

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume VII

Issue 43

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

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

THE END OF BOASTING

*For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?
now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*

I Corinthians 4:7

One of the important tactics of successful arguing is to endeavor to have the last word. This is very difficult to achieve in most cases, especially if both combatants are intent on having that final word. Arguments can go on for hours or perhaps even days, sometimes long after the original point of contention has been forgotten. Of course I don't know this from personal experience but just observing others who seem to actually enjoy a good argument.

Paul was quite adept at speaking the truth that he had been taught from the lips of the LORD and could often bring the "last word" before his opponents could even formulate their arguments. When the truth is spoken in power then there is nothing left to say and no other questions can be asked. The LORD demonstrated this ability when HE silenced the Pharisees and the Sadducees. *"And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions."* (Mat 22:46)

Paul often anticipated the arguments of those who, he knew, would oppose the truth. He demonstrated that in the ninth chapter of Romans where he answers the question that he knew would be on the lips of men who by nature are enemies of GOD's sovereign grace. *"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?"* (Rom 9:18-21)

The man who has not been born again by the SPIRIT of GOD cannot help but raise such arguments against GOD's sovereign right to do as HE sees fit with HIS own creation. By nature all men despise the absolute nature of GOD to determine the destinies of all of HIS creation according to HIS own sovereign purpose. The man who does not admit that such a concept causes anger to rise up in his flesh is not honest with himself. Paul anticipates the thinking of the unspiritual mind and ends the argument before it starts.

All men are born enamored with their own "free will". No one ever has to instruct another on his "right" and "ability" to do as "he pleases". Every child dreams of the day when they will grow up and be able to escape the rigors of their parents' decision making. They can't wait until they are "on their own" and can come and go as they please. That first taste of "freedom" often has disastrous consequences but this does nothing to dampen each one's determination to be his own boss.

It usually comes as quite a shock when GOD is pleased to teach a man (by HIS SPIRIT) that the "will" that he thought was free is actually a total bonds slave to sin. Those who have not been taught the true nature of sin think they can simply avoid sin by their own choice or

religious transformation, but those who have been enlightened by the SPIRIT of GOD are quite convinced that *"in their flesh dwells no good thing"* and they are brought to realize that unless the LORD delivers them from it, their own sin will ultimately bring about their certain destruction. This was the lament of Paul as he cried out, *"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* (Rom 7:24)

Here in the fourth chapter of first Corinthians Paul lays the proverbial axe to the root of all human boasting by saying a few simple words, *"For who maketh thee to differ from another."* Now it would seem logical that men would delight in the grace of GOD, but the reality is that the natural man hates the doctrine of grace because it totally strips him of any place of boasting except in that grace. It takes away any thought of merit in any endeavor which he might consider to be of value in his own actions. It does the same thing in the man who is born again by the SPIRIT. He is taught that:

He cannot boast in faith since 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) Not only is the initial work of granting faith, all of grace, but the subsequent operation of it is as well. *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."* (Phi 1:6)

He cannot boast in his maturity in CHRIST. *"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) HE is pleased to grant great faith to some and weak faith to others but HE is the ONE who grants the measure that HE sees fit to give and the faith of all, (whether great or small) has the same singular object, *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."* (1Cor 1:30-31)

He cannot boast of his knowledge. *"We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."* (1Cor 8:1) Regardless of all that we think that we "know" we are still sadly deficient *"And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."* (1Cor 8:2) Whatever level of true knowledge that we might possess is only that which HE is pleased to teach us. *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* (2Cor 4:6)

He cannot boast of his earthly station in life. GOD is pleased to give some much of this world's goods and HE is pleased to withhold it from others. *"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away."* (James 1:9-10) While the men of this world may think that they have made themselves rich, (as the man in Luke 12:15-21) that man who is instructed by CHRIST knows that all that he might possess is merely the gift of GOD.

He cannot boast of his faithfulness. Peter had to learn this lesson the hard way since he made the boast that he would stand with the LORD even if all others forsook HIM. The LORD used the "sifting" of the Devil to teach Peter that apart from the LORD upholding him, he would surely fall. *"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."* (Jud 1:24-25)

He only has one place in which he must ever boast. *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."* (Gal 6:14) He cannot boast in his election because he might be mistaken. He cannot boast in his religious ties because he might be deceived. He cannot boast in his brethren because they might forsake him. But oh even the weakest of those who feebly call upon HIS name shall never be confounded. They are those who have fled for refuge to HIM who ever lives to make intercession for those who come unto GOD by HIM. The LAMB who was slain for sinners is their only HOPE and EXPECTATION.