

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

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. John 4:23-24

The woman at the well of Sychar, was quite satisfied with the religious tradition in which she grew up, as is evidenced by the question she posed to the LORD. Even when it had been revealed unto her that HE was a prophet, (see v.19) her pious flesh sought to engage HIM in religious arguments built upon the traditions in which she was steeped. She was quite unprepared for HIS answer. When GOD is pleased to reveal HIS truth unto men it will always shut the mouth of the gainsayer and make silent the arguments of fools. Men may banter about with their self taught doctrines that make them appear wise in their own eyes, but when HE who is TRUTH speaks unto them they shall leave the waterpots that they brought and return saying *“Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”* (John 4:29)

All of us find ourselves mired in traditions of one type or other at various junctures in our lives. All tradition is not bad. Paul even said, *“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”* (2Thes 2:15) So there are good traditions which should be held onto but they are those traditions we have been taught by the word of GOD and not those into which we are born or have naturally received. *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.”* (1Pet 1:18)

The LORD told this Samaritan woman that the true worship of GOD was not carried out according to some longstanding custom or accepted ritual. Rather, it could only be manifested as the LORD in HIS grace and mercy saw fit to seek out a people and to meet with them in power and truth. The word used for “spirit” here is “pneuma” which literally means breath or the very substance of life. It is noteworthy that this is the same word the LORD used in speaking to Nicodemus when HE said, *“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”* (John 3:8) Apart from the new birth wrought in a man by the SPIRIT of GOD, there can not possibly exist any true worship. When the LORD is pleased to make a man into a new creature then, there begins to beat in his bosom a heart that delights in this worship. It manifests itself in the declaration which again dropped from the pen of the apostle Paul, *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”* (Gal 6:14)

The elect sons of GOD are the only true worshippers of GOD, all others shall continue on in their religion and learned piety, often with great devotion and dedication but devoid of the one characteristic which defines true worship, the indwelling power of the HOLY GHOST. Now some may say but what about “truth”? We should most assuredly not want to neglect truth but we find that HE who is the SPIRIT leads HIS sons into “truth” (see John 16:13). In

fact the ONE to whom the SPIRIT always bears witness is THE TRUTH. A man cannot be born into this “tradition” of worship by natural birth, neither can its practices be handed down from one generation to the other as the Jews thought. It cannot be taught in any school regardless of the abilities of the teacher or the pupils. Neither can it be perpetuated by the institutions of religion regardless of how orthodox they may appear or even in reality be.

The sons of GOD need to be reminded of this fact from time to time lest we grow too fond of our “religious practices” and tests of orthodoxy. Even those who see the errors of denominationalism can sometimes become mired in trying to build institutions which will carry on certain rules of decorum and customs as if these things could somehow define true worship. Our definitions of true worship must always come from that which is revealed in the word of GOD by the HOLY GHOST to every generation. Spiritual worship will be the same in every age, even though various generations are different. If the early Christians happened upon one of our meetings (regardless of where) I am sure they would find many oddities in our practices compared to their own, yet the essence of our worship would be no different than theirs if we are both led of the same SPIRIT.

Some believe that a certain type of singing is “spiritual”, while others have a completely different notion or musical taste. Both may use the “scripture” to bolster their position; equally sure of their orthodoxy. Some are convinced that the singing of only one or two songs is more spiritual than those who think more is better. Some feel the chanting of the Psalms quietly is the mark of spiritual worship while yet others believe loud exuberance of hymns and choruses fit the bill. Some feel the worship of the LORD is carried out best when there is a prescribed program that is followed while others believe in a more spontaneous form of meeting. The fact is that none of these things have any thing to do with “spiritual worship” which can be carried on in the midst of falling bombs during wartime or in the quietude of the stillest night. It is not defined by the setting in which it takes place. David said *“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing before You, O Jehovah, my Rock and my Redeemer.”* (Psa 19:14) Our practices and accepted rituals (perish the thought for some of us) may never be the same from congregation to congregation, but the true worship of the sons of GOD is the same in all of them.

Spiritual worship is not concerned with rituals or the lack thereof. It is not concerned with locations, times and seasons, will worship, nor shows of piety. It is not concerned with meat and drink nor any of the things which would be of concern to the flesh, such as comforts and convenience. (see Tit.3:9; Jas.1:26; Col.2:18-23; II Tim.3:1-8; Gal.4:9-10; I Tim.6:8; Mk.1:35)

Spiritual worship is concerned with magnifying the LORD JESUS CHRIST. It confesses, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* (Mat 16:16) Those who are true worshippers of CHRIST desire to worship HIM in a way that is pleasing unto HIM and in accordance with the word of GOD. They are open to instruction and do not esteem their way to be correct just because they prefer certain things or they have traditionally held to certain practices. They desire the proclamation of the truth of GOD regardless of how it may cause them discomfort or vex their flesh. They know that in their flesh dwelleth no good thing and lament the weakness thereof. They cannot find any sort of pleasure in the exaltation of man but have their chief delight in the proclamation of JESUS CHRIST as LORD. *“And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever.”* (Luke 1:46-55)