

Grace levels all distinctions, and regards . . .

the most zealous religionist--on the same plane as the most heinous criminal;

the chaste virgin--on the same plane as the foul prostitute.

Therefore God is perfectly free to save the chief of sinners, and bestow His mercy on the vilest of the vile! A. W. Pink

GADSBY'S CATECHISM

by William Gadsby (about 1800)

(Presented here as originally published – this does not constitute a full endorsement of the Riverside Baptist Church)

Question LII. Which is the second commandment?

Answer. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, or the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.

Ex. 20.4-6; Deut. 5.8-10.

Question LIII. Which is the third commandment?

Answer. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

Ex. 20.7; Dent 5.11.

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Sunday Evening 6:00 PM

Prayer and Bible Study Wednesday Evening 6:30 PM

WCWV 92.9 FM – 8:00 AM Sunday Morning

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST REPORT

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“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

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THE HEATH IN THE DESERT

Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Jeremiah 17:5-6

The scripture clearly declares that *As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come. Proverbs 26:2.* The causes in this text are clearly set forth and we would note them carefully at the outset. Any of these are descriptive of a cursed condition in that the Lord and His mercy and grace are categorically excluded from consideration. The cursed man errs greatly in registering confidence in men, whether himself or others. A long history of failure should be enough to prove men unworthy of confidence apart from divine help. He also believes that the means of coping with whatever he faces presently or in the future lies within the realm of human ability. The “arm” is a figure of strength often applied to Christ our Lord in the expectation of what He alone can do. In each of these situations the alternative would be to look elsewhere for help and strength. The only One laying claim to such ability is the Lord and pride will not allow that as a consideration. Therefore, they move further and further away and choose a course directly opposed to the Lord and salvation that is in Him alone.

To see men proceed madly in this way is a source of grief to all who know the Lord and so they preach a Gospel of grace and grace alone setting forth the mercy of God to such as come in repentance toward Him and faith toward Christ Jesus our Lord. The sadness is based on comparison to the precious fruits of grace and

love that are given in salvation and the joy that comes in fellowship with God in Christ. It is here that the realization settles in that not only are they rebellious and bent on a course of self-destruction; they have no concept of the blessedness that exists in the presence of the Lord. We who know the Lord have known both conditions and the miracle of a gracious visitation from the Lord remains most precious to us as we feast upon His lovingkindness. For this reason we preach and pray for that same essential visitation from the Holy Spirit that would awaken them to their situation.

The description that follows exposes a most glaring error in man’s consideration of man in the light of the demands of a Holy God. The assumption made by many is that there resides in fallen man the ability to act in such a way as to gain the desired response from the Lord. The error found in such thinking is the failure to recognize the limitations of the nature. So it is the nature of the “heath in the desert” to remain in stark conditions, producing no fruit and being generally of no value. It has enough water to sustain a semblance of life. The heath is defined as a species of juniper, a dwarf stunted juniper, which grows in the most sterile parts of the desert. According to tradition, it was not allowed to be used in religious activities because it has neither fruit nor seed and is neither sown nor planted (JFB). So is the nature of fallen man whose only hope lies in a life-

giving redeemer.

Perhaps the saddest part of this description is that "it shall not see when good cometh." So it was with Israel in particular as they summarily rejected the very Christ of God and indicated no awareness of the excellence of His person and their infinite need of Him. There may have been fertile places not too far away from a salty parcel of desert land inhabited by the heath. But, it would neither sense need of nor be aware of the coming of the early and latter rains. It would never know growth into something desirable by the husbandman. While fields were tended and flourishing elsewhere it would continue its sad and lowly existence. How sad indeed is the existence of any outside the life we know in Christ. But, John brings the contrast to bear most graphically in: *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. John 3:36.*

So, it behooves us to preach of the mercy of God unto such as have not the ability to see when the good comes. There is no other hope. We cannot but plead and sow and pray, but such a change requires the mightiest of works on the part of the life-giver. To become as one

"planted by the waters" does not occur as a result of a decision. It requires both regeneration and revelation. We preach Christ crucified, risen and coming again. The good has come, is now come and is coming. The heath is incapable of sensing it except the Lord quickens them. In the meantime, we tell them of the price paid, the merit claimed and the salvation that is accomplished. We declare the only life that is acceptable to God. We rejoice before them in celebration of a life possessed – "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life..." And, in so doing we make our appeal to the One who can quicken the dead, give new hearts, open blind eyes and deaf ears so that the ultimate good may be seen and loved, even Christ Jesus our Lord.

How do we see our fallen fellow men? Surely they are morally accountable before God. But, by nature, that translates into an existence in a desolate place devoid of hope. We who know Him have been "delivered from this present evil world." How can we not set before them the Lord of whom is it said that: *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. Psalms 103:8. bhs*

Salvation by the Crucified God

Galatians 4:4-6

The thrice holy God, by infinite wisdom and grace, determined to procure the salvation of his elect by the most unlikely means imaginable, by the humiliation and death of his own dear Son. Salvation by the crucified God displays "the manifold wisdom of God" which astonishes the very angels of heaven. How it ought to astonish us!

Strength in Weakness

When Christ came to accomplish his great work of redemption, he did not appear in greatness, power, and glory. He emptied himself, made himself of no reputation, and appeared in weakness, poverty, and shame (2 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 4:4-6; Philippians 2:6-8).

God's strength is made perfect in weakness. And God determined that Christ's weakness and humiliation be the means by which he would overthrow his enemies and redeem his people. Our Lord Jesus Christ overcame the tempter's power in the

wilderness after he had fasted forty days and forty nights. The mighty Captain of our Salvation resisted Satan's assaults in the Garden, when his own heart was overwhelmed with sorrow. The woman's Seed crushed the serpent's head in death. And God our Savior snatched us from the pit of destruction by going down to the pit of death for us!

God has brought strength out of weakness, greatness out of reproach, and glory out of ignominy. Christ's shame, reproach, and ignominious death as the sinner's Substitute is the only means by which sinners can be raised from the depths of sin and death to the heights of righteousness and eternal life!

Exaltation by Humiliation

The wisdom of God made Christ's humiliation the means of our exaltation. Divine wisdom made Christ's descent from heaven the means of our ascending to heaven. The wisdom of God made life the fruit of his death. The death of Christ was the only means by which we could have eternal life. The death of One who is God is the only means by which we could have life in God. Our acceptance into God's favor arises out of Christ's dying under God's wrath. Our blessing arises out of Christ's being made a curse for us. Our innocence arises from Christ's being made our guiltiness. Our righteousness arises from Christ's being made sin for us! As sin reigned unto death over God's own dear Son, grace reigns unto eternal life to us by the death of God's Son.

God's Gospel

The gospel we preach, the message of God's free and sovereign grace flowing freely to chosen sinners through the accomplished redemption of Christ, is truly God's gospel. It reveals the glory of God's grace and mercy and the honor of his justice and holiness, proclaiming that God is just, and yet the justifier of all who trust Christ. - "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!" --Don Fortner



GOD HAS A PLAN

It is true that God has a plan, that we are sinners, and that Christ died and rose again that we might be saved by faith, but memorizing these statements does not mean that we know or understand the gospel. We must not leave such precious stones unturned! Lesser animals can learn to mimic and repeat, but we must search the Scriptures and discover the meaning of these things. Like miners, we must be willing to push ourselves to the farthest limit, deprive ourselves of temporal joys, and burrow through countless hours of study and prayer in order to gain the prize of the knowledge of the gospel. Otherwise, we will always be a people dull of heart because of the ignorance that is in us. We must turn our eyes to the rock from which we were hewn. We must seek to rediscover the gospel of old, to be recaptured by it, and to preach it with passion like people who know their God and understand what He has done for them!

--Paul Washer *The Gospel's Power and Message*

"Hope fills the afflicted soul with such inward joy and consolation, that it can laugh while tears are in the eye, sigh and sing all in a breath; it is called 'the rejoicing of hope' (Hebrews 3:6)."

William Gurnall