

If you cannot worship the Lord in the midst of your responsibilities on Monday, it is not very likely that you were worshipping on Sunday! —A.W. Tozer

The highest honour in heaven will be the reward of the greatest humility on earth.
—Matthew Henry

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. 53. What is forbidden in the first commandment?

A. The first commandment forbids the denying, or not worshipping and glorifying the true God, as God and our God; and the giving that worship and glory to any other, which is due unto Him alone.

(Joshua 24:27; Rom. 1:20-21; Ps. 14:1; Rom. 1:25)

Q. 54. What are we especially taught by these words, “before me,” in the first commandment?

A. These words, “before me,” in the first commandment, teach us, that God, who sees all things, takes notice of, and is much displeased with the sin of having any other God.

(Deut.30:17-18; Ps. 44:20-21; Ps. 90:8)

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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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A PERFECT GIFT

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:17-18)

In times of thanksgiving, I have often benefited from remembering James 1:17 and the thought that everything I consider a blessing, and much that I do not, comes from Him, the Father of Lights. Likewise, in thinking of the sovereignty of God in regeneration, I have been sweetly reminded that it is of His own will that we are begotten, and that by the means He has ordained. Both verses certainly state precious facts concerning our God, His person, and His work. In view of the statement of verse sixteen, “Do not err my beloved brethren,” we sense that these two thoughts should not be separated. We would sense that the gift of regeneration is both a good gift and a perfect give from above.

We find it easy to think of the material gifts that pertain to this life, but we will be resisted in our efforts to look beyond these to things of an eternal nature. Even the material things given to a believer are received in the context of serving the purpose of God in salvation. As true believers we are not moved from a sense of spiritual blessedness by either the presence or absence of material wealth. Like Moses of old, we esteem the reproaches of Christ to be greater riches than all that is in this world.

We would take note of the fact that the KJV translators used the singular verb “is” in reference to both “good gift” and “perfect gift.” My word processor wants to insert the plural

“are.” We are given to understand that the intention of James here is to see every gift as both good and perfect. If it is of the Lord, how could it be otherwise. There are gifts that we receive as the benevolent provision of our creator who will provide for His own. How easily do we take this for granted. But special attention needs to be given to those gifts that communicate the perfections of God to us in salvation. As our minds and hearts are directed to consider then such things as righteousness, remission, adoption, regeneration, and eternal life, we would think of that which is complete in Christ. It is by this application of mercy and grace through the quickening work of the Spirit that we are brought to perfection.

We are reminded that He is the creator of all and especially of lights. Certainly, the sun, moon, and stars were part of the original creation, and we are reminded of their value to us in so many ways. But He is especially the provider of Spiritual light. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5).* Paul would see Him as the infinite source of all light: *Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. (1 Timothy 6:16).*

As the giver of life and all that pertains to it, we rejoice in the knowledge that He is unchanging as to His person, His purpose, His promise, and His gifts. John Gill commented: “as there is in that great luminary, the sun in the firmament, which has its parallaxes, eclipses, and turnings, and casts its shadow; it rises and sets, appears and disappears every day; and it comes out of one tropic, and enters into another at certain seasons of the year: but with God, who is light itself, and in him is no darkness at all, there is no change, nor anything like it...” There is no shadow at high noon.

It is to be carefully noted that James follows the declaration concerning gifts and the Giver with a profound declaration of the divine work of regeneration. Since man could not possibly have any input whatsoever it is most assuredly a perfect gift. It is according to His own will and is essential to all that follows in salvation. There must be spiritual life before there can be spiritual action. It is instant (we are either dead or alive). It is complete at the time of its occurrence. And it must precede any living act such as repentance or faith. We are begotten by the Word of Truth, that is the Gospel. It is the Holy Spirit that makes alive, and the Gospel believed confirms that such life has been given. The Gospel is essential in bringing the knowledge of regeneration, salvation, and experience to us. Consider: *For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. (1 Corinthians 4:15)*. Paul did not save them – Salvation is of the Lord. Regeneration is the perfect gift resulting in Paul’s Gospel being heard and

believed.

The Old Testament reference to the “firstfruits” is not without significance here. What were the firstfruits? From the Law we read: *Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. (Exodus 22:29)*. Many other references are given to the fact that the first and the best were to be given to the Lord. It is possible that the writer is here speaking of the earliest converts, but it is more likely that he is speaking of those who through regeneration become the “firstfruits” to be given unto God. Christ is called the firstfruits of them which slept (1 Corinthians 15:20). In regeneration we are the firstfruits of that which is to come. John MacArthur observed that “giving God that initial crop was an act of faith that He would fulfill His promise of a full harvest to come. In the same way, Christians are the first evidence of God’s new creation that is to come and enjoy presently in their new life a foretaste of future glory.”

The thought is that we should show forth His praise. The following is paraphrased from Gill. As firstfruits we are to be separated and distinguished, as preferred, and made best by the presence of Christ, as devoted to the service of God, and as formed for His praise and glory.

We would here be reminded that the basis for this good and perfect gift is the eternal love of God, the gift of His only begotten Son, His sacrifice for the sins of His people. It is truly through the “sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth...” May we be counted among the “spirits of just men made perfect.” *bhs*

If we really believe that the God who created the universe cares for us and is working in our lives, then that removes the fear that makes us hoard our money and turn away everyone who might need the generosity that God asks of us.

—Bryan Chapell

“O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.” — Psalm 136:1

It is everyone’s duty to give thanks to God. Being thankful to God is to acknowledge that He has acted graciously toward us. This is not a requirement only for those exercised at deeper levels in their prayer life, or only for established Christians. God requires thankfulness from everyone. “In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6).

First, we are to be thankful for mercies received—“our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life” (Belgic Confession of Faith). We are not only to be thankful when we receive remarkably clear answers to prayer. We are also to be thankful for the things we receive for which we did not ask. Imagine making a list of all the times we used our senses, physical strength, and mental abilities in one day. Think of the simple act of eating a slice of bread, of receiving the strength and muscle coordination to lift our hand, to chew, and to digest it. Perhaps we never specifically asked God for these blessings or for thousands of others today, but God graciously gave them to us anyway.

Second, we are to be thankful for trials endured. We must not only be thankful for clear answers to prayer and for blessings for which we did not pray, but our thankfulness must penetrate deeper: we are called also to be thankful for trials and tests (James 1:2), for those things that distress us, events that are not pleasant or comfortable or to our liking. Paul and Silas sang psalms in the inner prison—songs of praise to God when they had bleeding backs and shackled feet.

The subject of thankfulness highlights a common sore spot in prayer. We can pray thinking of the Lord as a “limited God,” not an “all-encompassing God.” What is the difference between an emergency phone number and that of a friend? The one you call only when you must, when you have no choice, only in times of emergency. But the other you love to call—when things are going well as well as when things are going badly.

Think of the ten lepers healed by Christ. Nine used the “emergency number” for God because they only wanted to be healed. But only one used the number of a friend. He returned to Christ, with a heart full of love, communion, and praise. The joy that exceeded the priest’s pronouncement that he was clean was the joy of his heart being full of love for Jesus Christ.

There is a difference between joy and thankfulness. Joy focuses more upon the blessings, but thankfulness focuses on the One who blesses. Scripture teaches us to count God’s blessings, as the old hymn states, to “name them one by one.” We are more prone to count our blessings by hundreds and to give thanks in bundles. In our busyness, we often ignore or trample on the God-given grass and lilies of the field! We rarely pause to see a flower’s beauty, or smell its fragrance. How many “flowers” in your life have you passed by, never noticing the love and beauty with which God clothed each one of them? Do we pause to thank God for His “flowers” petal by petal? —Joel Beeke