

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

THE LABOR OF THE FOOLISH

The labor of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

Ecclesiastes 10:15

There is nothing more common among the religious masses than the continual stirring up of one another to all sorts of labor and endeavor. Regardless of the denomination of those who call themselves believers, a premium is placed on those who are the most dedicated and busy about many tasks "in the name of the LORD". They are often singled out for recognition and esteem. Most sermons are geared towards encouraging some sort of endeavor, whether it is "winning souls", raising money, or general "busy-ness" in some sort of service in the supposed "kingdom of GOD".

I am reminded by our text of those men of Sodom who were struck blind and then "*wearied themselves to find the door.*" (Gen 19:11) While there are some whose desire for service is motivated out of love, the vast majority seem to be involved in these endeavors because it is the expected thing to do. Some are serving for the rewards that, they have been told, await the faithful and those who make great sacrifices. Some serve for esteem in the eyes of others or in order to satisfy religious requirements and camaraderie.

The radio and TV airwaves are full of religious shysters and beggars who promise the gullible, riches and other blessings, for "sowing" their tithes and offerings in these various ministries of greed. Some are not as intent on gain as others, but nonetheless seek to stir up their hearers to perform this work or that and to gain their assurance from their decisions and effort. They find a ready audience since men by nature have an innate attraction to religious endeavor and need little encouragement to value such enterprise even if they are not so ready to personally engage in it. Some merely consider its value from afar but are nonetheless convinced that such endeavors are the key to blessing from GOD.

This notion basically arises out of the innate consideration of men that GOD is "*altogether such a one*" (Psa 50:21) as themselves. "*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 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.*" (Rom 1:21-23)

By nature, men consider that they have some value to GOD which arises out of their own characters rather than their worth being that which HE is pleased to determine and grant according to HIS own purpose. This is why the natural man recoils at the notion that GOD has made some vessels unto honor and some unto dishonor. (see Rom. 9:21) Paul knew man's rebellious nature to the notion of GOD's absolute sovereignty when he said, "*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?*" (Rom 9:20)

Those who place great value in religion reject the notion that there is not one thing that men can do to influence GOD or change the course which HE has ordained. Rather than taking great comfort in the truth that *“Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”* (Psa 115:3) they can only rail against such a concept and busily go about to build their houses and kingdoms convinced that they can steer GOD which way they please or at least gain HIS favor by their own decisions, prayers, and actions.

The Pharisees were convinced that GOD was very pleased with their “obedience” and “sacrifice”, and proudly carried out their religious duties openly for all to see. The LORD instructed HIS disciples saying, *“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.”* (Mat 6:6)

That man who has been caused to believe the promises of GOD (revealed in the gospel of CHRIST) must of necessity cast all of his care upon the LORD. He has been convinced of his own worthiness of destruction and knows that apart from the mercy of GOD he shall surely perish. He is shut up to the mercy of GOD and confesses with Job of old, *“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”* (Job 13:15) He has no confidence in the flesh and recognizes HIS own worthlessness before HIM, except that HE should make him worthy by the merits of CHRIST alone. As David of old confessed, *“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?”* (Psa 8:3-4) *“Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away”* (Psa 144:4)

The foolish are those who grow weary in their service and cannot believe that what they are doing (or avoiding) is not valuable. (see Matt. 25:35-45) It is impossible for them to consider that their deeds of “righteousness” (which they esteem so highly), are yet as dung in the sight of GOD. (see Isa.64:6) Yet those who are the objects of HIS grace have no consideration at all of the worth of those good deeds to which they are ordained (see Eph.2:10) and operated upon by the SPIRIT of GOD to perform. (see Phil.2:13) They see them as the mere bestowal of GOD’s mercy and favor and not a function of their effort.

The man who thinks that he can somehow gain GOD’s favor (whether temporal or eternal) by the works of his own hands is that foolish man who *“knoweth not how to go to the city.”* (Eccl.10:15) Paul described the salvation of GOD’s people in this fashion, *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”* (Tit 3:5-7)

This is the total end of human endeavor. There can be no mixture of labor and mercy or works and grace. All of the blessings of GOD’s anointed ones are theirs according to HIS grace and mercy and are in no wise predicated upon their endeavors. *“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.”* (Heb 4:9-10)

That man who by the grace of GOD has been given ears to hear and eyes to behold a crucified CHRIST has ceased from his labor. There is no “weariness” to the quickened sons of GOD for they have been shown not only the WAY to the city but by the abundant mercy and grace of GOD have been given an entrance into it by no effort of their own. *“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”* (Rom 9:16) *“That no flesh should glory in his presence. 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.”* (1Co 1:29-31)

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