

Why Don't We Baptize Babies?

One of the most significant ways that Berean is different from a solid evangelical conservative Presbyterian church is our view of infant baptism. As Bible self-feeders, we are able to understand these differences. Knowing why we believe something is vitally important. Berean believes only those who profess faith in the Lord Jesus the Christ and the gospel should be baptized. While our Presbyterian brothers believe children born of at least one confessing believer should be baptized to make the child a member of the covenant. For example, consider the title "Bringing the Gospel to Covenant Children" by Joel R. Beeke (Reformation Heritage Books, 2010). In the book, Beeke defines "covenant children as those born to at least one confessing parent (1 Cor. 7:14) who are baptized and are growing up in the community of the church" (p.7).

Is Berean missing something? Is there a covenant our children could be in through baptism? If so, what covenant is this? The covenant of grace is the answer I have seen and heard the most. But what covenant is the covenant of grace? I know of the Edenic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenant. But where do I find the promises of the covenant of grace? Where in the Bible am I instructed concerning the details of this covenant? When did it go into effect? Who does it apply to? What does God promise members of this covenant? The answers given are murky at best. But why? The reason is simple – they are "murky" because the answers aren't in the Bible. Grace is in the Bible everywhere – but a covenant of grace for children of believers is not present. Consider this simple scenario. Bob and Sally have one child before they get saved; after conversion, Sally gives birth to a son, and then later, they adopt a third child as their own. According to Beeke (a beloved brother in Christ), only the middle child could legitimately be a child of the covenant of grace through baptism, because they were the only child "born to at least one confessing parent." Seriously, stop and think about what he is teaching. Would these parents pray, evangelize, or disciple their three children any differently?

He writes, "We must pray for our children, pleading upon their covenant relationship with God. God has placed his name beside theirs in baptism and claimed them as His" (p. 32). At this point, we beg Beeke to give us just one Bible verse to substantiate such a claim. But none are given. Berean, we wholeheartedly agree we must pray, but our prayers are not based on anything other than an appeal to God's mercy for our lost children. Some suggest Acts 2:39, "the promise is for you and for your children," as a justification for a promise to children of believers. But again, that is absurd, because the rest of the verse says, "and for all who are far off, everyone the Lord our God calls to Himself." The promise is for the children of Peter's audience and, equally, "for those who are far off." Does the Bible teach that the offspring of believing parents are in a special status different from other children? Are there two categories of unbelieving children? Some with God's name next to their name and some without this special designation. And if God claims these children as his own, what shall we say when these children never come to faith, as many people baptized as babies never live a life of faith – does God's claim fail? What am I missing?