

The gospel is not merely an introductory message to Christianity—it is the message of Christianity, and the believer would do well to give his life in the pursuit of knowing its glory and making its glory known. There are many things to be known in this world and countless truths to be investigated within the realm of Christianity itself; nevertheless, the glorious gospel of our blessed God and His Son Jesus Christ ranks high above them all. It is the message of our salvation, the means of our progress toward sanctification, and the pristine fountain from which flows every pure and right motivation for the Christian life. The believer who has comprehended something of its content and character will never lack in zeal nor be so impoverished that he seeks to draw strength from broken, waterless cisterns hewn by the hands of men. Paul Washer

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 LXII. Wherein does disobedience to God's law consist?

Answer. Disobedience to God's law consists in sinful thoughts, words and works.

Deut. 27.26; Prov. 24. 9; Jer. 17.9; Matt. 12.36 & 15.18-20; Rom. 6.23; Gal. 3.10; 1 Jn. 3.4.

Question LXIII. Can the law show any mercy to transgressors?

Answer. The law is a transcript of God's holiness and justice, and contains a righteous display of His wrath and indignation against ungodliness and ungodly men, and pronounces the man accursed who continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them; therefore it cannot show mercy to transgressors.

Deut. 27.26; Matt. 15.18-20; Gal. 3.10-11; Heb. 2.2 & 10.28 & 12.18-21; 1 Pet. 1.15-16.

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WXTH-LP 101.7 FM— In Richwood

Services:

Sunday Morning 11:00 AM

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

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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HELP THOU MINE UNBELIEF

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. Mark 9:23-24

The heavenly scene revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration quickly dimmed as our Lord along with Peter, James and John returned to the rest. While the three were witnessing something of the glory that was to come, the others were facing the rigors of this present world and stark reality about themselves. The narrative is well known. A desperate father had brought his demon possessed son to the disciples to be healed. Their efforts were fruitless, bringing contempt on themselves and the message they preached. And so, the son was brought to Jesus. None ever came to the Lord and were refused the help they sought. Yet, His manner was to effect some revelation as to who He was and how the work was to be done. Here He would bring forth true faith and then act on that which He had given.

We would not lose sight of the ongoing training of the men who would bear His message to the ends of the earth. They had failed in a challenge that exposed a lack with them and would provoke them to question the Lord as to why they were unable to cast out the demon. It was no doubt an embarrassment to them that they had failed in the presence of a multitude which our Lord called a “faithless generation.” Such are the lessons that were deeply imprinted on their minds and should be so incorporated in the body of our faith.

Jesus had asked the man of the manner and duration of the affliction and established that his son had been possessed from childhood.

That this was demon possession is witnessed by the fact that the demon reacted with great violence at the approach of Christ. Even so the man approached Christ in a hesitant manner. Perhaps, because of the failure of the disciples, the man was less than convinced at the ability of Christ. We read in verse 22, “...if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.” With this the stage is set wherein our Lord would display His infinite power and would do it in response to desperate faith.

Many of us, the writer included, have often been constrained to cry “help thou mine unbelief.” We have been made conscious of inability, hindrances, sin and infirmity. It is not for lack of knowledge that there is a problem. It is not even a lack of confidence in the Lord’s ability. It is rather a discovered inability to properly address the matter with the Lord. We lack the fervency attributed to Elijah. J. C. Ryle wrote: “These are experimental truths. Happy are they who know something of them. The world is ignorant of them. Faith and unbelief, doubts and fears, are all foolishness to the natural man. But, let the true Christian study these things well, and thoroughly understand them. It is of the utmost importance to our comfort to know, that a true believer may be known by his inward warfare, as well as by his inward peace.” *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels.*

The man had placed an “if” with regard to the Lord’s ability. V. 22. Jesus turned the

question into a burden for the man which would provoke the utmost of self-examination. The response was something to the effect that, as to the 'if thou art able,' that ability is there to all who are believing. There was never a question as to what the Lord could do, only if He would do the work. We might successfully argue that there was no doubt that Christ would heal the young man. We do not like to think on terms of limiting the Lord and yet, in another place it was said that unbelief was a limiting factor: *And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief. Matthew 13:58.* It is in such passages as this we learn of the importance of faith in the economy of grace. In Ezekiel 36 we read of many wonderful things that the Lord would do. But, He also said that "...I shall yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel." So it would be that this man would learn much about believing on the Lord.

At the Lord's response to him, the man cried out in desperation. He did believe but was now constrained to face the fact that he did not know how to believe in an effectual manner. Thus, the determination of the Lord here was to develop what MaClaren called an infant faith in the man. It takes true faith God-given faith to elicit such a response. His was a cry of

awareness that Christ was not responding to a superficial declaration of faith. He may have believed that Jesus was the Christ. He may have believed that He was almighty God in the flesh. But, until He believed that Jesus was there for Him and that presumed faith was impotent to appropriate the favor of God, he was helpless. So, it was that He was graciously enabled by a divinely ordained provocation to confess that he did not know how to properly believe and that Jesus must supply ability to overcome the limiting weakness. When Peter was pressed by the Lord as to his love for Him, he had to confess "Thou knowest," as if to confess that such a determination was left to the Lord.

Thus, the man's faith was taught and he realized that he was not only dependent on Jesus for the healing but also for the faith that apprehended the healing. He knew there was no personal merit in that faith – it was the gift of God. He further knew that he had an ongoing need that the Lord would go on helping his unbelief. The faith we hear of today is largely presumption in that most feel that it had its origin in themselves. The disciples were learning and so should we – "Lord, increase our faith." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." *bhs*

Unbelief, Its damning power:

Generally, it is taken for granted by all that Christ is able to save us if He will; yea, who shall question His ability to save us, though we live in sin and unbelief? And many expect that He will do so because they believe He can if He will. But indeed Christ hath no such power, no such ability: He cannot save unbelieving, impenitent sinners; for this cannot be done without denying Himself, acting contrary to His Word and destroying His own glory....Christ is able to save all those, and only those, who come to God by Him. While you live in sin and unbelief, Christ Himself cannot save you. John Owen

Truth, How it is found:

We stand at a better advantage to find truth, and keep it also, when devoutly praying for it, than fiercely wrangling and contending about it. Disputes roil the soul, and raise the dust of passion; prayer sweetly composeth the mind, and lays passions which disputes draw forth; for I am sure a man may see further in a still clear day, than in a windy and cloudy. William Gurnall.

DUTY OF GRATITUDE FOR DIVINE GRACE

2 Thess 2:13.—We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

1 Cor 15:10.—By the grace of God, I am what I am.

2 Cor 9:15.—Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

As love is the affection which should arise in our hearts, from a view of God's character, so gratitude is the affection which should be produced, by a view of the benefits that he confers. The stream of his benefits flows incessantly so that our cup is ever full. To receive the benefits thoughtlessly, like the brutes that perish, and to enjoy them without thanksgiving to him from whom they come, is demonstration complete of human depravity. Such demonstration is given daily and hourly in the conduct of mankind, and by it God is offended and his wrath provoked. The unthankful man is the evil man, [Luke 6:25] and the enemy of God. Hence, when we are called on to love our enemies, the example proposed for our imitation is the bestowment of God's providential blessing on the unthankful. Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. We are bound to thank God for the blessings of providence so incessantly and so richly bestowed; but far higher obligations to gratitude, arise from the grace that bringeth salvation. [Titus 2:11] This grace includes God's gift of his Son, a gift so great that no name for it can be found. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." [John 3:16] The love of the Son, which demands our gratitude, is not less unmeasured, than the love of the Father: whence Paul labored to explore "the height, the length, the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." [Eph 3:18-19] And our gratitude is not complete till we acknowledge and celebrate also the love of the Spirit, [Rom 15:30] by whom believers are fitted for the enjoyment of God, and brought into fellowship with him. In exercising and cultivating our gratitude for the blessings of salvation, we must distinctly recognise that they come from God, and that they are intentionally bestowed. When we trace them to their source, the infinite love of the triune God; and when we receive them, as conferred according to his eternal counsel, we are prepared while we enjoy the benefit, to return thanks to its Author, and to exclaim with liveliest emotion, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." [Ps 103:2] That our gratitude to God may be proportional to the blessing received, we should count his mercies over, and survey their magnitude. Unmeasurable! unspeakable! passing knowledge!—yet we should labor to know them; and as we make progress in this spiritual knowledge, our gratitude should swell and fill the enlarged capacity of the mind. In order to the full exercise of gratitude to God it is necessary to be thoroughly impressed with the conviction that the blessings received are wholly undeserved, and proceed entirely from the mere mercy and grace of God. When we feel that we are less than the least of all God's mercies, that our only desert is hell, and that if salvation is bestowed on us, it will be of his own good pleasure; we are prepared to give thanks for the unspeakable gift, and to say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." [Ps 115]

John Dagg *Manual of Theology*