

(The following column appeared in the *Calvary Herald* (vol. 12, no. 5, 1995), a publication of Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Church in Hampton, Virginia < [www.clearlight.com/~crpc/](http://www.clearlight.com/~crpc/)>.)

## **Necessary Consequence: Will My Children Go To Heaven? (Part 2)**

**by Michael Holloway**

**W**ill *My Children Go To Heaven?* is the title of a recently published book by Edward N. Gross. Dr. Gross' answer to his title question is, "Yes, if you are a faithful Christian parent." In the February/March edition of the *Calvary Herald* (volume 12, number 2), I stated the opinion that Dr. Gross fails to show that his answer is right. In this issue's column, I will explain the reasoning that supports this opinion.

Recall that one of the foundational premises of this column is that the Westminster Confession of Faith is correct when it states in Chapter I, Section VI: *The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture....* Thus, the assertion "all children of faithful Christian parents will be saved" is true if either the Scripture explicitly states it, or it may be deduced from Scripture by "good and necessary consequence." The question before us is whether Dr. Gross shows that at least one of these two conditions is satisfied.

We may quickly focus our attention on the second condition. Dr. Gross places particular importance on several specific Scripture passages, but he does not quite claim that these passages directly and unquestionably support his thesis. Instead, he asserts (without actually using the phrase) that his thesis follows by good and necessary consequence from these and other passages.

In this short column, we do not have space to look at every passage cited by Dr. Gross; however, because his basic approach is the same for all passages, looking at just one passage will suffice to show the inadequacy of his argument. For this purpose, let us consider the first Scripture passage he cites, and what he has to say about it.

Acts 2:36-39 reads as follows: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."

About this passage, Dr. Gross writes: "The promise offered to those repenting sinners was the promise of salvation. And the same promise was extended to their children, too. ... Was this promise only for *them*? Or does it continue to be in effect today? ... That promise was not only a Jewish promise, confined to those then present. It was a universal promise made to all everywhere whom God would call to salvation. The Gentiles were those who were 'far off' (Eph. 2:13,17), and so the promise is for you and me just as much as for those who first heard it."

These words reveal three errors that Dr. Gross makes throughout his book: (1) assuming that whenever the Scripture speaks of children, it means *all* children; (2) ignoring qualifying text within a passage; and (3) failing to recognize that his own interpretations are fatal to his thesis. Although only the third of these errors is specifically a question of logic (the first two are primarily hermeneutical questions), I'll address each briefly.

First, for Peter's words to support Dr. Gross' assertions, it is necessary that they be read as, "... the promise is for you and for each and every one of your children ...." To read the passage in this way is to

make the same error that many Jews did in thinking that God's covenant with Abraham insured the salvation of every child born to Jewish parents. The natural and orthodox understanding of Peter's words is that the promise continues from generation to generation, in the same way as God's previous promise to Abraham does.

Second, Dr. Gross ignores the phrase, "as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself." Even if "children" means "each and every child", the concluding phrase modifies the otherwise apparent universality of the promise by restricting it to those whom God calls. The promise is not to everyone in each generation, but to everyone God calls to Himself in each generation.

Finally, even if we adopt Dr. Gross' interpretation of "children" ("each and every one of your children"), and even if we ignore the passage's concluding phrase, the passage does not support Dr. Gross' thesis. Recall that his thesis is that every child of faithful Christian parents will be saved. If his interpretation of the passage is correct, then every child of Christian parents --- regardless of whether the parents are faithful --- will be saved; nothing in the passage restricts the promise to faithful parents only. Thus, Dr. Gross' own interpretation of the passage is fatal to his thesis.

Acts 2:36-39 does not support Dr. Gross' thesis. Although I've not shown it here, analysis of the other passages he cites shows that none of them support him, either. Thus, Dr. Gross does not prove that all the children of faithful Christian parents will necessarily go to heaven.

Please note that I have shown only that Dr. Gross has not proved his thesis; I have *not* shown that his thesis *cannot* be true (the thesis cannot be true, but the proof of this is left as an exercise to the reader). *Nor* have I explained what the Scripture does teach about the salvation of believer's children. On this issue, we should take comfort and confidence in the knowledge that God promises to richly bless those who honor Him.