

Man's will cannot be neutral or 'free' to act contrary to his nature — which is a sinful nature. I do not come into this pulpit hoping that perhaps somebody will of his own free will return to Christ. My hope lies in another quarter. I hope that my Master will lay hold of some of them and say, "You are Mine — and you shall be Mine! I claim you for Myself." My hope arises from the freeness of God's grace — and not from the freedom of man's will. C. H. Spurgeon

THE BAPTIST CATECHISM
AS PRINTED BY THE CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION IN 1813

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1. Q. Who is the first and chiefest being?

A. God is the first and chiefest being (Is. 44:6; 48:12; Ps. 97:9).

2. Q. Ought every one to believe there is a God?

A. Everyone ought to believe there is a God (Heb. 11:6); and it is their great sin and folly who do not (Ps. 14:1).

3. Q. How may we know there is a God?

A. The light of nature in man and the works of God plainly declare there is a God (Rom. 1:19,20; Ps. 19:1, 2, 3; Acts 17:24); but his word and Spirit only do it fully and effectually for the salvation of sinners (1 Cor. 2:10; 2 Tim. 3:15,16).

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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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A COMMANDMENT TO GROW

*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever.
Amen. 2 Peter 3:18*

It had been many years since Peter had been confronted by our Lord on the shores of Galilee. This event was recorded by John who deemed it of such importance that most of the last chapter of the Gospel of John was filled with the account. It was not that John wanted to put Peter in a bad light; rather it was that the inspiring Spirit of God directed the message to John, the other Apostles and all who followed their teaching and example. It is evident with Peter that the mandate given him that day was not forgotten. Even in his advanced years and while facing the prospect of death, Peter was still aggressively pursuing a course of obedience to the Lord's command that he, “feed my lambs... feed my sheep... feed my sheep.”

It is important that we understand that the Lord did not intend for us to preach to them, or demand from them, or intimidate them into obedience. The use of the word “sheep” was endearing, to say the least, and the thought of attending to their spiritual health and well-being was not to be missed. It is obvious that such attendance to the ministry was to be such as would provide for them the spiritual food that would facilitate growth and maintain health. Peter endeavored to be faithful to that task to the end and he did.

It is evident that the Lord's sheep are in view here. Dead things do not grow or know. That which is set forth here directs action to where there is ability to respond. In the first of Peter's epistles he observed several desirable things

that had been manifested among them. They had “purified their souls in obeying the truth;” they had shown “unfeigned love of the brethren;” they were striving to “love one another with a pure heart fervently.” But then he added the basis of all this: *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 1 Peter 1:23.*

Grace is an absolute in that God sovereignly rules over it. Peter elsewhere refers to our God as “The God of all grace... (1 Peter 5:10). The knowledge of Christ comes by divine revelation. Paul's testimony was that it “pleased God... to reveal His Son in me... (Galatians 1:15-16). How then can we be said to grow with respect to either? Yet, this is exactly what the Apostle commands. But then, growth is clearly understood to be the outcome and indicator of the presence of life. So, Peter had urged the means of it on these people in this way: *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: 1 Peter 2:2.* No man can, in and of himself, create or initiate either grace or knowledge. We are saved by grace alone and we are saved in grace. It is both the giving of life and the provision for sustaining it.

God's provision for us takes on many forms and appears as great gifts to be employed in His service. Paul warned Timothy as to neglecting the “gift” that was in him. To be exercised in the gifts of the grace of God is to be made better

able to use them to His glory. So, it is that we are to pursue the best gifts by faith in Christ alone. We have no contribution to make in procuring these things, but God has enabled us to participate in them. It is in this way that we are urged to grow in grace, or as some have it, the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The commentator Robert Hawker made this observation: "Grace is an humbling principle. And what then can growth in it be, but to be increasing in humbleness. If this growth was formed in any attainment of our own, I fear that instead of an increase in humility, it would make me proud. Moreover, grace is wholly of God, and not of men. If I grow in grace, it must be growth in the grace, that is in Christ Jesus. As such it is wholly out of myself."

At the outset of our Lord's intercessory prayer he declared: *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. John 17:3.* Thus, the very essence of the eternal life is knowing God. And, there is no knowledge of God apart from the knowledge, or knowing, of Christ Jesus. It is to us to know all that we may of Christ. The reference here is not to an accumulation of facts about Him. While these

things are not to be discounted, it is the acquaintance with Christ that is critical. Of those we love, we would learn all we can and our love for Christ must be unrivaled. We would know more of His person (God manifest in the flesh) and so learn of Him (Matthew 11:29). We would know more of His offices as Prophet, Priest, and King. The grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ defines to us salvation itself. It is emphatically not of ourselves; it is the gift of God. The knowledge of Christ is to be valued above all things. Paul counted "all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord..."

We are no more able to produce grace than to produce life. The very thought is an absurdity. But, in that the operations of God in us bring us to awareness of the provisions of grace and knowledge, it behooves us to desire them and to pursue our Lord in them. Where these things are absent there is no legitimate claim to life. The prayer of Paul for the Colossians was "that ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding..." should we not desire that for which the Apostle prayed. Likewise, we are given to respond to the commandment of Peter to grow. *bhs*

"That person who is truly and most fully aware of the depravity of his own heart, his own propensity to every evil, and his own liability to fall into any sin, is least likely to judge the faults of others, and most likely to forgive their offenses." Don Fortner

"We who preach the gospel of God's sovereign grace are told by some preachers, "I believe what you believe and preach, but I do not stress it."

Beloved, let us never be found guilty of not stressing what we believe. Let us never be found guilty of claiming to believe Christ and the gospel but stressing something else. Let us ever declare that we believe Christ and the gospel, and that we stress what we believe!" Daniel Parks

"God chose what is low and despised in the world ... that no human being might boast in the presence of God." (1 Cor. 1:29) This principle, which God repeats in v.31 (quoting Jer 9:24) explains the most vital truth behind a biblical understanding of salvation - that the name of Jesus excludes all human boasting (v. 30). Monergism

The Lamb of God is in Control of History and thus the Book of History.

"And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.... And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.... And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne" (Revelation 5:1-3, 5-7). The Lamb of God is in control of history and thus the Book of History.

The Lamb of God is the possessor of the book which is the source of history. The kingdom of our Lord and its ultimate victory is delineated in advance in this book or scroll which the Worthy Lamb alone can open. It is the vision of the Lord's government of the world which is sealed in the book, but is about to be revealed in the world.

The Holy Scripture does not contain ALL History but it does contain history from the creation of time and mankind and it prophesies events till the end of history as we know it. God's people are those who can have a true insight of history. Dr. R. L. Dabney clearly recognized the value of history. Church history is a portrayal of the plan of God being implemented in this world. He continued, "The history of the church and of the world, regarded as a whole, is but the eternal purpose of that God who 'worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.' Deep in the secrets of His own breast is hid the united plan, from which the pattern is gradually unfolded on the tangled web of human affairs. As that decree is one, even so history is a unit. And as God gives no explanation of His purpose, except by its unfolding, the great whole cannot be fully understood until it is completed."

He seemed to beautifully reflect many of the vital elements in history. What we see today is God's secrets being revealed. Dabney went on, "Revelation gives us the key to unlock the meaning of many parts, and it has told us what is to be the final result." Special revelation (the Bible) has unlocked an understanding of many events and it tells us how everything will work out in the end. "No man but the believer is capable of understanding the philosophy of history. He who learns from the Scriptures, and he alone, can possibly understand the meaning of events or interpret them aright. Your infidel historian must needs blunder on in Egyptian midnight," said Dabney.

The regenerated and converted person is one who is translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. This is why Dabney said that only the believer is "capable of understanding the philosophy of history."

"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Ps. 115:1-3). When it is all said and done the revisionist historians will stand before the judgment of God and answer for their perversions of history which is lying. "All liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Col. 1:16). Yes, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof and that includes the history of it and those He created. Civil government dishonors God when it seeks to take God's place and believes God's world is its world to do with as they please.

--Dr. Ron Rumburg