

- o Paedobaptists like to argue from the so-called expanded blessings of the NT to “covenant children,” in support infant baptism.
  - The argument is that we live in an age of expanded blessing and fulfillment, compared to the shadows and types of the OT age in which children were granted the covenant sign; therefore the covenant sign should not be denied to the children of believers.
  - Heart-tugging rhetorics are often used, e.g. Are our New Covenant children less blessed and privileged than Old Testament children? What happens to our children who die in infancy?
  - However, God’s word, not well-intentioned sentimentality toward our children, must define how we answer questions such as those.

### **I. Paedobaptist views of covenant promises to believers’ seed.**

#### 1. Divergent views among the paedobaptists.

- There are significantly different views among the paedobaptists to the extent that parents have been confused about how or whether to evangelize their children, and about the salvation of deceased infants.
- This wide divergence and lack of unanimity reveal a real weakness in the paedobaptist position. If God has clearly revealed these covenant promises for the children of believers in the New Covenant, then why do conflicting views persist among those who hold to the same theological confessions (Westminster, Heidelberg Catechism, etc.)?
- Prominent Presbyterian pastors are known to hold to the view that infant baptism does not regenerate or save the child, but is only a promise by the parents that they will raise the child in the nurture and discipline of the Lord.
- One of the questions asked of parents before infant baptism in the PCA (Presbyterian Churches of America) Book of Church Order is: “Do you claim God’s covenant promises in (his) behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for (his) salvation, as you do for your own?”
  - : Such a question implies far more than either dedicating the child to the Lord or promising to raise him up properly, praying and hoping for his salvation. To “look in faith to the Lord” for the child’s salvation is compared to looking to the Lord for your own salvation. The parents can, in some ways, look for salvation on behalf of the child. Romans 9, using Jacob and Esau as an example, shows that salvation is entirely in God’s hand and must be sought individually.

#### 2. Classic paedobaptist views.

- One view, held by William Hendriksen and Louis Berkhof, is that God has not promised to save every child of believing parents, but He has promised to perpetuate the work of grace *in the line* of the children of believers. In other words, the claim is that the children of believers stand a high probability of being saved, by virtue of their being born into believing families. Verses used include Gen. 17:7; Ps. 103:17-18; Isa. 59:21; Acts 2:38. We have shown that Acts 2:38 has been wrongly interpreted by the paedobaptists.
- Another view, held by Andrew Sandlin, Ursinus, Witsius, and others, is that infants are baptised upon presumption that they are regenerated or elect. Verses quoted in support include Acts 2:37-39 and 1 Cor. 7:14 which, we have shown, do not teach nor support infant baptism. In Luke 2:23, a first-born child is “holy” without implying regeneration, to the exclusion of children born subsequently.
  - : This view is a form of baptismal regeneration, which gives a false assurance of salvation to the growing children, who are deprived of the call to salvation.

#### 3. Extreme paedobaptist views.

- One view, held by Douglas Wilson, is that the salvation of the children is dependant on whether the parents are faithful to their covenant vows, made during their children’s baptism. This teaching is applied to Titus 1:6, in which it is claimed that the children must be believers before a man may be appointed to be an elder of the church. Imagine the pressure upon the children to profess belief!
- Another view, held by Pierre Marcel and others, is that infants who are baptised are removed from the Covenant of Works, placed in the Covenant of Grace, are no longer under the condemnation of God, and are restored to an ability to decide for or against the covenant blessings. If unfaithful, they revert back to the Covenant of Works, in condemnation.

## **II. A covenantal Baptist view of God's promises to believers' children.**

1. The Baptist view is that children born to believing parents are more blessed and privileged compared to those in the OT.
    - They are raised up by parents who have the fullness of the Spirit that was only partially tasted in the Abrahamic Covenant.
    - They have Christ and Him crucified proclaimed to them from infancy as compared to the types and shadows preached to children in the Old Covenant.
  2. Children born to believing parents are more blessed and privileged compared to those born to unbelieving parents.
    - They have parents who pray for their salvation, teach them God's word, discipline them according to the Scriptures, and set godly examples for them.
    - They have church to go to, where they are taught God's word and prayed for. They have the benefits of the fellowship, love and example of believers in church.
    - God has not promised to save every child born to believing parents. Yet, parents can take comfort in the knowledge that their faithfulness and prayers will not go unanswered (Isa 55:11)
    - Elect infants who die in infancy are saved by grace, based on the atoning work of Christ (1689, 10:3). We take comfort in the knowledge that God is sovereign, that He does all things well, and everything redounds to His glory (cf 2 Sam 12:23).
- = There is a right sense in which the blessing of the Covenant of Grace has been expanded in the NT, and to the children of believers. That does not mean we should baptise them in infancy, contrary to the expressed teaching of the NT that they must repent and believe before they are baptised.