

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

AN AXE LAID TO THE ROOT OF HUMAN GLORY

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

Mankind considers religion and morality as two of the proudest accomplishments of humanity. Man assumes that he has both the right and the ability to have a dialog with god whenever he decides to and in whatever manner he desires to approach him in. If men desire to speak with god then they just pray in some fashion or other. After all they feel like the man upstairs has been just waiting for some time on them to stop by for a visit. Religious gurus and "pastors" assure men that it is totally within their power to come to god any time they get ready. Countless books and seminars teach men how to pray, when to pray, and how to recognize the power of prayer. Prayer groups and chain letters maximize its great potential. There are self proclaimed experts on the subject who teach that prayer thus has a life of its own. That it is a golden battering ram that a man can wield to knock down the gates of heaven and get whatever their little heart desires.

The unshakable idea that they are going to be rewarded for their "good" behavior seems to be ingrained in the psyche of men. (see Mat.7:22) It is only logical (they assume) that god should reward their morality, deeds of religion, and service to their fellow man with some blessing in this life and some even feel like this will carry over into some existence beyond this realm in which they live at the present time. All of man's religion is built on this principle.

Most religions teach that all men have an eternal soul which must live on somewhere. You can seldom go to a funeral of any type where the "hereafter" is not spoken of and families and friends comforted by the assurances from the "clergy" that their loved one has gone on to their reward, most often a better place. Men are naturally quite convinced that there is something they can do to win god's favor in this life and to enjoy a blissful existence forever. The lazier ones among the crowd just assume everything will work out okay and they'll soon be enjoying their favorite pastimes forever since they have their own personal arrangement with god.

Nicodemus, a ruler among the Jews, came to the LORD JESUS with the intention of making an inquiry about entering the kingdom of GOD.(see John 3:2) The rich young ruler asked HIM "*what shall I do to inherit eternal life*". (see Luke 18:18) HIS answer to both of them deflated their hopes of entering HIS kingdom by the ability of the flesh. HE told Nicodemus that a man must be born again by a power totally outside of his own. This was not a power that Nicodemus or any other man possessed. HE told the rich young ruler to sell all that he had, thus revealing to him his own inability to comply with the perfection of GOD.

Ninety eight per cent of all of the books in so called "christian" bookstores are essentially worthless because they are written with the premise that man has within himself the ability to come to the LORD and to please HIM and earn HIS favor and blessing. Most of these books are written for the purpose of stirring men up to action and activity in the name of the LORD. To say that they are "man-centered" would be an understatement. If you want to find an easy

one, two, three step method for getting crowds, building “churches”, understanding the necessary psychology of dealing with different age groups and ethnicity, how to balance your life, have a happy marriage, or any number of religious activities which seem to be a good idea then the shelves are full. All of them are instruction manuals about “pleasing god” and “doing good deeds” both of which men are assured they can do.

The message that Paul preached (which is the true gospel) takes away all hope that any man may ever entertain that he could please GOD through some deed of the flesh. He taught that the LORD chose some upon which HE would bestow the gift of eternal life, (based not on any merit or good seen in them but) simply because of HIS free choice and grace. (see Rom.9:11-24) The natural man hates the doctrine of unconditional election because it totally strips away any place that a man might find to glory in before almighty GOD. When GOD is pleased to show a man that all men without exception are worthy of destruction and that the only reason that any of them are rescued from it, is the sovereign mercy of GOD, then that man’s mouth will be shut before GOD and all glorying in the flesh will cease. The only difference between the man who perishes and the man who is given eternal life is the distinguishing grace of GOD. As Paul said, *“lest any man should boast”*.

Religion, morality, and boasting go hand in hand, they are peas in a pod. It is impossible for men to consider the value of their religion and good deeds without taking some measure of pride in them, even some credit for reaching a lofty plateau in contrast to others. Just like the Pharisee who *“stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”* (Luke 18:11-12) He honestly assessed himself in this fashion just as many do today, some who even claim to believe in salvation by grace. Most religious and moral men are sure that they are more acceptable in the sight of GOD than those who are “less” religious and moral such as this publican (i.e.; government tax collector, an IRS agent, if you will) which the Pharisee compared himself to. There is no difference between the man who considers that he can earn GOD’s favor and merit blessings in this life by his good deeds and religious faithfulness and the one who is persuaded that he can earn eternal glory by the same method. (see Gal.2:16-21; 3:1-3; 4:4-11)

All moralists and religious men (of whatever type) consider that by their observances and lawkeeping that they can indeed curry favor with GOD. *“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”* (Rom 3:19) Yet when men are awakened (by grace) to see the true nature of their own heart and the perfections of GOD and HIS law, they will truly despair of ever pleasing HIM by any deed of the flesh and abandon all hope of merit based on human endeavor.

The gift of GOD, salvation by HIS grace, is the absolute end of all glorying in the flesh for those made aware of their need of such a gift. The average religionist figures that they can operate “in faith” and “of faith” by their own effort. Yet that faith which is mentioned here is the gift of GOD as a result of HIS grace. It is bestowed by HIS hand according to HIS sovereign mercy This faith spoken of here, is purely objective, it is the faith of CHRIST. Just as Abraham “believed GOD” and was justified so are the sons of GOD. Yet we are not “justified” by our act of faith but by the object of faith which is JESUS CHRIST. We have been given eyes to see that HE alone is our righteousness before a holy GOD. HE is our sanctification. HE has obeyed the law for us. HE has purchased eternal redemption and temporal blessings for us. (see Eph.1:3) We believe and are sure that HE is the CHRIST the SON of the living GOD. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to us, but our FATHER which is in heaven. (see Mat.16:16,17) This gift of faith is the revelation to men of the absolute sufficiency of JESUS CHRIST to meet all of their needs and heal all of their diseases. HE is our MEDIATOR, our PHYSICIAN, our HELP in time of trouble, our PROPHET, our PRIEST, and our KING. *“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)