

The Right Heart in Prayer

"Of all the list of Christian duties there is none to which there is such abounding encouragement as prayer. It is the duty which concerns all. High and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned - all must pray. Above all, it is a duty in which everything depends on the heart and motive within.

"Our words may be feeble and ill-chosen, and our language broken and ungrammatical, and unworthy to be written down. But if the heart is right, it matters not. He that sits in heaven can spell out the meaning of every petition sent up in the name of Jesus, and can make him that asks know and feel that he receives."~ J.C. Ryle

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 XXXVII. What special blessings do God's people derive from the Lord Jesus Christ?

Answer. As all spiritual blessings are treasured up and secured in Christ, so they are dealt out to the elect as is most for God's glory to give, and His people's good to receive.

Jn. 1.16; Rom. 8.28-39; Eph. 1.3-6; Phil. 4.19.

Question XXXVIII. What is Jesus Christ unto the elect?

Answer. Jesus Christ is made of God unto the elect wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption; He is their head, life, strength, portion and their all in all.

Psa. 18.1-2 & 73.25-26 & 142.5; S of S. 5.9-16; Jer. 23.6; 1 Cor. 1.30-31; 2 Cor. 5.21; Eph. 1.22-23 & 5.23; Col. 3.3-4,11.

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Sunday Evening 6:00 PM

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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INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. Ezekiel 18:20

Our nation seems to be seriously affected by a group mentality. Perhaps far worse is that there is a sense of group morality. As a child I have both observed and been guilty of seeking justification in numbers. That is, on being found out in some offence to reply “they did it too.” There may have been several thoughts behind such a plea. Was the load of guilt divided among all who were at fault? Was it that punishment might be avoided since others were involved? Was it somehow to be accepted since several seemed to think it was acceptable behavior. This type of plea never worked with my parents. Their reply was “I am not concerned with others, my business is with you?”

It is tragic that we witness horrible behaviors among the young in our nation. The “Pied Piper” of ungodly music, promiscuity and all other forms of social immorality has led them down the path to destruction. Many will argue, “I don’t see anything wrong with that” in reference to a specific action. But, the truth is that if God is not in that which they pursue, then the alternative is plain. *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. Psalms 10:4.* But, such is the case of mankind left to his own ways. The sad fact is that the wayward youth of our nation are a reflection of the adults of our nation. Parents see their children as objects of pride rather than God-given charges to love sacrificially, direct in responsibility and correct

their errors. In many cases the offenses of the children are an injury to pride and they find it easier to justify the behavior. I once knew a lady who openly decried the use of marijuana and campaigned for stiffer penalties. However, when her son was arrested for possession she suddenly decided it should be legalized. Certainly that is an extreme case, but the point is well made.

Our people seem to think that there is both safety and justification for anything in numbers. So we witness the acceptance of moral perversion, the killing of the unborn and other things clearly condemned in the Word of God. It seems, as time goes by, the numbers approving, even if not participating, grows toward a majority. Acceptance with God, however, is not in the hands of the majority. This comes by His grace and mercy bestowed on individuals, not groups. This is obtained for those coming to God at great cost. There is no ground for acceptance with God among men other than the blood of Christ shed for them individually. At the Throne of Judgment, “we all did it” will not be an acceptable plea. The message of this text is plain. **We stand or fall as individuals.** The scripture does not say “the souls that sinneth, they shall die.” The Lord, through the Prophet, bears down hard on this matter and so should we. Bad parents are not a reason for acceptance with God. A bad environment is not a justification for crime. The message is simple.

Personal sin for any reason will cause the eternal death of that person. That is, the person who lives under the direction of sin, enjoys sin and pursues sin in search of personal satisfaction will die. And, we are reminded that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." There is no comfort here at all. Death is personal and individual and without Christ brings an eternity of individualized torment.

In the same sense that the "wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him," the "righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him." With the knowledge that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" we might ask with the disciples "who then can be saved?" Does not even the Apostle Paul tell of a lifelong struggle with sin? The distinctions are however to be made in reference to natures. Two classes of people are here identified – the righteous and the wicked. Men do not become wicked by doing wickedness. It is rather that they do wickedness because they are wicked. Similarly, the righteous do not become righteous by any amount of good works. Their righteousness is as a result of them being made righteous. But, the scripture says it is their righteousness. The wicked are "born in sin and shapen in iniquity," as David confessed. Such is the lot of all men. It may then be justly asked, "Where is my righteousness?" Herein true believers delight to

confess that their only righteousness is the Righteousness of Christ. He alone offered up a perfect righteousness to God. This righteousness He sovereignly imputed to the account of all who come to know Him. Furthermore, in regeneration, the Holy Spirit imparted that same righteousness to us in a new nature. Such may rightfully call it "their own personal righteousness" because Christ has given it to them in Eternal life!

Such a wonderful gift of life and righteousness is the product of eternal love, is put into place by an act of sovereign mercy, solely based on the merits of Christ's blood and righteousness. It required the perfect life, infinite suffering, death and resurrection of Christ in order for me to come into possession of eternal life. Thereby my sin was taken away and He was made unto me "righteousness." There is no plea to be made but mercy.

In this same Chapter the Lord declares that: *Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live? Ezekiel 18:23.* Thus, the command goes out to all to "repent ye and believe the Gospel," not as a group but as individuals. May each of us delight to stand, individually, claiming the righteous of Christ to the eternal glory of our Great God and Savior. *bhs*

When you come to creep into your hole: (Thomas Boston, "Death")

For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living. Job 30:23

Behold the vanity of the world, and of all those things in it, which men so much value and esteem; and therefore set their hearts upon.

The rich and the poor are equally intent upon this fleeting world--they bow the knee to it, yet it is but a clay god. They court the bulky vanity, and run eagerly to catch this shadow.

The rich man is hugged to death in the world's embraces; while the poor man wearies himself in the fruitless pursuit for the world.

But look into the grave, O man! Consider and be wise! Listen to the doctrine of death; and learn, that, hold as hard as you can, you shall be forced to let go your hold of the world at length! "He will take nothing with him when he dies" Psalm 49:17

Though you load yourself with the fruits of this earth--yet all shall fall off when you come to creep into your hole--the house, under ground, appointed for all living. When death comes, you must bid an eternal farewell to all your worldly enjoyments.

If you lie down on the grass, and stretch yourself at full length, and observe the print of your body when you rise--you may see how much of this earth will fall to your share at last. It may be that you shall get a coffin and a shroud--but you are not sure of that; many who have had abundance of wealth, yet have not had this much when they took up their new house in the land of silence.

It was a sobering lesson, which Saladin, when dying, gave to his soldiers. He called for his standard bearer, and ordered him to take his shroud upon a pole, and go out to the camp with it, and declare that of all his conquests, victories, and triumphs--he had nothing now left him, but that piece of linen to wrap his body in for burial.

This world is a false friend, who leaves a man in time of greatest need, and flees from him when he has most to do. When you are lying on a deathbed, all your friends and relations cannot rescue you; all your substance cannot ransom you, nor procure you a reprieve for one day; no, not for one hour!

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart." Job 1:21



COMMENTS AND QUOTES: CALVIN ON PRAYER

Prayer does not change God or His decrees for three reasons: first, God is immutable; second, God's good pleasure governs everything; and third, God is in control of everything, including our prayers. If prayer could change God or His decrees, the human will would usurp from God at least part of His control of history, which would deny God's all-controlling grace and would destroy our faith. Rather, "prayer is something we do with God's help on the basis of what God has done for us in eternal election." Nevertheless, prayer is still effective, for these two truths must never be forgotten: "first, that in His divine wisdom God anticipates our prayers; and second, that in His divine love God responds to them." It is against God's nature not to hear and answer the prayers of His people. God feels drawn to help us and not to disappoint us in His grace. Bruce Ware summarizes Calvin's view of effective prayer as follows: "While prayer never coerces God to act other than his infinite wisdom has willed, it nevertheless is one important and necessary condition which must be present for certain aspects of God's work to be carried out. Prayer, then, is not contrary to divine sovereignty but is a divinely ordained instrument functioning within the sphere of God's sovereign wisdom and power in carrying out his will." Ultimately, God's response to prayer is a "divine response to a divine initiative in the elect." Prayer is effective because it is grounded in God and flows out of His sovereign, loving grace at work in us.

The Purposes and Method of Prayer According to Calvin in Book 3, chapter 20, there are at least six purposes of prayer: (1) to fly to God with every need and gain from Him what is lacking in ourselves to live the Christian life; (2) to learn to desire wholeheartedly only what is right as we place all our petitions before God; (3) to prepare us to receive God's benefits and responses to our petitions with humble gratitude; (4) to meditate on God's kindness to us as we receive what we have asked for; (5) to instill the proper spirit of delight for God's answers in prayer; and (6) to confirm God's faithful providence so that we may glorify Him and trust in His present help more readily as we witness His regularly answering our prayers. All of these purposes are designed to foster communion with God so that "the promises of God should have their way with us." Joel Beeke – *Taking Hold of God: Reformed and Puritan Perspectives on Prayer*.