was, ‘I fear not pains. I fear myself, lest through impatience I should let fall any unbecoming word.’” “It is a blessed frame,” said that grave divine who recorded it, “when pain seems light and sin heavy.”

“HOLINESS”—which I take, as the former, for that which is *Christian* and *conjugal*, more *general* and *special*.

1. **There is holiness that is considered more generally,** being a universal grace, agreeing to a Christian as such, wrought by the Spirit in the new creature from the peace made by Christ. [By this]—the soul being changed into His likeness—there is an abiding in a state of gracious acceptance with God and a striving in some measure to be holy as He is holy, in every particle of our [behavior], both toward God and man, publicly and privately, in some degrees. As all Christians are to mind their salvation in the “holiness of the Spirit” (2Th 2:13; 1Pe 1:2) and to “follow after it” by Christ (Heb 12:14; 13:12), so Christian wives in a childbear-

⁹ **behoves** – is appropriate for.

ing state are highly concerned for that good work to “have their fruit unto holiness” (Rom 6:22), [so that] they may comfortably bring forth the fruit of their wombs.

2. Holiness may be considered more specially as it is conjugal and more peculiarly appropriated to the marriage state, this being a more particular exercise of Christian holiness in the matrimonial band. [Although] everyone (both husband and wife) in that relation is concerned, so the childing woman is obliged to be singularly careful to “possess her vessel in sanctification,” or sanctimony, “and honour,” (1Th 4:4) in a special kind of conjugal cleanness and chasteness, which is opposite to all turpitude¹⁰ and “lust of concupiscence” in the very appearance of it. [Then] there may be, as much as possible, no show or tincture of uncleanness in the marriage bed; but that there may be a holy seed, and she may keep herself pure from any taint of lasciviousness.

“**SOBRIETY**”—so we render it. Others [render it] “temperance”; others, “modesty,” as in our old translation; others, “chastity.” And, taking it largely, “the word seems to speak that gracious habit that may best become a prudent, grave, temperate, moderate, or modest mother of a family,”¹¹ for that seems to reach the apostle’s sense...I might consider this, like the former graces, more *generally* and *specially*.

1. More generally, as Christian—“Every one that nameth the name of Christ,” being under an obligation thereby to “depart from iniquity” (2Ti 2:19). Certainly, then, a Christian wife, and that in a child-bearing condition, is concerned to seek that she may be endued with sobriety, which purgeth the mind from [disturbances] and putteth the affections into an orderly frame acceptable to God.

2. More particularly, the special conjugal grace of temperance and modesty is to be exercised by the childbearing woman in sobriety, chastity, and [graciousness,] with reference both to her affections and senses,

(1) *With modesty*—she is to govern her passions and affections.

(2) *With temperance*—she should moderate her senses; especially take care to govern well those of taste and touch. (i) *Sobriety*—which more strictly respects the moderation of the appetite and sense of tasting, for the desiring of that which is convenient, and the avoiding of riot...The [pregnant] woman is highly concerned to take special care for her own and the child’s safety...Childing wives, who have “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14) are to eat and drink for health, and not for pampering of the flesh. (ii) *Chastity*—it much concerns the Christian wife to give check to any suggestion, much more to any [conversation], which is in a tendency to violate her matrimonial contract; or to bring her into any [act] unbecoming

¹⁰ **turpitude** – depravity; wickedness.

¹¹ Apparently a quote from Theodore Beza, source unknown.

that “honorable” state she is brought into, or the undue use of the “undefiled bed” (Heb 13:4).

In the exercise of this, with the precedent graces, the good wife, having well learned the lesson of self-denial,¹² can bear her burden in humble confidence of aids from above, in the hour of her childbed sorrow, and a safe deliverance in the best way. For, being thus qualified, she hath, from the precious promise in my text, a sure ground of a comfortable exemption from the curse in childbearing and of the removal of that original guilt that otherwise greatens the sorrows of women in such a case.

From “How May Child-Bearing Women Be Most Encouraged and Supported against, in, and under the Hazard of Their Travail?” in *Puritan Sermons*, Vol. 2, Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers, www.rorbooks.com.

Richard Adams (c. 1626-1698): English Presbyterian minister; born at Worrall, England.



¹² See FGB 218, *Self-denial*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

SARAH GAVE BIRTH BY FAITH

A. W. Pink (1886-1952)

Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.—Hebrews 11:11

IT was “by faith” that Sarah “received strength,” and it was also “by faith” that she was now “delivered of a child.” It is the constancy and perseverance of her faith that is here intimated. There was no abortion, no miscarriage; she trusted God right through unto the end. This brings before us a subject upon which very little is written these days: the duty and privilege of Christian women counting upon God for a safe issue in the most trying and critical season in their lives. Faith is to be exercised not only in acts of worship, but also in the ordinary offices of our daily affairs. We are to eat and drink in faith, work and sleep in faith; and the Christian wife should be delivered of her child by faith. The danger is great, and if in any extremity there is need of faith, much more so where life itself is involved. Let us seek to condense from the helpful comments of the Puritan Manton.¹

First, we must be sensible what *need* we have to exercise faith in this case, that we may not run upon danger blindfolded; and if we escape, then to think our deliverance a mere chance. Rachel died in this case; so also did the wife of Phineas (1Sa 4:19-20): a great hazard is run, and therefore you must be sensible of it. The more difficulty and danger be apprehended, the better the opportunity for the exercise of faith (cf. 2Ch 20:12; 2Co 1:9). *Second*, because the sorrows of travail are a monument of God’s displeasure against sin (Gen 3:16), therefore this must put you the more earnestly to seek an interest in Christ that you may have remedy against sin. *Third*, meditate upon the promise of 1 Timothy 2:15, which is made good eternally or temporally as God sees fit. *Fourth*, the faith you exercise must be the glorifying of His power and submitting to His will. This expresses the kind of faith that is proper to all temporal mercies: “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst save me”—it is sufficient to ease the heart of a great deal of trouble and perplexing fear.

“And was delivered of a child.” As we have pointed out in the last paragraph, this clause is added to show the continuance of Sarah’s faith and the blessing of God upon her. True faith not only appropriates His promise, but continues resting on the same until that which is believed be actually accomplished. The prin-

¹ **Thomas Manton** (1620-1677) – Nonconformist Puritan preacher.

ciple of this is enunciated in Hebrews 3:14 and Hebrews 10:36. “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast *unto the end*”; “Cast not away therefore your confidence.” It is at this point so many fail. They endeavor to lay hold of a divine promise, but in the interval of testing let go of it. This is why Christ said, “If ye have faith *and doubt not*, ye shall not only do this,” etc. Matthew 21:21—“doubt not,” not only at the moment of pleading the promise, but during the time you are awaiting its fulfillment. Hence also, unto “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart” is added “and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Pro 3:5).

“When she was past age.” This clause is added so as to heighten the miracle that God so graciously wrought in response to Sarah’s faith. It magnifies the glory of His power. It is recorded for our encouragement. It shows us that no difficulty or hindrance should cause a disbelief of the promise. God is not tied down to the order of nature, nor limited by any secondary causes. He will turn nature upside down rather than not be as good as His word. He has brought water out of a rock, made iron to float (2Ki 6:6), sustained two million people in a howling wilderness. These things should arouse the Christian to wait upon God with full confidence in the face of the utmost emergency. Yea, the greater the impediments that confront us, faith should be increased. The trustful heart says, “Here is a fit occasion for faith; now that all creature-streams have run dry is a grand opportunity for counting on God to show Himself strong on my behalf. What cannot He do! He made a woman of ninety to bear a child—a thing quite contrary to nature—so I may surely expect Him to work wonders for me too.”

“Because she judged him faithful who had promised.” Here is the secret of the whole thing! Here was the ground of Sarah’s confidence, the foundation on which faith rested. She did not look at God’s promises through the mist of interposing obstacles, but she viewed the difficulties and hindrances through the clear light of God’s promises. The act that is here ascribed unto Sarah is that she “judged” or reckoned, reputed and esteemed, God to be faithful. She was assured that He would make good His word on which He had caused her to hope. God had spoken; Sarah had heard. In spite of all that seemed to make it impossible that the promise should be fulfilled in her case, she steadfastly believed. Rightly did Luther² say, “If you would trust God, you must learn to crucify the question ‘How?’ ” “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1Th 5:24): this is sufficient for the heart to rest upon; faith will cheerfully leave it with Omniscience as to *how* the promise will be made good to us.

“Because she judged him faithful who had promised.” Let it be carefully noted that Sarah’s faith went beyond the promise. While her mind dwelt upon *the thing* promised, it seemed unto her altogether incredible; but when she took her

² **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) – German leader of the Protestant Reformation.

thoughts off all secondary causes and fixed them on God Himself, then the difficulties no longer disturbed her: her heart was at rest in God. She knew that God could be depended upon: He is “faithful”—able, willing, sure to perform His word! Sarah looked beyond the promise to the Promiser; and as she did so, all doubting was stilled. She rested with full confidence on the immutability³ of Him that cannot lie, knowing that where divine veracity⁴ is engaged, omnipotence will make it good. It is by believing meditations upon the character of God that faith is fed and strengthened to expect the blessing, despite all apparent difficulties and supposed impossibilities. It is the heart’s contemplation of the perfections of God that causes faith to prevail. As this is of such vital practical importance, let us devote another paragraph to enlarging thereon.

To fix our minds on the *things* promised, to have an assured expectation of the enjoyment of them, without the heart first resting upon the veracity, immutability, and omnipotence of God, is but a deceiving imagination. Rightly did John Owen⁵ point out, “The formal object of faith in the divine promises is not the things promised in the first place, *but God Himself* in His essential excellencies of truth or faithfulness and power.” Nevertheless, the divine perfections do not, of themselves, work faith in us; it is only as the heart believingly ponders the divine attributes that we shall “judge” or conclude Him faithful that has promised. It is the man whose mind is stayed upon God Himself, who is kept in “perfect peace” (Isa 26:3): that is, he who joyfully contemplates Who and what God is that will be preserved from doubting and wavering while waiting the fulfillment of the promise. As it was with Sarah, so it is with us: every promise of God has tacitly annexed to it this consideration, “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Gen 18:14)...

But let our final thought be upon the rich recompense whereby God rewarded the faith of Sarah. The opening “Therefore” of verse 12 points the blessed consequence of her relying upon the faithfulness of God in the face of the utmost natural discouragements. From her faith there issued Isaac, and from him, ultimately, Christ Himself. And this is recorded for our instruction. Who can estimate the fruits of faith? Who can tell how many lives may be affected for good, even in generations yet to come, through your faith and my faith today! Oh, how the thought of this should stir us up to cry more earnestly, “Lord, increase our faith” to the praise of the glory of Thy grace. Amen.

From *Studies in the Scriptures*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³ **immutability** – “The attribute of God whereby He cannot change or be changed in His essence or perfections.” (Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, rev. ed., 224)

⁴ **veracity** – truthfulness.

⁵ **John Owen** (1616-1683), *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Vol. 7, ed. W. H. Goold (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust), 79.

A. W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author of *Studies in the Scriptures* and numerous books; born in Nottingham, England.



Most merciful Father, Who hast justly sentenced woman that was first in the transgression to great and multiplied sorrows, and particularly in sorrow to bring forth children: yet grantest preservation and relief, for the propagation of mankind. Be merciful to this thy servant; be near her with thy present help in the needful time of trouble; and though in travail she hath sorrow, give her strength to bring forth. Being delivered, let her remember no more the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. Bless her in the fruit of her body; and being safely delivered, let her return Thee hearty thanks, and devote it and the rest of her life to Thy service, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.—*Richard Baxter*

In our age, marriage has been deprived of its prestige and due honor, and true knowledge of the Word and ordinance of God has become extinct. Among the fathers, this knowledge was pure and proper. For this reason they had a very high regard for the begetting of children.

—*Martin Luther*

It is inhuman and godless to have a loathing for offspring. The saintly fathers acknowledged a fruitful wife as a special blessing of God and, on the other hand, regarded sterility as a curse. This judgment flowed from the Word of God in Genesis 1:28, where He said, “Be fruitful and multiply.” From this, they understood that children are a gift of God.—*Martin Luther*

THE BEST SUPPORT IN CHILDBEARING

Richard Adams (1626-1698)

THE application of this...observation—namely, that perseverance in Christian and conjugal graces and duties is the best support to childbearing women against, in, and under their travail—may briefly serve to teach care and administer comfort.

THEY WHO HAVE WIVES ALREADY SHOULD TAKE SPECIAL CARE upon this account, to discharge the duties of good husbands toward their childbearing wives with all good fidelity; namely,

First: *To “dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto them as unto the weaker vessels, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that their prayers be not hindered”* (1Pe 3:7). Yea, and to labor daily with them, both by their Christian advice and holy conversation,¹ to engage their fruitful wives more and more to the constant exercise of these graces and duties that their sorrows may be sanctified to them and [that] they may see the salvation of God in their conception and bearing of children. And if the great and holy God should, in His wise government, think it best to take them hence from a childbed, they may learn to submit to His disposing will and rest the better satisfied, as having good evidence of their souls’ eternal welfare.

Secondly: *To endeavor, as much as may be, to discharge the parts of good, Christian, and tender husbands toward their dearest yoke-fellows in such a travailing condition.* Laying much to heart those antecedent, concomitant, and consequent² pains [that] a state of pregnancy involves them in, which these husbands themselves, in such a kind, cannot have experience of. As it becomes them for the sake of their good and godly wives, they may, as is sometimes said of some sympathizing ones, in a sort, [conceive] with them and for them, by “putting on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, etc.” (Col 3:12). [They should] fulfill all the duties of the relation they are in, readily and timely providing for them, not only necessaries, but conveniences, as they can. [Husbands should provide] for their [wives’] longing appetites and for the heartening of their dear and suffering wives, apt to be cast down under apprehensions of their approaching sorrows; and call in aid of faithful praying ministers and pious friends to make requests known unto God for them. And if God hears prayers,

¹ **conversation** – behavior; conduct.

² **antecedent, concomitant, and consequent** – before, during, and after.

Thirdly: *To be heartily thankful to God upon His giving safe deliverance to their gracious wives from the pains and perils of childbearing.* When the kind husband hath been really apprehensive of the sicknesses, pains, throes, and groans of his dear wife in her [pregnancy] and bearing a child to him by aids from above, nothing can be more necessarily incumbent³ on him than to adore and be thankful to God, Who hath made a comfortable separation between her and the fruit of her womb, as [an answer] to prayer and hearkening unto her groaning...The Christian husband—having seen his loving wife in the exercise of the graces I have been discoursing of, pass through the peril of childbearing and admirably preserved therein by God’s power and goodness—is greatly obliged to return his hearty thanks to God, Who hath made good His word wherein He caused them to hope, in granting so signal a mercy...Thus briefly, I have touched upon the care of married men with reference to their childbearing wives in the aforementioned particulars. Again, this doctrine teacheth,

A LESSON OF CARE TO WOMEN. Consider...*If you are already married, and that “in the Lord,”* Who hath opened your wombs and given you power to conceive, it behoves you as righteous handmaids of the Lord,

First: *To continue in the constant exercise of these graces.* Certainly, you who are blessed in being instruments for the propagation of mankind—when you find you have conceived and grow pregnant—are highly concerned to put on and use these ornaments. A great work you are usually busy about in preparing your childbed linen;⁴ and I shall not discourage, but rather encourage, you to make necessary provision for your tender selves and babes...You ought to be somewhat indulged to make ready and feather your nests wherein to lay yourselves and your young (Luk 9:58). But the modesty and moderation you have heard of will not allow you, above your rank, to be costly in superfluous⁵ fine feathers, when Christ’s poor ministers and members, up and down, do expect your charity. O, I beseech you, good Christian women, let your chief care be...to be arrayed in that truly spiritual “fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints, wherewith the Lamb’s wife maketh herself ready” (Rev 19:7-8). This, this is the principal thing: the graces of “faith, charity, holiness, and sobriety” speak true Christian prudence...And if God hath given any of you real proof already of performing His promise in my text by vouchsafing temporal salvation to you, it behoves you to take care,

Secondly: *To record the [experiences] He hath given you of making good His word to you in particular.* Hath God vanquished your fears, wiped away your tears, and heard your prayers? Engrave the memorials of His goodness and faithfulness up-

³ **incumbent** – necessary as a duty.

⁴ **childbed linen** – the covering that was prepared for the bed in which the baby would be birthed.

⁵ **superfluous** – extravagant.

on the tables of your hearts. You have the great example of our dear Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, Who, when He had been greatly troubled for Lazarus, whom “he loved,” “groaned in spirit, and wept,” making His request known to His Father on his behalf. [This] was graciously answered. He, with great devotion of heart, “lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me” (John 11:3, 35, 38, 41). Let every ingenuous⁶ and grateful mother, whom God hath safely delivered from her childbearing pains and peril, imprint a grateful remembrance of so signal a mercy with indelible characters in her mind: “Lord, thou hast regarded the low estate of thine hand-maiden. When I was in an agony and well-nigh spent with repeated pains, Thou didst stand by my baby and me. Yea, thou didst admirably help us, making way for it to pass the bars into this world safely, keeping us both alive. Yea, and it may be, when our friends verily thought with sadness, that my child could not have seen the light, and I should shortly have shut mine eyes upon it, being ready to despair in bringing it forth, then didst Thou find a way for us both to escape” (cf. 1Co 10:13)...As Paul, when he was made sensible of great mercy in his deliverance, by superadded favors, “he thanked God, and took courage” (Act 28:15), so should every joyful mother thank God and be of good courage for the time to come...She should communicate her rare [experience] to encourage others...For well said the Greek tragedian, “It becomes one woman to be at hand to help another in her labor.”⁷

Thus, we briefly see, this doctrine teacheth care to men and women. It doth also administer *comfort*, as to the good wives themselves, so likewise to the husbands of such good wives.

(1) *To good wives themselves, who are qualified as you have heard*, yet in an hour of temptation are apt to walk very heavily from pre-apprehensions of grievous pains, yea, and, it may be, from great fear of death in their appointed sorrows that are coming upon them, grown weary with their heavy burdens. Whereas a constant abiding in the aforementioned graces and duties is a sure ground of good hope that you shall pass well through your childbed sorrows; which, be sure, shall be no obstacle at all to your eternal welfare...The apostle certainly brings in my text as an antidote against discouragement, and to cheer up suspicious and fearful women. They are heart-reviving words to every drooping woman and should lead her, with Sarah, to “judge him faithful who hath promised” (Heb 11:11)...God will lay no more upon her than He will enable her to bear. [He will] find a way for her escape, either by a comfortable, sanctified deliverance here, or a blessed translation to heaven to reap in joy what was sown in tears; and those [are] but temporary, when the joys are eternal. Further, it doth administer comfort,

⁶ **ingenuous** – noble.

⁷ **Euripides** (480-c.406 BC).

(2) *To the husbands of such good wives*, that is, such as continue in the graces and duties before and in their pregnancy...When they cannot but sympathize with their wives in their sorrows, they may cheer up in humble confidence that—*the sting being taken out of the punishment*—their wives' joys shall be increased by the pains [that] they undergo. God will deliver them and hear their prayers, and they shall glorify Him (Joh 16:21; Psa 50:15). And if, after prayers and tears, their dearest consorts should decease and depart from them out of their childbearing pains; though this be a most cutting and heavy cross in itself, yet comfort may be gathered from it in the issue. For indeed that is the comfort of comforts, which affords life in death...Let pious husbands and gracious childing wives in their mutual offices wait upon God with submission for a sanctified support, when they stand in most need of divine aids. Then such handmaids of the Lord may humbly hope they shall receive help in and under their childbearing travail, and, in due time, even a temporal deliverance (supposing that to be best for them) from those pains and perils. [Let them take] comfort from that gracious word of the Lord by the prophet...“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa 41:10).

From “How May Child-Bearing Women Be Most Encouraged and Supported against, in, and under the Hazard of Their Travail?”



When you were born, it was no secret event, nor was it a human invention. Your birth was a work of God.—*Martin Luther*

WHEN GOD WITHHOLDS BABIES

Thomas Jacombe (1623-1687)

For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.—Philippians 4:11

WHAT daily inquietudes¹ of spirit are there in some because of the want of [children]! They have many other comforts, but the not having of this embitters all. Abraham himself was much troubled about it: “Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?...Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir” (Gen 15:2-3). But Rachel’s passion rose very high: “Give me children,” saith she to her husband, “or else I die” (Gen 30:1). Children are very great blessings; they are promised as such [in] Psalm 128:3-4, and in other places. Indeed, they are one of the sweetest flowers that grow in the garden of earthly comforts. Hence, it is hard for persons contentedly to bear the want of them. But whoever you are upon whom this affliction lies, [I pray you] labor after a contented mind under it. And in order thereunto, consider

(1) *It is the Lord Who withholds this mercy.* For He gives it or withholds it as seems good to Him. Providence is not more seen in any of the affairs and concerns of men than in this of children; that there shall be many or few, some or none, all falls under the good pleasure and disposal of God. When Rachel was so passionate under the want of these, Jacob rebuked her sharply: “Am I in God’s stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?” (Gen 30:2). “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Psa 127:3). “He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children” (Psa 113:9). Now if this was duly thought of, would it not quiet the heart? When God orders the thing, shall we dislike and fret at what He doeth? May not He dispense His blessings where He pleaseth? O, if He will give, we should be thankful in the owning of His goodness; if He will deny, we must be patient in the owning of His sovereignty.

(2) *Sometimes this mercy is denied, but better are bestowed.* God doth not give children, but He gives Himself; is not He “better than ten sons?” as Elkanah said of himself to Hannah (1Sa 1:8). There is “a better name than of sons and of daughters” (Isa 56:5) promised. They who have that “better name” have no reason to murmur because they have not that which is worse. They who have God for their Father in heaven may well be content to go childless here on earth. If God will not give me the lesser, yet if He gives me the greater good, have I cause to be angry?...

¹ inquietudes – anxieties.

(3) *Children sometimes are withheld a long time, but they are given at last.* Of which we have many instances. The case is never desperate, so long as we can submit and wait. It is to be hoped [that] God designs to give us that comfort, under the want of which we can be contented.

(4) *If children be given after froward and irregular desires of them, it is to be questioned whether it be done in mercy.* And it is to be feared [that] this frame will very much spoil the mercy! What we get by discontent, we seldom enjoy with comfort. How many parents have experienced the truth of this! They were not quiet until they had children and less quiet after they had them; they proved so undutiful, stubborn, naught, that there was much more of vexation in the having than there was in the wanting of them.

(5) *Children are great comforts, but they are but mixed comforts.* The rose hath its sweetness, but it hath its pricks too; so it is with children. O the cares, fears, distractions, that parents are filled with about them! They are certain cares, uncertain comforts, as we usually express it. We eye the sweet only of this relation, and that makes us fretful: did we eye the bitter also, we should be more still and calm.

(6) *Had we this mercy in the height of it filled up in all respects according to our desires and expectations, it is a thousand to one but our hearts would be too much set upon it.* And that would be of fatal consequence to us upon many accounts! Therefore, God foreseeing this, it is out of kindness and love that He withholds it from us.

These things being considered as to this affliction, methinks they should very much dispose the heart to [contentment] under it.

From "How Christians May Learn in Every State to be Content" in
Puritan Sermons, Vol. 2, Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers.

Thomas Jacombe (1623-1687): English Presbyterian minister; a man of exemplary life and great learning; born in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, UK.



A CHILD IS BORN

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.—Isaiah 9:6

THE world waited long for Christ's coming into it, and here the prophet gives the news: that long-looked-for [One] is come at last. The "child is born." The word rendered *child* is a name of the sex—"a man-child"—and is just a lad, a lad-child. Such was our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a name common to the young of the male sex, competent to them whenever they are born and continuing with them during their younger years until they be grown men. The word rendered *born* doth signify more, even to be shown or presented born. It is a custom so natural that it has ever been in the world: when a child is born and dressed, it is presented or shown to its relations for their comfort. So Machir's children were presented to Joseph, their great grandfather, and on that occasion given him on his knees (Gen 50:23); and Ruth's son to Naomi (Ruth 4:17).

So says the prophet, "This wonderful child is presented," viz., to his relations. And who are these? He has relations in heaven: the Father is His Father, the Holy Ghost His Spirit, the angels His servants; but it is not these who are here meant. It is to *us*, the sons and daughters of Adam! *We* are His poor relations; and to us as His poor relations on earth, sons of Adam's family, whereof He is the top branch, this Child is presented born for our comfort in our low state.

The birth of Christ was expected and looked for. The Church, His mother (Song 3:11), had an early promise of it (Gen 3:15). It was in virtue of that promise He was conceived and born. All mankind besides [was] by another word, viz., "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen 1:28).

Though Mary, His mother in a proper sense, [was pregnant with him for nine months], yet the Church, His mother in a figure, [was "pregnant" with Him] from that time (Gen 3:15) for about four thousand years. Many a time the delivery was looked for, and she was in hazard of thinking it a false conception [because] it was so long coming forward. Kings and prophets looked and longed for the day: "For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (Luk 10:24). The whole Church of the Old Testament also longed for Christ's day: "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices" (Song 8:14).

2. Christ is now born. The happy hour of the long-looked-for birth is come, and the Child is come into the world. Angels proclaim it; “And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luk 2:10-11). The fathers, kings, and prophets were in their graves: [they] died in the faith [that] He would be born; and now it is come to pass! He was really born—a little Child, though the Mighty God; an Infant, not one day old, though the Everlasting Father! Wonderful birth—such as the world never saw before, nor ever shall see again!

3. Some have been employed to present this Child to friends and relations, and they are still about the work. O honorable employment! More honorable than the office of presenting a newborn prince of the earth to a king, his father. Joseph and Mary had the office of presenting Him to the Lord (Luk 2:22). But who has the honor of presenting Him to us? Why,

(1) *The Holy Spirit has the office of presenting Him internally to us.* “For I determined,” says Paul, “not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified...And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1Co 2:2, 4). And by [the Spirit,] His Father presents Him to us; “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Mat 16:16-17). Thus, sinners have presented to them in His heavenly glory, so as they get a broad sight of Him, such as is to be had on earth by faith: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (Joh 1:14).

(2) *Ministers of the gospel have the office of presenting Him to us externally, in the swaddling clothes of Word and [ordinances].* They are employed to present believing sinners to Christ, “For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2Co 11:2), and to present Christ to sinners to be believed on. They come with old Simeon, with the holy child Jesus in their arms in gospel-ordinances (Rom 10:6-8), and say with John the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29).

TO WHOM IS CHRIST PRESENTED?

1. Negatively, He is not presented to the fallen angels. He was not born for them; they are none of His relations, “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham” (Heb 2:16). Their house was originally more honorable than the house of Adam; but Christ has put an honor on the house of Adam above the house of angels. The holy angels are His *servants*; the evil angels His *executioners*; but holy men are His *brethren*.

2. **Positively, He is presented to mankind sinners**—those of the house of His father Adam. To them is the voice directed, “Behold the Lamb of God” (Joh 1:29), etc. “To us a child is born” (Luk 2:10-11). He was first presented to the Jews, [and shown] to Israel (Joh 1:31); but then to all the world indifferently, of whatsoever nation (Mar 16:15). Hence, from the uttermost parts of the earth, songs are heard upon occasion of showing Him born to them, His glory appearing unparalleled. Particularly,

(1) *He is presented to the visible church*—even to all and every one of them. There are indeed many in the world to whom He is not presented. They have neither His voice or fame, nor seen His shape represented in the Word. But wheresoever the gospel comes, there Christ is presented to every person as born to them...He is now bodily in heaven indeed; yet really, though spiritually in the Word and ordinances, presented to sinners, and seen by faith; though the most part will not behold Him.

(2) *He is presented effectually to all the elect*. Christ is revealed in them (Gal 1:15-16). Hence, they believe on Him, and so it is with all them, however others entertain Him. “As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed” (Act 13:48). They are all as Paul was, in a sense, chosen to see the Just One; and their seeing Him with a spiritual eye makes them willing to part with all and purchase the field and treasure and the one pearl...

HOW IS CHRIST PRESENTED? He is presented,

1. **In the preaching of the gospel**. “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” (Gal 3:1). To whomsoever the gospel comes, Christ is presented to them, as being in the word of the gospel, to be discerned by faith. “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach” (Rom 10:8)...

2. **In the administration of the [ordinances]**. As in the Word He is presented to the ears, in the [ordinances] He is presented to the eyes. In them, there is a lively representation of Christ, bleeding and dying on the cross for sinners. “This is my body” (Mat 26:26). Though He is not corporeally present in the [ordinances], yet He is really and spiritually so to the faith of believers, which realizeth invisible things: “Faith is...the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1)...

3. **In the internal work of saving illumination**. The Spirit of the Lord not only gives light, but sight, to the elect. [He] not only opens the Scriptures to them, but opens their eyes and reveals Christ in them (Gal 1:15-16). This is that demonstration of the Spirit [that] Paul speaks of, which is the immediate antecedent of faith, without which no man will believe.

[WHY] IS CHRIST PRESENTED TO US ON HIS BIRTH?

1. **That we may see the faithfulness of God in the fulfilling of His promise.** The promise of Christ was an ancient promise, the accomplishment whereof was long delayed; but now we see it is performed in its time and thence may conclude that all the rest of the promises depending thereon shall be fulfilled in their season.

2. **That we may rejoice in Him.** The very birth of His forerunner was to be a joy to many (Luk 1:14); how much more His own? The angels sang for joy at the birth of Christ (Luk 2:13-14). And He is presented to us that we may join them in their song; for it is a matter of great joy (Luk 2:10-11). And whoever see their danger by sin will rejoice on Christ's being presented to them, as a condemned man [does] on the sight of the Prince by whom he is to obtain a pardon.

3. **That we may look on Him, see His glory, and be taken with Him.** For this cause sinners are often invited to look unto Him: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isa 45:22). "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart" (Song 3:11). The looking on the forbidden fruit has so [corrupted] the eyes of mankind that the things of the world appear as in a magnifying glass; and there is no getting a right view of them until we behold Jesus in His glory.

4. **Lastly, that we may acknowledge Him in the character in which He appears, as the Savior of the world and *our* Savior.** For He is presented as a young prince to be acknowledged heir to the crown. The Father has made choice of Him to be the Savior of the world by office, [has] given Him to us for our Savior, and presents Him accordingly for our acknowledgement.

USE: I exhort you then to *believe* that Christ is on His birth presented to you as His relations. If ye enquire what your duty is on that occasion, I answer,

(1) ***Embrace Him cordially.*** "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in" (Psa 24:7). Old Simeon, when [Jesus] was presented in the temple, took Him in his arms with full satisfaction of soul (Luk 2:28-29). He is now in heaven as to His bodily presence; but He is presented to you in the gospel: embrace Him by faith with the heart, believing on Him for all His salvation, renouncing all other saviors for Him, betaking yourselves to Him for all, for a rest to your consciences and your hearts!

(2) ***Kiss Him***—with a kiss of love (Psa 2:12), giving Him your hearts: "My son, give me thine heart" (Pro 23:26), with a kiss of *honor*, honoring him in your hearts, lips, and lives; and with a kiss of *subjection*, receiving Him as your Lord, King, Head, and Husband.

(3) ***Bless Him***—"Bless his name" (Psa 96:2). He is God blessed forever! But we are to bless Him, as we bless God—declaratively, proclaiming Him blessed (Psa 72:17); praying from the heart that His kingdom may come (Psa 72:15).

(4) *Worship Him*. So did the wise men of the east (Mat 2:11). He is the everlasting God and therefore to be adored: “For he is thy Lord; and worship thou him” (Psa 45:11)—thy Husband, thy King, thy God. Worship Him with *internal* worship, consecrating your whole souls to Him; and worship Him with *external* worship.

(5) *Lastly, present unto Him gifts*. So did the wise men (Mat 2:11). Make a gift of your hearts to Him (Pro 23:26). [Give] of yourselves wholly (2Co 8:5) to glorify Him in your souls and bodies, your substance, your all!

From “Christ Presented to Mankind-Sinners” in *The Whole Works of Thomas Boston*, Vol. 10, Tentmaker Publications, www.tentmakerpublications.com.

Thomas Boston (1676-1732): Scottish Presbyterian minister and theologian; born in Duns, Berwickshire, Scotland.

