

Let us not fear modern criticism; it cannot rob us of one jot or tittle of God's truth. Scripture will shake it off, as the Apostle did the viper which fastened on his hand, and felt no hurt. —F.B. Meyer

Lord, I cannot hope to sit on your right or your left in your kingdom, but permit me to sit at your feet and hear your Word. —F.B. Meyer

The Baptist Catechism (Keach's Catechism)

1677

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Q. 71. What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment forbids the neglecting of, or doing anything against the honor and duty which belongs to every one in their several places and relations.

(Prov. 30:17; Rom. 13:7-8)

Q. 72. What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment?

A. The reason annexed to the fifth commandment is a promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve God's glory and their own good), to all such as keep this commandment.

(Eph. 6:2-3; Prov. 4:3-6; 6:20-22)

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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 CHURCH

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

Volume 15, No. 48

November 27, 2022

FAITH TO BE FOLLOWED

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. (Hebrews 13:7-9)

It is a source of great joy and encouragement to all believers that our Lord Jesus Christ does not change, has not changed, and never shall change. Some have stated that this statement has become confessional in that our faith rests on the truth herein asserted. Of old it was attributed to Jehovah and here the fact that our Christ has not changed assures us of the efficacy of all He has done and is secured because of who He is – God manifest in the flesh. It is well that we have such anchor points, and this is one which we have often clung to for assurance. Things change, people change, and we change, but our Lord does not. Verse 8 may be taken as a standalone statement of truth. However, the potential is to lose something of its application as is often done here. This we would not do.

At times, in reading scripture, we encounter statements that do not demand a connection to context. Such is not the case here. The connection in these three verses makes it support the aim of our faith and confidence which is Christ Himself. So, it is sandwiched between two words of instruction wherein the believer is encouraged in the consideration of our immutable Lord.

We do well to observe lives that have honored our Lord and to note that the common element in their faith is an unwavering attention to the person and work of Christ Jesus our Lord

and so it has been “yesterday, today, and forever.” This is followed with the warning concerning those things that are ever changing in content but are unwavering in their intent to corrupt the faith of God’s people. It is rather that we should be established. *But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. (1 Peter 5:10).*

The words here convey the idea of “guides” rather than rulers. And that is clearly the context here. The writer may have even been referring to those of chapter 11 who are cited as examples of the faith as well as those who looked to the promises realized in Christ. I have often hesitated to address this passage for fear that I might call undue attention to myself. But I am indebted to many who have gone before and who God has graciously used as guides in my life. This includes those from the inspired pages of the Word as well as historical and contemporary figures. It is not clear that the writer had any particular person in view. When a young preacher, a dear brother gave me a biography in which he wrote an inscription to the effect that “a good means of encouragement is to read the lives of Godly men.” I not only profited from that one, but many others since. We are reminded of the offices of those given to the early churches such

as Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers and the purpose for which they were given. We note here the blessedness that encourages us to remember them and their teaching. They have spoken to us the Word of God – this takes us from the Old Testament to the present and those who are faithful and true in presenting the Word. Their faith is exemplary in both precept and practice – they acted on what they believed. Abraham obeyed, the Apostles followed their calling unto the death, and men such as Mueller and Spurgeon who were so consumed, and even in more modern times men such as Jim Eliot who paid the ultimate price. And we note the outcome of such lives as theirs. Paul would speak of the life so given him as “I have finished my course...” One wrote that we should “Observe how they close a life well-spent.” The word here means to look repeatedly!

Our unchanging Lord is the constant to which they were/are anchored. One of the hymns that made an impression on my unconverted heart I heard sung by a dear uncle. *Time is filled with swift transition/ Naught of earth unmoved shall stand/ Build your hopes on things eternal/ Hold to God’s unchanging Hand.* While all about us is indeed changing, we may rest assured that God has not had to alter plans nor change course at any time and He never will. It is not that He “became” or that He is “going to be” in any sense of the words. He is who He always has been. So, it is with Christ Jesus our Lord. We take note of the fact that the

writer uses both Names of our Lord Jesus who is the Christ. The Name Jesus looks to the work of the Son of God on earth. As the Christ the claim is made of His deity and place in the Godhead. He was the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” and He is God indeed. The Psalmist wrote: *But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. (Psalms 102:27).* We see also, *And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. (Hebrews 1:12).*

Christ is the end of their conversation (manner of life) and is the same: Yesterday – not recently, but in all the yesterdays, of their time, and all that preceded. He was “with God and was God.” Today – the today of the Hebrews to whom this was written. He has not changed in His being, His offices, His love for His people, His ability to save and the efficacy of His blood, and the absolute of His righteousness and the demand shown for it in Him. And so shall it be forever.

This is surely an encouragement for our times where transitions are rampant and invariably away from our unchanging Christ. Strange and hateful systems are such as draw away from Christ in the holiness of His person, the sufficiency of His grace, and the glory that is due Him alone. O to be established with grace and so to be in touch with all that is true about Him – to so experience the gracious presence of Him who changes not and who communicates such peace as passes understanding. And He will be the same tomorrow and forevermore. *bhs*

God’s Acquittal Is Essential for Eternity

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” Romans 3:23-25

When there is an acquittal, it is obvious that a great wrong has been committed and here it is a wrong done to the eternally holy God of heaven and earth. Thus, an

acquittal is when God judicially sets one free from the charge of sin against Himself that deserves eternal damnation. "Justification ... signifies the declaring, or the pronouncing a person righteous according to law. Justification ... is the act of a judge, pronouncing the party acquitted from all judicial charges" [Abraham Booth]. Only the priceless blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. Paul in verse 23 describes the human predicament; in verse 24 he describes the divine provision; and in verse 25 he describes the resulting propitiation.

Paul in verse 23 describes the human predicament that all have sinned and habitually fallen short of the God's glory. The entire humanity consisting of Jews and Gentiles are spiritually bankrupt or destitute in God's estimation. Sin separates us from God, that is sin causes us to fall short of the glory of God. Those without the grace of God in Christ must pay for their own sin in the eternal damnation of hell.

Paul in verse 24 describes the divine provision wherein God the Father, based on the redemption of Christ Jesus, freely acquits us of our sin debt which had separated us from the glory of God. Unless the sin issue is settled there can be no saving and worshipping relationship with the holy God. "Redemption" means that Christ paid the ransom. God did not just randomly pass out pardons since all have sinned; only Christ Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice for sin can atone! The eternal damnation that should come to the sinner was satisfied when the Lamb of God made atonement. Jesus laid down His life for the sheep. God's acquittal is freely given without human desert but based on God's will and purpose in Christ. "Freely" means there was no human merit involved in this acquittal. Jesus paid it all! "When God acquits in judgment, He absolves from all guilt, He accepts as completely righteous.... This divine sentence shall never be made void" [Abraham Booth].

Paul in verse 25 describes the resulting propitiation through God's Son who was ordained to redeem so that through faith in Him past sins are remitted. This evidences the longsuffering of God. God set forth "a propitiation" which means that Christ Jesus satisfied the wrath of God against us for our sin. Yes, Christ is our mercy seat whereby all the wrath and judgment of God toward us was fully satisfied. Christ's death was propitiatory, or it averted the wrath of God deflecting it from the sinner because of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice for sin. As is clear our justification, redemption, and propitiation are "through faith in Christ's blood." Only faith in Christ, and not just faith, is that which makes a person a Christian. Yea, only Jesus Christ saves and not one's faith. Faith in faith is not unto salvation but only faith in Christ alone! Barnhouse asserted, "We must ... move away from the heresy that thinks that salvation is a reward for faith.... Such is not the Biblical picture...."

John Bunyan realized spiritual life when the Holy Spirit revealed this text to him. Bunyan said, "Now, my soul was clogged with guilt, and was greatly pinched between these two considerations, Live I must not, die I dare not. Now I sunk and fell in my spirit, and was giving up all for lost; but as I was walking up and down in the house, as a man in a most woeful state, that word of God took hold of my heart, 'Ye are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to manifest His righteousness.' Oh, what a turn it made upon me! I was as one awakened out of some troublesome dream."

--Dr. Ron Rumburg