

So, rest is never found in the quest to understand it all. No, rest is found in trusting the One who understands it all and rules it all for his glory and our good. —Paul David Tripp

GADSBY'S CATECHISM

By William Gadsby, about 1800

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Question XCIII. What has God said shall take place with the elect in this life?

Answer. God has declared that they shall be born again, not of corruptible but of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever; and that He will put His laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and He will be their God, and they shall be His people.

Jer. 31.31-34; Ezek. 36.25-27; 1 Pet. 1.23-25.

Question XCIV. Are the elect able to do this for themselves?

Answer. No; for it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.

Jn. 3.1-8,27 & 6.29,63.

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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

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"The Pillar and ground of the Truth" -- 1 Timothy 3:15

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BELOVED STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS

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)

First generation immigrants invariably cling to the culture from which they came. I recall such a person in my hometown who never learned the language. Even where the language is learned their accents identify them as different and others often know their origin by their manner of speaking and conduct. Paul declared of believers that our citizenship is in Heaven. By such a distinction he indicated that we should cling to the culture of our birth whereby we were made new creatures in Christ.

Peter used just such terminology to exhort, encourage, and embolden the people to whom he wrote. In the first chapter he addressed them as strangers (sojourners) and urged them to "pass the time of your sojourning with fear..." He was addressing the fact that they were being persecuted while urging them to see themselves as being in a temporary circumstance in which they would emerge as the victors. Sadly, many believers see us as victims rather than victors. We are, in fact, both strangers and pilgrims in a culture that is hostile to our way of eternal life in Christ. We should rather recognize that we are on a mission fully equipped with all that we need to complete the journey. In Jesus Christ we are assured that "all the promises of God are in Him yea and in Him amen," and that is unto the glory of God.

Having laid the groundwork in chapter 1, Peter proceeds to declare the distinguishing of the Lord's people. In verse 2 of this chapter Peter calls them "newborn babes" being

desirous of being fed on the "sincere milk of the Word." This appears to have direct reference to a previous statement: *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* (1 Peter 1:23). Their identity with Christ is established in this way. First, Christ is called the "Living Stone," disallowed of men and then he identified them with Him as "lively stones." Peter then calls them a "spiritual house" and a "holy priesthood," with the purpose of offering up acceptable sacrifices unto God through Christ Jesus our Lord.

We often speak of one's values. These often define us. What is most valuable to you? To believers, the answer is obvious – Christ is indeed most precious. This is in stark contrast to those who value the rejection of Christ. He is to them a "stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense..." Peter then reinforces a previous statement. The believer is identified with a chosen generation – the elect of God. They are called a "Royal Priesthood." See Revelation 1:6. The believer is called a citizen of a Holy Nation, clothed with the righteousness of Christ in faith and practice. They are a peculiar people; they are of divine birth and bear the marks of divine ownership in Spirit and in Truth.

As to this text, Peter directs them and us to a personal consideration of who we are. Perhaps, we must ask ourselves the question; how do we see ourselves in this present evil world? How do

we perceive our role as citizens of another nation (v. 9)?

He calls us first to see us as “Beloved.” What a title and an identity. There is no question that Peter loved the people to whom he wrote. He was not a “lord over God’s heritage;” rather he was a loving under-shepherd. While not stated, the powerful implication is that they were the Beloved of God. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (Ephesians 2:4).* Jude urges us to “keep yourselves in the love of God.” We are to be sensitive to being the Beloved of God. This alone is a distinguishing characteristic in contrast to a people who speak of the love of God while not having either experience or reflection that they are so loved, or care to be.

To see ourselves as strangers means that we embrace the fact that we are sojourners and not permanent citizens. *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me. (Psalms 119:19).* We are further reminded of the words from Hebrews: *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (Hebrews 11:13).* This is a difficult proposition for we who quickly recognize strangers in our midst. The reversed role is characterized by the Psalmist as he reflected on the time of the captivity. *For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land? (Psalms 137:3-4).* Yet, we can sing

the songs of Zion as we enjoy citizenship in Heaven while physically being bound to this world. Paul saw the cross as the distinguishing issue: *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (Galatians 6:14).*

The thought of being a pilgrim embraces again the thought of not being identified with those among whom we live. It also suggests that we are on a journey, the end of which, is not here. Of Abraham we read, *For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:10).* Jeremiah suggests a proper approach to our pilgrimage as he anticipated the captivity. He directed that even in the captivity that they should build and plant and even to “seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away.” See Jeremiah 29:5, 7. Another example of proper behavior in our journey is given in another Psalm in this way: *Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.(Psalms 84:6).*

Thus, we are encouraged to abstain from fleshly lusts – those things set in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit. See Galatians 5:19-23. The foundation for doing so is encouraged as we are reminded of our inalienable identity with Christ and the accomplishments of His cross. We are truly beloved strangers and pilgrims and in Christ we are clearly made distinct from the culture of Christ rejecters. Let us embrace the privilege given us to bear the banner of Christ in this world as we look to the glorious future promised us in the realms of glory. bhs

ON A GOOD DAY

Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (MATTHEW 5:48) Consider what you would probably call a “good” day spiritually — when your spiritual disciplines are all in place and you’re reasonably satisfied with your Christian performance. Have you thereby earned God’s blessing that day? Will God be pleased to bless you because you’ve been good? You’re probably thinking, Well, when you put it like that, the

answer's no. But doesn't God only work through clean vessels? Yet how good do you have to be to be "clean"? How good is good enough? When a Pharisee asked Jesus which of the Law's commandments was the greatest, He replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39, NIV). Using that as a standard, how good has your good day been? Have you perfectly kept those two commandments? If not, does God grade on a curve? Is 90 percent a passing grade with God? We know the answers to those questions, don't we? We know that Jesus said, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). And we remember that James wrote, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10, NIV). Regardless of our performance, we're always dependent on God's grace, His undeserved favor to those who deserve His wrath. Some days we may be more acutely conscious of our sinfulness and our need of His grace, but there's never a day when we can stand before Him on our own two feet of performance and be worthy enough to deserve His blessing. Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*

"...as I travel around and meet all kinds and varieties of Christians, I'm dismayed to notice that very often there doesn't seem to be any difference in the way they live and the way the rest of the world lives, in the way they respond to the experiences of their lives and the way the world would respond. In other words, if they were arrested for being Christians, would there be sufficient evidence to convict them? And I'm always asking myself the question, what kind of a difference would I expect others to see in my life which would at least catch their attention and make them say there is something different about that woman?" Elisabeth Elliot, *Suffering is Never for Nothing*

RECEIVING CHRIST IN WHOLE

In the prologue of John's gospel is one of the most beautiful promises of salvation in the Scriptures: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (1:12). For good reason, this text has become one of the most frequently employed in modern-day evangelism. Many have used it rightly to bring multitudes into Christ's kingdom. However, many have wrongly used it to lead multitudes to a false assurance of salvation. For this reason, it is necessary for us to understand the text and its biblical application correctly before we endeavor to use it to bring people to Christ. John immediately precedes this verse with a declaration of the Jews' almost full-scale rejection of the Messiah. It is briefly, yet powerfully, stated that Christ "came to His own [people, possession], and His own did not receive Him" (1:11). The word receive comes from the old, common Greek verb *paralambáno*, which means "to take to one's side," "to welcome." Jesus uses this word to describe the believer's welcome into the Father's heavenly mansion.¹ Having dealt with the Jewish nation's failure to receive the Christ, John then proceeds to a glorious and universal promise for all: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God" (1:12). Adoption into the family of God with full rights and privileges of sonship is available to all—Jew and Gentile, king and servant, rich man and pauper, philosopher and imbecile, moralist and prostitute—even to all who receive Christ, to all who believe in His name. —Paul Washer, *The Gospel & True Conversion*