

By sovereign grace, God is the Initiator, never the responder. God is the Seeker, never the one who is sought. God is the Savior, man is the one rescued. God is the Provider, man is the debtor. God is the subject and active verb, man is the object who is acted upon. –Steven Lawson

BENJAMIN KEACH'S CATECHISM

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

Q. 89. What then is the purpose of the law since the fall?

A. The purpose of the law, since, the fall, is to reveal the perfect righteousness of God, that His people may know his will for their lives and the ungodly, being convicted of their sin, may be restrained therein and brought to Christ for salvation. (Ps. 19:7-11; Rom. 3:20,31; 7:7; 12:2; Titus 2:12-14; Gal. 3:22,24; 1 Tim. 1:8)

Q. 90. Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?

A. Some sins in themselves and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others. (Ezekiel 8:13; John 19:11; 1 John 5:16)

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Sunday Morning Bible Study -- 10:00 AM

Sunday Morning Worship -- 11:00 AM

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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IF'S AND ABSOLUTES

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John 1:6-7

A response to some of our Lord's teaching is recorded in John 6. *Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? John 6:60.* He had just spoken to them of the necessity of dwelling in Him and He dwelling in them. This, along with the fact that it entailed a spiritual eating of His flesh and drinking His blood, was too much for them. He made no attempt to soften the issue and pressed on to declare that His words were “Spirit and life.” And then, the ultimate declaration that “no man can come unto me except it be given him of my Father” had the result of driving them away. As far as the flesh is concerned all the Word of God is a “hard saying” and so many soften it in order to make it more acceptable to the flesh. Such was not the method of our Lord nor was it so with John in writing the words of this text.

Often a false claim is put on display so that the light of truth may expose it for what it is. Five times in this first chapter of 1 John the word “if” is used to draw attention to something to be emphasized. Three times a false claim is stated so that an answer to it may be given. Twice the word “if” is used to magnify the blessedness of the truth as it is in Jesus and so to manifest an absolute distinction of the believer's walk from that of the world.

The word “if” is often used as a conditional. One may react to a proposition or a possibility by saying that it is “iffy.” The meaning, of

course, is that many factors may influence either acceptance or an outcome. The “ifs” here display no uncertainty and they do not spare what may appear to many as “hard words.” The basis for these conditionals is found in the preceding verse and reads, *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 1 John 1:5.* That declaration is an absolute.

Salvation is not to be compared to anything in this world. Rather, we have it fully defined in the revelation of God, of His Son, and of His people and they have fellowship one with another.

In these verses we see irreconcilable differences reconciled. It was said, I think by Vance Havner many years ago, that “Religion in America is three thousand miles wide and ½ inch deep.” I would add to that thought that much of it exists in total darkness when examined in terms of this scripture. The claim is readily made to the blessings of God upon a godless nation and that the sanction of God is upon unspeakable sin, and that one's walk is of no consequence. Of course, the testimony of scripture declares otherwise. Scriptures such as these declare zero tolerance in the sight of God.

We would note just how emphatic this fact is, not as a matter of philosophical difference, but as displayed through Christ Himself. When He who knew no sin was made sin for His

people, darkness was made to descend upon the earth. This was the declaration of the terrible darkness into which He descended as the wrath (not the fellowship) of God fell upon Him as He hung there on the cross. There is no other way to express it. To walk in darkness is to walk in that from which Christ delivered those who come unto God by Him. The answer is simply put; those who walk thusly and claim fellowship lie and have no relationship to the truth.

The "if" that appears in verse 7 declares the blessedness to be manifested to and in believers. Here, belief is characterized as more than a mental concept; it is a way of life. It is to know the existence of life from above lived in the light of Christ and in Him who is the Light. John declared his objective in verse 3: *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:3.* Much emphasis is laid on fellowship. If that fellowship does not include Christ Himself, it is meaningless and exists in darkness. That this is the product of redemption is clear in the reference there to the blood of Christ cleansing us from all sin.

We consider the revelations that Christ and the light of Christ brings. First, sin is revealed

and not merely declared, and we are made to see it and ourselves. Godly sorrow ensues, and we repent. We are shown our salvation in the person of Christ and given faith wherein we are able to lay hold on Him who is our life. And, the way is made plain so that we may see others who are of like precious faith. We are made to see and experience the cleansing of the blood of Christ in that He, the Lamb of God, took the place of believers and so assured them of salvation. The Day of Atonement in the Old Testament had to be repeated yearly. This Man has by one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14). It is He who sovereignly shines into the heart of His own.

The cleansing effect of the blood of Christ is a matter of fact to faith and a matter of ongoing experience in the believing heart. And so, we confess our sin ("hating even the garment spotted by the flesh") and receive as He has provided: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9.* "If" we say we have no sin – deceived. "If" we confess our sin – forgiven and cleansed. "if" we say we have not sinned – we call Him a liar!

How precious to walk in the Light of His countenance. *bhs*

Who Made You to Differ?

BY C. H. SPURGEON

It is grace, free, sovereign grace, which has made you to differ!

Should any here, supposing themselves to be the children of God, imagine that there is some reason "in them" why they should have been chosen, let them know, that as yet they are in the dark, concerning the first principles of grace, and have not yet learned the gospel.

If ever they had known the gospel, they would, on the other hand, confess that they were less than the least- the offscouring of all things- unworthy, ill-deserving, undeserving, and hell-deserving, and ascribe it all to distinguishing grace, which has made them to differ; and to discriminating love, which has chosen them out from the

rest of the world. Great Christian, you would have been a great sinner if God had not made you to differ!

O! you who are valiant for truth, you would have been as valiant for the devil if grace had not laid hold of you! A seat in heaven shall one day be yours; but a chain in hell would have been yours if grace had not changed you! You can now sing his love; but a licentious song might have been on your lips, if grace had not washed you in the blood of Jesus! You are now sanctified, you are quickened, you are justified; but what would you have been today if it had not been for the interposition of the divine hand? There is not a crime you might not have committed; there is not a folly into which you might not have run. Even murder itself you might have committed if grace had not kept you. You shall be like the angels; but you would have been like the devil if you had not been changed by grace!

Love's Greatest Happiness

No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. (Ephesians 5:29–30)

Don't miss that last phrase: "because we are members of his body." And don't forget what Paul said two verses earlier, namely, that Christ gave himself for us "so that he might present the church to himself in splendor." So in two different ways, Paul makes plain that Christ pursued his joy in pursuing the holiness and beauty and happiness of his people.

The union between Christ and his bride is so close ("one flesh") that any good done to her is a good done to himself. Which means that the clear assertion of this text is that the Lord is moved to nourish, cherish, sanctify, and cleanse his bride because in this he finds his joy.

By some definitions, this cannot be love. Love, they say, must be free of self-interest — especially Christlike love, especially Calvary love. I have never seen such a view of love made to square with this passage of Scripture.

Yet what Christ does for his bride, this text plainly calls love: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church . . ." (Ephesians 5:25). Why not let the text define love for us, instead of bringing our definition from ethics or philosophy? According to this text, love is the pursuit of Christ's joy in the holy joy of the beloved.

There is no way to exclude self-interest from love, for self-interest is not the same as selfishness. Selfishness seeks its own private happiness at the expense of others.

Christlike love seeks its happiness in the happiness of others — not at their expense. It will even suffer and die for the beloved in order that its joy might be made full in the life and purity of the beloved.

This is how Christ loved us, and this is how he calls us to love one another.

--John Piper

LOVE TO GOD IS ARMOR OF PROOF AGAINST ERROR. FOR WANT OF HEARTS FULL OF LOVE, MEN HAVE HEADS FULL OF ERROR; UNHOLY OPINIONS ARE FOR WANT OF HOLY AFFECTIONS

--THOMAS WATSON