

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

DOWN AND UP

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

(Eph 4:7-10)

One of the marks of false religion is they all have for their goal the design of raising men to the level of GOD. Some, such as the Mormons believe that men are actually gods who shall one day rule and reign as kings over their own worlds. The eastern religions embrace the concept of reincarnation with the ultimate goal of higher consciousness and deity. The muslims view man as reaching that pinnacle by enjoying the lusts of the flesh for eternity.

The first lie that Satan told Eve was "*Ye shall not surely die*". Of course GOD had plainly told Adam that the opposite of that was true. Satan then further tried to impugn the glory and purpose of GOD by accusing HIM of some ill design (as if GOD could be accused of wrong) towards man saying, "*For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*" (Gen 3:5)

The reality was that when they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were plunged into blackness and the innocence into which they were created was taken away. The knowledge of evil has forever been a destructive force in the earth as is demonstrated by their vain attempts to cover their own nakedness with fig leaves. Ever since that time men have been going about to establish their own righteousness and averse to the righteousness of GOD.

One of the manifestations of this is seen in Paul's description of men in Romans "*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*" (Rom 1:22-25)

The natural man in the darkness of his mind will pursue all sorts of avenues by which he thinks that he might justify himself. That may be the denial that there is a GOD, a desire to impugn the glory of GOD by exalting the creature (humanism), making idols, or falling at the shrine of free willism wherein men are viewed as the controllers of their own destiny. The result of that desire propels men to pervert even the truth of the scriptures and make the

atonement work of CHRIST wherein HE has purchased eternal redemption for HIS elect, to be effectual only if agreed to by men or as they define it, believed and received.

Nothing that GOD has done or intends to do is in any way affected by any decision that men might make. *"The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD."* (Prov 16:1) *"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."* (Psa 115:3)

The work of CHRIST in the behalf of HIS elect is an absolute and definite work of atonement whereby all of their sin debt is completely canceled forever without any action on their part. *"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."* (Heb 9:12) Not only did HE justify HIS own by HIS work alone but HE purchased and delivered gifts unto them by HIS power and applies them according to HIS purpose and for their benefit. *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."* (Eph 4:11-13)

In order to accomplish HIS purpose of making us "perfect (or complete) men" HE first "descended to the earth". This is the exact reverse of the course of man's natural religious tendencies. The GOD who alone hath immortality and inhabits eternity, made HIMSELF of no reputation and took upon HIMSELF the likeness of human flesh and dwelt among men in the person of HIS SON the LORD JESUS CHRIST. HE has revealed that HIS purpose in this endeavor is not to raise us to a place of "deity" but rather to conform us to the image of HIS SON as *"perfect men"*. The gifts HE has bestowed on HIS church are given so that by *"speaking the truth in love, (we) may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ"* (Eph 4:15)

It is impossible for a creature to ever "become god(s)" but by HIS grace and according to HIS abundant mercy HE has come down to us, purchased our redemption, and given us gifts whereby we might be made conformable to HIS perfect humanity wherein HE has forever left us a perfect example of what HE has created us to be. *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."* (1Pe 2:21-25)

Having first descended to this sinful earth (the scripture says to the "lower parts" which literally means "inferior regions" as compared with the heavens) HE has now ascended far above all as the mighty CONQUEROR having accomplished exactly what HE set out to do. There is absolutely nothing that can be done by men to thwart or aid that which HE has intended to see accomplished in the earth which is the *"bringing (of) many sons unto glory."* (Heb 2:10)

And so in the ages to come we shall bear witness and testimony as glorified men (upon whom the blessing of immortality has been visited,) to the grace and mercy of HIM who has come down that HE might raise us up out of the mire of sin which has had us bound. *"That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."* (Eph 2:7)