

Since the salvation of ill-deserving sinners is granted by free grace, and must be received as such, the salvation of every man depends upon the personal election of God in Christ. God summons all people everywhere to salvation on the condition of faith. But he grants faith to those whom he elects in Christ (John 6:63, 65, Eph. 1:5,6, 2:8; Matt. 20:16; 22:14). But, those who reject His summons to trust in Christ have only themselves to blame for it, because the ONLY reason they do not believe is the hardened wicked disposition of their own stony hearts. This is because God, in His kindness, calls them and promises salvation by his Word, and convicts them by the common influences of his Spirit. He is not coercing them or holding them back from belief, just leaving them to their own stubborn will. There is therefore no injustice to those not elected. They are only being treated as they justly deserve. In rejecting Christ, they have willfully sinned. Monergism

THE BAPTIST CATECHISM  
AS PRINTED BY THE CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION IN 1813

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

56. Q. What is forbidden in the second commandment?

A. The second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images (Deut. 4:15-19; Ex. 32:5, 8), or any other way not appointed in his word (Deut. 7:31, 32).

57. Q. What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment?

A. The reasons annexed to the second commandment are, God's sovereignty over us (Ps. 45:2, 3, 6), his propriety in us (Ps. 45:11), and the zeal he hath to his own worship (Ex. 34:13, 14).

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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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### A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Hebrews 12:1*

The first three verses of Hebrews 12 are some of the most encouraging in all the Bible. We are reminded first of the existence of a great cloud of witnesses then pointed to the example of Christ in accomplishing that to which he aspired. He is our seated High Priest at the right hand of the throne of God. While there is no substitute for “looking unto Jesus,” there is certainly great benefit in looking to those who have gone before as exemplars of faith. The object of their faith was Christ and their confidence was confirmed in His coming and His finished work. It is to the testimony of such witnesses that we shall direct our thoughts in what follows.

Several things must occupy our thoughts here. The metaphor used has several important components. The vastness of the number of witnesses is indicated by an overshadowing cloud. The witnesses themselves are identified. They lead us to that of which they bear witness and provide the example to us in encouraging our participation in a race set before us.

The writer ends the eleventh chapter by acknowledging that, in addition to those named earlier in the chapter, there were an indefinite number left unnamed but no less worthy of note. The “wherefore” that begins this chapter leaves no doubt that these are the witnesses in question. With many, however, an issue arises as to the proper application to them as witnesses. A witness may be one who is a mere observer of things or events. Or, a witness may

bear testimony to the things he has seen, endured or experienced: that which he knows to be true by observation. There is no question that the picture here is of a great amphitheater so designed to allow the best view to all in attendance. So, the picture seems to imply observers to the race we are now running in the same sense that the athletes performed before the crowds of onlookers. Seizing on this thought, some, such as Greek scholar M. R. Vincent, press the idea that those from the previous chapter are in Heaven looking on as interested observers of the saints in their pilgrimage here. Others (such as Kenneth Wuest) see that idea as not feasible in that it would constitute a distraction from the heavenly sights they are beholding.

Perhaps, the thought suggested by Albert Barnes is better considered in that the lives of testimony left behind by these is the standard that is above us as we pursue a course of faith in this life. There is no doubt that the Bible sets before us standards witnessed ultimately in Christ, but lived out by others, the records of which, is left us. Thus, we are referred to the “faith of Abraham” or the “patience of Job.” The record of these from the past surrounds us and they are found in the Word of God wherever true faith is on display. These are they whose standard serves to encourage us.

But, we would understand that closely related to this thought is that these are they who bear witness to us of the fact that faith is

essential, anchoring, assuring, and functional. As any contemporary generation faces the rigors of the world arrayed against us, encouragement is needed and the substance of faith sustains us. So, it is that we are presented with the requirement of faith in: *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Hebrews 11:6.* It is as if the writer (inspired of the Holy Spirit) would prosecute his case by parading an endless number of witnesses to the appropriations of faith – an interest in the person and work of Christ our Lord. Not only that, but the witnesses continue on into the New Testament as we are reminded of the deaths of many such as James and Stephen whose blood is added to the list.

These are not mere spectators. The word here for witness is that from which we derive the word “martyr.” The implication is that they suffered and so will all who will live in total devotion to Christ our Lord. That being said, we would not lose sight of the fact that we are being observed by those of this present world. That is not the meaning of this text, but it was a concern of Moses that failure and abandonment of Israel would be construed as God’s failure. David often prayed for deliverance with the

thought that the enemy was watching. What does the world see in us? What might the assessment be if, indeed, the witnesses referenced were observing us? Theirs were lives of total devotion and not cluttered with the cares of this present world. What of us?

The testimony of these witnesses is the basis for the writer’s encouragement. It is as if he is saying take a look at these, what they accomplished, where they are now and with whom they now dwell. Then quit your complaining and get on with it. It is not just any race – it is the divinely appointed race that is before us. It is not without either definition or purpose and there is a cloud of witnesses telling us that it is the only way.

The definition is given us is Christ our Lord. His mission took Him back to Heaven by way of the cross. And, we who know Him are crucified with Him. His then is the ultimate witness to the way and He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The purpose is the glory of God through the salvation of His people and the testimony manifested in them that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

There exists so great a cloud of witnesses and the ultimate witness – may we hear their testimony and so run. *bhs*

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### On the Sovereignty of God – Elisha Coles (1673)

“...the great God, blessed forever, has an absolute power and right of dominion over his creatures, to dispose and determine them as seems him good.” That there is such a power, and that this power belongs to God, no other reason needs be assigned, but, that “he is God, and there is none besides him: “there can be no more, because, 1. There can be but one infinite; for such a being fills heaven and earth; and so there is no place or room for another. 2. There can be but one omnipotent; for he that is such, has all others under his feet: besides, where one can do all, more would be impertinent. 3. There can be but one supreme; supreme power may reside in many, as in mixed monarchies and commonwealths; but as lawmakers and supreme, they are but one. 4. There can be but one first cause, from which all beings else derive their original; “of whom, and for whom, are all things,” 1 Corinthians 8:6. And if he is the Author of all,

he needs must have a sovereign right and power to determine all; both as to their being, order, efficacy, and end.

“That sovereign power belongs to God,” is a truth so natural, and obvious to reason, that other proof seems as needless, as that the sun is the fountain of light: nor shall I suppose that any who will read this discourse, can so far forget themselves to be creatures, as to seek a proof of their Creator’s sovereignty; “the things that are seen so loudly proclaiming his eternal power and Godhead.” But since, with our easy admitting the notion, it is none of the smallest difficulties to own it in our practice, and bear ourselves answerably towards him: since also so huge a weight is borne on the shoulders of this divine attribute, and our souls are so highly concerned in the interest and influence of it, it needs must be our duty, and well worthy of our time, to look over the instances of it, and to mark and consider them well, as things greatly importing our instruction; whereby we may know something of the greatness of that God in whose hands our souls are; as also of our infinite distance from him, and nothingness to him; and so, with the more humbleness of mind, and self-abasement; as also with the more faith, and creature like affiance, submit to him, and bear ourselves on him. To this end, the scriptures have enrolled several ensigns of sovereignty; by which, as by so many footsteps, we are led to the absolute will and power of God, as the supreme cause and disposer of all.

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#### The Gospel: Who, not What

What is this “gospel” for which Paul is willing to glory in being a slave? What gospel would make Paul happy to lose everything in order to share it? First, it is worth reflecting on the word itself. “Gospel”—euangeloi—is literally “good herald.” In the first century, if on a far-flung battlefield an emperor won a great victory which secured his peace and established his authority, he would send heralds—angeloi—to declare his victory, peace and authority. Put most simply, the gospel is an announcement—a declaration. The gospel is not advice to be followed; it is news, good (eu) news about what has been done. The apostle Paul is the herald of this announcement. It is a good reminder that the gospel is not Paul’s; it did not originate with him and he did not claim the authority to craft it. Rather, it is “of God” (v 1). We, like Paul, are not at liberty to reshape it to sound more appealing in our day, nor to domesticate it to be more comfortable for our lives. Neither is the gospel new; rather, God “promised it beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (v 2). The Old Testament is all about it. All the “Scriptures” point forward to this announcement. They are the scaffold on which Paul stands as God’s herald. Every page that God wrote before outlines what he has now declared in full color. The gospel’s content is “his Son” (v 3). The gospel centers on Jesus. It is about a person, not a concept; it is about him, not us. We never grasp the gospel until we understand that it is not fundamentally a message about our lives, dreams, or hopes. The gospel speaks about, and transforms, all of those things, but only because it isn’t about us. It is a declaration about God’s Son, the man Jesus.

--Tim Keller on Romans 1:1-3

**“EVERY BELIEVER IN THE CROSS MUST BEAR THE CROSS” -- SPURGEON**