

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume III

Issue 48

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

FAITH IN FAITH

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Romans 4:5

Quite often, we hear some speak of saving faith as if the activity of faith on the part of man has the power to minister salvation unto him. In fact, this concept has been taught so openly and copiously for so long that many people assume that they play a major role in their own deliverance. I have heard salvation described as GOD doing HIS part in supplying the means of redemption and man doing "his part" by believing it. Nothing could be more erroneous than to consider that the justification of lost sinners is in any way dependent on them.

When I was growing up it was quite common to hear people stand up in a church meeting and "give their testimony" by recounting the moment when they believed. The teaching was quite prevalent that a person thus "believing" should never doubt it again, because after all, once a man believed; he was "saved" at that very moment and could never again be lost. Thus men were cajoled and plead with to "get right with GOD", "give their heart to the LORD", or "let the LORD into their heart". All of this could supposedly be accomplished by simply "believing" the gospel since GOD had done everything else. Thus, man was presented as a sovereign making a choice to allow the LORD to save him. When a man had made this momentous decision, from that time on he was encouraged to have "faith in his faith".

Now such a "gospel" sits well with religious men and righteous men but it is of no use to the man who finds himself in a lost and undone condition. He hears the preacher say believe, but he realizes in himself no ability to do so. He hears men talk of faith but it sounds like a foreign language to him because he has discovered himself to be a sinner incapable of believing anything else. He knows if he must bring anything to the LORD he is done for. But oh! when that same sinner hears that JESUS CHRIST has accomplished everything necessary to bring wicked men such as himself into the very presence of GOD, he finds himself strangely drawn to this SAVIOR. By a miracle of the gift of faith being bestowed upon him by GOD, he expects no other deliverance than that which is in CHRIST. In fact he cannot look away because the gaze of the SAVIOR, causes his own eyes to be glued to that blood stained cross on which HE hung and he beholds a beauty in HIM which he is unable to escape.

The publican who smote upon his breast and cried out for mercy was such a man. Now we do not read that the publican went away from the temple with a cheerful heart nor a happy countenance but we do read that he went down to his house justified. The LORD JESUS asked HIS disciples if they would also go away when HE beheld the multitudes departing, but Peter said "*Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*" (John 6:68-69) Yet Peter was in for some tough times ahead as he was "sifted as wheat" denying the LORD and being plunged in the blackness of despair, he had little consolation then in all his proud boasts of following the LORD to the death. You might say his "faith in his faith" failed him.

The scripture says "their faith is counted for righteousness", when speaking of true believers. Their "faith" in all cases is not the amount or degree in which they were able to have confidence in what they believed. Rather the "object" of their confidence is that which is "counted" as their righteousness. Simply put that which is the "righteousness" of the LORD's elect is the LORD JESUS CHRIST himself. *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."* (1 Cor 1:30) The true believer is not necessarily confident in his ability to believe but he is certain of the suitability of the one in whom he believes. Paul said *"for I know WHOM I have believed."* (2 Tim 1:12) and testified that he believed HIM able to keep him to the very end. When the LORD said, to the woman with the issue of blood who touched the hem of HIS garment, *"Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole"* (Matt 9:22) she was comforted by the ONE she believed in rather than the fact that she had believed. The same is true of Bartimaeus, the lepers, and all of those who the LORD was pleased to heal.

This understanding is vital for a proper understanding of how the true believer is to be assured of his salvation before the LORD. It is a common practice among those who have "faith in their faith" to be assured by being reminded that they have believed, made a decision for CHRIST, or joined the church. In fact, I well remember being "assured" by such well meaning folks when I was being convinced of my sinful condition and lost estate. I was told that since I "joined the church" when I was ten, then everything was alright between me and the LORD. But such is no consolation to the true seeker of CHRIST. He knows himself to be false and full of deceit, able to be deceived and unable to present anything of value to the LORD. He can find no solace in the soothing words of men nor can he find comfort in formulas for "believing". But as the LORD is pleased to give him a clear view of the glory which surrounds the REDEEMER of sinners, he finds sweet solace and assurance in the sufficiency of this SAVIOR.

A true believer might find himself from time to time with little comfort as to his own election, but he is never without the confidence that JESUS CHRIST is the only REDEEMER. As he hears the gospel, his heart is encouraged. When the SAVIOR is exalted he is thrilled. He may walk in a measure of darkness but he knows who is the LIGHT. *"And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."* (Rom. 4:21-22)

mam