

Often our friends...can sympathize with us when we are in trouble, but they have no power to deliver us from it. But Christ is almighty. He is never in the position of wishing He could help but not having the power to do so. —J.C. Ryle

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*)

7.Q. What are the decrees of God?

A. The decrees of God are his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his own will, whereby for his own glory he has foreordained whatever comes to pass (Eph. 1:11-12).

8.Q. How does God execute his decrees?

A. God executes his decrees in the works of creation (Rev. 4:11), and providence (Dan. 4:35).

9.Q. What is the work of creation?

A. The work of creation is God's making all things (Gen. 1:1) of nothing, by the Word of his power (Heb. 11:3), in six normal consecutive days (Exod. 20:11), and all very good (Gen. 1:31).

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WXTH-LP 101.7 FM– In Richwood

Services:

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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### BLESSED BE GOD

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (Ephesians 1:3-4)*

This begins with what some say is the grandest of all doxologies (a statement or hymn of praise to God) and it well may be. Most epistles begin with thanksgiving but this one, along with 2 Corinthians and 1 Peter, begins with praise to God. It is well to note that the thought that begins in verse three does not end until verse 14. In this compendium we read of the origin, the fact, the means, the reasons, and the experience of redemption. The culminating declaration is found in verse 13, “the Gospel of your salvation.” The realization of all this moved the Apostle (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) to look to the wonders of our salvation and so declare, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

What a wonder it is to all true believers to discover that their relationship with Jesus Christ is eternal. While there are many who falter in their understanding of the sovereignty of God in salvation, many of these have a sense of eternity in their hearts that cannot be denied. So, their praise is genuine and arises out of a regenerated heart. But how much greater it is to realize that choice was made in eternity and that both that choice and the aim of God in it is revealed to us in this precious passage. The blessing with which we are blessed enables us to declare, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

To properly understand the relationship we are to have with God, we must note the relationship that was displayed in the life of Jesus on earth. As we look to the man Christ Jesus, we observe what He displayed and declared concerning His love to the Father. It was as a man that He served both the Father and men. It was to His Father that He prayed. He prayed in the times of His ministry, He prayed in His approach to the cross, and He prayed from the cross. In all ways He fully submitted Himself to His Father. This He did because He was acting on our behalf and was fulfilling what had been determined from all eternity. He is the Son of natural and eternal generation – the only begotten of the Father. This, of course, was cause for rejection on the part of the Jews. When they objected to the Sabbath healing at Bethesda, He answered them in this way: *But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. (John 5:17-18).* He as such honored His Father: *For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. (John 5:20).*

In the beatitudes and other places, the word for “blessed” is synonymous with the word “happy.” The word used here is rather doing what it appears. It is an expression of praise and that of the highest order. We get our word *eulogy* from it. It is He who has blessed. The word is only slightly different and speaks of benedictions being pronounced upon its objects. This is then further qualified by identifying the blessings as being spiritual and being experienced in Heavenly places. These blessings are those things that evoke praise unto our God, and which provide for the enjoyment and functioning of the redemption we have in Him. And this provision is comprehensive in that all is provided in being in Christ.

Paul next begins to define the manner of all blessedness with “according” and starts with the fact of divine choice being made. Many stumble at this point and put themselves in the role of the one who makes the choice. I have heard some, at times, including me, sound almost apologetic in saying that nobody knows who the elect are but God.” Knowing of this mindset I once announced to my congregation that I was going to tell them who the elect is. I then took as my text the following: *Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. (Isaiah 42:1-2)*. It is God that has made the choice. It is that “He has,” and not He will. Christ is the choice of God and we in Him.

Sadly, many cannot get beyond the matter of sovereign choice. They look no further. They miss the Gospel aim that is incorporated in the

choice of God. Perhaps if this were better understood, the necessity of such a choice would be understood. The aim is that we be “holy and without blame...” Throughout the Word of God the fact of the impossibility of men making themselves holy is declared. The requirement is that we be holy (having His righteousness) and without blame (having His nature). Men have striven in vain to manufacture a righteousness of their own doing and have miserably failed and all they have tried has been rejected from on high. That which follows in this chapter fully describes how it is by the grace of God that these requirements are met.

The reasons for declaring “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” are many. But as we think that this is the declared purpose of God and that it was made “before the foundation of the world” we are given to praise even more. Do we ever think, as we consider the marvels of this creation and the foundation upon which it is built, that this, the choice of God, preceded even that. We may then conclude, even as we gaze into the heavens and wonder, that all this was done to serve the purpose of God in redemption. It is here in this present world and in this universe that the plan of God in salvation and His glory are worked out.

I approached this text with hesitancy for the simple reason that I stand in awe of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. With such texts as this we are made aware of the wonders of our God and the salvation which He has wrought. The feeble musings of this poor preacher shall never be able to do justice to the vastness of this declaration. O, to praise Him more. *bhs*

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**CHARLES SPURGEON: "THE SOVEREIGN ELECTING GRACE OF GOD CHOOSES US TO REPENTANCE AND TO FAITH, AND AFTERWARDS TO HOLINESS OF LIVING, TO CHRISTIAN SERVICE, TO ZEAL, AND TO DEVOTION."**

Only once in sacred Scripture is an attribute of God elevated to the third degree. Only once is a characteristic of God mentioned three times in succession. The Bible says that God is holy, holy, holy. Not that He is merely holy, or even holy, holy. He is holy, holy, holy. The Bible never says that God is love, love, love; or mercy, mercy, mercy; or wrath, wrath, wrath; or justice, justice, justice. It does say that He is holy, holy, holy, that the whole earth is full of His glory. At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. (Isa. 6:4) R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God*

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The old British preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones explains: “You will never make yourself feel that you are a sinner, because there is a mechanism in you as a result of sin that will always be defending you against every accusation. We are all on very good terms with ourselves, and we can always put up a good case for ourselves.”

--Cited by Dane Ortlund, *Deeper*

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Worshiper First Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. —PSALM 100:4 Our Lord commands us to pray the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest field. What we are overlooking is that no one can be a worker who is not first a worshiper. Labor that does not spring out of worship is futile.... It may be set down as an axiom that if we do not worship, we cannot work acceptably. The Holy Spirit can work through a worshiping heart and through no other kind. We may go through the motions and delude ourselves by our religious activity, but we are setting ourselves up for a shocking disillusionment some day. Without doubt the emphasis in Christian teaching today should be on worship. There is little danger that we shall become merely worshipers and neglect the practical implications of the gospel. Fellowship with God leads straight to obedience and good works. That is the divine order, and it can never be reversed. *Spirit of God, make my heart a worshiping heart this day so that You may be able to work in and through me mightily and that the Father may be glorified along with the Son. Amen.*

A. W. Tozer

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And this is his invitation to us, as well, today: to cultivate habits of withdrawing to hear from God and respond in prayer, and then of returning, with our hearts and minds renewed, to echo the heart of Christ in acts of love toward those he has put along our path. —David Mathis, *Rich Wounds*