

# 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*

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## LIKE PRECIOUS FAITH

*Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.* *2 Peter 1:1*

Mankind is made up of a diverse lot. There really is no such thing as "one size fits all." Some are tall, some are short, some are skinny, while an ever increasing number could be politely termed plump (the clinical term is obese). Some excel at sports of one kind or another, others excel at art or business, and still others seem to excel at very little. Some are highly motivated to succeed in a variety of endeavors while others are just trying to get by with as little effort as possible. Some possess virtues such as polite speech, good manners, and promptness in keeping appointments. Still others seem to take delight in being coarse in all that they do with no regard for how their behavior affects others.

Such is the state of men in this world. There is only one trait that all without exception share: They are sinners by birth, by nature, and by choice. The scripture says, "*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*" (Rom 3:10-12) Those who are comparatively moral and upright sometimes have difficulty grouping themselves in with what they might term the riff-raff of society, but Paul makes clear what their condition really is when he says; "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*" (Rom 3:23)

Though it is fairly easy to get folks to admit that they are not "perfect" it is impossible to get them to admit that there is not one shred of intrinsic value in them, apart from the revelation of that truth to them by the HOLY SPIRIT. Men are by nature convinced that they have something to offer to GOD, even if it is just "trying to do the best they can." The natural man scoffs at the idea that GOD would be just in condemning the world and all of its inhabitants to an everlasting destruction. This is preposterous in his eyes because he knows too many "good people" like himself that he deems worthy of GOD's favor. He looks upon those things he would call "good deeds" and feels certain in his mind that these things must count for something beyond their commission in this life.

An amazing transformation of thought takes place when GOD is pleased to quicken a man who is lost in this state of nature. (see Eph.2:1) All of a sudden he is smitten with a recognition of the fact that he is totally without any sort of hope and sees the "good deeds" that he has relied upon as so much dung. He finds himself stripped naked and bare before GOD without any sort of covering and absolutely no excuse for his sin. There is a universal cry that goes out from his lips as GOD is pleased to reveal HIS holiness in stark contrast to his own sin, causing him to say, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" (Luke 18:13) The Psalmist said the man who shall enter the presence of GOD must have "*clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.*" (Psa 24:3-4). Inexplicably the man who once saw himself as righteous and fairly pure, now confesses that he is neither, nor has any hope that he can somehow attain unto such a lofty place.

Now if a man could somehow earn GOD's favor by his "good deeds" then the reward would be given according to debt. (see Rom.4:4) Man could in this way "control" GOD. Of course this is preposterous as HE who rules in the heavens and the earth cannot even be questioned in HIS doings let alone become obligated to men. So it has pleased HIM to bestow HIS mercy upon men according to HIS sovereign purpose that HIS grace might be exalted and HIS name glorified. HE is pleased to work in those upon whom HE bestows this mercy to produce true "good works" which are the evidence of HIS blessings rather than the cause of them.

Those who are not the recipients of HIS mercy will carp and cavil at how "unfair" this reckoning of blessing by grace and not debt is. But those who have been the objects of HIS mercy are given eyes to see that were it not so they would surely perish. So Peter here speaks of a "*like precious faith*" which is shared by all of those whom GOD has marked out to receive it. This like precious faith is :

**The gift of GOD.** *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."* (Eph 2:8) Let no man think that faith is the function of his own mind or an activity of his will. This faith is bestowed upon HIS elect according to HIS own measure and purpose. *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."* (Rom 12:3)

**The same to all of HIS elect.** *Though it has pleased HIM to give to various men differing degrees or measures of faith, the essence of faith which HE gives is the same to all of them. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism."* (Eph 4:4-5) The sum and substance of the faith of GOD's elect is the "righteousness of CHRIST" manifested in HIS redeeming work at Calvary. We look for no other. *"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."* (1John 2:27) HE said HE was the vine and we are branches and we are to abide in HIM. This is extremely sweet for the sons of GOD as they contemplate their acceptance before the FATHER to be one hundred percent according to HIS acceptance there. If that be the case they are assured of their own acceptance since HE is their hope and faith.

**That which gives them strength in the present hour.** Though the full enjoyment and manifestation of our total blessing in CHRIST yet awaits us in the day of the resurrection, we are presently given grace through this same "*like precious faith*" to stand in this present evil day. *"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."* (Eph 6:16) *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* (Gal 2:20) That faith in which we shall stand when the dead, both small and great, stand before the ALMIGHTY is the same faith in which we currently live and move and have our being. *"The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies."* (Psa 18:2-3)

Come, guilty souls, and flee away  
To Christ, and heal your wounds;  
This is the welcome gospel-day  
Wherein free grace abounds.  
God loved the church, and gave his Son  
To drink the cup of wrath;  
And Jesus says he'll cast out none  
That come to him by faith.

#55 Gadsby's Hymns

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