

Why we baptise our infants

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Date: 08 February 2009

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[0 : 0 0] Well, now, this morning we have the great joy of the baptism of little Rebecca Robury, the firstborn of David and Julie, our missionaries who are back from Kenya.

So it's a very special day for them and for all the family and for our fellowship, but also particularly for me, because today's another first for me. David and Julie were the first couple that were members of St. George's Tron that I married after coming here.

David was the first apprentice that we had working with us in the church here. Julie was on the very first year of Corn Hill that we did. They were the first missionary couple that we've sent out as members of the church here since I became minister.

And so now today it's the first baptism of a couple that I myself have married. So this will always be a very special day and a special joy for me as well.

And as I've said, it's a joy to have so many friends and family of the Robury and McGill families with us. And especially as I know for some of them who come from a different church tradition, this might be just a bit foreign to them.

[1 : 1 0] And so I want this morning, for all of our sakes, to explain something of the reasoning by which we think of infant baptism, and some of what we believe to be biblical reasoning for how we think about our children, and the privileges and the responsibilities that they're born into.

And in doing so, I hope that we will all be encouraged by the grace and the blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that especially for all of us who are Christian parents, we will be helped to trust God more as we entrust to him all the more our own children, and as we seek to bring them up in the nurture and in the admonition of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So first of all this morning, I want to go right back to the beginning and think about, first of all, the purpose of covenant families. According to the Bible, from its very, very beginning in Genesis, the purpose of parenthood is to bring to birth and to faith and to fruitful service the next generation of believers who will continue serving God's kingdom purpose of creation through redemption and therefore bring to fruition the consummation of God's kingdom purposes in glory forever.

That's why we have children. We procreate and we parent for the task of mission, for the sake of the glory of the kingdom of God. I want to explain that briefly.

If you want to listen to more of that, I would recommend to you the series we covered a couple of years ago called Right Relationships on Sex, Love and Marriage. But just briefly this morning, think back to the very beginning of the Bible, to the very first chapter.

[3 : 0 1] God, who is the covenant God, reveals himself from the start in commands and promises about the very purpose of marriage itself and parenthood. The very first command to humanity in the Bible is be fruitful and multiply.

Fill the earth. Well, to what purpose? Well, God says to subdue it and have dominion over every living thing. That is, to bring God's perfect rule to every part of the cosmos as God's vice-gerents, as rulers under him, so that the whole world might glorify him and fulfill the purpose for his creation, that his kingdom should be consummated in glory.

Now, of course, after the great rebellion of Genesis chapter 3, every aspect of the world, every aspect of our humanity is cursed, including, specifically, childbearing. In pain, you shall bring forth children, God says.

And yet, clearly, parenting is still very, very important. God's people are still to fill the earth with people who rule in his name and in his ways. And that purpose hasn't ceased with the rebellion of man.

But, of course, now, mere procreation isn't going to be enough. Yes, of course, does God, God does, promise that the hope of the world will be in the human seed of man.

[4 : 25] That's a great promise of Genesis 3.15. The seed of the woman will triumph in the end and restore and reverse the curse. And yet, also, there is another seed, isn't there?

The seed of the serpent, the seed of Satan, opposed to God's people and God's ways. So, of course, now, just increasing the population of the world isn't going to save the world, is it?

We know that. We've got six billion people and more in the world now. Have we saved the world? We're doing the opposite, aren't we? Natural reproduction is no longer going to be enough to fulfill God's kingdom purposes.

It must be spiritual reproduction. It must be procreation of families of faith, bringing to birth and to faith and to service believing seed, heirs of God's covenant promise.

And that was the calling of God's people, God's covenant people, right from the very beginning after the fall. The missionary parenting to bringing up families, children, in believing obedience to God.

[5 : 37] Now, if you skip forward, then, to the passage that we read in Genesis chapter 17, in Abraham, that's exactly what we see. In Genesis chapter 12, God had said to Abraham, I will make you into a great nation so that you will be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

And from then on, from that moment, the story all the way through of God's covenant people in the Old Testament, his Old Testament church, as the New Testament calls it, that's its purpose.

There's a huge emphasis on that great purpose, that responsibility of parenting as the people of God. Never, ever, ever in the Bible is the natural side of procreation separated from its spiritual side.

Never, ever in the Bible is reproduction just a matter of biology for God's people. No, it's a matter of faith, obedient faith to God's command and his purpose that his people would be a holy people, a missionary people.

Never, ever, does God just tell his people to have children. He commands them to bring forth believing children, missionary children. Now, of course, he's the sovereign God and that means that there will always be things that we don't fully understand, questions that we're tempted to ask, but when God tells us about these things, he tells us clearly not to be taken up with trying to fathom mysteries that are beyond us, but rather to just get on with listening to and obeying the commands that he gives us which are very, very plain.

[7 : 08] Deuteronomy 29, verse 29 is a very important verse in this regard. Don't look it up, but just listen. It's speaking specifically about rearing children. The secret things, says God, belong to the Lord, our God.

But the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may do all the words of this law. That is, let God deal with his business, let him be God, and let us deal with what's our business and get on doing it.

And in this case, it's the business of grasping hold of God's revelation of truth, which is for us and our children that we are to do it, to obey it. So God promises Abraham a missionary family.

But his command to Abraham is very, very plain, isn't it? We read it. Abraham, you are to nurture a missionary family. Listen again to Genesis 18, verse 19 that we read.

God says, I have chosen him that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.

[8 : 25] And as it was for Abraham, so it was for the whole family of faith, the whole people of God. I would like you to turn forward to Deuteronomy chapter 6 in your Bibles.

I think it's page 150 because it gives us a very, very clear explanation of all of this. After the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, Moses turns in Deuteronomy chapter 6 to expound the life of believing holiness that God's people are to live in their missionary existence in the world as God's people Israel as they shine a light to the nations of the world.

Listen to Deuteronomy 6 verses 1 to 3. Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you that you may do them in the land to which you are going to possess it that you may fear the Lord your God you and your son and your son's son by keeping all his statutes and commandments which I command you all the days of your life and that your days may be long.

Hear therefore O Israel and be careful to do them that it may go well with you and that you may multiply greatly have children as the Lord the God of your fathers has promised you in a land flowing with milk and honey.

Do you get that? It's a command to you and your children and your children's children says the Lord that you may multiply greatly passing on the blessings down the generations.

[9 : 54] And look at verses 4-7 that tells us how it's going to be done. Well of course God is sovereign of course only God can call and change hearts but the secret things belong to him to us belong his clear commands listen hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might and these words that I command you today shall be on your heart you shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house when you walk by the way when you lie down when you rise you see that's the nurture and admonition of faith teach it to your children never ever anywhere do the scriptures give us that dreadful idea that we should somehow leave our children to get on themselves and decide themselves if they're going to follow God that's what Richard Dawkins wants us to do that's why he left his job as professor in Oxford to devote himself to extirpating all references to Christianity and faith among children in schools and if he could in our families we don't want to side with him do we?

never ever do we find either in the Bible the idea that well God is sovereign so we can't do anything to bring our children to faith no God is sovereign and even bringing children into the world in the first place is a response of faith and trust in God's sovereign grace isn't it?

as is going on in obedient truth teaching our children to be sharers in the faith of God's promises look down to verse 20 of Deuteronomy chapter 6 for the very heart of what that nurture of the faith embodies when verse 20 the children ask why does our family live this way not like the pagans what's the meaning of this way of life we are to say verse 21 because the Lord is our redeemer he saved us with a mighty hand he brought us out of slavery that he might bring us in verse 23 to the inheritance of all his promises that's why we are to live to fear him it's for our good always that he might preserve us alive verse 24 we are God's people by grace that's what you are to tell your children and if we trust and obey his gracious covenant says verse 25 it will be righteousness for us God will accept us as his see that's what the believing people of God the Old Testament church were to teach their children we are God's holy people he set us apart for him we are to trust in him alone we are to witness to him alone as our God if you read down to chapter 7 of Deuteronomy you will see it again very explicitly regarding children look at verse 3 you shall not give your sons and daughters in marriage to pagans because they would turn them away from serving me says the Lord why verse 6 for you are a people holy to the Lord your God the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession including explicitly your children of course that calls not for presumption but for faith you can't just do as you're please as though well God's called us therefore we're all safe no you've got great privileges says God but that means you've got great responsibilities also if you read on to verse 9 you'll see

God is a faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations and repays to their face those who hate him by destroying him if you disdain your calling if you scoff at the Lord he'll destroy you in other words what he's saying here is you people have got to take God seriously you can't presume on his grace but you have to exercise faith in the privileges of that grace so that's the purpose of God's covenant families right from the beginning to be and to parent a missionary people who love God and serve God and live for him alone to shine his glories in the world and children are always always regarded as part of that covenant people God's people being taught from the earliest days to share in all the privileges and all the responsibilities of that calling never is it otherwise you'll look through all the Old Testament and find that every significant covenant feast at every significant and momentous gathering of the church of God explicitly they're told to include all the children even the youngest well and secondly

[15 : 04] I want to think about what is the mark of the covenant family the people of God during that age of promise once again let's look back at Genesis chapter 17 and the words that we read for clarity on this in the age of promise in the Old Testament church of God it is to be a witnessing household marked out by a sign and the sign of course is circumcision and God gives that to Abraham as a sign and a seal of his covenant promise of redemption now when you look at verse chapter 17 of Genesis you need to notice something very very important circumcision is given by God to Abraham not as merely a nationalistic thing or an ethnic marker many other people groups in the world have used it as that but it wasn't so here nor was it just an external thing far from it God makes it very clear that it was a supremely spiritual marker both the

Old Testament and indeed the New Testament make that very clear and plain everywhere in Acts 7 Stephen in his speech says God gave to Abraham the covenant of circumcision in other words he identifies the spiritual promise of the covenant so intimately with the sign that he actually calls the sign itself the covenant it's a supremely spiritual promise look at verses 7 and 8 I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout all generations for an everlasting covenant not just an earthly thing to be God to you and to your offspring after you and I will give to you and your offspring after you the land and I will be their God says the Lord it's a spiritual promise so the first and the overriding thing about the mark of God's covenant family is that it speaks of a real spiritual union a real relationship with God himself and the

New Testament affirms that plainly in Romans 2 verse 29 Paul says circumcision is not outward and physical circumcision is a matter of the heart by the spirit not by the letter so that such a one's praise is not from man but from God it's not just an outward spiritual thing physical thing but it's a sign and a seal of something that is real and eternal a union a relationship with God forever second in Romans chapter 4 Paul speaks of another aspect of this spiritual nature of circumcision when Paul says Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised it was a sign and seal of forgiveness from the guilt of sin and of the justification the righteousness the being declared righteous before God that Abraham received and thirdly

Moses too right back in Deuteronomy clearly speaks of these spiritual realities that are sealed by circumcision it was far from being just an external ritual and everybody knew it to receive the blessing of God's covenant of his eternal gospel they must give God their hearts that's why in Deuteronomy 10 verse 12 Moses says this and now Israel what does the Lord require of you but to fear the Lord to walk in his ways to love him to serve God with all your heart and soul and to keep the commands and the statutes of the Lord circumcise therefore the foreskins of your heart and be no longer stubborn it was utterly plain in Moses teaching that the sign of circumcision expressed externally what was to be true of the innermost hearts of believing Israelites they were to be united to God alone forever they were to be cleansed and renewed from defilement of heart by God's spirit they were to be sealed with a righteousness that comes only by

God's grace through faith the sign depicted the truth of God's real covenant promise that he would at last as he'd always promised that he would intervene and bring an end to sin's curse and truly cleanse and renew his people and be with them eternally forever but it also sealed that reality Paul says it sealed it to Abraham personally guaranteeing to him both the privileges the blessings and also the responsibilities that is the curses of the covenant and you see that the sign and the seal was applied not just to Abraham the great believer but also to his children in Genesis chapter 17 it's Ishmael the teenage boy later it was Isaac on the eighth day of his life and notice also here in verse 10 of Genesis 17 God says every male in your household shall also be circumcised not just the natural seed foreigners too were included in God's covenant blessings right from the beginning it was a missionary family right from the start no accident that Genesis 18 sees Abraham on his great prayer mission to save people in

[20 : 36] Sodom pagans and Genesis 17 verse 27 tells us that's what happened that very day they were all circumcised there is no mention of their faith there is no mention even of their consent but by virtue of God's call upon Abraham and his faithful response as the head of the household that whole household was circumcised and the privileges of God's gracious promises were displayed upon them but also don't forget the warnings about breaking God's covenant and that was the way it was to be always all through the Old Testament age of promise God's people were a missionary people a holy people from the Lord marked out by the sign of his gracious covenant the sign of circumcision of course that wasn't the end of the story all of that was given to Abraham by way of promise remember what Hebrews 11 says by faith

Abraham and all the saints of God obeyed and died in their faith not having received the things promised but having seen them and granted them from afar because God has provided something better for us that apart from us they should not be made perfect well what could possibly be better than what God promised Abraham in that covenant signed and sealed with a sign of circumcision union with God being declared righteous before God renewed and cleansed what could possibly be better well of course what could be better is the actual fulfillment in history of all that God had promised to Abraham for his seed and the actual accomplishment in history and in time of everything that that circumcision sign pointed forward to and promised the cleansing and the

renewal of heart forever the reconciliation and the restoration with God that people had longed for ever since that first rebellion when they were cast out of the presence of God in Eden that's what the whole

Old Testament age was waiting for and longing for Moses looked forward to that when he called the people to circumcise their hearts he called them to real repentance and faith to real ongoing obedience to God in their personal experience but only because he also promised them that one day God himself would at last intervene and truly circumcise their hearts put away their sinful flesh forever bring them to renewing a new birth he says it plainly in Deuteronomy 30 verse 6 one day despite your sin God will do this he will circumcise your hearts the prophets longed for that day they foretold that day more and more the day that God would at last intervene in history by his true and lasting action to bring renewal and cleansing to Ezekiel in chapter 26 of his prophecy for sort there's a time coming he says when I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols

I shall cleanse you and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit and I will put within you I will be your God and you will be my people forever Jeremiah longs for that day too in Jeremiah chapter 31 the days are coming when I will make a new a renewed covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah I will put my law within them I will write it on their hearts he says and I will be their God and they shall be my people and I shall forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more that's the better things that were still to come but the Old Testament saints looked on from afar so that as Hebrews 11 says only together with us who share the privilege of living in these days should they be made perfect should they also inherit all that we also inherit through the grace of God in Christ so where then does this great promise of that circumcision that intervention of God in history to actually cleanse and renew and bring to life where does that cleansing and renewal and reconciliation actually find its fulfillment in time and in history well of course the answer is in the person and work of our Lord

Jesus Christ everything every promise of God is fulfilled in him and in him alone and so says the apostle Paul he has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son in him we have redemption the forgiveness of sins that's the words he uses writing to the church in Colossians chapter 1 and how does Paul go on to describe that well he describes it exactly as the great once and for all circumcision of God that they were all waiting for I think it would be worth you turning up Colossians chapter 2 at this point just to see it's page 984 in the Bibles it's worth turning there just to read how clearly Paul puts this for us this whole letter is to remind the people that everything that they need for a full experience of God's grace is to be found in one place alone in

[26 : 21] Christ and so in Colossians 2.11 he says this in him that is in Christ you that is Gentiles remember not Jews you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ isn't that striking he's saying to them in Christ alone you are truly circumcised that is they truly belong to the family of God to the people of God they don't need anything else to achieve and to possess the full blessings of Christ that's what the whole letter is about just by trusting and following in Jesus they are truly circumcised they are renewed they are cleansed they are justified they are united to Christ there is no need for circumcision anymore because fully and completely they are members of

God's household well if circumcision marked out the household the family of God the family of faith the church in the old testament in the age of promise what is it that marks out then the new covenant family of God the church of Jesus Christ in the new testament if it's not circumcision and that brings us to the third thing to the mark of the covenant family in this age of fulfillment and the answer that the new testament gives to us very plainly about that is that it is a witnessing holy household marked out by the sign of baptism in the age of promise Abraham and Israel after him they were marked out by circumcision as a sign of the redemption promised in Christ who was to come and so in the age of fulfillment we have baptism as a sign of redemption now accomplished in Christ who has come that's exactly the point that Paul makes here in Colossians chapter 2 to these gentile converts in the church at Colossae in the old days of promise of course outsiders could join the people of God we saw that right and many others but they had to be circumcised to be right at the heart of the life of Israel to be admitted even to the Passover feast you had to be circumcised but no longer is that the case says Paul because in him in Christ you were circumcised in the death of Christ applied to you when you believed when you received Christ as Lord and all that the right of

physical circumcision signified that is the putting off of the body of the flesh is signified to you now says Paul by baptism look carefully again at Colossians 11 and 12 in Christ also you were circumcised says Paul and there's a parenthesis with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ that is in what Christ did you were circumcised verse 12 having been buried with him in baptism you see that sentence is a sandwich the circumcision on one side is baptism on the other and in between there's the reality that both of these signs speak of the actual dealing with the body of flesh our sinful nature in the death of Jesus Christ for our sins and its application to us what the one sign speaks of prospectively pointing forward to fulfillment the other sign speaks of retrospectively looking back upon a fulfillment and so it's no surprise then that we find all through the New Testament that what baptism marks are exactly the same things that were marked by circumcision union with God in Christ through baptism we read it in Galatians 3 27 in baptism we have put on Christ we're united to him Romans 6 says that in him we are united to his death in baptism so it speaks of union with Christ it speaks specifically of cleansing and renewal by the Holy Spirit Paul says to Titus he saved us by a washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior Ephesians 5 he says he has sanctified us he's cleansed us that is his church by the washing of water through the word and it speaks of forgiveness and the righteousness that comes by faith alone just as it did in Abraham's circumcision Peter says baptism saves you not by removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of

[31 : 39] Jesus Christ it's the pledge from God to us that our conscience is clean that we are justified counted righteous in his sight because he was raised says Paul for our justification you see how parallel these signs are circumcision was a sign of God's gospel promise and all its benefits that would be secured in his once for all action when Christ came in the future and baptism is a sign of exactly that same covenant gospel promise based on Christ's finished work now in the past they're both signs of the same gospel of grace and all its benefits well they must be because there's only ever been one gospel hasn't there that's what we read in Galatians chapter 3 the gospel that was preached in advance to Abraham the blessing promised to Abraham which comes to the Gentiles through Christ so that as Galatians 3 27 says for as many as you as were baptized into Christ have a slave nor free Jew or Gentile male or female you're all one in Christ Jesus and if you are Christ through baptism then you are Abraham's offspring heirs according to the promise heirs to the covenant that circumcision was all about that's why Paul says circumcision or uncircumcision doesn't mean anything anymore what matters is this new creation in Christ what matters is faith one new family of faith through Jesus Christ Gentile together no separation there's one body now one Lord one faith one baptism circumcision is no longer the mark of God's covenant people his family his body that age is past we are the circumcision he says to the Philippian church we who glory in Christ Jesus the community marked out by the new covenant sign of baptism well that's all clear enough and I hope it's clear to us all but now the real question is this if God from the beginning of his dealings with his people in grace delighted to deal in families and if circumcision is the mark of initiation and belonging to the people of God in the old days of shadows and promises if it was given to the children of God's people indeed if it was commanded to be given on pain of death to the children of God's people is it really conceivable that now in the better days of fulfillment in the new renewed covenant which is by definition New Testament tells us a better covenant with better promises is it conceivable that God should now rather constrict and restrict the blessings of his covenant grace to exclude the children of believers from that orbit of grace so that we could no longer see our little ones as really being part of God's church so that we have to see them as being outsiders as foreigners to the covenants of promise which means as pagans and God haters that's what it is to be outside the covenant of grace is the grace of God and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ now somehow to be less gracious to our children than it was under Moses so that we could no longer say that the promise is to you and your son and your daughter but rather we'd have to say to you but not your son and your daughter until such time as they respond in a prescribed way and convince us all beyond doubt of their intellectual ability to articulate properly their Christian faith is that what we're to say certainly seems inconceivable if we're to believe the whole tenor of the Bible's movement from grace to greater grace from promise to fulfillment in all things in Jesus Christ and moreover it would be such a massive reversal of all the covenant ways that God had revealed all through history and all through scripture for the New

Testament church to suddenly stop thinking of their children as properly involved in the professing church of

Jesus Christ such a massive reversal that surely we would expect to find major and serious discussion and teaching of it from the apostles that it should be so after all it took a huge amount of teaching and persuasion didn't it to persuade Jewish Christians that some things had changed the food laws and things like that and circumcision itself we would expect an awful lot of apostolic teaching to convince us of this if a new covenant was to now exclude the children of those in the church from the blessings and the sign of being part of God's people but in fact what we find in the New Testament is nothing of the kind in fact what we find is perfect consistency with the old the very reverse so in the gospels when those who loved the Lord

[37 : 12] Jesus and responded to his teaching brought their little ones to him including infants he didn't rebuke them and turn them away he didn't say no no not till they profess faith by themselves no he rebuked those who would stop them coming to him and he said let the little children come to me for to such belong the kingdom of heaven without waiting for any sign at all of faith on their part he took them in their arms and he blessed them an act which is surely fraught with significance the blessing of God himself was given to these little ones want to know what that means read the beatitudes blessed is the pronouncement of acceptance with God and in the apostolic preaching in Acts the day of Pentecost Peter doesn't say repent and be baptized every one of you except that is your children who now can't be part of

Christ's church until they've decided for themselves not like Moses gospel anymore it's no longer for you and your son and your daughter no praise God for us Christian parents he didn't say that he said just like Moses the promise is for you and your children as well as for those who are far off the Gentiles for all who the Lord will call it's greater grace it's extended beyond even before and nor do we see all through Acts that baptism happens only to the believing heads of households to the exclusion of their families the apostolic pattern mirrors exactly that that we read of in Genesis 17 with Abraham when he believed all his household received the mark of circumcision and so it is in the New Testament three of the seven baptisms that are recorded for us in the Acts of the Apostles where people are individually identified they're household baptisms and two of them in particular in Acts chapter 16 Lydia's and the Philippian jailers were told very clearly that it was the individuals the heads of the household who believed and as a result their whole households were baptized whether infants were included in those households or not isn't the point of course we can't prove that either way it seems very unlikely none of these households had children in them though but the point is whatever age these others were in the household they were included in the family of the church by virtue not of their own faith but the faith of the head of the household and then when we read in the epistles it's perfectly plain that the apostles clearly address the children as part of the church the letters are addressed to those who are holy saints that is those who belong to the church through baptism and in

Colossians chapter 3 Paul tells plainly the children to obey their parents in the Lord same in Ephesians 5 they get just the same kind of instructions as fathers and mothers husbands and wives because they're part of the church they belong to the Lord 1st Corinthians 7 and 14 Paul explicitly says that the children of even one believer are holy that is set apart for the Lord part of the Lord's people that he takes for granted that they also took that for granted that's why he uses it to argue his point about marriage see the total consistency in the New Testament with God's pattern from the beginning you are a people holy to the Lord says Moses to Israel you and your sons and your daughters and you must live as a people set apart live out the meaning of the sign of circumcision so the apostles tell the New Testament church you are a people holy to the

Lord including your children and so you also must walk in the manner worthy of the calling that you've received the promise is to you and your children the blessings of the grace of God belong to our families as do the responsibilities to live it out so friends we believe we cannot possibly deny the sign of promise and of responsibility to our little ones of whom we have said to God of whom before we have even ever said to God Lord we entrust them and their future to you he has said to us take this little child that I have given you a child of promise and nurture her for me mark her out publicly as mine from earliest days and teach her how to walk in my ways all the days of her life no we rather rejoice in this wonderful assurance of God's grace that he's given to us as believing parents and we lay hold on

God's promises and we trust him as we teach our little ones to grow up into him to love him to obey him to serve him all the days of their lives friends that's the great privilege of being a true Christian family we mustn't pass it by so many Christian parents live in fear about their children fear that somehow they won't follow the Lord fear that they'll go astray and be lost but God doesn't want us to raise our children in fear he wants us to raise them in faith trusting in his gracious promise assure that his love and grace is towards our little ones that we gladly bring to him and put into his arms and in this gracious gift of baptism to us in the church that word of assurance is given to us again not just audibly in the word of the gospel but visibly tangibly something we can see and feel and touch and when in time our little ones say to us as the children did about the

[43 : 20] Passover when they say to us what did that mean what we say to them is this little Rebecca on that day in the front of the whole company of God's people the people who love and trust him the Lord Jesus promised visibly to you that if you trust him and go on trusting him all the days of your life then surely as the Lord lives he will wash away your sins and he'll fill your heart with love to him and he'll enable you to serve him all the days of your life that's what he promised to you on that day so our prayer for little Rebecca this morning as it is for all of our little ones claimed in baptism for Jesus is not for some kind of dramatic conversion many years from now but rather that as she week by week and month by month grows and matures in Christ that her testimony will be like that of the psalmist that she too will pray to the Lord Jesus Christ you are he who took me from the womb you made me trust you at my mother's breast on you

I was cast from my birth and from my mother's womb you have been my God Amen and may God grant the answer to these prayers of faith