

To a graceless neck the yoke of Christ is intolerable, but to the saved sinner it is easy and light. We may judge ourselves by this, do we love that yoke, or do we wish to cast it from us? — Charles Spurgeon

Neither Satan nor sickness nor sinful man is sovereign. Only God is. And he is good—and wise and sovereign. —John Piper

GADSBY'S CATECHISM

By William Gadsby, about 1800

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

Question XCVII. What shall be done to the wicked at the day of judgment?

Answer. At the day of judgment, the bodies of the wicked, being raised out of their graves, shall be sentenced, together with their souls, to unspeakable torments and the vengeance of God's righteous displeasure, with the devil and his angels, for ever and ever.

Dan. 12.2; Matt. 10.28 & 13.38-42 & 25.41,46; Jn. 5.29; Rev. 20.11-15 & 21.8.

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

55 Avenue A

P. O. Box 628

Richwood, WV 26261

B. H. Seacrist, Jr., Pastor

Phone 304 846 6406

Email: branthsj@msn.com

Website: www.riversidebaptistchurchwv.com

WXTH-LP 101.7 FM—In Richwood

Services:

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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FALLOW GROUND AND THORNS

For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. (Jeremiah 4:3)

How often have I heard the words, “I guess I am just set in my ways?” This is just a way of excusing an unwillingness to change or to be changed. Of course, we come to times in our lives in which the choice is not ours. We may be living in just such a time. There is much talk of returning to normalcy. That would be a return to the same old way of doing things. Included might be “doing church” the same old way, praying the same old ritual prayers, presuming to know the Word of God while not engaging in daily study and meditation, and taking for granted that the Lord is pleased with such ways. How easily we settle in our routines and lose the wonder of the grace of God and the ability to stand in awe of God as we seek His presence.

Judah and Jerusalem had become comfortable with their idolatry which they practiced while paying lip-service to following the Lord and the ways set forth in the Word of God. Thus, the Lord spoke to them through Jeremiah. The directive was simple and included two things. They were to break up their fallow ground and stop sowing among the thorns. They would have understood the figurative language used here, although many today might not. Fallow ground is land that is tillable but had been planted before. It is not as hard to till as ground that has never been planted, but it does present a challenge.

Our Lord identified four kinds of soils in the parable of the sower. Only one of those soils was conditioned to receive the seed and it

yielded much fruit. The thought of the thorny soil may find further explanation in our text. And so, may the preparation of the good ground parallel the breaking up of the fallow ground. The ground that received the seed had been prepared while the other soils would have been the result of ground left to itself. Thus, we pose the question, what makes the good ground good?

It is certain that the unregenerate heart is not ready to receive the Word and left alone it would react to the Word in the same way described in the parable. The word is quickly snatched away, gives place to trial, or is choked out by the things of the world. For one to be made receptive to the word in a way that produces fruit, several things must happen. He must be made able to feel the pain of his own sinfulness in a living reaction to it. He must hear enough to sense the lost condition of his soul. He must respond with brokenness and contriteness of spirit where once pride reigned. Having been so plowed, such an one will embrace Christ, His cross, and all that He has done as his only hope. Having had their hearts so broken up, those believers on the day of Pentecost “gladly received his word,” surrendered to baptism, continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine, and were daily about the business of being saved people. The evidence of a work of grace is seen in that the fruit of the Spirit is produced in their lives. Galatians 5:22-23.

The prophet is addressing the chosen people of the Lord in this passage. The warnings had begun, and the remedy was being presented. The assumption here, both by us and the prophet, was that they had knowledge of the history of the nation. That would have included the wilderness experience along with all the failings recorded in the Book of Judges. They had the records of the kings that had gone before, and they had witnessed the fall of the northern kingdom. A secular philosopher observed that “they who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” The history of repeated failures tells us that Israel never learned. But there were times when they responded to the Lord for a time and so may have been the Lord’s reference to “fallow ground.” The Lord spoke in other places of tender responses.

We might well apply this to believers neglecting the exercises of repentance and faith. We quote Paul in his message to the Ephesian elders: *And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:20-21).* It seemed that he was still preaching it to them as a way of life for them as well as the substance of their preaching. That being said, perhaps it is that we all should be in the way of “breaking up our fallow ground” as a matter of ongoing practice. The well-tended garden is a year-round

project. So, also, is the fruitful Christian life. There is resistance to such a thought. Vance Havner once said that “if the ground could cry out, it would surely express resentment at the insertion of the plow.” We tend to cry out at any disturbance to our routines apart from the faith.

We are warned to “sow not among the thorns.” Our Lord explained what that meant. It had to do with the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. The allurements of the world deceive many into the belief that they can have both. Our Lord taught otherwise. Attention given to the cares of this world and its trinkets will soon result in routine religion where there should be living faith. This would have no meaning to the unregenerate. It is believers to whom these things are written. Compare the words of another prophet. *Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. (Hosea 10:12).* Such must be the desire of every true believer – the righteousness of Christ upon us. We are further reminded of the words of Paul: *For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. (Galatians 6:8-9).*

O to be made more receptive to the Word of God and to be better enabled to be “to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved.” *bhs*

GOD’S WORD REGARDING THESE DAYS

Look around you. Behold all the troubles now plaguing this earth. Behold also yourself and the people around you. Then read in the Holy Scriptures *2 Timothy 3:1-5*: “*1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*”

Consider the points stressed in this text.

1. These perilous times were prophesied by God (v.1). Man's news confirms God's Word!

2. The wicked people in these last days were prophesied by God (vv.2-5). The text cites nineteen characteristics of the wicked. But they may be summarily described as professing godliness but denying God and living in ungodliness.

3. Wicked people caused these perilous times. Note the conjunctive "For" at the beginning of verse 2. It connects the phrases "in the last days perilous times will come" and the description of the men in them. This conjunctive shows cause and effect. Wicked people cause perilous times!

4. "From such people turn away!" God will punish the wicked for their wickedness. Therefore, do not be found among them. Turn away from them by turning to God. Do so by turning to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith. Be the opposite of what wicked people are. And trust in God to protect and preserve your soul from wicked men and perilous times. – Daniel E. Parks

"If we do not preach about sin and God's judgment on it, we cannot present Christ as Saviour from sin and the wrath of God. And if we are silent about these things, and preach a Christ who saves only from self and the sorrows of this world, we are not preaching the Christ of the Bible.

We are, in effect bearing false witness and preaching a false Christ. Our message is 'another gospel, which is not another.' Such preaching may soothe some, but it will help nobody; for a Christ who is not seen and sought as a Saviour from sin will not be found to save from self or from anything else.

An imaginary Christ will not bring a real salvation; and a half-truth presented as the whole truth is a complete untruth."

–J.I. Packer, "The Puritan View of Preaching the Gospel," in *Puritan Papers*

After being strengthened by the angels, Jesus began his public ministry by preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. Christ was not only the true prince of preachers; He was the Prophet who was foretold by Moses. Christ spoke with authority because He spoke exclusively of the things that were given to Him by His Father. Christ sought not His own glory but the glory of the One who sent Him. Furthermore, Christ is the Prophet of all prophets, for He is the living Word of God, manifested in human flesh. As the Word of God brings life out of death, Christ had the power to bestow life upon all those whom God had given Him. Though Israel could not hear the voice of Moses, that veil of blindness is lifted from all those to whom it is given to hear the voice of the Lord. Christ called out his disciples by name and they listened and left all to follow Him. The Spirit gives life, and the words that Christ spoke were spirit and life. He is the good Shepherd who calls His sheep out by name; they hear His voice and follow Him. In this way, Christ fulfills the covenant mandate and brings many children into the kingdom, not by procreation, but by the effectual and regenerating power of His Word.

--Jeffrey Johnson and Tom Nettles, *The Kingdom of God*