

Great sins draw out great grace; and where guilt is most terrible and fierce, there the mercy of God in Christ...appears most high and mighty. —John Bunyan

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)

10. Q. What are the decrees of God?

A. The decrees of God are his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass (Eph. 1:4, 11; Rom. 9:22-23; Is. 46:10; Lam. 3:37).

11. Q. How doth God execute his decrees?

A. God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence.

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Services:

Sunday Morning 11:00 AM

Sunday Evening 6:00 PM

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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### DRAWING NIGH TO GOD

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. (James 4:7-8)*

Not all desire to be close to God or to have Him close to them. This should be unthinkable to the true believer. Religion that does not treasure a close relationship with God is empty and dead. So, while James was chiding with those to whom he wrote, he addresses something that must be there if they are saved.

The reason that God is dreaded by the many is that He in His holiness exposes them in their sinfulness. The believer welcomes this exposure so that he might be assured that Christ has atoned for his sin. Painful is the realization, but sweet is the forgiveness given in Christ. The Israelites of old told Moses to get what they needed from the Lord, but not to let the Lord speak directly to them.

To draw nigh to God is not that we should flippantly come in a way that denies an awareness of His majesty, might and power. Just the opposite is true. Those coming to Him believe that He is and that includes all that is true about Him. But, come they must. There is no other to whom we might turn because we realize that He who is offended by our sins is the only one who can forgive. This He does, for all who come, through the suffering and death of Christ.

That “He will draw nigh to you,” Is a precious promise, not a conditional response. Yet, in the experience of drawing near, we sense that He is doing the same. It is His

delight to show mercy and provide comfort. It is not an inconvenience to God, rather it is in keeping with His purpose. It would only follow that we must be seeking an identity with His purpose. We must not be as they of old of whom it was said that drew near with their lips, yet, their heart was far from Him.

If we would declare His works: *But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works. (Psalms 73:28)*. Consider then the promise of success: *The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. (Psalms 145:18)*. We have both motivation and authority to draw nigh: *For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. (Hebrews 7:19)*. Christ is the better hope. All believers are made nigh by the blood of His cross.

Sometimes, there is a hesitancy to draw nigh because we lack confidence to do so. Thus, we are reminded: *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:22)*. A better hope, full assurance, what better encouragement could we find? Why should we want to draw nigh to God? He has manifested over and over that those who love Him, He loved first. His design is to obtain glory by showing mercy. He will

have fellowship with His people. He will nurture them; He will give them peace and comfort and assurance. He will make His power known in them. He will engage His power for them. To the delight of such who seek Him, He will draw nigh to them.

This passage has some hard words for those to whom it was addressed. A closer look will reveal that the tendencies of the natural man are clearly in view. It is not the purpose of God to simply chide with us, rather, as a loving father he will graciously direct His children. There are three things that connect here. Looking at verse 7, we see that we are to submit ourselves to God, to resist the devil, and then to draw nigh to God. These are inseparable. Without humility and submission, man goes on seeking his own way. But, while we are told to submit to God, we are encouraged to resist the devil with the assurance that he will flee from you. This is not because of you, but because of Christ in you. And thus, the groundwork is laid for drawing nigh to God.

It would be foolish to think that any of this could be accomplished apart from the mystery of God's enabling grace. Yet, as we are bidden so must we do. Remember that God "giveth grace unto the humble." Likewise, we dare not come presuming anything about approaching a Holy God. This is why He speaks of clean hands and a pure heart. Those drawing nigh would not do so with the matter of presumptive sin hanging over them. Above all else, we remember that God is HOLY. So are we directed, "be ye holy." Obviously, we cannot make ourselves holy. But again, we are directed to the blood of Christ which cleanses

us from all sin. Thus, we see the necessity of God given faith as essential to access. What of a pure heart? Earlier, James had said, *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. (James 4:3)*. In our approach to God, we would be single eyed. That is, our focus would be upon His glory and our delight in it. Knowing the nearness of God is a wonderfully spiritual experience. It is not to be enjoyed in the context of carnality. We may as well expect a loving mother to punish a child by giving it ice cream as that God would engage us in His fellowship in the context of presumption and sin.

While these conditions may seem to be legalistic requirements, they are far from it. Having these issues resolved is a source of joy in and of itself. Truly, we could not enjoy having God nigh with such things unresolved. It is well said that unregenerate sinners would be miserable in heaven because there is nothing there they would enjoy. Likewise, we, in seeking a close walk with God, would have it to be free of all human distraction. These admonitions are graciously given that we might know the fullness of joy. This is not in the cold assent of the mind but in the warm response of a new heart.

*To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself... (2 Corinthians 5:19)*. The way of closeness then is found in Christ our Lord. It is He, who, through His death, burial, and resurrection has brought us nigh to God and God nigh to us. May we pray for deliverance from all that would hinder such tender love and fellowship with our Heavenly Father. *bhs*

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To follow Jesus Christ is the greatest adventure in all of life. It involves the pursuit of life's greatest purpose – the glory that belongs to Christ alone. It meets life's greatest need – the forgiveness of sin that only Jesus can give. It gives life's greatest pleasure – the joy that comes exclusively from knowing Christ. It involves the greatest partnership in life – the fellowship of walking closely with Jesus. It imparts

the greatest teaching in life – the wisdom that Christ alone possesses. It infuses the greatest power in life – the grace of Jesus Christ to live triumphantly. It leads to the greatest destination after life – the immediate presence of Jesus Himself in heaven. There is no journey that can compare with this one. It will take you from where you are to where you need to be. It will take you through all of life’s many experiences, including your greatest moments and darkest nights. This journey with Christ will enable you to live as God intends you to live. As you follow in His footsteps, you will find the real purpose for which you were made. Moreover, it will ultimately lead you home to heaven, to the very throne of God. No pursuit in life even begins to compare to this journey of following Jesus. –Steven Lawson, *The Cost*

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The way to receive the gift of God’s empowering our actions is to do the actions. If he gives the gift of effort, we receive that gift by expending the effort. When he gives the grace of growing in holiness, we don’t receive that gift apart from becoming more holy. When he gives us the desire to get more of him in the Scriptures, or in prayer, or among his people, we don’t receive that gift without experiencing the desire and living out the pursuits that flow from it. –David Mathis

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My friend, I know not what your trouble may be --James Smith

*“As for me, I would seek God, and to God would I commit my cause, (Job 5:8)*

This is sound advice. It is much better than . . .

seeking unto men, or poring over troubles, or indulging a gloomy imagination, or giving way to fears.

If I was in perplexity, I would seek unto God for wisdom. If I was in sorrow, I would seek unto God for comfort. If I was in weakness, I would seek unto God for strength. If I was under guilt, I would seek unto God for pardon. If I was in a severe conflict, I would seek unto God for victory. If I was in doubt and fear, I would seek unto God for confidence and a sense of His favor. If I was harassed by Satan, I would seek unto almighty God for protection. If I was afraid of falling, I would seek unto God to uphold me with His omnipotent arm. If I was alarmed at death, I would seek for His presence to comfort me. Whatever you need, seek it from God!

Whatever you fear, carry it to God! Whatever troubles you, lay it before God! You cannot seek unto Him in vain, or without profit! "If I were you, I would seek unto God! I would lay my cause before Him!" –copied from *Grace Gems*

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**THE IMPULSE TO PURSUE GOD ORIGINATES WITH GOD, BUT THE OUT WORKING OF THAT IMPULSE IS OUR FOLLOWING HARD AFTER HIM; AND ALL THE TIME WE ARE PURSUING HIM WE ARE ALREADY IN HIS HAND: “THY RIGHT HAND UPHOLDS ME.” –A.W. TOZER**