

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume III

Issue 14

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

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

SAINTHOOD

To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. 1 Corinthians 1:2

It is quite common to hear religious men and women talk about "saints" as if this title defines someone who has reached the pinnacle of "Christianity". Of course, the Roman Catholic Church has, for years, taught that only a relative few, exceptionally holy and devoted men and women, have ever reached this lofty perch. In fact, from time to time, they add someone to the list of those they have deemed worthy of the honor of being called a "saint", but even then, only after a lengthy process of judging their merit relative to others, upon which, they have bestowed this lofty designation in times past.

We may view this process with amusement or disdain but in reality the concept that there are different levels of being a Christian (i.e., follower of CHRIST), is quite a universal consideration among many. There is a widespread notion that it is possible to be a believer without a total commitment to CHRIST. Some define it as accepting HIM as SAVIOR but not as LORD. I have also heard this phenomenon described as a "carnal Christian". The implication is that a man may possess some basic level of salvation while not having a heart that delights in the things of CHRIST. Still others say that a man can be a believer but can "get filled with the HOLY GHOST" and become a "spirit-filled Christian" which is different from just being a plain Christian.

In the religious tradition in which I grew up in, salvation was presented as something a man just chose when he got ready. He could "ask JESUS into his heart" and automatically he became "saved". Nothing could ever overturn that which he had "allowed" GOD to do for him. His ticket to heaven was punched forever. This was proudly described as "once saved, always saved". It was (and is) quite common to see a multitude in this tradition, professing faith, without any manifestation of love for the things of CHRIST in them. They curse without remorse, drunkards continue their drunkenness, adulterers and fornicators are undeterred in their lust, gossip mongers and backstabbers all continue with business as usual after a brief period of euphoric reform. Sometimes they are described as "backsliders" and with a wink and a nod they are assured of a salvation based on their "decision for CHRIST." (see Mark 4:16,17)

Such a concept is entirely foreign to that which the scripture reveals. The LORD JESUS told Nicodemus that a man must be "born again" in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. Paul said, *'therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.'* (2 Cor 5:17) The work of regeneration is a universal work wrought by the HOLY SPIRIT in all of those whom HE calls to eternal salvation. A man is either "born again" or he is not. There is no middle ground. Either the SPIRIT has begun a work in us or we are yet in our sins.

Now we are quite certain that all of GOD's children, who have been brought out of darkness and into the light, and who have been given a revelation of the glorious redemption of JESUS

CHRIST, are the "saints" of GOD. The word "saint" literally means "holy one" or "one set apart". We have been sanctified by CHRIST and set free from the law of sin and death. So when the scripture mentions "saints" (62 times in the N.T.) it is not a reference to a class of "super" Christians but the name given to all of those whose sin debt is forever cancelled by CHRIST, who have been called by the gospel and indwelt by HIS SPIRIT. They have certain characteristics:

Saints are not perfect but are being perfected. *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended (i.e.; attained perfection): but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil 3:13-14).* We have not yet arrived at our final destination nor have we totally triumphed over this sinful flesh which still plagues us and seeks to bring us back under its dominion. But we are confident that *"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:" (Phil 1:6).* We are not yet what we shall be, but thank GOD we are not what we once were, either. (see I Cor.6:9-11)

Saints have a language all their own. *'the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'* (Rom. 8:26) The children of GOD can be prevented from many things, but they will always pray. *"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."* (Gal 4:6) A man whose life is not bathed in prayer does not have the SPIRIT of GOD dwelling in him.

Saints are compelled to believe and follow CHRIST. *"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."* (John 6:68) I am sure that each person who is a saint has chosen to follow CHRIST, but I am equally certain that each one is unable to choose to follow another. *'thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.'* (Ps. 110:3) The HOLY SPIRIT draws men to CHRIST and causes them to declare as Peter did, *'thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'* (Matt 16:16) Can the true children of GOD embrace another savior? Can they bow before another LORD? HE has bound us to HIMSELF with cords of love that cannot be broken.

mam