

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

CHILDREN, FATHERS, AND YOUNG MEN

I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

I John 2:12-14

Traditional history tells us that the Apostle John lived to be about 95 years old. We believe that he wrote three epistles and the "Gospel of John", even though he did not attach his name to them, designating himself as their author. He also recorded his vision in the book of the Revelation of JESUS CHRIST, and identified himself as that one to whom this vision was given. "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*" (Rev 1:1-2)

Throughout all of John's writings the theme of CHRIST's pre-eminence and DEITY are clearly set forth. When men read any of his writings and come away with any view of CHRIST which is less than highly exalted, and seated on the throne of the MAJESTY on high. they exhibit the natural spiritual blindness which is common to all of the sons of Adam. Yet when the LORD is pleased to give a man eyes to see, he can then rejoice in the sweetness of John's testimony which centers in the work of the GOOD SHEPHERD as HE goes about to gather HIS sheep from those places where they have been scattered. "*I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*" (John 10:14-16)

His first epistle seems to be written to combat the egregious errors which crept in among the churches quite early on. The greatest of these false doctrines was a denial of the true nature of CHRIST as both MAN and GOD. Out of this error arose numerous other fallacies which denied the sinfulness of sin. Man's natural tendency is to excuse the waywardness of his flesh and to justify himself and his actions. As he does so he can easily minimize the necessity of the death of CHRIST as indispensable for the atonement of his sin.

Thus John exhorts his readers to flee from sin, as he sets forth the reason (see I John 1:8-10) and the remedy of this tendency. "*And he is the propitiation for our sins.*" (1John 2:2) The very fact that HE is the "EXPIATOR" (i.e.; the ONE who settles a debt) of our sin, both testifies to our sinfulness as well as HIS DEITY, since only HE who made man can cleanse him of that stain which is upon his character as well as his record.

He also clearly testifies that a man who has a disregard of the commandments of CHRIST proves that he is not a true follower of CHRIST. "*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*" (1John 2:4) "Keeping" HIS commandments is more than just the exercise of walking according to the precepts which CHRIST taught. Rather, the meaning of the word "keeping", is describing a high regard and consideration of the

preciousness of all that comes from the LORD. *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* (Mat 4:4)

Quite often the sons of GOD (due to their sinful flesh) find themselves acting contrary to those commandments, but if the SPIRIT of GOD dwells in them they cannot cast off the truth of GOD as being of no consequence but rather they desire to walk according to its precepts even as Paul describes in the seventh chapter of Romans. Those who are born of the SPIRIT will not "transgress the law", which means they will not count it as of no use and value. This "law" will not fail to bring them to repentance due to the tender heart which the LORD is pleased to give unto those whom HE loves. *"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."* (Jer 31:33)

To "commit" sin (as John describes) is to "transgress the law" (see I John 3:4), which is not simple disobedience or failing to hit the mark (which even the strongest of the sons of GOD do on a regular basis) but rather, it is to have a contempt for the truth which has fallen from the lips of HIM who is the PROPITIATION (i.e.; complete eradication) of the sin of HIS elect. A consideration of HIM who has died for sinners will cause those who are born from above to hate their own wicked way which was the occasion of HIS grief and suffering. The man who is unmoved by such a consideration has no reason to consider that the SPIRIT of GOD dwells in HIM. *"For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."* (Heb 12:3)

All of the sons of GOD share a "COMMON FAITH" (see Tit.1:4; Rom 1:12; 2Cor 4:13; 2Pet 1:1; Jude 1:3). Yet all of them do not share the same measure of faith nor even the same level of understanding. *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."* (Rom 12:3) *"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."* (Eph 4:7)

The LORD is pleased to construct HIS church, which is HIS body, of many diverse parts ("lively stones") and gifts which demonstrate both HIS wisdom and power to make one cohesive unit with ONE HEAD, as HE gives gifts unto men, not for their own benefit but for the strengthening of the whole body. *"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."* (Eph 4:13-16)

John testifies of his knowledge of this fact as he makes this exhortation to three different groups of people which are generally found wherever the sons of GOD are gathered together. He writes to "little children". This describes all of the saints of GOD, from the youngest to the oldest and from the one with the least understanding and faith to the one who is a seasoned veteran of much battle. The most basic comfort to the saints regardless of their station is found in being reminded that their sins are forgiven for CHRIST's sake, and that HE has sent the SPIRIT of HIS SON into their hearts crying "ABBA FATHER".

He writes to the "fathers"; "who have known HIM that is from the beginning". These are those saints who "are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb 5:14) To them belong "strong meat". Their consolation and ability to comfort the saints arises from a firm understanding that HE "inhabiteth eternity" and is a GOD who "is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." (Psa 115:3) They will affirm that HIS decrees are unaltered and unalterable. *"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."* (Mal 3:6)

Then he writes to the "young men" who are full of faith and the HOLY GHOST. They are known for their zeal in the way of GOD, being made "strong" by HIS power. They are able to exhort and convince the gainsayers as they "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 1:3) The body of CHRIST is comprised of all of these individual groups which John addresses and each one supplies the need for which they are gifted.