

You will never be smarter than God, your plan for your life will never be better than God's plan for you, what you want for you will never be better than what your Savior has died to give you.
—Paul David Tripp

Nothing should keep our minds busier on earth than this great reality: the Holy One of God was declared unholy, so that unholy sinners might stand unblemished before a holy God. —Mark Jones

The Baptist Catechism (Keach's Catechism)

1677

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

Q. 88. Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?

A. No mere man, since the fall, is able in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but daily breaks them in thought, word, and deed.

(Eccles. 7:20; Gen. 6:5; Gen. 8:21; 1 John 1:8; James 3:8; James 3:2; Rom. 3:23)

Q. 89. What then is the purpose of the law since the fall?

A. The purpose of the law, since the fall, is to reveal the perfect righteousness of God, that His people may know his will for their lives and the ungodly, being convicted of their sin, may be restrained therein and brought to Christ for salvation.

(Ps. 19:7-11; Rom. 3:20-31; 7:7; 12:2; Titus 2:12-14; Gal. 3:22-24; 1 Tim. 1:8)

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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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JOYFUL ACCOUNTING

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. (James 1:2-4).

We are often confronted in the Scripture with thoughts which run counter to the reasonings of the natural man. James begins his epistle with just such a thought. In the world’s way of thinking, bad things produce bad feelings. Uncomfortable things produce feelings of uneasiness. And negative things result in feelings of negativity, anger, resentment, and the like. Here, and in many other cases, throughout the Word of God we are taught to react in an opposite manner. How indeed can we think happy thoughts in times of such distress? Yet, where the life of Christ is manifest within, joy comes to the surface and blessedness is the experience that follows the worst of circumstances. My first Sunday School teacher in teaching the Beatitudes assigned each of us in the class a verse to memorize. I was probably the youngest in the class but was also the biggest. She apparently thought I should be able to do more, so I was assigned two verses. I have never forgotten those words: *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12).* As a six-year-old I pondered the sense of those words. As time has gone on and the realization that “blessed” is the equivalent of “happy” the

mystery has deepened but the experience is real.

We would consider the differences between James and the other New Testament writers. They deal with the definition and the necessity of faith while James tests the genuineness of faith in practice. The reason that “all things work together for good” is that they produce faith and the joy that attends it. Everything that occurs in the life of believers is designed to point us to Christ and in Him we find pure joy which transcends anything to be found in this present world. The typical concept of blessedness is of health, wealth, and prosperity interpreted in a human context. To believers the trials and testing in this life only serve to reveal the value of life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is evident that James knows of the trials facing those to whom he writes. The prevailing thought is that this is not James the son of Zebedee; it is the other Apostle James who was a leader in the church at Jerusalem. As such, he was not unfamiliar with the fact of persecution and knew how violent it could be. He had known and or witnessed the stoning of Stephen. His fellow Apostle of the same name had died under the sword. So, he tenderly addresses them as “my Brethren” as opposed to distinct persons – we share the blessings of grace with all who know Him.

Spurgeon noted that it is our faith that is under attack in these trials. Recognition of faith being tested verifies its existence. Even as one listens for a pulse or tries to detect breathing where one appears to have died, so even a sense of weak faith is a product of faith. The things mentioned here are trials and testing. They are not temptations in the sense of worldly allurements. They are the things that tempt us to doubt and bitterness in opposition to faith. These provide the setting for grace revealed.

Accounting is putting the right numbers in the right place. In this case it is taking all the difficulties and putting them in the “joy” column. (The fruit of the Spirit is joy). The sense of the word here is that of considering it as the source of joy. David prayed for the restoration of the joy of salvation. Jesus proceeded because of the joy that was set before Him. Paul marveled that he was counted worthy. We are to consider joy as the result of all that we endure. The value of faith tried and proven is to the Lord: *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (1 Peter 1:7).*

Often, in times of trials, the flesh cries out for an answer as to why. We are privileged in knowing why. This is not in the immediate sense of cause and effect. Thus, James directs our attention to the outcome. God-honoring patience comes as the result of being tried, and faith is in evidence. We become more conscious and confident in the promises of God in Christ. Such expectation is confirmed by the knowledge of the great truths of the Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace – these must be reviewed from time to time in our hearts and in our minds. In this way our hearts are strengthened to cling to or desperately lay hold on these

things. Patience then is the cheerful and hopeful endurance experienced as we wait for Him. Matthew Henry wrote: “the truing of one grace produces another.” We consider then: *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Romans 5:3-5).* This is not stoicism – it is living joyful proof of God with us. How we rejoice to know: *For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. (Hebrews 10:36).*

Patience leads on to maturity and completeness. Literally, let patience have its effect which is a mature continuance in the way of faith. We consider that salvation is to “he that endureth to the end.” It is not the attaining of sinless perfection even though that is the standard that is before us in Christ. A. T. Robertson saw it as perfected at the end: Perfect and entire – everything working and all there; perfected all over – possessing the fulness of Christian character; lacking nothing (a doubling up of the preceding that we might have it emphasized to us).

Such things as try our faith are the order of the day for believers. Yet, what comfort is to be had: *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13).* And we see also: *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; (2 Corinthians 4:17).*
bhs

From Psalm 29

The Bible gives us multiple angles of who God is: he is both transcendent and immanent, both high and low, both great and good, both mighty and merciful. Some of us may tend to emphasize one or the other of these in our thoughts of God, but the Bible insists that we hold both up together. This ought not to surprise us, for greatness without goodness is terrifying, while goodness without greatness is impotent. The apparent tension between these twin realities was finally resolved in Jesus Christ. In him we see the merciful heart of God, and the unprecedented nearness of God, in our very midst—healing the sick, forgiving the penitent, welcoming the children. Yet for all those who do not bow the knee in contrition to Christ, only fury and wrath await them at his second coming (Rev. 19:11–16). Now is the time to humble ourselves and plead for mercy—which, in accord with his deepest heart, he delights to give. – Dane Ortlund, *In The Lord I Take Refuge*

I will be their God, and they shall be My people. —Jeremiah 31:33

When God declares through Jeremiah, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it,” He is speaking of the work of regeneration. When He declares, “I will be their God, and they shall be My people,” He is speaking of the result of that work: a unique relationship between God and a community of people who would believe on His name and walk according to His commands. Not only would this new covenant people be obedient to God’s law, but also they would possess a marked devotion and fidelity to God Himself. They would have an affinity—a natural and spontaneous affection—for Him, and He would claim them as His own. He would be their God in truth and righteousness, and they would be a people who would worship Him in spirit and in truth; such people God seeks to be His worshippers. – Paul Washer, *The Gospel And True Conversion*

The Holy Spirit Is Not Optional

Surely, LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield. —PSALM 5:12 The stark, tragic fact is that the efforts of many people to worship are unacceptable to God. Without an infusion of the Holy Spirit there can be no true worship. This is serious. It is hard for me to rest peacefully at night knowing that millions of cultured, religious people are merely carrying on church traditions and religious customs and they are not actually reaching God at all. We must humbly worship God in spirit and in truth. Each one of us stands before the truth to be judged. Is it not now plain that the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit of God, far from being an optional luxury in our Christian lives, is a necessity? Holy Spirit, infuse my worship today so that what I have to offer the Father through the Son may be acceptable. Amen. – A. W. Tozer

Daily do we need to pray for a fresh realization of the preciousness of the Gospel, a fresh appropriation of its blessed contents; and then there will be a renewing of our joy. —A.W. Pink