

“From the beginning Christianity was the religion of the broken heart; it is based on the conviction that there is an awful gulf between man and God which none but God can bridge.” - J. Gresham Machen

BENJAMIN KEACH’S CATECHISM

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Q. 115. What do we pray for in the fourth petition?

A. In the fourth petition, which is, "Give us this day our daily bread," we pray that of God's free gift, we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life and enjoy His blessing with them. (Matt. 6:11; Prov. 30:8,9; 1 Tim. 6:6-8; 4:4,5)

Q. 116. What do we pray for in the fifth petition?

A. In the fifth petition, which is, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," we pray that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by His grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others. (Matt. 6:12; Ps. 51:1,3,7; Mark 11:25; Matt. 18:35)

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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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FIVE LITTLE WORDS

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. John 3:7

Many years ago, as I walked by a Christian Bookstore my attention was drawn to a book on display in the window. The author was a well-known evangelist. The title stopped me in my tracks. Even at that early stage in my ministry I was taken aback at the thought. It was *How to Be Born Again*. I never read the book in that there was enough to indicate that there was no play on words. It was asserting that there was a method to attain to something that our Lord clearly declared to be a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. I was amazed that one so knowledgeable of the Word of God could believe and teach such a thing. As time has gone on it has become apparent that the author was not alone and that the thought that this miraculous work was in some manner owing to the efforts of fallen man persists in the minds of many.

The realization that the New Birth could not be of man first came to me as a teenager with a know-it-all attitude. In sharing some Gospel truth with me my dad posed some questions I could not answer. He asked me when I made the decision to be born naturally and when did I choose him to be my day and my mom to be my mother. I knew enough scripture to understand that the words of Christ had certainly been well-chosen to address the matter of regeneration. And, I knew that in answering the questions that had been posed to me my own words would be used to show that if I were saved it would not be through any efforts of mine. I remained in rebellion for some time after that, but when I

was regenerated and arrested, I never thought for a moment that it was owing to anything I had done. I rather had the distinct sense that something had happened to me that was not of my doing.

These five little words declare a most essential truth wherein we are made to understand that there is no salvation apart from it. It may well be the most misunderstood and misapplied truth. To greater or lesser degrees men take credit for some part of their salvation. They talk of grace and mercy but speak to the idea that salvation cannot occur except they permit it. Thoughts of decisions, actions, and acceptance are laced throughout their declarations of how to be saved. The result is often a self-imposed change in their lifestyle or their thinking. They devote themselves to a cause and may well persevere therein. So, what is the problem? Christianity can be very well imitated and that without the new nature that the Lord declares as essential. They err in equating a self-willed change with the New Birth. They cannot imitate what only the Holy Spirit can bring to pass.

Having already declared that apart from the New Birth one could not see or enter the Kingdom of God, Jesus here made it emphatic and personal. Nicodemus was amazed at the words of Jesus and any would be so affected who gave them serious thought. He went on to explain in the next verse that he could not explain the wind, and neither would he be able to explain the work of the Spirit. To have his

questions answered as to Jesus' work and identity would require that this sovereign and mysterious work would have to be done to him. So, the first word in the statement "Ye" laid it right before Nicodemus. It was not a generalization. It was about his condition. He could not understand because he was "dead in trespasses and sins" and totally unresponsive to spiritual things. Down through the centuries this truth has been preached to those who had no ability to respond to it. Our mandate is to preach it.

The word "must" means what all would understand – necessity. The question is how or by whom is it accomplished? It is not, nor could it be, something he must do. By what follows it is clear that our Lord was declaring what must be done to him, not by him. We are reminded of the answer of Peter to the High Priest: *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Acts 4:12.*

Our Lord was not telling Nicodemus what he must do. He was telling him what he must be. The idea of men is that they must get born again or to get themselves born again. Human merit would ever be a part if that were the case. To be is to exist. It is the nature of that existence that is in question here. It is not what must you do; it is who you must be. Paul's answer to the Jailer as to what he must do was answered by telling

him what he must be – that is, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and thus would be (as a matter of existence) saved!

To be born is to be bought into existence – procreated. Nicodemus was acting according to the existence he received in natural birth. The birth described here is to be bought forth as a new creation in Christ. The use of the term "again" indicates a second birth, but there is much more. The word not only means again, but anew or from above. Further thoughts in defining the term include "from the beginning" and "from the very first." Thus, we are taken to both source and nature in Christ.

What Nicodemus was that day was the end of what had begun in natural birth. What we are in Christ is what has begun in regeneration – the New Birth. It was therein that we were made partakers of the diving nature. All that is required of us is enabled by this work and is continued by virtue of who we are – born from above and born anew!

When George Whitfield was challenged as to why he preached so much on the New Birth he simply answered "because Ye must be born again!"

We do not tell men how to be born again – we tell that they must be born again. And then we direct them to Christ and His mercy and His command to repent and believe the Gospel. *bhs*

Eight Symptoms of False Doctrine

BY J. C. RYLE

1. There is an undeniable zeal in some teachers of error—their "earnestness" makes many people think they must be right.
2. There is a great appearance of learning and theological knowledge—many think that such clever and intellectual men must surely be safe to listen to.
3. There is a general tendency to completely free and independent thinking today—many like to prove their independence of judgment by believing the newest ideas, which are nothing but novelties.
4. There is a wide-spread desire to appear kind, loving, and open-minded—many seem half-ashamed to say that anybody can be wrong or is a false teacher.

5. There is always a portion of half-truth taught by modern false teachers—they are always using scriptural words and phrases, but with unscriptural meaning.
6. There is a public craving for a more sensational and entertaining worship—people are impatient with the more inward and invisible work of God within the hearts of men.
7. There is a superficial readiness all around to believe anyone who talks cleverly, lovingly and earnestly, forgetting that Satan often masquerades himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14).
8. There is a wide-spread ignorance among professing Christians—every heretic who speaks well is surely believed, and anyone who doubts him is called narrow-minded and unloving.

All these are especially symptoms of our times. I challenge any honest and observant person to deny them. These tend to make the assaults of false doctrine today especially dangerous and make it even more important to say loudly, “Do not be carried away with strange doctrine!”

Every advocate of sound theology must take this warning to heart. Sound theology alone without love and humility and without genuine Christian experience cannot maintain spiritual unity. Good theology must never be wrenched from its inspired setting. This is its womb, the source of its life. This is its atmosphere, the air it breathes. Theology extracted from its experiential habitat is like a fish out of water. It soon dies, yea it stinketh, and the stench of its decay rises to the third heaven. Small wonder then that whenever godless and unbelieving men motivated by pride and ambition devise and teach religious doctrines, they dream up subtle and dangerous errors and heresies ruinous to men’s souls. With their errors they import the unbelief of the world into the Christian community. The stench of such error abounds in our day. Its smell points our spiritual noses to the vital connection between grace and truth.

—Greg Nichols *Lectures in Systematic Theology: The Doctrine of God*

FAITH AND REASON – Ravi Zacharias

Faith has not always been as suspect a category as it has now come to be. Both the Hebrews and the Greeks had an understanding of faith. True, there were some differences, but faith still had legitimacy. Today, if faith is admitted at all, it is seen as the faith to have faith. It is packaged as a private matter and banned from intellectual credence. “Everyone has to have some faith,” we quip. “If it were not for my faith, I would never have hung in there,” we may hear someone else say. Faith in what, one might ask? In such a faith, the focus is often on anything but truth and on everything that signals pragmatism—“It worked for me, whether it’s true or not.” Such glib pronouncements have made us vulnerable to the faith marketers of our time. It is time to do some “temple cleansing” of the mind and face this reality head-on.

REPENTANCE IS A CHANGE OF THE MIND, AND REGENERATION IS A CHANGE OF THE MAN

– THOMAS ADAMS