

Arthur Pink wrote: “The justice, the holiness, and the wrath of God have been pushed into the background, and a God that loves everybody thrust into the foreground. In consequence, the masses of church-goers no longer fear God. For the past fifty years the vast majority of pulpits have maintained a guilty silence on Eternal Punishment so that few now have any dread of the wrath to come. This logically follows from the former, for no one needs to stand in any terror of One who loves him. The repercussions have been unmistakable, drastic, and tragic. Sickly sentimentality regulated the pulpit until it dominated the pew, and this evil has so spread that it now permeates the whole nation.” Quoted by William Nichols in *Seeking God (The Works of Jonathan Edwards)*



GADSBY’S CATECHISM – William Gadsby about 1800

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

Question XXIII. What is the misery of that estate whereunto man fell?

Answer. All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, incurred the curse of the law, and so were made liable to all the miseries of this life, and to death itself; and all who die in sin must endure the pains of hell for ever.

Gen. 3. 16-24; Job 5.7 & 14.1-2; Isa. 64.6; Matt. 22.13 & 25.41; Rom. 3.23 & 8.7; 1 Cor. 2.14.

Question XXIV. Did God leave all mankind to perish in that estate of sin and misery?

Answer. No; God, having out of His own good pleasure from eternity elected some of them to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of that estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer.

Rom. 3.21-25 & 9.6-24; Eph. 1.4-7; 1 Thess. 5.9; 2 Thess. 2.13; 1 Pet. 1.2.

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Sunday Evening 6:00 PM

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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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THANKSGIVING AND THE WILL OF GOD

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Saying “thanks” or “thank you” is often a matter of common courtesy expressed with varying levels of intensity. That is, the expression may be of genuine appreciation or it may be somewhat superficial. But, with passages such as this the thoughts of giving thanks or saying “thank you” to the Lord is elevated to the level of worship and acknowledgement of who God is and what He has done. That it is something done in compliance with the will of God makes it an essential to a proper relationship with God and it should not be expressed carelessly. Rather, it should be expressive of things realized from the grace of God and certainly extend beyond material things.

We have a tremendous precedent set for us in the thanksgiving of our Lord. He gave thanks for the bread He would break to feed the multitudes. He thanked His Father for those to whom He would be revealed. He gave thanks for the bread and wine at the Last supper. He constantly expressed an attitude of dependence on and submission to His Father. After all, although He is God manifest in the flesh, He was in our stead manifesting the only acceptable behavior toward God. His was a recognition of absolute and essential provision before God. Could anything less be expected of those being conformed to the image of His Son.

Two questions arise from this expression. First, what is understood in the phrase “In everything?” It is easy enough to think in terms of material provision. That is, we pause at

mealtimes and acknowledge God as the ultimate source of our food. We, also, include clothing, shelter, a good measure of health and other such things as may seem essential to comfortable living. It is good that such things should be accounted to divine provision, but greater things than these should enter into the picture. That is, we should be aware of such spiritual gifts as are incorporated in the work of the provider of “every good gift and every perfect gift.” These things are not to be tied to material things. If we truly find ourselves submitted to God in every way we will be able to be thankful for things not ordinarily desired. The Psalmist acknowledged that it had been good for him to be afflicted. The disciples were thankful to have been counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. We must ask ourselves if we could be thankful for suffering. While this is a difficult question to answer, we may conclude that suffering does not take away our reasons for thankfulness. The benefits received in adversity far outweigh the suffering experienced. In the same sense that Romans 8:28 tells us that all things work together for good... we must understand that salvation does not become dormant in sickness, affliction, persecution or trial.

The second question is how it is the will of God that we be thankful. Is it one of the things that God is willing for us to do or is it expressive of the will of God accomplished in us? Paul expressed three things here that may be connected. They are that we should rejoice

evermore, pray without ceasing and give thanks in every thing. Do we see these as rules for conduct or as means of expressing and experiencing the great work of grace in us? These Spirit-led activities do not exist apart from salvation. Thus, they are indicative of true salvation as well as gifts whereby we enjoy salvation. True thanksgiving, before God, portrays the character that God would have in His people. Several things are brought to bear in thanksgiving.

In thanksgiving there is confession of absolute need. It would be empty if the essential value of that received were not acknowledged. Why would we thank God for saving us if we believed we could have done it ourselves? In every aspect of believing thankfulness there is the admission that we could not provide for ourselves. Even if we pray "give us this day our daily bread" we are confessing inability and therefore expressing essential need.

In thanksgiving there is recognition of consideration. Many approach the idea of salvation as a divine obligation. They think that by a profession or some act of their own will they force God to act in their behalf. The true believer will always be in wonder that he was ever considered for salvation. In thanksgiving, it

is acknowledged that all originated with God and there was nothing moving Him to such kindness but His own will. Thus, in knowing that we are undeserving of any consideration, salvation is a wonder and a cause of continual gratefulness in us.

In thanksgiving there is an understanding of consummation. While we wait the return of our Lord and the fulfilling of all His design for all eternity we are given a sense of completion now. I can delight in knowing that I am His and He is mine. First, I am given the ability to say "Abba Father" and, also, that He acknowledges me as His child. So, it is that we stand in a relationship with God as justified, sanctified, adopted and assured. We are thankful indeed.

But, we must be careful to note that it is not merely a matter of compliance. The divine image and superscription is upon it in that it is in Christ. For this He died and rose again. For this He ever lives. In this He derives glory. The child of God is never separated from the knowledge that it is "yet, not I but Christ that liveth in me." Thanks offered up to God in a proper way is worship and should be approached as such. *..Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Ephesians 5:20. bhs*

Grace does not cause or promote licentiousness, but true godliness (Ephesians 4:17-24). The gospel of the grace of God and the grace of God experienced in the soul teaches believing men and women to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world for the glory of Christ. We are totally free from the law; but believers are not lawless. Saved sinners seek to glorify God in all things. If your religion promotes, permits, or allows room for lasciviousness, greed, and deceitful lusts, your religion is not the religion of grace. Grace teaches people to bridle their passions and their tongues (vv.25-29). And grace causes saved sinners to fear the thought of grieving the Holy Spirit (v.30). In a word, grace makes people gracious. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (vv.4:31-32).

– Don Fortner, pastor in Danville, Kentucky, USA

Is it True That “If You Don’t Have a Conversion Story You Don’t Have a Conversion?”

Sure it is. As long as what we mean by “having a conversion story” is broad enough to include, “I have loved and depended on the finished work of Christ as far back as I can remember.” Sadly, it is unlikely this is what people who say such things mean.

There are at least two different kinds of believers. Some are what we call cradle Christians, others might be called crisis Christians. And because both groups are composed of sinners, it is not at all unusual for them to fuss and fight with each other. In the first instance we have those who have been raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They have been taught the things of God from their youth. Indeed they may have been, as John the Baptist appears to have been, converted in their mothers’ wombs. (Remember that even before he was born John leapt to be in the presence of Jesus, who likewise was still in utero (Luke 1:41). Remember also that this is not a denial of the need for conversion. Even cradle Christians were once children of their father, the devil.

In the second instance are those who have more dramatic conversion stories. They remember a time not believing, and have in turn experience in that unbelief. That is, it is not uncommon for these folks to be profoundly conscious of their lost state before their conversion, sometimes via a life of peculiar licentiousness, others via the memory of a gnawing emptiness/fear despite a relatively upright lifestyle. These folks are well aware of when they walked out of the darkness into the marvelous light.

The Bible is chock full of both kinds of conversions. Paul’s conversion was rather dramatic, as was that of the thief on the cross. The Philippian jailer, the Ethiopian eunuch both would be able to look back on a particular hour in a particular day and give thanks. Who though in the Bible is a cradle Christian? Virtually every believer in the Old Testament. Indeed one would be hard pressed to even find a conversion at all among the sons of Abraham. David, though conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5) trusted from his mother’s breast (Psalm 22:9). While we see many faithful men of God, we do not witness “conversions.” These trusted in the coming work of Christ, and so became the friends of God, even with no conversion stories.

Those who argue that without a conversion story we are not converted are admirably seeking to guard against the danger of presumption that can come from those who grow up in Christian homes. It is all too easy to think of oneself as a heavenly “legacy,” one who is almost due salvation by virtue of being the child of a believer. I appreciate the concern, but fear this kind of language throws the baby out with the baptismal water, and ironically adds works to our faith.

That is, eager to deny that we are saved by baptism (which is a good thing to deny) they then add to the biblical necessity of trusting in the finished work of Christ for salvation this—remembering when you first started to do so. That is, we end up teaching justification by faith plus remembering when your faith started. It is an odd form of the Galatian heresy. Perhaps worse still it makes our perseverance dependent on our memory. I wonder how many people taking this position will one day, in old age, lose their memory, and therefore lose their story and if this claim is true, lose their salvation.

We are not saved from God’s wrath by remembering when we were saved. We are saved by remembering by Whom we are saved, by trusting in His work alone, adding neither the faith of our parents nor our memory of being given that faith. R.C. Sproul