

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

GOING IN FOR A CHECK UP

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

2 Corinthians 13:5

Just like a lot of other people who have an email address I receive a multitude of emails which I do not ask for. Many of them are sent by well meaning individuals who think it is the most novel of things to pass on emails that they have received in the same fashion. Some of them are even profitable but many are of the "chain letter" variety demanding that they be sent to ten other individuals so that the world might be blanketed with some prayer request or heart wrenching tale of dubious origin and authenticity. Few people seem to take the time to verify the facts purported in these epistles, just preferring to send them on as if they must be true or afraid that some evil spell will be put upon them for breaking the chain.

Patriotic messages of this type abound. There is nothing in the world wrong with a measure of patriotism as long as those who claim to be the sons of GOD do not forget in which country their true citizenship lies. (see Heb.11:13-16) There is a grave error purported however when one confuses patriotism with godliness and godliness with patriotism. If a man is a great patriot it does not mean that he is a child of GOD any more than, if he is not considered by the mainstream to be a patriot, does it mean that he is not a child of GOD. There is no connection between the two.

What some consider to be patriotism is a blind allegiance to the country and government of one's nativity. The children of GOD are not to blindly follow anything. We are to walk circumspectly and to judge all things.(see I Cor.2:15; Eph.5:15) Even the LORD JESUS CHRIST never taught HIS disciples to blindly follow HIM but HE counseled them to look at the things which HE was doing and teaching. HE said HE would send HIS SPIRIT to dwell with them and to lead them into all truth. HE said, "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" (John 8:32)

I got an email the other day which was a compilation of the results of a survey taken in which Americans were asked if they believe in GOD, if faith was important, and if they believe in the power of prayer. Overwhelmingly they said they did to the tune of 85 percent. That in itself came as no great surprise since that question could be asked world wide with the same if not greater results. However those taking this survey were trying to say that this proves that America is a Christian nation with Christian values and that our nation was founded on these principles. Whether or not that is true is up for debate but that such a survey proves it is not.

I am neither dismayed nor encouraged by the results of this survey because as James said, "*Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.*" (Jam 2:19) It is no sign of Christianity to believe in a god, the Muslims believe in one god. They pray as do practically all religions in the earth. Many so called Christians say they believe in the power of prayer but yet they deny the power of the ONE who they supposedly call upon in those prayers. (see II Tim.3:5) Prayer for the true sons of GOD is not enhanced by prayer chains, vain repetitions, or the prayers of clergymen, healers, and prophets. The

only comfort for the true sons of GOD in the place of prayer is that the true and living GOD is in the midst of those prayers. (see Rom.8:26) We do not believe in the power of prayer but in the ONE who moves HIS people to pray.

Because nominal Christianity has been the mainstream religion in America for over 250 years many people assume that most Americans are Christians. It is most especially true that here in the south there is an even greater assumption that those who belong to "fundamental" denominations which emphasize a "decision for CHRIST" are indeed true sons of GOD. The denomination which I grew up in equates being "born again" with making a profession of faith, walking down a church aisle, joining the church, or being baptized in water. It is almost sacrilegious to call into question anyone's conversion since most are convinced that it is in the power of men to become the sons of GOD by an act of their free will. If a man has ever "asked Jesus into his heart" then he must be forever saved because salvation is equated with the man's decision rather than GOD's. Even among those who have a little more sound doctrinal understanding; the conversion of men is often assumed to be true because men continue to operate in a quasi-religious state making an outward attempt to follow the precepts of CHRIST.

On the other hand there is no shortage of "regeneration" judges who have many and varied tests they use to determine who they think is "regenerated" and who is not. Their tests usually consist of determining if someone lines up with their own doctrinal views in which case they may give someone a suspicious benefit of the doubt. They are quick to pronounce anathema upon all who would dare to question their infallible systems of "regeneration" detection. Usually these "detectors" group themselves into little cliques or mutual admiration societies (also known as preacher games) from which to view the world from afar.

I find very little evidence in the scriptures that we are to be seeking to determine the "regeneration status" of others but I find quite a bit of support for the concept of self examination. None of GOD's children should ever assume that they are the sons of GOD or take for granted their status as one of HIS elect children. Paul says, "*Examine yourselves*":

Whether you be in the faith. The faith of GOD's elect is not something they have so much as it is something they are "in". This is not temporary nor passing but is something they "continue in" (see Acts 14:22). They "stand fast" in it(see I Cor.16:13) unmoved by outward or inward influences. As Peter testified, "*LORD thou hast the words of eternal life.*" They are "rooted and established" in it, (see Col.2:7) not easily swayed by every wind of doctrine. (see Eph.4:14) They are "steadfast" in it, even in the face of the devil." (see I Pet.5:8-9)

Prove or test yourself. One must never assume that he is a child of GOD because of past experiences. HE is a very present help in time of trouble. The elect must continually document their standing before the LORD knowing that a citizen of that holy nation must possess the credentials necessary to prove his citizenship. (see Rom.12:2) "*But let every man prove his own work.*" (Gal 6:4) "*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*" (Gal 4:6)

Knowing what the truth is. GOD does not leave HIS children in darkness. The elect of GOD are not those who are "*ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth*" (II Tim.3:7) HIS sheep hear HIS voice and follow HIM. Our self examination is not on the basis of someone else's ideas of what the truth is but upon that truth which HE has shown us concerning HIMSELF in the scriptures. (see II Cor.3:18; John 16:13; 14:6)

JESUS CHRIST is in you. "*To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" (Col 1:27) HE has now given to HIS elect which are born again a "living hope". The OT saints could never see the glory of that which is plainly revealed to the sons of GOD in the present time. JESUS CHRIST himself is the believer's hope and expectation. They wait for no other to come for they have seen HIM and are satisfied with HIS work and person. HE "*hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*" (1Pet. 1:3)