

"Use the hammer of diligence, and let the knee of prayer be exercised--and there is not a stony doctrine in Scripture which is useful for you to understand, which will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith. You may force your way through anything with the leverage of prayer. Thoughts and reasonings are like the steel wedges which give a hold upon truth; but prayer is the lever which forces open the iron chest of sacred mystery, that we may get the treasure hidden within!" Spurgeon

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)*

87. Q. 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 (Ecc. 7:20; 1 John 1:8, 10; Gal. 5:17), but doth daily break them in thought, word, or deed (Gn 4:5, and 7:21; Rom. 3:9-21; James 3:2-13).

88. Q. Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?

A. Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others (Ez. 8:6, 13, 15; 1 Jn. 5:16; Ps. 78:17, 32, 56).

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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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A MATTER OF TIME

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.

(Hosea 10:12-13)

We have often heard the statement, “It’s just a matter of time.” I have often made that statement myself in referring to various things. It may be some anxiously awaited result of something we perceive to be in progress. It may be in reference to observing the progress of a terminal illness being assured that death was at hand. Regarding what we see about us today we may be surmising that it is just a matter of time until we become witnesses to the hand of God coming down with even greater consequence than we are now seeing. It is evident that we are already seeing what happens when God gives up a people to depraved desires for sin and wickedness, leaving them to the consequences that are just a matter of time. Being in the world, it is difficult for us not to think of the troubling things we see about us. But in that we, as believers, are declared to being not of this world, we are encouraged to assess things in the perspective of the revealed will of God, the comforting reality of the providence of God, to actively seek the Lord and His righteousness, and so to rest our case with Him.

The timing of the Lord is perfect. It was in the fulness of time that He sent forth His Son in the manner described to us in the Word. Men sought to kill Him at various times to which He responded, “my time is not yet.” All that transpired in the accomplishing of redemption,

all that occurred in every aspect of His life, all that was done to Him as the substitute for His people, and His resurrection and ascension were all right on time. Our God dwells in eternity and all things are eternally before Him. We, on the other hand, are dependent on time and timing. Time has been defined as the measure of the succession of events. Thus, it is God’s gift to finite man to accommodate his sense of the order of events in his life and in the revealing of those things before determined by our God and effectually brought to pass.

As to the pursuit of the things of the Lord and of cultivating a consciousness of the presence of the Lord, it is always time. The prophet here exhorts the people in that they had long neglected a lively relationship with the Lord. He uses the metaphor of “fallow ground.” Fallow ground is that which has at one time been cultivated but has long lain unattended. While it is not the same challenge as breaking “new ground” it nevertheless needs intense care in order that it be made fruitful. By implication here we understand that they were the “fallow ground.” I would submit that we may be fallow ground. Our Lord chose a similar metaphor in the parable of the soils. Four different soils were named. They were the wayside, the stony ground, the thorny ground and the good ground. We may safely imply that the good

ground was made so by preparing it to receive the seed. So, it is here that the fallow ground needs to be made receptive to the sowing of righteousness and the reaping of mercy. I believe it was Vance Havner that observed that "if the ground could cry out it would surely express resentment at the intrusion of the plow." He was pointing to the fact that repentance is painful to the flesh.

To the unregenerate and rebellious of this world these words have no meaning. The message of the Word of God here is to the Lord's people. Have we become complacent? Have we neglected the spiritual activities that have long defined true believers – Bible study, prayer, meditation, and fellowship with the saints? Have we taken for granted that which is characterized as "so great salvation." Even with these things present in our lives we shall never arrive at a place where we may presume that all is well. As we note the conditions of our land and its obvious decline it is not the time to despair. It is rather "time to seek the Lord," to do so with persistence, knowing that God honors importunity.

There is a tendency among men to become complacent regarding the things of God while giving attention to material things. When the children of Israel were returning from the captivity in Babylon, they were enthusiastic about the Land and about rebuilding the Temple. In time the work fell into neglect as their interest turned to their own things. The prophet chided them thusly: *Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. (Haggai 1:4-5).* They

were directed to self-examination, and it would be well for us to be so advised. We are warned about judgment of others, but we are always instructed to "consider our ways." We have become a very materialistic culture and it is easy to be so affected and so priorities change.

Paul reminded us that our salvation is nearer than when we believed. It would be easy to simply sit down and wait it out. But his exhortation is "...now it is high time to awake out of sleep..." As I observe the political developments of our day the tendency is to adopt a "woe is me" attitude. Then I am reminded that I am not of this world; my actions and reactions are to be ordered as in my "conversation in Heaven" and in response to my Lord's bidding. Paul would further exhort us to "redeem the time, because the days are evil." Paul quoted the Old Testament prophet in reminding us that "...today is the day of salvation." Do we look with anticipation or consternation?

The writer of Hebrews cites the words of Habakkuk is saying: "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." The Lord will appear right on time. It remains in the meantime for us to seek the Lord while He may be found. If that entails "breaking up our fallow ground," let us be about attending to it. Neither our confidence nor our fear is in regarding men. We are to "Sanctify the Lord of host Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread."

The time is now to "break up our fallow ground." It is ever the time to seek the Lord and to do so until He comes and rains righteousness upon us. *bhs*

John Newton: Trials are medicines which our great and wise Physician prescribes because we need them. He proportions the frequency and weight of them to what our case requires. Let us trust in His skill, and thank him for His prescription!

FROM JERRY BRIDGES

Because we know God is directing our lives to an ultimate end and because we know He is sovereignly able to orchestrate the events of our lives toward that end, we can trust Him. We can commit to Him not only the ultimate outcome of our lives but also all the intermediate events and circumstances that will bring us to that outcome. Still, it's difficult for us to fully appreciate the reality of God's sovereignly doing as He pleases in our lives because we don't see Him doing anything. Instead, we see ourselves or other people acting and events occurring, and we evaluate those actions and events according to our own preferences and plans. We see ourselves influencing or perhaps even controlling or being controlled by the actions of other people, but we don't see God at work. But over all the actions and events of our lives, God is in control, doing as He pleases—not apart from those events or in spite of them but through them. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery—a malicious act in and of itself—but in due time, Joseph recognized that through his brothers' actions, God was acting. Joseph could say to them, "It was not you who sent me here, but God" (Genesis 45:8). Joseph recognized the hand of God in his life sovereignly directing all the events to bring about His plan for him.

Shadows and Streams

May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works, who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke! I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord. (Psalm 104:31–34)

God rejoices in the works of creation because they point us beyond themselves to God himself.

God means for us to be stunned and awed by his work of creation. But not for its own sake. He means for us to look at his creation and say: If the mere work of his fingers (just his fingers! Psalm 8:3) is so full of wisdom and power and grandeur and majesty and beauty, what must this God be like in himself!

These are but the backside of his glory, as it were, darkly seen through a glass. What will it be to see the glory of the Creator himself! Not just his works! A billion galaxies will not satisfy the human soul. God and God alone is the soul's end.

Jonathan Edwards expressed it like this:

The enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. . . . [These] are but shadows; but God is the substance. These are but scattered beams; but God is the sun. These are but streams; but God is the ocean.

This is why Psalm 104 comes to a close in verses 31–34 with a focus on God himself. "I will sing praise to my God while I have being. . . . For I rejoice in the Lord." In the end it will not be the seas or the mountains or the canyons or the water spiders or the clouds or the great galaxies that fill our hearts to breaking with wonder and fill our mouths with eternal praise. It will be God himself. —John Piper