



SERMON ADDENDUM

Our passage touches on the New Testament's evidence of infant or household baptisms. To avoid getting sidetracked, please note this clarification of the issue. Not least, because in the rightful rejection of presumptive regeneration—an emphasis on the privileges of covenant children at the expense of their responsibility to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—there is a danger (and evidence in our Reformed community) of a weakening of the command given to Christian families to have the sign and seal of the covenant applied to their children.

True, nowhere in the New Testament is there a command given to the church to baptize households. This common objection, however, is easily dismissed.

First, the practice continues from the command given to Abraham to apply to all within his household the sign and seal of the covenant (Gen. 17:1-14).

Second, the command was never abolished. Certainly, circumcision ended in the new covenant era, but not the principle of applying the sign and seal to those in believing households. Had it being abolished after twenty centuries (that is over eight times longer than the USA has existed!), we would have heard of little else in the New Testament (imagine the reaction to the abolition of the second amendment!). While, rather,, the sign and seal became bloodless once Christ died, the principle of the application of the sign and seal of the covenant to the infants of believers remains in force, and *as a command* and not merely an option.

Consider the record in Acts 16 of the conversions of Lydia and of the Philippian jailor. Verse 15 states, "And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged *me to be faithful* to the Lord, come to my house and stay." Then verses 33b-34: "he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that *he had believed in God.*"

Now the sacrament of baptism is, as Baptists emphasize, primarily a missionary sacrament (Matt. 28:18-20), and symbolizes the conversion of first-generation believers from among the nations. Indeed, we given credence to Baptist theology, when, through the failure of outreach, we become satisfied with the baptism of our covenant children. Nevertheless, we baptize them with the prayer that God may so use them in the years to come as to increase adult baptisms through their witness. This said, note from Acts 16 two critical details.

First, Paul and Silas automatically baptized the households of Lydia and the jailor. They had neither reason nor justification to do so other than obedience to the command first given to Abraham to apply the sign and seal of the covenant. They thereby demonstrated the unity of the old and new covenant eras.

Second, each household baptism is explained not in terms of the conversion of each family member, as our Baptist friends claim, but as a consequence of the personal faith of Lydia and of the jailor (see the italics above). As Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 7:14, the presence of one Christ-indwelt parent in a household sets apart from the world the entire household. By this, we mean not to say that the other members did not need saving, but that, as belonging to the visible church, they gained access to the gospel and to the opportunity likewise to believe.

While, then, it is biblical to react against presumptive regeneration, the Scripture cautions us against overreacting.