

The sinner can no more raise himself from the deadness of sin than Lazarus, who had been dead four days until Jesus came. —George Whitefield

Spurgeon's Catechism
Compiled by Charles Haddon Spurgeon
[1834 -1892]

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

35.Q. What are the benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?

A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification (Rom. 5:1-2, 5), are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17), increase of grace, perseverance in it to the end (Prov. 4:18; 1 Jn. 5:13; 1 Pet. 1:5).

36.Q. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at their death?

A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness (Heb. 12:23 and do immediately pass into glory, (Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8; Lk. 23:43), and their bodies, being still united to Christ (1 Thess. 4:14), do rest in their graves (Isa. 57:2) till the resurrection (Job 19:26).

37.Q. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?

A. At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory (1 Cor. 15:43), shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment (Matt. 10:32), and made perfectly blessed both in soul and body in the full enjoying of God (1 Jn. 3:2) to all eternity (1 Thess. 4:17).

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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 MARVEL OF UNBELIEF

And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching. (Mark 6:5-6)

Many preachers over the years have experienced the frustration of having faithfully declared the Gospel only to witness their hearers walk away seemingly unaffected. This is especially the case where there are unsaved folk in the audience. They hear the evidence of their precarious situation but presume to continue on their way to destruction. Examples are given from the word of God of those who are perishing and of those who have perished while clinging to their own ideas of self-preservation. We who preach cannot be unaffected as we witness such unbelief and rejection of Christ our Lord.

The preceding chapter in Mark has been characterized by one commentator as the faith chapter. In it we have the account of the demoniac healed and exercising faith. We marvel at the faith of the woman who touched His garment and was healed. And we take note of Jairus and the fact that he heeded the words of our Lord to “Be not afraid, only believe.” Only those who ask Him to leave over the loss of the swine and those who scoffed as He approached the daughter of Jairus acted otherwise. In this chapter the theme seems to be unbelief. And so, the account is given of Herod and many of the objects of the missionaries sent with the good news. But it is those at Nazareth and their unbelief that caused our Lord to marvel.

At the beginning of this chapter, we read that

He came to His own country, which we presume to be Nazareth, and His disciples followed. They would learn much concerning unbelief. Matthew’s account parallels that of Mark. In the case of Luke, it is either that there were two visits to Nazareth or that Luke recorded the event out of sequence. Most think the timeline of Mark is correct. In any event all the accounts report an adverse reaction to our Lord’s declaration of the truth concerning Himself. Men left to themselves will deny that one like themselves could aspire to greatness in any way. So, they saw Him as no higher than His earthly brothers and sisters. We are here reminded that over and over man yields to faulty logic in the face of overwhelming evidence. Just as faith must be, and is, directed to Christ, so is unbelief directed in such a way as to discredit Him. In this way we understand the awful nature of unbelief.

Thus, we read that He appeared in the Synagogue on the Sabbath day and began to teach. They were astonished at what they heard. They recognized that He was no ordinary man. They heard the wisdom that would correlate to the mighty works that He had done. But even so, they questioned the source of this wisdom. They did not deny that He had done wonderful things. What caused them much consternation was the declaration of Scripture fulfilled concerning Him. They were acknowledging the need of special wisdom and even acknowledged that they were

“mighty works” and that they were “wrought by His hands.” We witness, even now, the many who do not deny all that Jesus claimed and all that He did while refusing to hear the call to repent and believe the Gospel. To them He was the carpenter’s son and one of them. Many still see Him as no more than that even now.

Rejection and unbelief are found in the depravity and pride of men and will persist in the face of abundant evidence. I am reminded of the reply given to the rich man in hell. He wanted to send Lazarus to warn his brothers. He was told that they would not believe though one were sent from the dead. So it is, we preach the resurrection of Christ to no avail. He was indeed to them a prophet without honor. And so, we are made to understand that “...Great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh...” And we understand that this is a matter of regeneration, experience, and faith. They rejected that one such as was before them could be the Christ!

“And He could there do no mighty work...” does not imply a lack of ability in our Lord. It was rather an act of will in which He did not challenge their unbelief. He certainly had the power to overcome their rebellion and their unbelief, but as Matthew reported it was because of their unbelief that He rather held them responsible. The miracles of our Lord were often directed to those who were ready to believe in Him. It was not a matter of their will; it was His will that it be so. Even with the resurrection of Lazarus, those who hated Him conspired to kill Him because of it. He did not abandon mercy, but rather healed some of the sick.

It is only recorded three times in the Scripture that Jesus marveled. He marveled at the faith of the centurion (Matthew 8:10 and Luke 7:9). Here He marveled at the lack of faith. He was not surprised here, but certainly experienced the rejection and so was affected accordingly. It is here that He saw, and we see the exceeding sinfulness of unbelief. How often do we hear that all have a right to believe as they will. Unbelief was first manifested at the fall. It has continued down through the ages despite repeated judgments prophesied and carried out. It is rampant today. It is openly declared as it was in this text. Could it be that we are seeing no mighty work for that reason?

Even as believers we are not exempt from its effects. Spurgeon pointed out that we tend to be unbelieving about such things as providence, divine faithfulness, the efficacy of prayer, and the efficacy of the blood of Christ in all things. We hear the cry of a desperate man: “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

It was necessary that the unbelief of men come to the fulness of expression. This was done in Him being delivered up to die. We see the awfulness of unbelief unrestrained as He was nailed to the cross. Unbelief is not directed to religion; it is directed to Christ alone. We see the depths of depravity manifested in the unbelief of men. Many questions arise in my mind as I consider these things. Do I marvel at the unbelief I witness in myself? Do I marvel at the unbelief I witness in the unsaved? Am I properly affected by such awareness? Do I seek to counter that unbelief as I preach the Gospel? Do I properly marvel at the mercy and grace of our God and Savior? Do I fully understand why we preach “Ye must be born again.” *bhs*

“There is no such thing in the New Testament as a believer whose perseverance is so guaranteed that he can afford to ignore the warning notes which are sounded so frequently.” —Sinclair Ferguson

In heaven, the eternal Son of God was “palatial” magnificence if anything ever was. But he became a man and, instead of ruling in glorious authority as one would expect of God-become-man, he was rejected and killed. His own life was reduced to bombed-out rubble. Why? So that he could sweep sinful you into his deepest heart and never let you go, having satisfied the Father’s righteous wrath toward you in his atoning death. Your suffering does not define you. His does. You have endured pain involuntarily. He has endured pain voluntarily, for you. Your pain is meant to push you to flee to him where he endured what you deserve. If Jesus himself was willing to journey down into the suffering of hell, you can bank everything on his love as you journey through your own suffering on your way up to heaven.

--Dane C. Ortlund, *Deeper*

People have an appreciation for moral excellence, as long as it is removed a safe distance from them. The Jews honored the prophets, from a distance. The world honors Christ, from a distance. -R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God*

I find to this day seven abominations in my heart: 1. Inclining to unbelief; 2. Suddenly to forget the love and mercy that Christ manifesteth; 3. A leaning to the works of the law; 4. Wanderings and coldness in prayer; 5. To forget to watch for that I pray for; 6. Apt to murmur because I have no more, and yet ready to abuse what I have; 7. I can do none of those things which God commands me, but my corruptions will thrust in themselves. When I would do good, evil is present with me. 7. These things I continually see and feel, and am afflicted and oppressed with, yet the wisdom of God doth order them for my good; 1. They make me abhor myself; 2. They keep me from trusting my heart; 3. They convince me of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness; 4. They show me the necessity of flying to Jesus; 5. They press me to pray unto God; 6. They show me the need I have to watch and be sober; 7. And provoke me to pray unto God, through Christ, to help me, and carry me through this world. -John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*

Yahweh-Jireh: The LORD will provide or see to it (Gen. 22:14) Yahweh-Rophe: The LORD who heals (Exod. 15:26) Yahweh-Nissi: The LORD our banner (Exod. 17:15) Yahweh-M’Kaddesh: The LORD who sanctifies (Lev. 20:8) Yahweh-Shalom: The LORD our peace (Judg. 6:24) Yahweh-Rohi: The LORD my shepherd (Ps. 23:1) Yahweh-Sabaoth: The LORD of hosts (Ps. 46:7) Yahweh-Tsidkenu: The LORD our righteousness (Jer. 23:6) Yahweh-Shammah: The LORD is there (Ezek. 48:35)

Each day is an appointment, not an accident; and when our desire is to glorify God, we see opportunities as well as obstacles.

- Both Warren Wiersbe, *He Walks With Me*