

"The life we have, even with its adversities, is better than we deserve. If we ever asked God to be completely fair and just, and He complied, we would all be instantly destroyed." - Timothy J. Keller

BENJAMIN KEACH'S CATECHISM

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

Q. 117. What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

A. In the sixth petition, which is, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," we pray that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted. (Matt. 6:13; 26:41; Ps. 19:13; 1 Cor. 10:13; John 17:15)

Q. 118. What does the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer teach us?

A. The conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, which is, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen," teaches us to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise Him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to Him; and in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, AMEN. (Matt. 6:13; Dan. 9:18,19; 1 Chron. 29:11-13; 1 Cor. 14:16; Phil. 4:6; Rev. 22:20)

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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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NEARNESS TO GOD

But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

Psalms 73:28

John Newton expressed the value of nearness to God in the words, "How tedious and tasteless the hours when Jesus no longer I see!" In reading this Psalm we may detect that perhaps many have experienced what Newton understood so well. The Psalmist here concluded that not only was it good to draw near to the God but also that it was good for him personally. We would note that faith was the outcome and a proper way of worship and witness were thereby enabled.

We do well to read the whole Psalm and follow the experience of the Psalmist as he is brought to this conclusion. One of the earliest songs I remember was "Farther Along." It expressed what many know as a matter of experience in trials. The condition was that of being tempted and tried and oft made to wonder. The reason of the wonder to the songwriter was observing the prosperity of the wicked as it seemed they were "never molested, though in the wrong." The songwriter was led to the idea that we will at some point understand it all. I am not so sure that is the case. The scripture here indicates that there is wisdom and purpose and a designed reaction to the things we observe in this world. That reaction is that believers will surely recognize the matter of evil and those who pursue it. And, they will as a result be led to abandon any likeness of their situation in the Lord to that of the world.

Our old nature will always cling to the things of this world and desire to return to them. That

nature will also express a sense of injury at things denied it as a result of identity with Christ. A tendency to self-righteousness will claim unfairness as the prosperity of the ungodly is witnessed. So, the Psalmist is brought to confess the reason of his misery and that which awakened him to the blessed thought expressed in our text.

In verse three he confesses that he "was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." It was apparent to him that they deserved punishment but were receiving wealth and worldly happiness. They were unrestrained. After a detailed description of their behavior he describes his own reaction: *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* Psalms 73:13-14. Have we ever thought along this line? Have we ever thought that somehow, I deserve better? In verse 16 he confesses that the whole thought was just too painful.

This continued until he "went into the sanctuary of God" (v. 17). He did not get an explanation there; but he did learn of the holiness of God. He understood their end. He came to the place where communion with God was to be had and worship was to take place. He came to a greater sense of the holiness of God and knew of His justice and His power to vanquish all that offends Him. It was there that two things became clear. One was that the prosperity of the wicked is short-lived. The other

is that the sufficiency of God is all that we need and infinitely more. Thus, we are led away from the mere appearance of prosperity unto the abundance to be known in the presence of God. *For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; Psalms 102:19.*

He then summarized his behavior: *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Psalms 73:21-22.* But he follows with the assurance that the Lord had held him by His right hand. Furthermore, assurance was given: *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Psalms 73:24.* His desire had been turned to the Lord and so delighted to confess that there was no other in heaven or on earth that he desired.

And so, he concludes that it is good for him to draw nigh to God and we are reminded of David's words: *Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. Psalms 65:4.* After all, our nearness to God is the object of redemption: *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 1 Peter 3:18.*

Being born again of the Spirit of God we are given a heart that delights in being in the

presence of God. Therefore, we resist the flesh and despise the trinkets this world calls prosperity and delight only in our God in Christ. Alexander MacLaren commented on this passage that: "...whatever be the outward condition, God is enough. 'It is good for me,' rich or poor harassed or at rest, afflicted or prosperous, in health or sickness, solitary or compassed about with loving friends, 'it is good for me to draw near to God'; and nothing else is good. Thus the river that has had to fight its way through rocks, and has been chafed in the conflict, and has twisted its path through many a deep, dark, sunless gorge, comes out at last into the open, and flows with a broad sunlit breast, peaceable and full, into the great ocean—'It is good for me to draw near to God.'"

One near to God cannot help but trust Him and it will be more than mere satisfaction with one's lot. There will be the need to declare His works. In his conclusion to his Psalm of penitence, David was so moved as he declared: *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Psalms 51:13.* We are bidden to draw nigh to God (James 4:8) and in so doing will be affected as were these: *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. Psalms 66:16.* May we rejoice in the promise to Abram, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward!" bhs

AN UNWORTHY CONCEPTION OF GOD – A. W. Tozer

For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. —Psalms 89:6-7 Christianity at any given time is strong or weak depending upon her concept of God. And I insist upon this and I have said it many times, that the basic trouble with the Church today is her unworthy conception of God. I talk with learned and godly people all over the country, and they're all saying the same thing. Unbelievers say, "Take your cowboy god and go home," and we get angry and say, "They're vile heathen." No, they're not vile heathen—or at least that's not why they say that. They can't respect our

“cowboy god.” And since evangelicalism has gone overboard to “cowboy religion,” its conception of God is unworthy of Him. Our religion is little because our god is little.... We do not see God as He is....

A local church will only be as great as its conception of God. An individual Christian will be a success or a failure depending upon what he or she thinks of God. It is critically important that we have a knowledge of the Holy One, that we know what God is like.

O God, help me to capture once again a realization of Your greatness. May the God I represent in my ministry be a God worthy of lavish worship. Amen

Grace Denied and Supplied – John Piper in *Future Grace*

Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)

The need for inner strength arises not just from the depletions of everyday stress, but from the suffering and afflictions that come from time to time. And they do come.

Suffering is inevitably added to heart-weariness on the way to heaven. When it comes, the heart may waver and the narrow way that leads to life may look impossibly hard. It's hard enough to have a narrow road and steep hills that test the old jalopy's strength to the limit. But what shall we do when the car breaks down?

Paul cried out three times with this question because of some affliction in his life. He asked for relief from his thorn in the flesh. But God's grace did not come in the form he asked. It came in another form. Christ answered, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Here we see grace given in the form of Christ's sustaining power in unrelieved affliction — one grace given, we could say, within the circle of another grace denied. And Paul responded with faith in the sufficiency of this future grace: “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

God often blesses us with a “grace given” in the circle of “grace denied.”

For example, on a beastly hot day in July, the water pump on our car stopped working, and twenty miles from any town we were stranded on the interstate in Tennessee.

I had prayed that morning that the car would work well and that we would come to our destination safely. Now the car had died. The grace of trouble-free travel had been denied. No one was stopping as we stood around our car. Then my son Abraham (about eleven at the time) said, “Daddy, we should pray.” So we bowed behind the car and asked God for some future grace — a help in time of need. When we looked up, a pickup truck had pulled over.

The driver was a mechanic who worked about twenty miles away. He said he would be willing to go get the parts and come back and fix the car. I rode with him to town and was able to share the gospel with him. We were on our way in about five hours.

Now the remarkable thing about that answer to our prayer is that it came inside the circle of a prayer denied. We asked for a trouble-free trip. God gave us trouble. But in the midst of a grace denied, we got a grace supplied. And I am learning to trust God's wisdom in giving the grace that is best for me and for unbelieving mechanics and for the watching faith of eleven-year-old boys.

We should not be surprised that God gives us wonderful graces in the midst of suffering that we had asked him to spare us. He knows best how to apportion his grace for our good and for his glory.