

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

THINGS I WAS NEVER TAUGHT

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

Psalm 58:3

The offspring of humans are among the most helpless of all of the animal kingdom. Most dumb animals are born with many instincts and a strong sense of survival. A good portion of animals born in the wild would survive even if abandoned by their parents and many are never nurtured at all. Yet I would venture to say that no human infant would survive more than a few hours if left in the same condition

Even so I believe that it is true that there are many things that those same children never need to be taught, that come forth from them simply because of the innate corruption that each is born with. Though it is true that there is a point at which each one commits his (or her) first sin, it is also true that each one is born with the imputed sin of Adam and will manifest the corruption of their nature and the darkness of their understanding, in short order. David's words in Psalm 51 is not a commentary on the act whereby he was conceived but is his description of his own innate depravity. "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" (Psa 51:5) Paul said a very similar thing in Romans, "*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" (Rom 7:24)

No one ever taught me to lie, yet one of my earliest of recollections involves me telling a lie in order to escape blame. Even infants of a few days old are able to manipulate their caretakers to some extent. They soon learn what action will elicit the response they desire. Those who are comforted in their lies rather than scolded often grow up to be politicians.

No one ever taught me to be selfish. This seems to be quite universal. Youngsters need no extra encouragement to think of themselves first. In fact if not corrected at a very young age this inborn attitude can ultimately manifest itself in murder or other acts of violence against their fellow men.

Now while there are few who would dispute these plain observations there are other ideas which seem to be entrenched in the minds of men that no one had to put there, but just seem to be the result of the natural mind at work. Solomon said, "*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*" (Prov. 14:12)

No one needs to teach men the concept of "free will". Everyone automatically thinks that they have a "free will" which they can use to choose whatever they will. In fact most men will resort to a keen sense of anger if such is brought into question. Most men think that they can listen to the word of GOD whenever they want to; yet the LORD upbraided the Jews who were certain that they were followers of the LORD, "*Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.*" (John 8:43) Hearing the things of GOD is not a function of the will.

The vast majority of men (especially those who call themselves Christians in our day) think that GOD is limited by what men will to do. Some are fond of saying HE will not "violate" the free will of men, as if to imply that GOD's hands are bound by the will of men. The will of men is no impediment to GOD in any fashion and the Psalmist clearly states "*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.*" (Psa 110:3) Being called of GOD is not a function of the will.

No man will ever will to do anything that he does not desire to do. Only GOD can give a man a desire to seek after HIM. If HE does not, then that man will only desire the things in which he delights by nature. *"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." (Rom 3:11) "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." (John 5:40)*

No one needs to teach men to believe that GOD should be "fair". This is one of the major arguments that is always brought up by those who despise the scriptural teaching of GOD's unconditional election of a people in CHRIST and HIS reprobation of others to destruction. The natural man hates the absolute sovereignty of GOD and despises HIS right to do with HIS own creation as HE will. They believe GOD has got to give every man a chance, a fair shot or a square deal. Yet salvation is not by chance, nor is it the result of any deal, but it is the demonstration of the mercy of GOD upon undeserving sinners. *"Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." (Rom 9:14-16)* So salvation is not an offer but is the operation of GOD in mercy to rescue those HE chose.

It is this same innate hatred of GOD's sovereignty that causes men to despise the definite and particular redemption which the LORD undertook for HIS elect. It "seems right" to the natural mind that CHRIST should have died to make salvation a "possibility" for all men. Yet there could be no salvation at all if HE only made it possible for those who are willing to believe it for the scripture has revealed that none will believe apart from HIS gift of faith. Therefore the redemption of HIS people is not dependent on their belief but upon the fact that HE has procured their everlasting redemption on the cross of Calvary. *"By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb 9:12) "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (Rom 5:9)* GOD is pleased to give faith to those for whom CHRIST shed HIS blood.

No one needs to teach men that the blessings of GOD are "conditional". All men by nature believe that they can in some measure earn the favor of GOD. In its most extreme manifestation, they think that they can establish a righteousness which will make them fit for heaven as the Jews did. (see Rom.10:3) All men naturally think that as long as their "good" outweighs their "bad" they will receive some favor with GOD. This is the basis and foundation of all natural religion regardless of what it may be called.

Even among those who call themselves Christians, there are some who are not quite free from this natural way of deadly thinking that the blessings of GOD are conditioned upon their obedience. They think that they merit GOD's favor when they are obedient and they earn HIS disfavor when they are disobedient. *"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer 10:23)* Job's supposed "friends" were of this conditional mindset as they constantly upbraided him and sought to accuse him instead of comfort him. Job however knew that whether HE received good or ill from the hand of the LORD he should be thankful. GOD's grace is free to those who are the sheep of HIS pasture, HE calleth them all by name and leadeth them in and out. HIS chastening is to be desired more than the miserable comforts of those who would load us with the law.

The natural man thinks that there is something about him which cannot ultimately die. This was the first lie that was told by Satan to Eve, and she believed him. *"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:" (Gen 3:4)* This is another root of all natural religion wherein, man thinks he is of far too great a worth to be destroyed. We hear men talk of the eternal soul of man but can discover nowhere in the scripture that there is anything eternal about man except those who have been given eternal life in JESUS CHRIST. Death and destruction awaits those outside of CHRIST. *"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Mat 10:28)*

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