

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

FORM AND SUBSTANCE

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

John 20:17

In the flesh we will generally always seek out a place of comfort. Most everyone has a natural fear of being thrust into situations over which they have no control. That is why public speaking is number one when people list their fears. Following traditions is one of the mechanisms that many use to combat their fear of the unknown. This is especially true when it comes to religion.

By and large families continue on in the religious traditions (or non-traditions) of their fathers and mothers. There is a great likelihood that a person will remain in the "religion" that they are raised in because they are largely comfortable with it even if they don't necessarily agree with its precepts or practice it faithfully.

This concept generally explains (in my opinion) why people go to McDonald's to eat. They are pretty certain that the food is not going to be really good or healthy but they know exactly what they are going to get. Some people will lament the lack of appeal of the foods they eat but then continue to eat the same things because they are afraid to try something new. This thought of the unknown makes them uncomfortable.

Mary was so relieved and overjoyed when the LORD JESUS revealed HIMSELF to her that it appears (judging from the language that she used) that she likely fell at HIS feet and reached out to embrace HIM. The LORD quickly admonished her not to touch HIM. Some have surmised that HE was in some form of phantom or ghostlike state and that HE warned her not to "touch" HIM because of some mystical reason. Such is not the case since a few days later HE told Thomas to reach forth his hand and touch HIS side and hands (see John.20:27)

Rather, what the LORD was saying to Mary was, "Don't cling to me" since HE had yet to ascend to the FATHER in order that HE might send the HOLY GHOST to be the COMFORTER of HIS people. As HE told the disciples: *"It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."* (John 16:7)

Each time that the LORD told HIS disciples of the fact that HE was going to be leaving them they were very perplexed, even to the point where Peter rebuked HIM. (see Mat.16:22,23) They supposed right up until the end that HE was going to establish a physical earthly kingdom which would overthrow their political oppressors and raise them to a place of prominence. This was never HIS purpose nor did any of the OT prophecies ever indicate that such was the case once HE revealed the spiritual nature of HIS kingdom and the fact that it

was not one which could be gained by flesh and blood. This is in large part (humanly speaking) why the Jews stumbled and fell, since they desired a kingdom in which their own righteousness was that which would be recognized.

Mary was comforted by HIS physical presence but HE told her it was not HIS purpose to remain with her physically, nor for her to expect to receive comfort in this fashion. I am sure this frightened her and she had mixed feelings as she arose to go and tell the disciples the message that HE gave her. Just moments before HE ascended into the heavens, his disciples were still expecting HIM to restore the Jewish kingdom. (see Acts 1:6)

Men will naturally seek out the form of religion and favor it above the truth. Men can easily go through the motions of religion by clinging to forms and traditions. This is clearly illustrated by the question of the woman at the well (see John 4:19-24) as she asked HIM if the Jews religion or the Samaritans was the best. HE told her that neither one was of any value because *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:24)

Those who bow at the shrine of free will don't know the difference between form and substance. One of the greatest hoaxes that Satan has ever foisted upon the human race was to convince well meaning men that it is possible for them to enter the kingdom of heaven by the exercise of their free will. There is not a more pervasive error than this one which has led many religious men to trust in their own faith and ability to exercise that faith in order to gain favor with GOD. This teaching is a useful instrument that Satan employs in the sowing of tares among the wheat. The “gospel” has been reduced to a mere formula which any man may utilize by praying a form prayer and making a “decision for CHRIST.”

Those who delight in religious tradition mistake form for substance. Those who confuse outward adherence to creeds and decorums with serving GOD in SPIRIT and truth are a part of the same hoax. These are those who depend on being able (according to them) to trace their lineage back to the apostles and are sure that all of their “practices” are spelled out in the scripture. They can determine who is in the kingdom of GOD by whether or not they agree with their own doctrine and practice.

Those who are proud of their doctrine and legal correctness prefer form over substance. Most of these folks are suspicious of those who speak about feeling and desiring the presence of GOD. They have a rational explanation for all things and desire for all things to be done “decently and in order” as long as they are the ones to define it. They love the reading of the law and the lash of duty laid upon the backs of sluggards.

Those who know themselves to be but sinners find no use for form, and seek only substance. When a man is convinced of his depravity by the HOLY GHOST, he cannot be satisfied by all of the assurances offered by men in their traditions or formulas and plans of salvation. He cannot be satisfied with anything less than the witness of the SPIRIT of GOD and the hope of redemption applied by the SAME. Here is his desire:

1 Pity a helpless sinner, Lord, Who would believe thy gracious word,
But own my heart, with shame and grief, A sink of sin and unbelief.

2 Lord, in thy house I read there's room, And, venturing hard, behold I come;
But can there, tell me, can there be Amongst thy children room for me?

3 I eat the bread, and drink the wine; But oh! my soul wants more than sign!
I faint unless I feed on thee, And drink the blood as shed for me.

4 For sinners, Lord, thou cam'st to bleed; And I'm a sinner vile indeed;
Lord, I believe, thy grace is free, O magnify that grace in me. #447 Gadsby's; J.Hart
“He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”(1John 5:12)

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