

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

IT'S CHRIST

Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Colossians 3:11

During the campaign of our illustrious former President, Bill Clinton, someone came up with this campaign slogan "It's the economy, stupid". Now whether or not they were stupid I will leave to others kinder than I to determine. The fact is that they decided there was one central issue upon which their whole campaign would be built. This did not mean that there were not many other issues that could be discussed but they felt that there was one issue which transcended all others. We are not particularly interested in presidential politics, especially that of one who brought such shame and reproach upon the office, but we are reminded by their focus that there is really only one major issue when the gospel is preached. It's CHRIST.

A preacher can be wrong about many other issues without totally missing the truth, but if a man misses the centrality of CHRIST in the gospel, he has missed the gospel no matter what else he may be right about.

Some center their teaching on the blessings that men may or may not receive by their "participation" with GOD. They often promote physical and mental healing, formulas for happy marriages and life in general, financial windfalls and practical monetary advice. No benefit for men goes unnoticed and seldom any opportunities for self enrichment on the part of the "prophets" and "teachers". But some just speak about the normal blessings of everyday life which they say can be enjoyed to a greater or lesser degree based on a person's relative obedience to GOD's commands. These show that not only have they missed the center of the Gospel but they have missed the gospel entirely.

Still others shift their focus to the perpetuation of religious orders and traditions which are faithfully handed down from one generation to the next; completely intact in every detail, assuming that by preserving such customs, an adherence to gospel truth can thus be insured in the future. Some focus on the gift of "preaching" as if it was the hinge pin upon which all of the truth of GOD must turn, even sometimes denying that a person could "hear" the gospel through the lips of one not particularly set aside for this task by some ceremony or human recognition. Or they make "priests" out of those who are mere heralds of truth.

Then there are those who delight in certain "tests" which prove whether or not a person is a true disciple, such as water baptism, the length of one's hair, headcoverings for women, whether or not a person is a "Calvinist", etc. In fact some even become enamored with doctrines which may be true enough but they promote the form of the doctrine rather than the ONE who is the SUBSTANCE of the doctrine. It does not matter how straight one may seem to be in dotting all of his theological I's and crossing all of the T's of his eschatology, if the crux of all of his preaching or conversation is not JESUS CHRIST and HIM crucified, then regardless of what else he may be doing, he is merely shadow boxing. (see I Cor.9:26)

Paul continually preached one message, and HIS message was CHRIST. When he taught about the Christian's relationship to the law, his message was CHRIST. When he taught about the believer's place among the saints of GOD in the local church, his message was CHRIST. If he taught on marriage, his message was CHRIST. If he taught on giving, his message was CHRIST. If he taught on the LORD's supper or baptism, his message was CHRIST. If he taught on walking in the SPIRIT and not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, his message was CHRIST. If he taught about putting on the whole armor of GOD, his message was CHRIST. If he taught about the hope of the resurrection, his message was CHRIST.

If CHRIST is the center, sum, and substance of the gospel then it behooves us not only to be sure that we preach CHRIST, but that the CHRIST which we preach is the ONE of whom the scriptures bear record. *"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."* (1John 5:11) So who is this CHRIST?

HE is the SAVIOR of sinners. *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* (Rom 5:8) HE came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. HE is not the SAVIOR of those who have some form of righteousness which they can lay claim to. HE is not the SAVIOR of the moral majority, good citizens, or those who help themselves.

HE is ONE in whom all truth is found. *"In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."* (Col 2:3) HE is not just "true" but truth is wrapped up in HIM. If a man has seen the SON he has seen the FATHER, there is no further revelation nor mystery which is not in and of HIM.

HE is the ONE who came into the world for a particular purpose. *"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."* (Mat 1:21) HE determined to save HIS people before the foundation of the world and manifested HIS resolve when HE fulfilled HIS purpose at Calvary and the empty tomb.

HE is mighty to save. *"But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."* (Heb 7:24-25) *"And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me."* (Isa 63:5) HE is not trying to save all and failing but HE is mighty to save everyone HE has determined to save.

HE is utterly triumphant. *"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."* (Isa 53:11) *"And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."* (Col 2:15) To the victor belong the spoils and HE is pleased with the results of HIS labor and has left nothing undone nor has HE in anyway left the redemption of HIS elect to chance. HE has borne their sin and imputed HIS righteousness to them, so that there is therefore, now, no condemnation to them. (see Rom. 8:1-11)

HE shall yet raise our bodies in like fashion as HIS. *"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."* (1Cor.15:20) *"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."* (Phil. 3:21) Paul said that if the dead were not raised we who believe in the resurrection would have all of our hopes overturned. HE has placed within us the hope of the resurrection and we wait until our change occurs, content that what HE has promised HE will perform.

HE shall lose none of those which were given to HIM by the FATHER. *"And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."* (John 6:39) HIS elect shall hear HIS voice and come to HIM, and none of those that thus come to HIM shall ever be cast out. *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."* (Phi 1:6)