

# 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*

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## THE PRECEPT OF MEN

*Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.*

*Isaiah 29:13*

Around 722 B.C, the LORD sent Shalmaneser, (the king of Assyria) into the region of Samaria to destroy the kingdom of Israel and take them captive. At that time, Samaria was the seat of power of the ten northern tribes of Israel, whose king at the time was Hoshea. Shalmaneser removed many of the Israelites from the land and sent in multitudes of people of other lands to occupy and dwell in Samaria. You can read about this in the seventeenth chapter of II Kings.

These various heathen tribes brought with them their gods and their religions and they went about to worship them in this land which was at one time occupied by a people set apart unto the worship of the one true and living GOD. This intrusion should have caused the remaining Jews to be appalled at such a prospect but they had already, first secretly, and then openly departed from this holy worship and adopted the ways of the heathen long before these outsiders arrived. It was for this reason that the LORD stripped the kingdom from them and rejected them as HIS people. (see II Kings 17:9-18)

But as good religious men will do, these remaining Jews still held on to various vestiges of their former true worship and did not reject all of its precepts, considering that they could in their own power continue to worship GOD as they pleased. So they had a mongrel religion not unlike that which masquerades today as true Christianity. One which embraced (to some extent) a fear of GOD but sought to weave in with it various forms of humanistic and pagan ideas. *"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."* (2Tim 3:5)

GOD showed his disapproval of the pagan worshippers by sending lions among these people to slay them. (see II Kings 17:25) As men without the light of GOD are wont to do they sought help in religious instruction. Their heathen king thought it only proper to send them a Jewish priest to "teach" them how to fear the LORD and the "priest" complied. None of those involved ever considered the folly of such a notion even as those in our day who compass land and sea to make proselytes ever consider the folly of such either.

Men who think that it is within their own power to influence GOD have no qualms at all in considering that they have the power to change the hearts of men. So this priest assumed that if he taught men to "fear the LORD" then men would "fear the LORD". If you begin with a false assumption you will always arrive at a false conclusion. Yet who can argue with success. Just as we see the "soul winners" tallying up their conquests and apprising us of all their successes so we see that indeed these people in Samaria were taught to "fear the LORD", yet alas they still served other gods. *"So these nations feared the LORD, and served*

*their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.*" (II Kings 17:41) What folly was wrought in Israel and their latter end was worse than the first. *"Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."* (Psa 127:1)

The last two hundred and fifty years has seen one of the most concerted efforts on the part of multitudes who have claimed to be the disciples of CHRIST, to convert the world. The folly that has become associated with these endeavors is not in the desire to declare the truth of GOD to the world, but in the presumptuous notions of men that they can actually measure the success of their efforts by pronouncing that the disciples which they have made are indeed those who truly fear the LORD. It has become unthinkable to even question the legitimacy of such campaigns, let alone to speak words of opposition against such presumptuous notions. It is thought sacrilegious at best and downright blasphemous to point out that men cannot perform a task which the LORD has reserved for HIMSELF.

When the LORD JESUS came onto the scene, HE declared, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."* (Luke 4:18-19) HE went on to say that this prophecy was fulfilled in HIM the very day that HE spoke it.

The writer of Hebrews declares the prophecy given to Jeremiah, saying, *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them."* (Heb 10:16) He declares that it is brought to pass according to the same ONE who orders all things. *"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."* (Heb 10:10) The basis upon which this new covenant rests is, *"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."* (Heb 10:17) Those who are the inheritors of this covenant promise are one and the same with those for whom JESUS CHRIST has entered in once into the holy place, having shed HIS blood for the remission of their sins.

We understand that we are mere declarers and proclaimers of that which JESUS CHRIST has accomplished. The LORD has sent men into the earth to testify of CHRIST and not to teach men to fear the LORD by the precept of men. When the LORD is pleased to awaken HIS elect HE will teach them things which men are unable to teach. Even as Jeremiah goes on to say, *"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."* (Jer 31:34)

Men do not become the sons of GOD by *"blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD."* (John 1:13) When GOD is pleased to write HIS precepts upon a man's heart then that man will be transformed by the power of GOD. No other power in earth or hell can overturn it. Contrariwise, unless the LORD is pleased to open a man's eyes to behold the glories of CHRIST alone and cause him to delight in HIM then all of the preaching of men however eloquent, learned, or fervent will not cause it to occur. They are merely those who, *"received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved"* (2Thes 2:10) regardless of their religious devotion and involvement.

What makes mistaken men afraid Of sovereign grace to preach!

The reason is, if truth be said, Because they are so rich.

Why so offensive in their eyes Does God's election seem?

Because they think themselves so wise That they have chosen him.