

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

THAT OLD TIME RELIGION

And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. Acts 11:26

I heard a song on the radio just the other day which said, "I'd rather be an old time Christian, than anything I know." It reminded me of another song which seems to be popular from time to time among many which says, "Gimme' that old time religion, gimme' that old time religion, gimme' that old time religion, it's good enough for me". Most people pat their foot and sing along as their mind travels back to some pleasant memory of childhood. Maybe they remember some all day meeting or dinner on the grounds or some such fond reminiscence. Such recollections may be precious but are generally only an exercise of the flesh. Man's religious mind can be easily stirred by such nostalgic thoughts and his desires for "old time religion" most often are fulfilled by recreating such exercises or revisiting the sites where such memories were given birth. The observance of holidays such as Easter or Christmas are usually great occasions for such dreams to be relived as folks put on their fancy clothes and gather for "sunrise services" and other special meetings designed to evoke fond musings.

Here in the south, (the Bible belt if you will) religion of one sort or another has always played a big part in people's lives. Why almost everybody, in past generations, was raised to go to church on Sunday: especially Easter Sunday. It is such a warm tradition that causes the minds of the more mature folk to be drawn back to a simpler place and time. Sadly, many confuse such traditions and memories with the reality of following CHRIST. When they desire "old time religion" they only desire to go back a certain number of years. Some are satisfied with the forties, some the nineteenth century, or some who really desire to go back may define "old time" as coming from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. But in reality the basis for the faith once delivered to the saints must go back two thousand years.

The disciples (i.e.; followers) of JESUS CHRIST were first called Christians at a place called Antioch which was a city of Galatia in what is now the country of Turkey. The term Christian literally means "like CHRIST" or "follower of CHRIST". The early believers in Antioch were given this name by those who were unbelievers. It seems that their love and devotion to the teachings of CHRIST were so plainly evident that even those who had no faith easily recognized those who were the followers of CHRIST. Things have changed quite drastically in two thousand years. The heretical doctrine of decisional regeneration has filled up "churches" with great numbers of religious folks who cannot be distinguished from the world unless they are wearing a tee shirt with some catchy "gospel slogan" on it or they put a bumper sticker on their car advertising that they are "Christians". (Something is wrong with this picture!) These "churches" compete with one another for members with enticing programs and entertaining "worship" services. Not to mention bigger and more elaborate buildings, classrooms, and buses and vans equipped to deliver the "faithful" to this fun destination or that. Nowhere in all of the scripture can we discover anywhere that the early followers of CHRIST ever engaged in any such campaign to enlist or entice people to join up with them or that they needed some calendar of activities to keep them "active". The scripture does say *"the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*(Acts 2:47)

Gimme that old time religion. The LORD is quite able to call HIS own unto HIMSELF in HIS own time, as HE sends men into the world to preach the gospel of the glory of the blessed GOD. (see I Tim.1:11, Rom.10:14,15)

That true "old time religion" is one which:

Is based on the simplicity of the teachings of JESUS CHRIST.

The Bible as we know it was not completed until the death of the apostle John who wrote the last book in it which is the Revelation of JESUS CHRIST. Then centuries passed before it was readily available to the common man. Yet the church of GOD flourished because that which the saints of GOD must be taught in order to be the followers of JESUS CHRIST cannot be communicated to them by men but only by the HOLY GHOST who is our TEACHER and does not speak of HIMSELF but speaks plainly of CHRIST. The LORD has blessed us in placing within our hands the completed canon of scripture but apart from the supernatural work of the SPIRIT in opening up our understanding, it may as well be written in a foreign language. But HE is faithful to lead us into all truth. HE said *"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* (John 8:32) Sunday schools and study courses have produced those who can quote the scriptures but yet know nothing of the WORD of GOD. (see John 5:39-42)

Produces the likeness of CHRIST in those whom HE calls.

The scripture plainly says *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son."* (Romans 8:29) GOD is not attempting to bring this to pass but is accomplishing exactly what HE said HE would do. The decisional regenerationists have produced a group of folks who give no evidence of this work in them, so they have come up with a description for them; designating them "carnal Christians". The scripture knows nothing of this. (see Mat.7:21) When the LORD saves a man HE makes him a new creature, old things are passed away, all is become new.

Gives HIS children a love one for the other and a desire to gather together to worship HIM.

The "carnal Christian" can be satisfied with occasionally assembling with the "saints". The true sons of GOD, however, feel themselves in great need of such gathering. This is caused by a two fold motivation: The love of the brethren (see I John 3:14) and the need to be fed and nurtured in the most holy faith.(see Jude 1:20; Eph.4:16; Col.2:19; I Cor.12:1-30) Those who have been taught of GOD know themselves to be in need of that which only the Body of CHRIST can supply. *"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."* (Eph 1:22-23)

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