

vi. Having Your Children in Worship is a Testimony to the Faithfulness of God in Keeping His Covenant of Grace.

When children of believers are admitted to baptism and are present for God's worship, it is a public testimony that the covenant of grace, as explained to Abraham, is true for us today as well: 'And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee' (Gen 17:7). This promise was also reiterated to those being brought under the New Covenant administration of the covenant of grace: 'For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call' (Acts 2:39). Thus, when parents, with their children, gather together in solemn assembly with the visible church for the public worship of God, they altogether testify to the faithfulness of God in His covenant of grace.

vii. Having Your Children in Worship is an Exhortation to Them that the God of Their Parents Should Be Their God.

How many today do not take the faith seriously because they never saw the faith taken seriously by their parents? How many children never saw their parents be attentive to sermons, commune at the Lord's Table and sing the Psalms? When parents are diligent including their children in public worship on the Lord's Day (in addition to daily family worship) it is an exhortation to them that the God of their parents is to be their God also. Remember the command and comfort declared in the Scriptures: 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it' (Prov 22:6).

Practical Applications

Having seen the principle clearly demonstrated that children are to be in the public worship of God with all the visible church, it is fitting that we

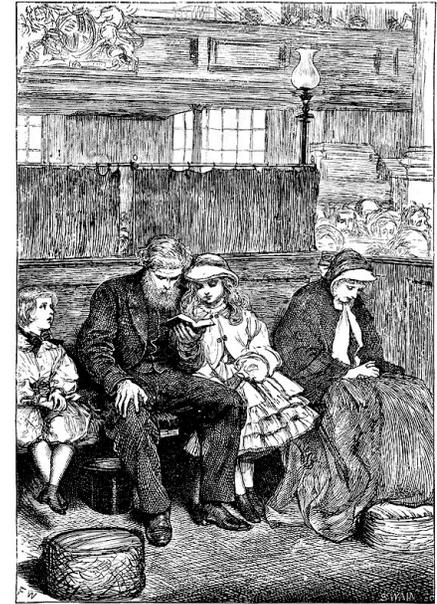
should conclude with a variety of applications for each grouping of members of Christ's Body:

(1) *To Ministers:* As you are preaching not only to adults, but also their children, apply God's Word to those children just as you would their parents. Our Lord instructed Peter not only to 'Feed my sheep,' (Jn 21:16, 17), but also to 'Feed my lambs' (Jn 21:15). When ministers apply God's Word to children, they are feeding Christ's lambs. Further, encourage parents in your pastoral visits to persevere and grow in their faithfulness to have their children in public worship.

(2) *To All Church Members:* Prepare yourselves beforehand to know that children will have bad days and at times be noisy. When they are a distraction, still seek to be as attentive as you can to God's worship; and then afterwards, speak a word in season of encouragement, extend help where needed and offer advice if pertinent. In this way, Christians are obedient to Galatians 6:2 - 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.'

(3) *To Parents:* (a) Firstly, you must seek the Lord's blessing in the raising of your children in the Lord. Psa 127:1, 'Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.' (b) Secondly, from your knees, you ought to be both quick and persistent to go to action. (i) Be quick, in that it is never too early (nor too late) to begin instilling godly discipline in the family pertaining to the Lord's worship. (ii) Be persistent, in that you must persevere in this discipline. There will be good days, and there will be difficult days. (c) Thirdly, be clear in your instruction to your children before, during (when required) and after worship.

(4) *To Children:* Participate in worshipping God with the saints. Listen to the Bible reading, pray along with the minister, sing the Psalms, heed every word of the sermon. And afterwards, ask your parents (and your elders) questions. May the God of your parents truly be your God by faith.



Why Should Your Children Be in the Public Worship of God?

A Pamphlet to Encourage Covenant Families to Worship Together with the Visible Church

'But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

Introduction

There has been for some time a startling trend in modern evangelical churches to exclude children from the public worship of God. The forthcoming fruit from this aberrant practice is telling: many young people are ignorant about the Christian faith, while others are leaving it altogether. However, pragmatism is not to be the judge of church practices - God's Law is. This pamphlet will provide seven biblical warrants why children are to attend the public worship of God along with their parents, and conclude with various applications.

i. For the Sake of Your Children's Obedience to the Fourth Commandment

The Fourth Commandment is as follows: 'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it' (Ex 20:8-11). The implication is clear - believers and their children alike are, corporately as a singular household, to keep the Sabbath holy. When children do crafts and plays games (even when they are tied to a Bible lesson with all good intentions), they are doing unlawful recreations on the Sabbath and neglecting the ordinances of God. And in doing so, these children are profaning the Sabbath. Ministers and parents who allow this to go on (and even promoting it) are likewise complicit in such sin. Sufficient enough should be this reason to have children in the gathered assembly for worship: that we should keep the Sabbath holy. May we remember the threatening of the Lord Christ in Matthew 18:6, 'But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for

him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.'

ii. For the Sake of Your Children's Conversion under the Preaching of the Gospel.

The Bible is clear that the preaching of God's Word by ministers of Christ's Church is the most ordinary means used by God to effectually call sinners to faith in Christ. 'So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God' (Rom 10:17). Indeed, the preaching of God's Word is a wonderful grace from God to work and confirm in us faith: 'If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom' (Jb 33:23-24). When covenant children are deprived of the means of grace, they are not merely removed from the blessing of corporate worship, they are also being removed from the ordinary and prescribed means whereby God would work in them saving faith.

iii. For the Sake of Your Children's Obedience to the Duties of Their Church Membership.

Children of believers, being baptized into Christ, are members of Christ's visible church: 'For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ' (Gal 3:27). As such, they have duties to render unto God - namely, worship - as well as unto their fellow members of the church - namely, encouragement in the Lord. With regards to their duties to God, covenant children who are removed from public worship cannot fulfill the calling of their baptism. Likewise, when covenant children are removed from worship they cannot be an encouragement to other Christians by their presence and participation in worship. Consider what an encouragement it is, indeed, to hear little children bring forth the fruit of praise with their

lips in singing the Psalms; or in their uttering the 'Amen' with the minister as he offers up prayer to God. Covenant children are not only to be served, but also to serve as members of Christ's Body in a manner commensurate to their station and ability.

iv. For the Sake of Your Obedience to Christ's Command.

Matthew 19:14, 'But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' The commandment given by our Lord Christ Jesus is clear - that children should be present in the public worship of God, since therein Christ is truly present among His Church. The command itself is two-fold. First, we are to suffer little children, meaning Christians are to show their humility and endurance in bringing children unto Christ in His worship. Second, we are not to forbid them. It is a gross sin to forbid covenant children from Christ's presence. The reason annexed to the command is this: 'For of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Meaning that, not only is our Lord able to work faith in the smallest infant by the preaching of His Gospel, but also that children of believers of have a true interest in the covenant of grace.

v. Because Christ Brings Forth Fitting Praise from Covenant Children.

It is commonly objected that covenant children are incapable of rendering true praise unto God, and so they are to be kept from His public worship. But such is not the view of our Lord in quoting from the Psalter: 'Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?' (Mt 21:16). God is able to sanctify the praise of all of His Church - regardless of age, station and ability - that it should be pleasing unto Him. Thus, covenant children, who are called holy by virtue of the covenant of grace (1 Cor 7:14), should be present for, attentive to and participating in the public worship of God.