

Something to ponder.

Arthur Pink: "Because God is God indeed--He does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. His great concern is the promotion of His own glory. He is the Supreme Being, and therefore Sovereign of the universe!"

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. 92. What does God require of us, that we may escape His wrath and curse, due to us for sin?

A. To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption.

(Acts 20:21; Acts 16:30-31; 17:30)

Q. 93. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel.

(Heb. 10:39; John 1:12; Phil. 3-9; Gal. 2:15-16)

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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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THE NEXT LEVEL

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: (Ephesians 1:15-17).

We often sing the song “Count Your Blessings.” It is well that we do so. Yet, it is to be feared that we do not look deeply enough into the blessedness that we possess in Christ nor do we aspire to an even greater realization of blessedness. The wise man wrote, *Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. (Proverbs 9:9).* Isaiah wrote of our Lord, “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end...” It is not merely that He governs and provides peace, it is that these things are ever increasing. Paul introduces the thought of blessedness at the outset of this epistle and he does so in a very special way. He directs our attention to the source of all spiritual blessings as being the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He gives the location as being in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). The songwriter directed us to “name them one by one.” Paul continues by doing that.

In verse 4, we are directed to the sovereign choice of God, in Christ, with the attendant purpose that we should be “holy and without blame before Him in love.” What a blessing to realize that we deserve nothing but the contempt of God but are chosen in love. In verse 5, the blessedness is that He “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ...” What a joy to be able to say to Him, “Abba Father.” This wonder is followed by the fact that

we are made “accepted in the beloved (v. 6).” We are not as orphans receiving minimal favor; it is rather that we are fully embraced as sons and daughters in Christ. The blessings continue with the declaration of the means whereby we are brought into this blessed relationship with God. In verse 7 we learn that we have redemption from a deserved eternal destruction and are justified by the blood of Christ. But it doesn’t stop there, we have as well the forgiveness of sins, the assurance that they are remitted. Paul continues with the fact that He has given us an abundance of wisdom and prudence in revealing that which is to come (vv. 8-9). What a blessing it is to know that in the “fulness of time” that the Lord will gather together all things in Christ. This is the inheritance to which we look having been “predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will...(vv. 10-11).” Paul claimed it was the Lord who had ordained that we (Paul and others) should be to the praise of His glory (v. 12). Owing to the same power they had heard the gospel of their salvation (and ours), and they had believed, and “were sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise (vv. 13-14).

We might wonder how many sing Count Your Blessings with these things in mind. Paul had spent much time with those of the Ephesian church and would rehearse these things with

them. The thought of regeneration and faith coming at the end of the declaration of God's will and purpose was exciting. But many may know these things and may be able to even declare them to others. It is to be feared that many are merely cloned in a system of belief which they dutifully repeat. Deep spiritual experience comes with the revelation of divine wisdom to us and in us. It behooves us to know of the workings of God to the best of our ability. That for which Paul prayed here brings great glory to God and great joy to His people.

We would consider here that Paul was hearing in prison of the continuation of that which began while he was with them. The word had gotten out on them. Thus, he informed them of what had happened (vv. 1-14) and now he would pray for what was to be desired. There were two aspects of what he had heard that he took as evidence of their foundations. The first was their faith in the Lord Jesus. This was no mere affirmation of the truth. It implied that there was a walk of faith and such as was in keeping in his later direction that they walk worthy of their testimony (Ephesians 4:1). The second was the love of the saints. This, according to John, is personal evidence of passing from death unto life. Again, this is not mere lip service or a discharge of duty. It is that which is evident to both the object and the observer. This confirmed them to Paul.

Paul related to them that for all the reasons given in the preceding verses he gave thanks for them. This was not because of any thoughts of Paul's success with them. (This should provoke

us to give thanks for those who manifest the faith of God's elect in that they reflect the work of grace and are to His eternal glory). It was that they came up when he prayed.

Paul was specific in the way he directed his prayers for them. In referring to the "God of our Lord Jesus Christ," he invoked every thought of the redemptive purpose of God and the relationship in the Godhead in bringing it about. It is He who is the Father of Glory, or the Glorious Father. Therefore, all that would be brought to fruition in them would be to His Glory. Three specific things are here requested that they might come to the next level of experience. The first is the Spirit of wisdom. It is the ability to discern, understand, and apply the things of God in Christ. We would remember the emphasis laid on spiritual wisdom and that wisdom is personified in Christ. He would have them (us) to be given the Spirit of revelation – the ability to have the things of God revealed in us as well as to us. Paul spoke elsewhere of the Son being revealed in him. These would mean nothing apart from the knowledge (knowing) of Christ Himself. So, our prayer would be for "Growth in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

In the verses that follow Paul unpacks the various aspects of these things. It is that we should know of His power, His resurrection, His dominion, and the extent of His reign. These things are not of the sort which may be known as mere facts. These are those things of which there is eternal increase in the knowledge of the Lord's people. *bhs*

Portions of the article above were inspired in listening to a message by H. B. Charles

Sadly, in an alarming number of churches today, God's people are being told what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear. They are being fed warm milk, not solid meat. A watered-down gospel will attract large crowds (for a while), but it has no eternal impact. I've not been able to find any place in the Scriptures where God expresses the least bit of concern for increasing numbers. Satisfying the curious, itching ears of our postmodern audiences is an exercise in futility. –Charles Swindoll

What is this? What is this cry that we hear? -- (Charles Spurgeon)

"Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him." Genesis 4:8

"The blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel." Hebrews 12:24

"The sprinkled blood which speaks [of mercy], a better and nobler and more gracious message than the blood of Abel [which cried out for vengeance]." Hebrews 12:24 (NLT)

There is a cry heard in Heaven; the angels are astonished; they rise up from their golden seats and inquire, "What is that cry?"

God looks upon them, and says, "It is the cry of blood; a man has been slain by his fellow; a brother is slain by him who came from the womb of the same mother, has been murdered in cold blood, through malice. One of My saints has been murdered, and here he comes."

And Abel entered into Heaven, blood-red, the first of God's elect who had entered Paradise, and the first of God's children who had worn the blood-red crown of martyrdom.

And then the cry was heard, loud and clear and strong; and thus it spoke: "Revenge! Revenge! Revenge!" And God Himself, rising from His throne, summoned the culprit to His presence; questioned him, condemned him out of His own mouth, and made him henceforth a fugitive and a vagabond, to wander over the surface of the earth, which was to be sterile to his plough.

And now, beloved, contrast the blood of Christ with this. There is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God; He hangs upon a tree; He is murdered--murdered by His own brethren. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him--but put Him to death.

He bleeds; He dies; and then a cry is heard in Heaven.

The astonished angels again start from their seats, and they say, "What is this? What is this cry that we hear?" And the mighty Maker answers yet again, "It is the cry of blood; it is the cry of the blood of My only-begotten and well-beloved Son!"

And God, uprising from His throne, looks down from Heaven and listens to the cry. And what is the cry? It is not revenge; but the voice cries "Mercy! Mercy! Mercy!" Did you hear it? It said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

"The sprinkled blood which speaks [of mercy], a better and nobler and more gracious message than the blood of Abel [which cried out for vengeance]." Hebrews 12:24 (NLT)

Thomas Brooks, "Christ is a jewel worth more than a thousand worlds, as all know who have Him. Get Him, and get all! Miss Him and miss all!"