

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

NATURAL THEOLOGY

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Proverbs 16:25

Almost any person you meet has some opinion about who he thinks god is and what he is like. Some of those ideas stem from instruction that they may have received in times past. The amazing thing, though, is that those who have had little or no instruction on spiritual matters still share fairly common thoughts about these matters with most people who have been supposedly instructed in them. Many religions in the earth share these basic common ideas. The average, so called Christian, church spends little time seeking to know who the true and living GOD is and basically relies on this “common” knowledge as a point of reference. The only time most preachers even mention “theology”(i.e.; the study of GOD.) is to make fun of it and describe it as a pointless use of time. They shun the teaching of “theology” in the pulpit, preferring to center their thoughts on experiences and entertainment. Is it any wonder that the average nominal Christian is functionally ignorant of who the true and living GOD is?

There are a few people in the earth who deny the very existence of GOD, but there are actually fewer of them than even those who make this profession will admit. By and large men are very comfortable with the god that they know, and he is very handy to have around when things aren't going well and he is a very convenient explanation for things they don't understand. (For example, most all contracts contain the clause, “acts of GOD”.) Even most so called atheists can be found seeking his help in times of great turmoil and trouble. I think there is a theology which men have by nature that is shared by them all but falls short of a true understanding of who HE is, because it is not possible for man in his fleshly mind to comprehend nor fully grasp the ONE who rules the heavens.

Men think they can find GOD. Man's natural hunger for religion bears this out. It is quite common for men to assume that they can discover GOD in the same way they can discover any thing else. But the scriptures say, “*Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior.*” (Isa 45:15) HE is the ONE “*Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.*” (1Tim. 6:16) Unless the LORD is pleased to reveal HIMSELF to men they cannot see HIM as HE is, nor can they know HIS way. The Pharisees thought that they could understand and know the way of GOD by studying the Bible, but the LORD said, “*Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*” (John 5:39-40) Men will gladly embrace the god of their choosing and imagination but unless the LORD of GLORY is pleased to reveal HIMSELF men will perish in their ignorance and rebellion. So instead of men finding GOD, they need for HIM to find them, after all, HE is not the one who is lost.

Men think that GOD is in partial control of the world. The natural theology of men requires them to believe that GOD intervenes in the affairs of the world from time to time but largely lets it run upon a natural course over which HE can exercise some control as long as man prays and asks HIM to. Yet HE testifies, “*I am the LORD, and there is none else, there*

is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.” (Isa 45:5-7) “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa 46:10) Nothing transpires in the universe which is not according to HIS predestinated purpose. HE is an absolute GOD from whose presence the heavens and earth shall flee away.

Men think that GOD will have respect unto their good deeds. However the scripture says, *“They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Rom 3:12) Many “nominal Christians” will pay lip service to believing this scripture but then turn around and glory in their “performances” before GOD as they measure their supposed progressive sanctification. GOD has respect unto perfect righteousness, which can be found in JESUS CHRIST alone. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” (1Cor.1:30-31) Apart from the righteousness which HE has been pleased to impute to us and that wherein HE works in us to perform we are still miserable wretches without one shred of righteousness before GOD. HE is our righteousness in every respect.*

Men think that GOD has respect unto their free will. I grow so weary of hearing “parrot preachers” saying “GOD will never violate your free will” as if man’s will is free in the first place. The man who thinks he can choose to follow GOD whenever he gets ready is ignorant of his own wicked heart and still abides in the darkness into which he is born by nature. Apart from GOD in sovereign mercy breaking down the rebellious heart of man and changing his will, that man will continue to choose sin and take delight in it. Man’s will is not free but is in bondage to sin and darkness. Thank GOD that HE conquers the will of HIS elect. *“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” (Psa 110:3)*

Men think that GOD must show mercy to all men on the same basis. It is quite common to hear preaching which purports that the gospel is “offered” to all men. Yet the scripture indicates that mercy is the sovereign prerogative of GOD. *“For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” (Rom 9:15-16) Paul knew the rebellious nature of the natural mind of man when he penned the ninth chapter of Romans. He knew that when he mentioned the fact that GOD loved Jacob and hated Esau that natural men would rise up in anger. When one dares to preach on the doctrine of GOD’s unconditional election he can be sure that mans sinful nature will cause him to rebel against it. (see Rom.9:14,20; Eph.1;4-6) Rather than looking at the gospel as an “offer” of grace, I think that it is more accurate to describe the gospel as GOD’s operation of grace wherein HE is calling unworthy sinners to HIMSELF. HE does not leave this calling to chance nor does HE delegate it to men, rather HE applies it HIMSELF. “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. “ (John 6:44) “Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” (2Tim. 1:9)*

Men think the gospel is for everybody. The gospel is a message for sinners. They are the only ones who will find any comfort in its glorious message. The righteous man doesn’t need it. The religious man finds it beneath him. When a man has been brought by the grace of GOD to see himself as the old publican who would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast saying *“GOD be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13)* then and only then will the gospel appear to him as the very savor of life. *“God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2Th 2:13-14)*