

GRACEGAZETTE

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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*

DUTY

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. *Romans 12:1*

The concept of duty forms the very basis for all of man's religious endeavors. The natural man considers the performance of various duties to be the zenith of a man's service to GOD and man. Those who are enamored with religion are zealous to remind men of their various duties and quick to rail upon those who fail to perform them. Modern "Christianity" (so called) would cease to operate if the work mongers and the duty-works advocates ceased their constant barrage of reminding men to perform their duties, such as "tithing", "praying", "witnessing", reading the bible", "attending church", etc.

I am often dismayed and amazed when I survey the religious scene around me and I see this one constant thread which is woven throughout the fabric of practically every denomination of so called Christian churches. It is extremely disturbing when it seems that the most common duty that is pressed upon the supposed "sons of GOD" is that of tithing or giving of money into the coffers of this ministry or that. One can hardly hear a "preacher" on the TV or radio who is not concerned with such, and very few churches do not make constant reminders to their members to financially support them.

There is a whole genre of "financial advisors" who have risen to take the stage who all basically teach that the key to financial success is first performing ones duty and giving at least ten percent of their income to GOD (as if HE needed it). It has become common to see these "financial seminars" conducted in churches as a function of their "ministry". There is certainly nothing wrong with sound financial advice (of which the scripture has much to say) but we sadly suspect that many churches are more interested in seeing their "bottom line" increase as a result of men being convinced to "give" for duty or gains sake than they are to see their people taught the word of GOD simply for their benefit.

Now we are quite certain that the scriptures do indeed exhort the people of GOD to be "cheerful givers". Indeed we do not think that there can be any other kind. The man who "gives" out of duty is no "giver" at all but is a mere "payer" of a tax. Paul gave the Corinthians this exhortation concerning giving *"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."* (2Co 9:7) The whole concept of giving cannot arise out of "duty" but must be motivated by desire.

Here we see is the whole fallacy of man's natural religious bent. He thinks that he can become pleasing in the eyes of GOD by the performance of duty, but clearly as the LORD told the Pharisees such is not the case. *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the*

law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” (Mat 23:23)

Now it seems to be quite clear that the LORD did not disregard “duty” at all, for HE said, *“these ought ye to have done”*. HE plainly said that they as Jews, under the law, “ought to have done” what they did. (i.e.; tithed mint, anise, and cumin) However they missed the whole matter of serving GOD not because of what they did but what they did not do, which was to serve HIM in spirit and truth. HE told the woman at the well the exact same thing when she inquired as to whether the duty service of the Jews was superior to that of the Samaritans. HIS reply was, *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24)*

The law, as it was given to the Jews in the Ten Commandments, and as it has also been written in the conscience of all men (see Rom.2:11-15) has made very stringent demands upon men. It has laid “heavy burdens” upon them and these were even made heavier by the demands of man’s religious contrivances. (see Mat. 23:2-28) Man in his religious zeal looks at the law and thinks of it as a “to do list”. That man who is awakened by the SPIRIT of GOD to know his inward depravity looks at it as a “woe is me, I am undone list”. That man has no comfort or hope when he surveys the demands of the “duty” of the law.

The LORD JESUS CHRIST did not come into the world to overturn the demands and duties of the law. Rather HE came in order to deliver HIS people from the condemnation of that law which neither they nor their fathers could keep. Instead of destroying the law’s demands or canceling the duties required therein, HE has completely fulfilled them in the behalf of those which were given to HIM before the foundation of the world. *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” (Mat 5:17)*

Man’s problem with the law is not the fault of the law in any wise. The law is “*holy, just and good*” according to Paul.(see Rom.7:12) Man’s problem with the law is the weakness of his flesh and his inability to keep the law. *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” (Rom 8:3)* It seems clear enough to us that CHRIST has remedied the problem of HIS people in relation to the law. First HE has removed all of the condemning power of the law by the sacrifice of HIMSELF as an offering for sin in their behalf. The law has no basis upon which to condemn those for whom CHRIST died.

Not only that but he has changed the perspective of HIS people’s minds towards the requirements of the law. Therefore Paul speaks to the Romans concerning their “*reasonable service*” (i.e., duty) as the sons of GOD. Clearly that which at one time would have been considered as a task now is seen as that which they aspire to and desire.

Those under the law see duty as a definition of things to be done and as the motivation to perform its demands. Those who are reborn by HIS SPIRIT see duty as a definition of those things which CHRIST has fully performed for them. That which he has done is for them a motivation to follow in HIS steps even as Peter exhorted them. (see I Pet 2:20-25) Duty is no longer their motivation. *“For the love of Christ constraineth us.” (2 Cor. 5:14)*

They still find themselves to fall far short of their “reasonable service”, due to the warfare of the flesh and the SPIRIT, but they confess with the apostle Paul, *“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 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. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”(Gal 2:19-21)*

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