

The Gospel is not a mere message of deliverance, but a canon of conduct; it is not a theology to be accepted, but it is ethics to be lived. It is not to be believed only, but it is to be taken into life as a guide. —Alexander Maclaren

...there was never any other way to escape death than for men to flee to Christ. —John Calvin

### The Baptist Catechism

AS PRINTED BY THE CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION IN 1813 *(Presented here as originally published – this does not constitute a full endorsement of the Riverside Baptist Church)*

50. Q. Which is the first commandment?

A. The first commandment is, Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Ex. 20:3).

51. Q. What is required in the first commandment?

A. The first commandment requireth us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God and our God (1 Chron. 28:9; Deut. 26:17), and to worship and glorify him accordingly (Mt. 4:10; Ps. 29:2).

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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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### IN HIS STEPS

*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: (1 Peter 2:21-22)*

Many years ago, I read a little book entitled *In His Steps*. The author skillfully derived from the life and example of Christ things that should be the aim of all true believers. I have since become more aware that in the accounts of the life of Christ in Scripture, we see in practice what we claim to believe but find our pride to be in fierce opposition. While we often grasp with delight that it is God that works in us to “will,” we falter at the inclusion of “to do” His good pleasure. We often sing of the footsteps of Jesus and of following on as He leads. It is indeed He that leads, and it is He whom we would follow and that in “deed and in truth.”

These words were written by Peter to a persecuted people, and he gave to them and us the greatest of examples to follow. It is interesting to note here that Peter does not propose a way to stop the persecution – it is rather that he would equip them to deal with it by way of their consideration of the sufferings of Christ Jesus our Lord. He did not teach them to feel as if they were victims and to look to human ways and means. We are used to a remedy; what he gives us is the perfect strategy for endurance. This chapter presents some profound thoughts and are often quoted in isolation and are precious even then. We would see them in the context of Him being an example as well as core Gospel truths. The sufferings of Christ were essential to our salvation and we marvel at what He suffered and what He accomplished. These truths are

made the more precious to us as we see them in action.

We begin with the reminder that we are a called people and that this calling is of God. See Romans 1:6 and 1 Corinthians 1:2. And of course, we are reminded of, *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)*. And we are called to a life in this world that includes suffering but not unhappiness. There are beatitudes that are declared in the face of suffering. Peter did not deal with this suffering people with platitudes and good wishes; he rather gave them the utmost words of consolation. They were called to suffer as did Christ relative to the world. He taught us not to marvel at the world’s hatred in that they hated Him first.

Our example is first and foremost the Gospel work wherein salvation is accomplished. *Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? (Luke 24:25-26)*. Paul’s message to the Thessalonians out of the Scripture was, *Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. (Acts 17:3)*. The mandate

here is clear. We are to walk in His steps. At the home of Cornelius Peter declared that Jesus “went about doing good.”

We marvel at the fact that there was no sin in Him. Here, the emphasis is placed on the fact that He did not practice sin. Remember, He is being depicted as our example and the purity of Christ is included. Thus, we are directed to follow that example and do no sin. The immediate reaction is that such is impossible, and we would agree. However, there is in every true believer the desire to be delivered from the practice of sin. I think it was Vance Havner who said that “The early disciples had a goal in life, and it was not imperfection.” He did not practice deception. He was open in all that He said and did. Paul made a similar claim: *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. (Acts 20:27)*. Peter continued on in this passage noting that He was reviled but did not respond in kind and that He suffered their abuses without threatening or retaliation. These things are summarized in the statement “He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously (1 Peter 2:23).” We would pause here and reflect that all this is descriptive of Christ our example – not merely an example but as our Redeemer. Peter would add in v. 24 that He bore our sins in His body on the tree. Paul teaches in this light that we should, *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)*.

The purpose of it all is stated also in v. 24 – “that we, being dead to sins; should live unto righteousness.” An unregenerate sinner sins

because he cannot do anything else. The redeemed have the ability to identify sin and react against it. We are repulsed at seeing it in others and driven to repentance as we see it in ourselves. We see our sin on Him: *Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5)*.

Paul declared to the Philippians that it is given to us to suffer (See Philippians 1:29) and here Peter includes it in the description of our calling. It behooves us to consider who we were and with whom we now have to do. *For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. (1 Peter 2:25)*. We were bent on destruction, without God and without hope in the world. We are brought to our Loving Shepherd who sees to our every need and our trusted Bishop of our souls who infallibly directs us in the way that leads on to an eternity of bliss.

Our lives and happiness are not to be derived from the comforts of this world; it rather comes as we walk after the example of Christ and enjoy the benefits of identity with Him now and forever. Christ was our suffering substitute in the obtaining of our salvation and our wonderful example in so doing. His virtue in us is not subject to other factors such as suffering. *bhs*

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## **Whatever Is Not Christ –Tim Challies**

It is said of Michelangelo that when he was carving his best-known masterpiece he began with a block of marble and simply removed whatever was not David. This is the task of any sculptor—to begin with raw material and to work with it until nothing is left but the subject itself. Under the hand of a skilled artist, each rough blow of mallet on pitching tool, each gentle tap of hammer on chisel, each precise stroke of rasp and

riffler, each careful sweep of paper and polish steadily transforms an unformed block of marble to a stunning work of art.

When we come to Christ in repentance and faith, we surrender ourselves to the purpose of God and submit ourselves to the hand of God. We are the block of marble and he the artist, we the medium and he the one who must remove from it whatever is not Christ. From the moment of our salvation he begins to conform us to the image of his Son, to pare away whatever is earthly until there is nothing left but that which is heavenly.

His work, though always purposeful, does not always feel gentle. If a block of marble had a voice it might cry out at the actions of the artist, it might object to having piece after piece chipped away. But surely it would be comforted by the sculptor's reminders of what it is becoming and his assurances of what it will soon be. And as God carries out his work on us, as he removes what is sinful and idolatrous, what distracts and diverts, what keeps our feet planted on earth and hearts fixed on what is present, we, too, sometimes cry out in pain. But as rust must be scoured from a blade to make it glisten, as grime must be polished from glass to make it transparent, as pieces must be carved from a block of marble make it a work of art, so God must sanctify us to make us like Christ. And if it was only through suffering that Christ himself was made perfect as our Savior, it should be no surprise that it is only through suffering that we are made perfect as his imitators.

Of course all illustrations grow weak at some point and this one is no exception, for it may cause us to think there is something unblemished within, some glimmer of goodness, some spark of divinity, that God looks for and finds and perfects. But this is not the case, for God assures us there is no one righteous, no one who understands, no one who seeks after God, no one who does good. There is not even one. But through God's work of salvation, he transforms us from coal to marble, from what is worthless to what is precious, what from is darkened with our depravity to what glistens with his goodness. Then through his work of salvation he steadily sculpts that new material to resemble the image of Christ. He removes the old to display the new.

Diamonds need to be polished to display their brightness, spices need to be crushed to release their fragrance, trees need to be shaken to relinquish their fruit. And as marble needs to be carved to bring forth the image within, we oftentimes need to endure sorrows to bring forth the character of Christ. But we have the assurance that our Artist is kind and good, that he only ever acts lovingly and purposefully, that he only ever does what is for our good and his glory. And as he goes about his work, he always holds before us Christ as our model, God's Son as our prototype, so that when we feel the blow of the hammer, when we feel the pierce of the chisel, we can keep our eyes fixed on the beauty of what we are becoming. For it is God's will to do his work in us and upon us until we have been perfectly conformed to the perfect image of our perfect Savior.

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*Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)*