

The clear message from Genesis to Revelation is either go to hell with your own righteousness, or go to heaven with the righteousness of Christ credited to your account by faith alone. Faith in Christ is saving; faith in anything or anyone else is superstition. —Michael Horton

The New Hampshire Confession of Faith

By J. Newton Brown 1833

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

V. Of Justification

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood; by virtue of which faith his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

John 1:16, Eph.3:8, Acts 13:39, Isa. 53:11-12, Rom5:1-2, Rom. 5:9, Zech. 13:1, Matt. 9:6, Acts 10:43, Rom. 5:17, Titus 3:5-7, I Peter 3:7, I John 2:25, Rom. 5:21, Rom. 4:4-5, Rom. 6:23, Phil. 3:7-9, Rom. 5:19, Rom. 3:24-26, Rom.4:23-25, I John 2:12, Rom. 5:3, Rom. 5:11, I Cor. 1:30-31, Matt. 6:33, I Tim. 4:8

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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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LOOKING UP UNTO THE HILLS

A Song of degrees. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. (Psalms 121:1-2)

These two verses are the first that I memorized. I don't remember my age, but it was probably no later than first grade. The dear old Sunday School Teacher of the youngest children would always begin class by directing our attention out the window to the mountainside a short distance away. Then she led us in reciting this passage. Although other verses were memorized in time, this one stuck with me through all the years of my rebellion and so is anchored in mind and heart to this day. As a child I wondered at the phrase “from whence cometh my help.” I tried to connect hills with the idea of help. While I didn't grasp the connection at the time, because it was in the Bible, I knew it had significance. Now, having been born again of the Spirit of God and by faith receiving Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, its significance to me has taken on greater dimensions.

If the first verse were all that we had, many questions would arise. But in that it is immediately followed by the declaration that “my help cometh from the Lord” puts it in perspective. If indeed there is help to be understood from the hills, such help has the Lord as the source. John Gill pointed out that the Psalmist's look to the hills was not with the expectation that some need would be met by people coming from the hills. He rather pointed to hills that had spiritual significance around the area of Jerusalem. *Truly in vain is salvation*

hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel. (Jeremiah 3:23).

Hills and mountains have been prominent throughout the Biblical narrative. The Ark rested on Mt. Ararat. Abraham was directed specifically to Mt. Moriah to sacrifice his son. Moses was directed to Mt. Sinai where the Law was given. It would be from Mts. Gerizim and Ebal that blessing and cursing would be set forth. From Mt. Pisgah the view of Moses was directed westward to the mountains there where the hills of Zion and Moriah looked over the Land of Promise. Other mountains were referred to and the Land itself was to be characterized by “hills and valleys.” Evident in all this is the fact that it was a place of divine design and provision. It is the Lord that made them and that not without purpose. The might of the Lord is on display. And yet, our Lord would describe a faith that would move mountains.

There is some disagreement among the scholars regarding this passage. Some have stated that the words of verse one constitute a question rather than an assertion. They would have it “Shall I lift mine eyes unto the hills” followed by “whence cometh my help?” Many conceded that it could be that way instead of what we see here in the KJV. Both the ESV and the NKJV end the first sentence with a question mark. However, who could look to the hills and not be encouraged at being the child of the One

whose mighty hand has made them? I would not enter the debate here; I would rather see that we are directed in any case to the source of all help, and that is the Lord.

This Psalm is the second of those called “A Song of Degrees.” The thought is that these were the songs of pilgrims as they made their way to Zion. Others have suggested an approach to the Temple. In any case there is a lesson for us as to an approach to our God and to that which He alone can provide. Alexander MacLaren outlined the passage in this way. He saw first A Look of Longing. Then He saw a Question of Weakness. And thirdly, The Assurance of Faith. With those thoughts in mind, we would note that the Psalmist is looking upward. While we may think of the hills above, the idea is of looking above with expectation. At the tomb of Lazarus, we read that “Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.” In our expectations we may be reminded of the maker of hills only to elevate our gaze to far beyond them. Thus, we would be directed to the source of all. Truly our expectations find anchor in Him who is our provision and is made unto us all things.

There is obviously a sense of need in that the Psalmist is seeking help. True believers have an ongoing consciousness of our need and so we cast ourselves on His mercy and are taught in His Word that “Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.” The word of assurance is what our faith lays hold on – my help is coming. So, it is promise to all who wait on Him and long for His presence. Such

assurances are precious given to us throughout. Spurgeon wrote on this passage of those looks to those assurances to which we are precious directed here: “The purposes of God; the divine attributes; the immutable promises; the covenant, ordered in all things and sure; the providence, predestination, and proved faithfulness of the Lord - these are the hills to which we must lift our eyes, for from these our help must come. It is our resolve that we will not be bandaged and blindfolded, but will lift up our eyes.” We are reminded of the words of the prophet: *For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee. (Isaiah 54:10).*

So very many thoughts are brought to mind of the help and provision of the Lord as we meditate on this passage. The ways and means employed by the all-wise One cannot be counted. Spurgeon further commented on this passage: “What we need is help, - help powerful, efficient, constant, we need a very present help in trouble. What a mercy that we have it in our God. Our hope is in Jehovah, for our help comes from him. Help is on the road, and will not fail to reach us in due time, for he who sends it to us was never known to be too late.”

I heard a preacher say many years ago that “we need to raise our gaze.” And we shall not have looked high enough until our gaze is fastened on Him who is our Help. *bhs*

Grace Denied and Supplied

Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)

The need for inner strength arises not just from the depletions of everyday stress, but from the suffering and afflictions that come from time to time. And they do come.

Suffering is inevitably added to heart-weariness on the way to heaven. When it comes, the heart may waver and the narrow way that leads to life may look

impossibly hard. It's hard enough to have a narrow road and steep hills that test the old jalopy's strength to the limit. But what shall we do when the car breaks down?

Paul cried out three times with this question because of some affliction in his life. He asked for relief from his thorn in the flesh. But God's grace did not come in the form he asked. It came in another form. Christ answered, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Here we see grace given in the form of Christ's sustaining power in unrelieved affliction — one grace given, we could say, within the circle of another grace denied. And Paul responded with faith in the sufficiency of this future grace: "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

God often blesses us with a "grace given" in the circle of "grace denied."

For example, on a beastly hot day in July, the water pump on our car stopped working, and twenty miles from any town we were stranded on the interstate in Tennessee.

I had prayed that morning that the car would work well and that we would come to our destination safely. Now the car had died. The grace of trouble-free travel had been denied. No one was stopping as we stood around our car. Then my son Abraham (about eleven at the time) said, "Daddy, we should pray." So we bowed behind the car and asked God for some future grace — a help in time of need. When we looked up, a pickup truck had pulled over.

The driver was a mechanic who worked about twenty miles away. He said he would be willing to go get the parts and come back and fix the car. I rode with him to town and was able to share the gospel with him. We were on our way in about five hours.

Now the remarkable thing about that answer to our prayer is that it came inside the circle of a prayer denied. We asked for a trouble-free trip. God gave us trouble. But in the midst of a grace denied, we got a grace supplied. And I am learning to trust God's wisdom in giving the grace that is best for me and for unbelieving mechanics and for the watching faith of eleven-year-old boys.

We should not be surprised that God gives us wonderful graces in the midst of suffering that we had asked him to spare us. He knows best how to apportion his grace for our good and for his glory. —John Piper, From *Future Grace*, pages 66–67

Broken health is naturally discouraging, but if God is in it, we need not be disheartened: he is able to make more of us with our shattered health than we could have made of ourselves with athletic robustness. —J.R. Miller

It is quite time we should learn that worrying is neither a grace nor a duty, but rather a most unlovely blemish in a life—a sin that hurts the soul and grieves God. —J.R. Miller