

Human fatherhood exists to display the beauty of God's Fatherhood. Our highest calling as fathers is to be the image of God's fatherhood to our children.

—John Piper

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)

48. Q. What is the preface to the ten commandments?

A. The preface to the ten commandments is in these words; I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (Ex. 20:2).

49. Q. What doth the preface to the ten commandments teach us?

A. The preface to the ten commandments teacheth us that because God is the Lord, and our God and redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments (Luke 1:74, 75; 1 Pet. 1:15-19).

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THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST REPORT

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

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THE ARM OF THE LORD REVEALED

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. (Isaiah 53:1-2).

Isaiah is the first name thought of when the Old Testament prophets are mentioned. Isaiah 53 is one of the best known of Old Testament passages. It is well that a comment on any portion of it should be in the context of the entire chapter. Actually, chapter 53 is a continuation of the last three verses of chapter 52. There The Lord is depicted as The Servant (52:13); The Sufferer (52:14); and The Sovereign (52:15). We read as well in that chapter, *The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. (Isaiah 52:10)*. The content of Isaiah 53 is the comprehensive Gospel covering everything from the incarnation to the death and resurrection of Christ and even beyond in describing the ordained outcome. In preaching the Gospel we often reach back to the Old Testament for origins, illustrations, and confirmations (Paul’s method). Especially do we look to passages such as Isaiah 53 that are quoted by our Lord and other of the New Testament writers. It is clear that Christ is here set forth as the Arm of the Lord in that He is personified in the second verse.

We consider here the humble presentation of the Lord and His rejection by men in a contemptuous way. In the verse following all are identified. *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (Isaiah*

53:3). As we are so reminded of the place where love and mercy found us, we have cause to rejoice that we were not left as despisers.

The immediate frustration of the Prophet is noted here. He perhaps identified with both the Lord and the other prophets. – “Our Report.” This is a shared feeling by preachers in all generations, this one included. The “Arm of the Lord” is figurative language for His power: *Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. (Isaiah 40:10)*. And we are reminded as well of such declarations as: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)*. We have a “Report” to deliver, and it is all that is revealed to us in Jesus Christ and the salvation that He purchased with His own blood.

The prophecy set forth here seems to be at odds with itself. He is declared to be the Arm of the Lord and then as a “Root out of Dry ground.” It is essential that we defend the grace of God (not that God needs defending). It is in passages such as this that the necessity of grace is shown. The metaphor here is very rich in truth and application. It certainly looks ahead to the time Israel’s lowest ebb in history (Alfred Edersheim). Reference may be made to the line of David that had fallen into insignificance. But then we see: *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem*

of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; (Isaiah 11:1-2). From Spurgeon we read, "Such a plant derives nothing from the ground in which it grows. He derived nothing from natural descent or nationality. Nothing was drawn from His followers. No army rose up for support -note the dependence of others on armed forces to defend their faith (so-called) – remember the inability of Baal. He derived nothing from human nature. It is rather that He grew up before Him as a tender plant (the Father) while being rejected by men. But then we read of Him and His eternal connection with the Father -- *Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; (Proverbs 8:30).* From His eternal origin to being a Babe born in obscurity, to the carpenter's son, to being a cohort with the fishermen. Truly a "root out of dry ground." Just a note in application: we were all brought up with no support from anything in this present world and we who know Him are the product of His saving grace. We often see pictures that run counter to what we read here. In that He came to identify with men, He would not appear to be any different than them. Those depictions showing a radiance about Him are the inventions of men and dishonor the Lord in His humanity.

We will look again at the third verse of this chapter. The songwriter aptly expressed a wonder in writing "Man of Sorrows what a name" For the Son of God who came... He is here declared to be forsaken of men; no longer regarded as a man! (The language here does not fully portray the extent of His rejection. We hear it from Him (see Psalm 22)). This seems to survey the whole of His experience on earth but came to culmination at the cross as it came to a fever pitch. He was indeed the "Man of Sorrows." There is no record of Him laughing – His joy was beyond the cross. He was rejected -- "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." He was sorrowful because of what was done to Him personally. And His sorrow was because of the sinful and undone condition of those He came to save.

He was acquainted with grief in that He was in constant contact with the dead, diseased, afflicted. Who can fully comprehend such identity with the grief of others. And we hid our faces from Him.

The prophet posed it as a question, "To whom is the "Arm of the Lord" revealed? How we rejoice in the knowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. He is declared as the power of God unto salvation. We who once esteemed Him not, now gladly own Him as our King. He is revealed to us and that to our eternal delight. *For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. (John 5:21).* We have heard the Report – Let us be about the business of delivering it. *bhs*

One Measure of Greatness

While all of us ought to see evidence of marked growth in our knowledge of God, our relationship with him, and our obedience to him, none of us ever evolves beyond our need for the ordinary means of grace. We never "level up" to such a degree that we gain access to some hidden extraordinary means of grace. We begin the Christian life by building habits that will foster our relationship with God, and these very disciplines are meant to sustain us to the end.

John Piper once said, "One measure of the greatness of a man is not only that he practices what he preaches, but also that he doesn't consider himself above the ordinary means of grace that all Christians need." Piper talks about the measure of the greatness of a man (or woman), and we know from the Bible that true greatness is marked by humility, for "whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:12).

The humble Christian receives these means of grace as undeserved kindness from God for his growth and joy and perseverance. He never allows himself to think he has so mastered them or so mastered the Christian faith that he is no longer fully and utterly dependent upon such simple, wonderful, ordinary means. As John Newton wrote, "Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

--Tim Challies, *BLOG May 19, 2024*

"His Name Shall Be Called The Mighty God --Isaiah 9:6

Jesus Christ, our Savior, is God, Jehovah, the Most High God, the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, the second Person of the holy Trinity, possessing all the attributes of the Godhead, in every way equal to the Father and the Spirit. His Godhead is demonstrated by the works of creation, providence and grace attributed to him and the worship he receives from men and angels as God. All who know him declare, this Man is "My LORD and my God!" The Bible declares that Christ is God manifest in the flesh, over all, blessed forever, the great God, the living God, the true God, and eternal life. Isaiah tells us that he is God, the Mighty One. His mighty power as God, his omnipotence, is revealed in the works he performs, works which none but God himself could do.

THE WORKS HE PERFORMED BEFORE HIS INCARNATION DEMONSTRATE THAT CHRIST IS THE MIGHTY GOD. Who but the Mighty God could create all things out of nothing, uphold all things by the Word of his power, and sovereignly manage all the affairs of providence? These are works attributed to Christ throughout the Scriptures. He not only had a hand in them, he performed them!

THE WORKS PERFORMED BY CHRIST WHILE HE WAS UPON THE EARTH WERE THE WORKS OF GOD, THE MIGHTY ONE. He healed the sick by the word of his power, fed the multitudes with the loaves and fish, cast out devils, calmed the winds and the sea by his voice, and raised the dead by his own word. The Man who did these things is God, the Mighty One!

CHRIST SHOWED HIMSELF TO BE THE MIGHTY GOD BY HIS GREAT WORK OF REDEMPTION. He gave himself into the hands of wicked men; yet he controlled their hands. He never knew sin; but he bore all the sins of all his people. And when the justice of God fell upon him, he satisfied it fully with his precious blood, and put away all the sins of God's elect forever. Then he breathed out his life. And, after three days, he raised himself to life again!

HIS WORKS OF GRACE IN HIS ELECT MAKE ALL WHO EXPERIENCE HIS GRACE TO KNOW THAT CHRIST JESUS IS THE MIGHTY GOD. Who but God could make rebels willing in the day of his power, subdue our sins, clear our consciences of guilt, deliver us from the power of Satan, keep us in the hour of temptation, restore us when we fall, comfort our hearts in trouble, keep us in peace in this world, and preserve us in grace and faith? We who believe know by experience that Christ is God, the mighty One!

--Don Fortner (1950-2020)