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Cultured Olive Branches – Nurture and Loyalty in the Christian Home (Psalm 78:1-8)

- A Redeemed Culture #13

Introduction – We live in a land and in a time where a people boast in their ability to make reproductive choices, and those choices are really playing themselves out in limiting their reproduction. They are doing the exact opposite of the cultural mandate – they are destroying their culture. Contrary to this, our best, long-term strategy for the redemption of a culture is to be a people committed to faithful multiplication and nurture in the Christian home. Simply put – have babies – and train them up by faith to be faithful followers who will then have babies and do the same.

Overview of Psalm 78:1-8 – Asaph exhorts all the people of God to listen to his parable, the story of Israel (vv9-72). Spurgeon comments, “*Israel was ordained to be a type; the tribes and their marchings are living allegories traced by the hand of an all-wise providence.*” Jesus instructs us that He is spoken of in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27) and Israel is not simply the story of the Jews, but our story, the story of God’s people (Eph 2:11-22, Gal 6:16).

Telling Our Stories (vv4-7) – The stories of the redemption of God’s people are to be told from one generation to the next. But these are not merely to be interesting history lessons. The goal is identification, loyalty, and nurture, and it is a warning against turning against God in stiff-necked rebellion, unbelief or presumption, and forgetfulness.

World Evangelism and Discipleship at Home – “...*that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments...* (Psalm 78:6-7)” There it is – God’s plan for long-term discipleship and cultural obedience. Our homes are the seedbed for a new, redeemed culture. This gospel that is taught to our children is not first of all a set of propositions, but a series of stories, stories that they are to identify with and call their own. We are to teach these stories in such a way that they can be summarized, “*Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*”

“Give Ear, O My People...” – Like the Shema of Deut 6:4-5, the Word of God declares the faithfulness of God to His people and calls upon us to believe in Him, in His faithfulness, in His lovingkindness, and to love Him. This love is a weighty love; it is tangible, objective, full of affection and loyalty, and obvious to all around.

The Loyalty of God – The next generations are assumed by God to be His. This is why He can turn and address the children in the church with the same commands and promises (Eph 6:1-4). This is what God did in Deut 5 when He told people whom He had not actually delivered from Egypt that He *had delivered* them from Egypt.

Loyalty Passed On - We command our children to believe the promises of God for themselves because we *first* believed the promises of God for our children. They get to see firsthand that our loyalty is no hypocrisy because they live with us for two decades.

Incarnational Loyalty – When Jesus quoted this greatest commandment, He was quick to also recite the second, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matt 22:37-40). Godly loyalty to the first commandment wears the second commandment on its sleeves for all to see. Therefore how you speak to your wife, how you show respect to your husband, how you address the children – these things measure your true loyalty to the first commandment.

Living out This Loyalty –

Personal Obedience (Col 3:21) – Children see past your hypocrisy. If you have sinned in the home, you must confess that sin to your children. Either way, you are teaching them – to be a hypocrite, or to be a loyal follower of Jehovah. Make sure that your children understand how to submit to your authority through your submission to yours (1 John 1:9). Do you love God? Do your children know it? Do they know *your* stories?

Intercession From You (Job 1:5) – Job prayed for his children not only out of his love for them, but knowingly as their representative head. The passage makes clear that while many of the children are now grown, this had been Job’s constant practice. Far too many parents agree they should pray for their children but do not do so. Is it possible you do not believe the promises of God or in His appointed means of bringing forth those promises?

Sing, Celebrate, Contemplate (Psalm 78 – “*A Contemplation of Asaph*”....verse 4 “*telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord*”) – Apparently we are to spend a lot of time doing this. God set aside time for His people to constantly reflect on His story, His character, His gospel. Psalm 78 is a long song, and yet God wants us to sing it with our kids. The stories are to be in songs, they are to be talked about all through our day-to-day activities (Deut 6:6-9), and we are to be contemplative over them. And this contemplation is to result in active, ongoing praise.

The Compassion of Jesus – Fill your home with stories of and examples of the compassion of Jesus our Friend and Redeemer

(Matt 9:36, 14:14, Mark 1:41). Your children should know this Friend of sinners from as early as they can sing or listen to stories.

Our Identity in Jesus – Children (and all people) need to belong, and they need an identity, a name. Your last name is one of their names. Christian is their other name. We are Christians. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. This is not an invitation, it is a name, a place, for your children to belong with you – forever. Teach them that they do not have a choice in this matter. Teach them that they are a part of the people of God, that they are to believe this (which means to believe upon Jesus) and to live accordingly. And teach them what a wonderful blessing this is.

Covenant Nurture in Jesus – Now, in Jesus' name, admonish and instruct and discipline and celebrate and remember and love and work. You are going to be busy – really busy. Do not do this for Jesus. Do this in Jesus.

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