

One thief was saved that no sinner might despair, but only one, that no sinner might presume. —J.C. Ryle

It is misleading to say that God accepts us the way we are. Rather he accepts us despite the way we are. —Sinclair Ferguson

The Baptist Catechism
AS PRINTED BY THE CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION IN 1813

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Riverside Baptist Church)

What is forbidden in the second commandment?

A. The second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images (Deut. 4:15-19; Ex. 32:5, 8), or any other way not appointed in his word (Deut. 7:31, 32).

57. Q. What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment?

A. The reasons annexed to the second commandment are, God's sovereignty over us (Ps. 45:2, 3, 6), his propriety in us (Ps. 45:11), and the zeal he hath to his own worship (Ex. 34:13, 14).

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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 LAW SPEAKS

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19-20).

The revelation and confirmation of one's guilt is a most gracious act on the part of God. Men think the Law of God to be harsh in its strictest execution. Or they think it to be a simple guide for their lives. In this chapter in Romans, we learn the design of God for the Law in declaring the guilt of all mankind. Paul does not err in referring to this declaration in these terms – “it saith to them who are under the Law.” What does that have to do with grace? Where no illness is realized, no cure is sought. They that be whole (think that they are whole) do not need a physician. Israel of old who went about seeking to establish their own righteousness would not submit to the righteousness of God as it is in Christ. So, many today either seek to establish a personal righteousness or mediate the strictness of the Law. Men will not of themselves admit to the fact of their absolute guilt before God.

Where the grace of God is realized, the true believer never loses sight of this and constantly and consistently flees to Christ for mercy. Herein, we see the grace of God in the conviction of men and the convincing them of their awful guilt. Grace and mercy are realized in Christ's death, burial and resurrection applied to the account of the true believer. Repentance and faith come about through the experience of guilt realized and grace provided. The message is of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Without a deep and abiding

sense of our deservingness of the harshest judgment of God, forgiveness would have no meaning let alone be sought after.

Every act of God toward His people is motivated by love, even, the revelation of our guilt. How wonderful it is to have a sense of being redeemed from what we deserve. The “death,” whose shadow we walk in is what we deserve. His rod and staff that comfort us teaches us to abhor that very sight and to delight in mercy. We see enough of the awfulness of sin as we see its terrible effect on Christ. And when we see that, we pray with the publican, “Lord be merciful to me a sinner.”

It is essential that our mouths be stopped as far as any righteousness of our own. Rom 3:21 (KJV) says: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;” This is the answer to faith: Rom 3:22 (KJV) “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:” This is the gracious message to “them that believe” and look to the Lamb of God. The hope of the hypocrite is cut off.

“O the matchless Grace of Jesus.” It is Christ in you that is your hope of glory. John Newton wrote, “T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear and Grace my fears relieved.” Fears are indeed taught. We are not given many insights to the action experienced with conversions in the Bible, but we are told what brings them to pass.

We are told of the fact that it was the Lord that opened Lydia's heart and That: *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Philippians 2:13.* And from Paul in Galatians that it pleased God to reveal His Son in him. But, on the road to Damascus we are shown, in a measure, the immediate effect on Paul as we see him trembling and astonished. We would here be reminded of the meaning of the word "amazing:" "To confound with fear, sudden surprise, or wonder; to astonish." Webster's 1828 dictionary. Paul later confessed that the Law is Holy.

And so, to understand the scene upon which our eyes are opened as to both our estate and the revelation of the person of Christ our God. In reading after Newton, we may be reminded of near-death experiences before we were saved and then wonder at what the consequences might have been – a terrifying thought. Thus, provoking a look at the present estate (Newton had had many such experiences – enduring storms and the perils of his own wicked ways). And then to see the providence of God evidently working by placing certain ones in his path.

Newton's heart (and that of many others) was taught that the things he had laughed at and despised were deadly to his soul and that he stood before a holy God and was flaunting all that had been laid before in the example of His mother and others placed in his life. The initial thought is that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God and that it is He who has the power to kill and to cast into hell and

that is what he must do! To be found with only the pictures of what has befallen others is terrifying at best.

It is by grace that we learn of our need and then by grace we are led to Him by whose grace we are saved. If I had not been convinced by the Holy Spirit of my guilt before God, I would still be plunging headlong toward final destruction. That would be justice for me. But, with the Apostle Paul, the true believer can say, "I obtained mercy." The Law discovers "sinners" and Jesus is merciful to save them.

Thus, that no flesh could be justified by the deeds of the Law since the Law uncovers the guilt of all without exception. "Law here is obviously employed in the wide sense of conscience as well as Scripture. It is God's ideal held up before our faces, to show us from what we have fallen. The looking-glass is intended, not to wash the face, but to show how much it needs washing. You may commend your soap, and no one will use it; but if you reveal the discoloring filth, people will be only too glad to avail themselves of the cleansing power which otherwise they would neglect and despise. The way to fill the inquiry room is to hold up the divine standard before men's consciences. (F. B. Meyer)." John Gill wrote of the Law, "it discovers to a man, by the light of the Spirit of God, and as under his influence, and attended with his power, the sins both of his heart and life; and so, he is convinced by it as a transgressor and finds himself guilty, and liable to condemnation and death..." *bhs*

Absolute Dominion John 13:2

God's dominion over all things is absolute. Even the most base, vile, and despicable acts of reprobate men and women are under the absolute rule of our God and heavenly Father. Nothing more clearly displays this fact than Judas's betrayal of our blessed Savior. That son of perdition did what he did because of the greed and

malice of his own evil heart, according to the purpose of God to save his elect by the redemptive accomplishments of his dear Son. Even the work of Satan himself is under the rule and control of our God and Savior (Psalm 76:10; Proverbs 16:4).

The 18th century Scottish Presbyterian preacher, Ralph Erskine, wrote: “He employs the wicked themselves to carry on his work, and make their wicked designs to contribute to advancement of his holy and glorious design; as he did make the treason of Judas, the sentence of Pilate, the malice of the Jews, to contribute for the work of redemption.” That is precisely what God the Holy Ghost tells us in Psalm 76:10. — “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

Our great God, our heavenly Father, wisely and sovereignly uses his enemies and ours, contrary to their will, to do that and only that which will advance his cause and serve his purpose of grace for his elect (Psalm 57:2). —Don Fortner (1950-2020)

The Heaven of Heavens

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?” (1 Kings 8:27)

The term “heaven” is not just a general term for where the souls of the righteous go after death. The Bible actually speaks of the “third heaven,” the realm to which Paul was once temporarily “caught up into paradise” (2 Corinthians 12:4). The term is also applied to the realm of the atmosphere and to the realm of the stars (e.g., Genesis 1:14, 20). In fact, the Hebrew word *shamayim* is actually a plural noun, often rendered “heavens” as well as “heaven.”

The concept of “first heaven,” “second heaven,” and “third heaven” may also have another meaning, depending on context. For example, Peter speaks of “the heavens [which] were of old,” “the heavens...which are now,” and the “new heavens” that God has promised (2 Peter 3:5, 7, 13) in the ages to come. The phrase “heaven of heavens” actually occurs at least six times in the Old Testament.

Presumably, the “heaven of heavens” is where God now has His heavenly throne and to which, after His resurrection, Christ “ascended up far above all heavens” (Ephesians 4:10) to be seated at the right hand of the Father. It is beyond all the stars and galaxies and presumably has no end. It may be synonymous with the third heaven (the extra-biblical literature speaks of a “seventh heaven,” but this idea is not in the Bible).

Someday, however, the heavenly Jerusalem will come “down from God out of heaven” (Revelation 21:2), and “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it” (Revelation 22:3). The heaven of heavens will be on Earth (the new earth) and we also shall be there—with our Lord—forever. Therefore, sing praises “to him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens” (Psalm 68:33).

--Dr. Henry Morris, *Days of Praise*