

# Pride of Ancestry

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Luke 3:8

Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father...

Pride of ancestry is a common evil, and it was very prevalent among the Jews.

## I. LET US ATTEND TO A FEW GENERAL REMARKS ON THE PASSAGE,

1. It must be admitted that it was once a privilege to have Abraham for a father. It was in consequence of the Israelites being the children of Abraham, that unto them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. It was, therefore, one of the first honours, to belong to the family of Abraham (Deuteronomy 33:29; Psalm 105:42; Romans 9:4).

2. It was no unusual thing for the Jews, in their most degenerate state, to boast of their descent from this eminent patriarch.

3. To be descended from pious parents is still a privilege, which we should carefully improve. A heathen philosopher blessed God that he was born at Athens; and have we not greater reason to bless Him that we were born in a Christian country, and descended from godly ancestors. David mentions the piety of his mother as a motive for devoting himself to the service of God, and as a reason of his having obtained mercy. "Oh, Lord," says he, "truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thy handmaid; Thou hast loosed my bonds." And in giving a solemn charge to his son, he uses similar language, "Thou Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father" (2 Timothy 1:5; Psalm 116:16).

4. Though it is an honour to be descended from pious ancestors, yet we are warned against trusting in it as a substitute for personal religion. "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father"; for so had Ishmael and Esau; and yet they were none the better for it. Do not imagine that this will be any excuse for sin, or a sufficient plea for mercy.

II. Consider THE REASONS THAT SHOULD CAUTION US AGAINST PLACING ANY DEPENDENCE ON NATURAL DESCENT, as giving us a title to eternal life, or rendering us more secure from the wrath to come.

1. The children of pious parents are defiled with original sin as well as others, and therefore have the same propensities to evil. Corruption runs in the blood, though grace does not. Though the Jews themselves were circumcised, their children were born in uncircumcision; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others (Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:2, 3).

2. In too many instances, the children of religious parents, like the prodigal son, have grown weary of restraint, and indulged in those criminal excesses which are common to the most abandoned characters. What were the sons of Eli, and the sons of Aaron; their conduct, and their end! Guilty of intemperance, impurity, and profaneness, they died under the visible marks of Divine displeasure. That excellent prince Josiah had four sons, and they all proved wicked. Benjamin was so called, to denote that he was the son of his father's right hand; and yet most of the left-handed men we read of in Scripture were Benjamites, as if it were intended to show that the course of events and the formation of character are oftentimes the reverse of what we had reason to expect.

3. It is still more painful to observe, that some of the best of men have had the very worst of children, who have been a grief and a dishonour to their parents. The sweetest wine makes the sharpest vinegar, and the most promising children sometimes turn out the worst of characters. Nabal the churl was of the posterity of the noble and disinterested Caleb. Absalom who murdered Amnon, and Amnon who defiled his sister, were the sons of David, the man after God's own heart.

4. Our being the children of pious parents merely can no more effect our salvation, than our being the children of wicked parents can effect our destruction; personal character being that alone by which our future state will be determined.

5. The futility of every plea arising from our connection with pious ancestors is also evinced in what is alleged by the sacred writer, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. He who gave Abraham a son when he was past age, and afterwards raised him up in a figure from the altar, can be at no loss to give him a spiritual seed as numerous as the stars of heaven.

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