

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume IV

Issue 38

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

OH SAY CAN YOU SEE ?

For we walk by faith, not by sight. II Corinthians 5:7

To be without sight is not necessarily to be blind, however to be without hope is. Hebrews 11:1 tells us *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* One may possess much of this world’s goods and be content and happy in the prospect of enjoying them for a long while, but if such an individual has no hope beyond the realm wherein those goods are usable then that man may as well be blind: in fact the scripture says that he most certainly is. (see Luke 12:16-21)

To say that we live in an age of affluence would be an understatement. There has probably never been a society that has enjoyed the broad based material wealth that ours has for the last one hundred years and most especially the last fifty. Even the poor in our society would be considered wealthy by the standards of much of the world. During the time that the New Testament was written, it was quite common for the average person to only own the clothes upon their backs and enough food to make it through the day. Now the standard of poverty would be whether or not one owns more than one TV or has a cell phone with a camera.

Along with an abundance of material goods our society is also glutted with religion, especially that which calls itself Christianity. It is practically impossible for one to go five miles without seeing a meeting house. There are churches of every type imaginable from those in which you could hear a pin drop in the midst of their “worship service” to those where it is commonplace to experience frenzied activity, hear a cacophony of babbling tongues, and see folks stacked like cordwood who have been “slain in the spirit”. If there has ever been an society which characterizes the church at Laodicea, this is it. *“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.”* (Rev 3:17-18) Most church folks are proud to be a member wherever it is that they attend. Keeping people happy and involved has become a science all its own. Men go off to this or that school or seminary to learn the latest techniques for “sheep-herding”. And it seems everyone loves to have it so especially if you remember their birthday.

Now it is easy to look at the ridiculousness of the “religious world” and then look at ourselves and have basically the same feeling of satisfaction that they do; thinking that we have somehow arrived at a greater spiritual plateau than all those folks who are caught up in such foolishness. After all we actually believe the Bible don’t we and we have a proper doctrinal understanding, don’t we? We really understand spiritual worship, don’t we and we would never fall into practicing such charismatic tomfoolery would we? Don’t we seek to follow the New Testament pattern. Actually we need to be reminded daily of Paul’s statement, *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: 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. 3:12-14)

We cannot be those who look at ourselves compared to others for we have a higher standard to which we must look. *“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” (2Cor. 10:12)* The ONE to whom we look is the ONE who is all of our righteousness, all of our hope, and all of our expectation. We have no confidence in this flesh or its understanding but our confidence is in HIM. *“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)* Paul directed the natural tendency of man to boast in something here, *“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. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” (Gal 6:14-15)* The end of all human pride is found in the revelation of JESUS CHRIST as our REDEEMER and MEDIATOR. *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2Cor. 4:6)* We are not blind; yet we walk not by the sight of these mortal eyes but ever looking through the eyes of faith we have hope which is an anchor for the soul. Some examples of walking by sight instead of faith are:

Being concerned with religious pedigrees. Everyone of GOD’s children should seek to be a part of a church that is as typically close to New Testament practice and order as possible, but we must never place our confidence in the traditions and heritage of that church to which we belong. Because the church to which we belong can trace its roots back hundreds and even thousands of years with unbroken succession is of little value since the only roots that are important are those by which we are firmly attached to JESUS CHRIST. *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” (Col 2:6-8)*

Building our confidence on confessions of faith written by others. Faith in JESUS CHRIST can be defined as a reception of that truth which is revealed in the holy scriptures. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom 10:17)* We believe the record of the scriptures concerning the LORD JESUS CHRIST. *“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” (1John 5:11)* This faith is the gift of GOD to HIS elect sons and it is not given to them by proxy or through the efforts of men. While we may learn what the tenets of this faith are though the means of mans teaching, the actual faith to believe must be applied directly by the SPIRIT of GOD who causes this faith to take root in our heart and mind. Therefore the apostle said, *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” (1Pet. 3:15)*

Having confidence in any outward conduct of our own. It is certainly true that when the LORD JESUS makes us new creatures HE causes old things to pass away and all things to become new. However any man who takes any comfort in any work performed in this body is walking by sight rather than faith. Faith is that which continually confesses that in our flesh dwells no good thing. All of our righteousness is in CHRIST both as to that which is performed for us and imputed to us and that which is performed in us by the working of HIS SPIRIT. This sinful nature with which we are born will continually try to make us satisfied with that which can be seen, whether it be our faithfulness to read the scriptures, pray, and attend unto sound teaching, avoid the outward wickedness to which others fall prey, or to esteem ourselves worthy of mercy in any sense. *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” (Tit 3:5)*