

Where Is My Child Now?



Meditations on Salvation, Heaven and the Grace of God for Our Children **By Cory Wessman**

Is the grave the end? Or are our deceased infants and young children now in Heaven? If so, for what reason is my child there? If you were like me, before your own child died you had never really given much thought to what happens to children who die in the womb, in infancy, or as a young child. **What previously seemed an esoteric question has now become a question of utmost importance to us in our grief.**

In searching scripture, we find the assurance that all infants and young children are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. Every infant child who dies before being reaching a morally accountable age receives the gift of eternal life through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on a Roman cross about two thousand years ago. Just as we adults have no merit on our own by which we can justifiably claim to deserve Heaven, so also God chooses to save infant children as a gift (“by grace”). Based upon the demonstrated character of God, God clearly not only has the power to save infants, but the desire to do so. God chooses to save all deceased infants not because of any inherent innocent of a child, but because God is loving, merciful and just. We hope that you would be encouraged by Biblical assurances that your infant child is alive in Heaven, even now, enjoying the unspeakable riches of eternal life with God.

How Are Our Children Saved?

If my child is in Heaven, how is it that my child is there? In studying scripture, we find that our infant children are not saved because they are “innocent,” but are eternally saved by God’s grace through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Children are not saved because they are “innocent”

First, it is crucial to understand that infant children are not saved because they are “innocent” or because they otherwise “deserve” to go to Heaven. The Bible clearly teaches that all of us, from the moment of our birth, behave in a manner that morally separates us from God. The Bible uses words like “sin” and “depravity” to describe our natural inclination to think and behave in ways that are displeasing to God. In the book of Psalms, King David writes, “Behold I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Psalm 51:5. “In your sight no one living is righteous.” *Psalm 143:2.*

According to Paul, our sinfulness is inherent because of what it means to be human. *Romans 5:12-21.* Ever since the moment that Adam decided to disobey God, the natural inclination of every human is to be sinful—that is, to be separated from God in thought and action. Because of our connection with Adam as human beings, we are born into the world guilty. As a result, Paul writes, “We are, *by nature*, children of wrath.” *Ephesians 2:3.* While our earthly decisions will help us increase or decrease that predilection towards behavior that displeases God, the Bible clearly states that this predilection causes us humans to be separated from God because of our immoral impurities. “Who can say, “I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” *Proverbs 20:9.* Regardless of whether you are 1 day old or 100 years old, our thoughts, desires, and actions separate us from God. According to the Bible, sin is not something that reared its ugly head in our lives only after we make bad decisions. Sin is in us from even our youngest days, are the result of a heart that is fundamentally sinful.

Jesus himself said that all of us must be “born again.” *John 3:3.* This presumes that something wrong happened from the very moment we were born. Jesus didn’t say, “We need to start over from our teenage years” or “We need to start over from the day we could walk.” Indeed, the very fact that children die at all is a demonstration that we have not been born innocent—that something has gone wrong from the moment of our birth. All of us, including our infant children, “have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” All of us, including our infant children, are in need of supernatural means to reestablish a relationship with God.

Children are saved by God’s Grace

Rather than saving children because of they are “innocent,” God saves children for the very same reason he saves some adults; by grace, through the blood of Jesus Christ. The central message of the Christian faith is that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has provided a means to an eternal relationship between Himself, an infinitely wise and Holy God, and us sinful humans. Because Jesus is both God and man, Jesus was able to pay the penalty that was due to us because of our sin. No matter how many good works we accomplish during our earthly lifetime, how many good deeds done or dollars spent on good charitable causes, we would not have sufficient moral standing in the sight of an infinitely wise and Holy God to enjoy an eternal

relationship with us. In other words, the infinite gap between us and God (caused by our sin) was bridged by Jesus Christ. Jesus' work accomplished what we could never accomplish on our own.

The salvation of an infant child is a perfect demonstration of what God means when He says that salvation is by His power, and not ours; for otherwise, some amount of "action" or "deeds" on our part would be required. **The Bible teaches that a relationship with God is possible not by a lifetime of good works but only if God's free gift of salvation given to us through Jesus Christ.** Paul writes that "we are justified [that is, made right with God] by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." *Romans 3:24*. Only because of Christ's sacrifice for us, and the grace given to us, and not because of anything we have done, do we have peace with God. *Romans 5:1*.

Adults can find just about anything to boast in. We can find reason to boast in our work, our income, significant others, homes, and children. But if you study the Holy Bible, you realize that none of these things that we boast in matter to God when it comes to salvation. In the book of Ephesians, Paul says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." *Ephesians 2:8-9*. We have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and not through any attempts at making it to him on our own. "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace." *Romans 11:6*.

It is absolutely crucial for us adults to understand that being saved "by grace" means that no part of the "work" we are able to accomplish on this earth has anything to do with why we are saved. **If we, as adults, are saved by God's grace and not because of our works, there is no reason to believe that our infant children are not similarly the beneficiaries of God's grace.** Pastor John MacArthur writes, "The saving grace given to an infant who has no part whatsoever in his salvation is a perfect example of salvation, which is always wrought sovereignly by God through grace." *John MacArthur, Safe in the Arms of Jesus (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 77*. Since all of us are saved by grace, parents of deceased infants can be grateful for salvation by grace, for it means that God's saving power can extend to all of us, regardless of whether we have lived on this earth 100 years or 100 seconds. Infants are saved by God's grace, and for that, we can be grateful.

What Scriptural Assurances Do We Have That Our Children Are Saved?

If you believe in the authority of the Bible, you have ample reason for trusting that children who die in infancy are saved for all eternity, having been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Here are a few of the reasons why, based upon scripture, we can have such confidence:

God Has The Power To Save Infant Children

Since God has the freedom and power to decide who will be saved for eternity, we can be certain that God does, in fact, save children who die in infancy. In other words, in considering

whether or not our children are in heaven, we should not lose sight of the fact that God has the power and authority to save whomever He wants, and God's power is independent of any standard of authority outside of Himself. God sets the rules as to who is saved, and who is not saved. The Bible teaches that there is no authority outside of God that God must obey in making decisions as to who is going to Heaven and who is not going to Heaven.

In the Old Testament book of Exodus, Moses has several encounters with God in which Moses is able to ask questions to God about what God is doing through Moses and the nation of Israel. In one encounter, Moses asks God to show Moses God's glory. In response, God tells Moses, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." *Exodus 33:19*. God's response to Moses demonstrates that God is outside any law. His glory, His divine nature, includes the ability to choose whom He will be righteous towards, and those whom He withholds mercy. Pastor John Piper says, "It is the glory of God and His essential nature mainly to dispense mercy on whomever He pleases apart from any constraint originating outside His own will. This is the essence of what it means to be God. This is His name." *John Piper, Future Grace (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 1995), 80*.

Since God is not bound in any way as to who he can save, he is certainly not bound by human conceptions of who should be saved. God has the freedom to elect someone to salvation regardless of their nationality, family history, what sins they did or did not commit in their past, and the length of their lifespan. In Matthew 3, the Pharisees and Sadducees thought that they would be considered righteous in God's eyes because of their family lineage from Abraham and their religious observance of the Mosaic law. But John the Baptist corrects them, stating that human ancestry or human action does not dictate to God who will receive God's blessing. "Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father;' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham." *Matthew 3:9*. Rather than human genealogies and the observance of human laws, it is God himself who dictates who is, and who is not, to receive God's blessing of an eternal relationship with Him.

For parents grieving the death of an infant child, it is absolutely crucial for grieving parents to understand that no set of rules or regulations conceived by men dictate the eternal destination of our children. God's power to save is not limited to only those children who were baptized as infants or whose parents attend a certain church or are members of a certain religious denomination. As parents, we can trust in God's power to save, independent of what humans proscribe to be those rules for who is, and who is not, saved for all eternity.

Infant Salvation Is Consistent With God's Attributes Of Goodness, Justice And Mercy

Second, we can rest in the assurance that the salvation of infants is in keeping with the attributes of goodness, justice and mercy God that has demonstrated throughout the course of human history. Consider all of the wonderful ways in which God is described in the Bible:

- **• God is good and does good. *Psalm 119:68.***
- **• The Judge of all the earth will do right. *Genesis 18:25.***
- **• Good and upright is the Lord. *Psalm 25:8.***
- **• Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever. *Psalm 107:1.***
- **• Praise the Lord, for He is good; sing to his name for he is gracious.**

As best demonstrated in the person of Jesus Christ, God is merciful and just. In the third chapter of John, Jesus emphasizes the purpose for his own entrance into the world is to save. He says, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.” *John 3:17.*

If God is loving and merciful, and if God is all-powerful then we can rest assured that He will cause children who die in infancy to enter into Heaven. The great 19th century preacher Charles Spurgeon strongly believed in the salvation of all infants because the salvation of all infants was most consistent with the demonstrated goodness and justice of God. Spurgeon preached that if God did not save all infants, “it would be clear contrary to all that we have ever read or ever believed of Him, that our faith would stagger before a revelation which should display a fact so singularly exceptional to the tenor of his other deeds.” *Charles Spurgeon, Infant Salvation (Sermon at Metropolitan Tabernacle, September 29, 1861).*

In the Book of Revelation, we are given a glimpse of how we will respond to God once God brings the world, as we know it, to an end. “[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” *Revelation 21:4.* We are told that every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that God is good. At that time, our response to finally seeing why God accomplished certain things, or allowed such things to occur, will be to praise God. We will all praise God for how He demonstrated his goodness, mercy and love in each of our lives, even through the most difficult of all human circumstances, such as the death of our infant child. We will see that God’s power and mercy was demonstrated in ways in our lives that we could never have imagined during our earthly lifetimes.

In light of this, is there any possibility whatsoever that, after a long earthly lifetime of following Jesus on earth, dying and going to Heaven, your infant children and mine were not there, singing praises to God? The Bible gives us no indication that any of us will be disappointed. Again and again throughout scripture, we see that God is a God of love, mercy and justice. Following the end of the world, we will be more enthralled with the goodness of God, not less. If you follow Jesus Christ, you serve a God who is merciful, kind and loving, both to us and to our children. We can

rest assured that, because of the very nature of who God is, our infant children are saved by Jesus Christ.

Jesus Loves Little Children

We can be assured that our infant children are saved because of the way Jesus loved little children during his earthly ministry. You cannot read the gospel accounts of Jesus with little children without coming away knowing that Jesus loves and adores little children.

In each of the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke, we are told that Jesus and His disciples were inundated with the requests of little children and their parents who wanted to see Jesus. Jesus' response to these children was remarkable given the views of infants in his culture. In the Roman society of the day, children were viewed as insignificant; infanticide and child abandonment were common. Similarly, the Jewish society of the day had little regard for children. Since children could have done nothing in their early years of life to "earn" their salvation by keeping the law, they were viewed with contempt. It is not surprising that when the children when they came to Jesus, clamoring for his attention, the disciples rebuked the children. In the mind of the disciples, Jesus had more important things to do than deal with inconsequential little children.

But to everyone's astonishment, Jesus beckons the children to come to him. *Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:4; Luke 18:16*. Jesus told his disciples, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." *Luke 18:16-17*. More than merely welcoming and blessing the little children, He called all of us, His followers, to become more like these little children. In doing so, Jesus was clearly contrasting the attitude of these little children with the attitude of the religious leaders of the day. Like so many of us who have an elevated sense of self-importance today, these leaders felt that they merited the affection of God and the attention of other men because of their actions, either religious and otherwise. But rather than calling us to become like these religious leaders, Jesus called us to develop the same levels of trust and dependency in God that are found in these little children.

Jesus' statement in Luke 18 has a double meaning. Jesus is clearly calling us to become like little children in the sense of developing a spirit of dependency, trust, humility, and obedience to God. But more than just using little children as an example of how adults should develop a child-like dependency on God, and thereby become members of the kingdom of Heaven, Jesus is also stating that little children are, in fact, members of the kingdom of heaven. Not only does the kingdom of God include those adults who become like little children, but it also includes those little children who have the very heart attitude required of his disciples but who die before reaching adulthood. Since Jesus calls us adults to develop a heart like a child, it seems only right that children die while still possessing the attributes of the heart that God call us to—namely, a humble, gentle, dependent heart—should become members of the Kingdom of Heaven. If we can only become members of the kingdom of Heaven if we develop a "childlike" heart like a child, doesn't it also stand to reason that

God will make all children, who died while still possessing their “childlike” heart, members of his Kingdom?

When Jesus multiplied and loaves and the fish to feed the five thousand, Jesus ministered to the physical needs of hundreds, if not thousands, of little children. If Jesus was that concerned with the physical needs of the children, would he not be infinitely more concerned about their eternal spiritual well-being? Given the Gospel accounts of how Jesus treated these young children, we can rest assured that our own young children are saved.

God Owns The Lives Of Our Children, And Does Not Punish Our Children For Our Sins

Fourth, we can be assured that God saves infant children because He claims and loves our children and that God will not punish our children for our sins. In the Bible, God clearly makes a claim of ownership over each of our lives and the lives of our children. “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. *Psalm 24:1*. In the book of Job, we read that God told Job, “Everything under heaven belongs to me.” *Job 41.11*. If God claims ownership over our children, would not God dictate the eternal destination of *His* children?

Indeed, scripture consistently points out that God’s ownership of, and provision for, infants and young children is in no manner impacted by who the parents are and what type of relationship these parents have with God. We are told unequivocally that God does not punish children for the sins of their parents. “The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.” *Ezekiel 18:20*.

The Old Testament includes several examples where God’s actions clearly demonstrate that he will not punish a child for the sins of his or her parents.

- *Deuteronomy*: In the book of Deuteronomy, we find the people of Israel living in disobedience to God. Israel had become obstinate in their refusal to enter the Promised Land as per God’s instructions. In his anger against Israel for its disobedience, God promised that none of the adults who were then living would ever enter the Promised Land. But God specifically notes that the same punishment imposed on the disbelieving generation would not be imposed upon subsequent generations. God said, “And as for your little ones, who you said would become a prey, and your children, who today have no knowledge of good or evil, they shall go in there. And to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.” *Deuteronomy 1:35, 39*. In that particular instance, God does not punish the younger generations of Israelites, those who “have no knowledge of good or evil,” for the unbelief of their parents. Indeed, we are told that once the older generations died, the next generation did enter the Promised Land, and received God’s blessing.

• *Jonah*: In the book of Jonah, God had mercy on the infants of Ninevah, even though God had considered the evil in the city to be very great. We are told that God saved Ninevah because of the 120,000 infants living in the city at the time who “did not know their right hand from their left.” *Jonah 4:11*.

• *Ezekiel*: In the book of Ezekiel, God speaks through the prophet Ezekiel to speak out against Israel. At that time in its history, the nation of Israel had forsaken its relationship with God and had resorted to such detestable practices as idol worship and child sacrifice. The prophet states, “...And you took your sons and daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols....You slaughtered my children and sacrificed them to the idols...” *Ezekiel 16:20-22*. God claims ownership of all children, not just the children who live in obedience to Him. The children who died as a result of their parents sacrifice to idols were called “my children” by God. In His mercy and justice, God did not punish the infants and young children for the disobedience of their parents.

In each of these examples, God did not punish the infant children for the sins of the parents. Instead, God claimed ownership of these children, in spite of the disobedience of the parents. We can therefore rest in the assurance that because of God’s ownership of all of our children, He will indeed save them for all eternity.

Infant Children Cannot Meet The Description Of Those Facing Eternal Punishment

We can be assured that God saves children who die in infancy because **infant children do not possess any of the attributes of those described in the Bible as facing eternal separation from God**. While infant children are saved the same way that adult believers are saved by God, namely, through grace, infants are not damned in the same way that adult nonbelievers are, since infant children could not possibly possess any of the attributes described in the Bible of those who await an eternity outside of God’s presence. In closely studying the attributes of those who will spend eternity apart from God, one can clearly see that infant children do not possess these attributes, and therefore will not face eternal separation from God.

Infants Have No Ability to Know God

Infants do not have the physical and mental capabilities to know God and understand their own sinfulness and therefore have a legitimate excuse to be spared eternal judgment. In Romans 1, Paul writes, “What can be known about God is plain to men, because God has shown it to them. Forever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. Therefore, they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him.” *Romans 1:19-21*.

All of us adults, who have the mental capacity to know God, to perceive his greatness and his beauty, are without excuse for our own actions. But the implication is that those who cannot perceive God's power through their mental facilities do have an excuse. The millions of infants or mentally handicapped adults who died without ever possessing the ability to know and understand God's beauty and power have an excuse. Therefore, God will not judge infants and young children in the same manner as He will judge those of us who have seen and perceived God's glory as demonstrated in His creation.

Infants have had no opportunity to deny faith in God.

Infants and young children have never had any meaningful opportunity to accept or deny Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Numerous times in the book of John, Jesus emphasizes that condemnation will come to those who, after receiving the opportunity to believe in Jesus, willfully and purposefully refuse to believe in Him. In John 3:18, he says, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." Jesus is not saying those who have no opportunity to even believe in Jesus are condemned—it is those who, having heard the good news of Jesus Christ, have made the conscious and willful decision not to trust Jesus.

In John 3:36, Jesus says, "...he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides in him." In John 8:24, Jesus tells the religious leaders, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." Throughout each of these passages and the rest of the New Testament, the relevant distinguishing characteristic for receiving the wrath of God is willful disbelief in Jesus Christ. There is no promise anywhere in scripture that those who have no capacity to deny faith in God will receive the same fate. Instead, Jesus emphasizes the purpose for his own entrance into the world is to save. He says, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him." *John 3:17*. We can therefore rest in the knowledge that through Christ's sacrifice, God saves for all eternity our children who die in infancy.

Infants have never committed a willful sin.

When the Bible refers to why people go to Hell, it always refers only to those who have willfully and purposefully disobeyed God. In numerous passages throughout their letters to the early churches, Paul and John detail the attributes of individuals who will receive the wrath of God. Without exception, all of these attributes relate to intentional sins. *Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 21:8; Revelation 22:15*. For example, in the third chapter of Colossians, Paul tells the believers to "put to death" certain purposeful, willful sins, such as "...sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." *Colossians 3:5*.

All of us adults have willfully chosen to depart from God's ways. As with the individuals described by Paul, we rightfully deserve God's wrath in Hell. But children have not willfully committed any sin. If our infant children have no ability to commit those very sins that are the subject of God's wrath, there is no Biblical basis to believe that our infant children are the subject of God's wrath. There, we can be assured that our infant children are not now receiving God's wrath.

No Ability to Understand Divine Punishment

Infant children would have no capacity to understand why they would be damned to Hell. Since infant children have no capacity to reason, they could not possibly mentally associate the sufferings of Hell with sin. R.A. Webb wrote that if infants were damned to hell, "...the child's mind would be a perfect blank as to the reason for its suffering. It could not tell itself why it was so awfully smitten, and consequently, the whole meaning and significance of its sufferings, being to it a conscious enigma, the very essence of the penalty would be absent and justice would be disappointed, cheated of its validation." *R.W. Webb, The Theology of Infant Salvation (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publications, 1907), 42.*

Instead of punishing infant children for no purpose, God is reserving divine punishment for those who, during lifetime committed willful sins. "God's justice in condemnation will be most clearly seen by allowing those who will not be saved to demonstrate their inherent sinfulness through willful, knowing transgression." *Matt Perman, Desiring God Blog,*

Why Would God Save Infants?

Well-intentioned friends or family members might come to us with words of assurance about a deceased child's eternal destiny in which they point to the innocence of your child or the fact that your child was baptized. If the Bible assures us that infants and young children are saved, what difference does it make how they are saved? **It is crucial that we understand God's purposes in salvation because these purposes have significant implications not only for how we view our deceased child's salvation, but also how we view our own.**

In his first letter to the Corinthian church, the Apostle Paul summarizes God's purposes in saving, for all eternity, through the blood of Jesus Christ. Paul tells the young church in the city of Corinth, "Consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. From him you are in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; in order that, as it is written, Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." *1 Corinthians 1:26-31.*

As noted by Pastor John Piper, this passage demonstrates God's purposes in election are two-fold: (1) to eliminate human pride and (2) to cause us to boast only in God. *John Piper, The Pleasures of God (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2000), 137.* By taking salvation out of our own hands, none of us could boast in ourselves. By making salvation a power of God, and not a power of humans, we will spend an eternity worshipping God for His goodness, love and mercy towards us, not lauding certain humans for how moral or good they were, or even how intelligent they were in "finding"

God. Jesus pointed out that it was in God's good pleasure to hide the plan of salvation from "the wise and the understanding" and instead reveal it to "little children." *Luke 10:21*.

God has ordained the universe in such a manner so as to cause the salvation of certain individuals, including infant children, in order to humiliate human pride and bring glory to God alone. In God's plan for salvation, as in all His works, God is causing us to boast not in ourselves or any other human but only in God. In studying scripture, we see that God loves to confound human wisdom. God loves to boggle our minds with His plan. God loves, in the words of St. Paul, to chose what is "weak, low and despised" in the world to "shame the strong."

In the Old Testament, we see that God hand-picked the nation of Israel as the recipient of a special relationship with God. Among all the other people groups of the time, there was nothing unique about the Nation of Israel that caused God to decide to save Israel. Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel, was called by God out of the idolatrous city of Ur. There was nothing noteworthy or unique about Abraham other than God chose him to be the father of a great nation. Similarly, God chose Israel before the creation of the world not because of any unique qualities of the Israelite people, but simply because He chose them.

In Ezekiel 36, God is promising the nation of Israel that it will be saved, but not because of the nation's good behavior. In fact, God will save the nation in spite of its behavior in order to demonstrate, to all nations, God's saving power. "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes." *Ezekiel 36:22-23*.

The Apostle Paul tells us in the book of Ephesians that God has chosen his elect from the creation of the world to be the recipients of His grace. He says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved." *Ephesians 1:3-6*.

If you were to read the obituary section of the local paper, you would read about those aspects of a deceased individual's life that our society deems valuable. We might learn about the deceased individual's career, military service, athletic or artistic

achievements, country club memberships, travel experiences, and maybe even implicit suggestions about their personal wealth. But with an infant child, the family cannot provide a litany of achievements because life was not long enough to provide the child with the opportunity to succeed in those endeavors that our society views as noteworthy. Our deceased infant or young child has done nothing significant in the eyes of the world to deserve any acclaim.

And yet it is precisely this fact that should give us so much hope that our deceased children are exactly those whom Paul was referring to when he described “things low and despised of the world” and “things that are not.” It is because our children have a short obituary that God is pleased to shower upon them the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Because our children have no reason to boast in themselves, we can all praise God for his mercy and justice in giving the gift of salvation to our children.

Just as our children were saved by grace, so also have we been saved by grace, and therefore have no reason to boast in ourselves. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, it is not because you are “smarter” than everyone else, or simply because you grew up in a certain family. Rather, it is because God, in His mercy, had determined that, before you were born or before you made any decisions on your own, you would be the object of His grace.

By reason of this plan instituted by God, we will eternally worship God. In the book of Revelation, we are told that, in the last days, we will all worship God because salvation is from God, and not from us. Salvation is not found in ourselves or in anyone else. “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” *Revelation 7:10*. Will you join me in praising God for the gift of salvation for your child, apart from no merit on the part of your child? If you have not yet trusted Christ’s work on your own behalf, apart from no merit on your part, will you trust Jesus for your own salvation?

What If My Child Was Not Baptized?

If you belong to a church that baptizes your children as infants, you should not confuse the symbolic significance of the infant’s baptism with the underlying reason as to how your child is eternally saved in the event of death. Your infant child is not saved because of the baptism; your child is saved by God’s grace. God owns our children; as between us and God, God’s claim to “our” children, as creator, is superior to ours. An infant is saved, regardless of whether they live in a first-world or a third-world country, whether the child was baptized as an infant, or even whether the child’s parents are Christians, through God’s grace. God owns each and every one of our infant children and, as such, has redeemed them all through the blood of Christ.

Consider what would happen if an infant child were, in fact, saved by the sprinkling of water in the context of an infant baptism ceremony. If infants are saved by baptism, then

their salvation would be a salvation of works; that is, in being baptized, the “work” of the parents in baptizing the child saved the child. If this were true, the parents could justifiably boast in his or her own wisdom in saving the child through their decision to sprinkle their children. To God’s glory, 1 Corinthians clearly states that we will hear no such self-exaltation from the mouths of mere humans in Heaven. For that reason, infant salvation cannot be brought about by infant baptism.

Moreover, if infants are saved by baptism, God would not be free in electing those who are saved by His grace. God would be bound to abide by decisions of mother and fathers whose weekend schedule allowed them to squeeze in a cute little water-sprinkling ceremony with the local church. In such a situation, we could treat God like we would treat our dog on a leash. Just like telling our dog, “Go, dog, fetch that bone,” we would say, “Go, God, and fetch that little boy (or little girl).” God would be at our beck and call. In Heaven, we would elevate the wisdom and foresight of the parents in baptizing the child; human action, not God’s sovereign plan, would save children, and human pride would be central to the salvation of each child.

But God is not beholden to any of us, nor as we see in 1 Corinthians does God tolerate human boasting. “Our God does not live in a temple made by human hands. *Acts 17:24-25*. He is not at our beck and call. And Heaven is not about human self-exaltation. Those of us who are saved by God’s grace are saved in order to bring glory to God, not ourselves. Therefore, we can be assured that our children are saved by grace, through the blood of Jesus Christ, regardless of whether or not the child was baptized as an infant.

Will I See My Child Again?

We can live in the assurance that if we know Jesus Christ as our personal savior, we will see our deceased child again. The Biblical story of the death of King David’s infant son provides Biblical support for our hope that we will see our children again in Heaven. In the book of 2 Samuel, King David has a child with Bathsheba. The baby is seriously ill from birth. For seven days following the baby’s birth, David fasted and prayed without ceasing. We are told that he would not eat, despite the repeated requests from his servants to do so. We are told that he “laid all night on the ground” in ceaseless prayer. *2 Samuel 12:16*.

But after seven days of this fasting and praying, his infant son died. David’s servants were initially hesitant of even telling David, believing that he would be so distraught so as to consider suicide. Instead, upon receiving the unwelcome news, David surprised his servants by immediately washing, anointing, going into worship, and taking a meal. The servants wondered why, after feasting and praying during his infant son’s short lifetime, he would act in this manner upon hearing of the news of his son’s death. In response, David tells them, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, ‘Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead. Why should I

fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.” *2 Samuel 12: 22-23*.

David trusted in God for his own salvation, and believed that he would one day go to Heaven. David wrote, “My heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. For you will not leave my soul in Sheol....in your presence is fullness of joy, at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” *Psalms 16:11*. In saying that David would “go to him,” David was clearly suggesting that he would be joining his infant son in heaven upon his own death. Clearly, if David believed that he would not see his son again, he would have expressed greater grief than he did at the death of his infant son.

Later in David’s life, David experienced the death of a second son, though under far different circumstances. *2 Samuel 18*. This son, Absalom, was killed after Absalom’s unsuccessful attempt to unseat his own father from the throne of Israel. There, unlike the death of his infant son, David wept openly, not having the same assurance that his son Absalom would join David in the life to come. *2 Samuel 18: 33*.

In David’s case, David had the assurance that he would see his son because he trusted in God. That is, while David’s son was saved by grace, David was saved by grace through faith. We cannot make the same assumption about seeing our own deceased child unless we trust Jesus Christ, in faith, for our salvation. If you have not already trusted in Jesus for your salvation, there is no more appropriate time than now. We invite you to contact us if you have questions about faith in Christ, or want to know more about beginning a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.