

THE FOUNDATION OF THE REFORMED FAMILY

*“They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places:
thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations;
and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach,
The restorer of paths to dwell in.”*

- Isa. 58:12 -

The above mentioned scripture details generally the mandate which bears upon the shoulders of every movement of revival – every movement of *reformation*. By “reformation”, I do not *necessarily* mean a returning to those doctrines which marked that period between the 16th and 17th centuries, nor do I suggest by such a word the resurgence of that which is commonly called Calvinistic doctrine. What I mean in the use of the word “reformation” is a renewal of thought and practice; or rather, a re-forming in our hearts today of those principles which were so firmly established in the hearts of that Church which was established at the hand of Jesus Christ and his apostles.

The very need for reformation presupposes a falling away from the truth that is to be regained. Thus we hear the prophetic call dropping from the lips of Isaiah to all such standard rearsers: “They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places,” that means that these places have been wasted, and they have. “Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations,” that means that the foundations have been destroyed, and they have. “And thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in,” that means that the old paths – the paths of life – have been made crooked, and they have; it means there is breach in the dam of our generation which is letting out a fatal amount of iniquity, and if not presently repaired will let out a crushing weight of sin upon the heads of this untoward generation. There is a breach in this hour, and a man must needs stand in the gap. Thus the burden for reformation.

I find that our apostle Paul is peculiarly burdened for the family; he is burdened for the behavior of husbands to their wives, and *vice versa*, saved children to their saved parents, and parents to their children. No doubt the man is burdened about this! and there is no doubt in the full council of God, that he had obliged himself, by the burden of God, to give to the people (holding back nothing that was profitable to them) direction upon this peculiarly pressing point of practice. There was a necessity that he neglect not to preach on these matters to them, for though the gospel be a sword righteously splitting in sunder whole households, yet it is also a bridge repairing the gaps made by sin and darkness – in the home first of all. For was prophesied of John the Baptist that he would be such a minister of reconciliation so as to “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,” (Mal. 4:6). And so in the well ordered household of faith is displayed the similitude of a heavenly original and a much higher household where God the Father rules and Christ the Son brings all into subjection through the authority vested in God’s Holy Ghost; while in the spiritually divided house is displayed (without compromise) the chasm immutably fixed between light and darkness, the holy and the profane.

This burden for the family is something that must lay at the foundation of every revival, and if this burden is not borne through, then the revival will miscarry, the Spirit will be quenched, and more than likely the latter condition of things will be worse than the former. God does not mean to scrape the wound's surface, but to dig the thing out. God is not such an One to be pretentious or superficial – God seeks to do a deep work in revival. This work God means to carry on, not merely through a *spiritual* seed, that is to say, the many souls that would be swept into the kingdom of God in such a moving of his Spirit, but equally (if not more so) through the *natural* seed he has already planted into the kingdom of God in our families. Thus Paul had this ever uppermost upon his mind when he came to dealing particularly with the lives of those souls he came to love and labor for in the person of Christ. He cared that their marriages might be a glorious reflection of the mysterious outworkings of God's great love to man in the gospel; he cared that the order of the home might be, without hypocrisy, a standard of order within the house of God, *etc., etc.* Now if we would see a substantial, lasting work of God established in the earth, we must not neglect this weighty matter which is upon the heart of God, for, "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7), and we cannot expect to reap where we have not sown. Thus, in order that this burden for the family be thoroughly established in our hearts, I would take you now into somewhat of the heart of God from the beginning of time in ordaining this blessed system: the family.

From the beginning of time God was seeking something, which thing changed not with the fall of our first parents. And what was that thing which the Lord God sought? The prophet Malachi opens to us somewhat of God's mind upon this matter in Mal. 2:14,15, "The LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. *And wherefore one?*" *Why* did God see fit to bring a man and a woman together? *Why* did God see fit to merge these two bodies? "*That he might seek a godly seed.*"

From the beginning this was the burden of God. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So [because God had this purpose in his heart] God created man in his own image... And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26-28). God has a purpose seen perpetually throughout the scripture, beginning here in Genesis 1 and running through the entire fabric of his word, till, in the end of time, we see "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13) – that purpose, again, is that his glory might cover the earth, as waters the sea (Hab. 2:14). That is God's burden. And this is one of God's prime designs in executing this end: *the family*.

This "godly seed" is that which we find outlined in Luke 3, beginning with Adam reaching even to Christ. I say, to Christ, and no further, for, "He was cut off out of the land of the living: and who shall declare his generation?" (Isa. 53:8). Thus are we now expressly forbidden from doting upon "endless genealogies, which minister questions" (I

Tim. 1:4), for the only blood-line that matters is not physical but spiritual, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26). And so in a spiritual way, we are made the legal heirs of God and brethren of Jesus Christ by regeneration. We must contend for this spiritual reality to take place in the souls of our natural family.

There is something inherent in the seed of the godly that tends to persevere even in adversity; yea, *much more* in adversity. “The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew” (Exo. 1:12). Even as *Judah*, that place in the southland of Canaan where true religion ruled and reigned in the teeth of the golden calves and idolatry of Jeroboam; that holy hill where God never suffered the light to go out, never suffered a man to fail from sitting upon that throne of David. All of this in spite of the dynasties of their idolatrous counterpart, Israel, rising and falling upon their right hand and left. Somehow God always kept a lawgiver sitting upon the throne in Judah. God was ever orchestrating the workings behind the scenes, preserving the seed “until Shiloh come” (Gen. 49:10), even that heavenly Governor, the Lord Jesus Christ. The promise was sustained all the way from Genesis 49 on. Until Shiloh came God never suffered a lawgiver to cease from the throne of Judah. Again, there is something of the blessing of God upon the seed of the godly, both physically and spiritually. The seed of the godly, I say, in itself has a persevering nature, though against the grain, against adversity, against the onslaught of the devil, against everything! Something about it just keeps going. God will maintain and sustain, he will bring on and on his own seed till the whole earth be filled with his glory as he has before ordained.

Why is this? How can this be? Why would God so bless the seed of the godly? Behold the promise of God: “The LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, *keeping mercy for thousands*, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation” (Exo. 34:6,7). How does mercy rejoice against judgment! God is judging to the third and fourth generation of the wicked, but God is having mercy, *keeping mercy for thousands* – forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin. “Keeping mercy for thousands,” that is, thousands of generations; this is the blessing of God to all those that have kept the right way of God, and been conducted clear off this stage in uprightness and integrity of heart before God. What they have left behind will not be destroyed, will not be corrupted by the devil. God will preserve it.

With this in mind, namely, that God is seeking a godly seed, we find, even from the beginning, a dilemma arise. We find in Genesis 4 that God's plan A has, as it were, gone amiss. Abel, the “godly seed”, has been taken at the envious hand of his ungodly brother, Cain, from the lower scenes of this world into the next with the honorable decorations of First Martyr. And now the question comes, “What is God going to do? What is God's plan?” God will raise up another *instead* of Abel, namely, Seth. And so the story picks back up, that story seen from beginning to end: God pursuing *his* seed.

“And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name *Seth*: For God, said she, *hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel*, whom Cain slew.” “Seth”, that is to say, “appointed”, or, “put in the place of”, or, “in the stead”. Eve knew the mind

of God, she remembered the words of God, namely, that God was seeking *a seed*. She knew this to be the will of God, thus she looked diligently for it: “Who will God give us instead of Abel?” And the Lord gave Seth. So by faith she names his name Seth, for he was appointed in the stead (*i.e.* put in the place of) Abel. Do you see? She was watching for a seed. That is what was in her mind. She was looking to be more than just a woman with much material inheritance to pass on to her children. She was looking to lay up a spiritual inheritance; she was looking for an heritage of God (Psa. 127:3).

Behold how this dear woman knew that this man-child, brought forth from her own womb, was indeed that heritage of God, was indeed that promised seed. How did she know that *this* babe was the one to take the place of Abel? From the beginning, there was a burden in the heart of God: “In the likeness of God, made he him” (Gen:5:1). The purpose was that through man his image might fill the earth, even the knowledge of his glory. “And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth” (Gen. 5:3). Adam named his name Seth, because he saw a child in his own image, and Adam was in the image and likeness of God. Thus when Adam saw a son come from the bowels of his wife, and saw the son in his own likeness, after his own image, then by faith he named his name Seth. Adam knew that the Lord was seeking a godly seed, a seed of God, that righteousness might be wrought in the earth; therefore, by faith Adam confessed the purpose of God in the life of that babe to the glory of God, and the eternal good of the human race.

“And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD” (Gen. 4:26). And so with Seth we begin to see, that out of the bleakest scene, when all hope appeared to be lost of seeing the glorious end for which the Lord ordained the family (namely, his glory) – from this darkness springs forth a beautiful day, and the progress of religion advances like an almost sunken ship pulling forth from the depths, in the midst of a million breakers, to press on to the harbor. And naturally, we see that the result was men calling upon the Lord just as in the days of that righteous man, Abel. God was glorified in the earth and the powers of hell were driven apace before this storm of revival. And so will it be in our day, when Satan has come in like a flood, the Lord will raise a standard against him (Isa. 59:19)! We must not look to the ends of the earth for this revival before we look at that which has already been placed between our feet (Pro. 17:24). God has given us our families, and this is where we ought to believe the Lord to work first of all, in light of this purpose and burden in the heart of God, which has been opened now before our eyes.

You can always count on it; the family will go hand in hand with revival. If revival will come, God will be turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, as well as the hearts of the husbands to the wives, and the wives to the husbands. And so the kingdom of God will run swiftly and advance upon the devil once again. This church which has long slept, which has long been prevailed upon by the gates of hell, shall awaken and shall again cause a mighty trembling to buckle the knees of all the hosts of darkness, but not without the means. Therefore, O reader, awake to righteousness, “and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses” (Neh. 4:14), and the God of Israel be with you! Amen.