

# 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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## HOPE DESTROYED

*The waters wear the stones: thou washest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth; and thou destroyest the hope of man.*

*Job 14:19*

Back in the sixties, a zealous man who was the leader of an evangelical group which operated primarily on college campuses came up with a little tract entitled "The Four Spiritual Laws". The first one of these "laws" was the general declaration, "GOD loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life". This was a statement which was designed to appeal to the natural desire of all men to be valued, appreciated, and loved.

Most modern day "evangelism" (so-called) uses much the same approach, thinking that the commands of the LORD JESUS to HIS apostles, to preach the gospel to every creature, necessarily involves appealing to the natural reason of men and thereby seeking to persuade them to make a "decision" to follow CHRIST or as some put it "allow" the LORD to save them, as if a man possesses the ability or wherewithal to "allow" HIM who is in the heavens and hath done whatsoever HE hath pleased, to do anything. (see Ps.115:3, Dan.4:35)

The error in modern "evangelism" is not in the "zeal" and "fervor" of those who are engaged in it but the sad fact that it is primarily a "zeal without knowledge", in much the same fashion as the manner which Paul described the ignorance of the Jews, "*For I bear them record that they have a zeal of (or after) God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*" (Rom 10:2-3)

It is accepted, without question or examination, by the vast majority of those who style themselves as "evangelicals" that man is a creature with a free will who can as easily choose eternal life as he can choose sin. Therefore they believe he can use that free will to avail himself of a "salvation" which is "offered" to him by a doting god (through "soul-winners" of course which he depends on) who would not hurt a flea and hopes with all of his heart that they will take him up on the offer. In this formula it is also accepted without question or examination that when the scripture says "GOD is love" that this means HE loves all men the same. In the same fashion they conclude on this basis that CHRIST therefore died to pay for the sins of all men and making "salvation" available for all men, has now left it up to them to cast the deciding vote as to whether or not they will be saved.

The magnitude of this error cannot be overstated. This is not simply a procedural mistake, or a slight blurring of the truth, or difference of opinion. Rather, this is an egregious error which confuses, distorts, and sets forth a "gospel" which is no gospel at all. If any portion of a man's salvation depends on an act of his "free will" then he is done for; since the scripture accurately says, "*There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they*

*have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.” (Rom 3:10-18)*

It is sheer folly to think that a declaration of the gospel can be heard by those who are dead in trespasses and sins. The truth of GOD can only be heard by those who have been given ears to hear it, *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1Cor 2:14)* This is why the LORD JESUS told Nicodemus, *“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)*

The gospel is not a proposition which is offered to men in hopes that some will be persuaded to believe it. Rather it is the declaration of that work of redemption which JESUS CHRIST has done in the behalf of his elect children who are themselves by nature the children of wrath even as others and worthy of destruction. Yet because of the great love wherewith HE has loved them, HE has undertaken their complete salvation and has obtained eternal redemption for them.

This salvation is totally dependent on the work which HE has performed for them and HE does presently work in them both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure as HE is pleased to quicken them which were dead in trespasses and sins. (see Eph.2:1) In HIS own time HE does give them eyes to see and ears to hear that sweet and blessed sound of a complete salvation in HIM, even as Paul declares, *“Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” (2Tim 1:9-11)*

Yet the first work of the SPIRIT when HE quickens the children of GOD is not to cause them to hear but rather to see themselves as they really are. No man will call out for mercy nor will the gospel appear as the sweet savor that it actually is, until he first knows himself in desperate need of such. Jonah never cried out for deliverance, until he saw himself in a hopeless situation as he testified, *“I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.” (Jon 2:2)*

The LORD has sent HIS SPIRIT to convince men of sin (theirs), righteousness (HIS) and judgment (certain). The natural man reads the words of Job when he says, “HE destroys the hope of man”, and he thinks this is a terrible thing. He reasons in his own mind that such an action would be completely unkind. Yet to that man who has been given spiritual understanding he sees this destruction of natural hope as an application of the LORD’s mercy.

The natural man whose hope remains intact will perish, for he is exactly like the Pharisee who went down to the temple to pray and there considered his own merits and faith. He is totally unable to cry out for mercy as the publican who, by the grace of GOD, had been shown exactly what he was and what he deserved. He is exactly like those whom the LORD banishes from HIS presence in the Day of Judgment who enumerate the good deeds which they have performed. (see Mat 7:21-23) He is totally unlike Job who by the grace and design of GOD was brought to ultimately confess, *“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:5-6)*

This is the music of heaven, for it is this that causes the angels to rejoice. *“I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” (Luke 15:10)* This is the result of the destruction of the hope of the natural man. This is that which David experienced which led him to the complete understanding of his own estate which he expressed in the fifty first Psalm. *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” (Psa 51:17)*

*“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.” (1Cor 1:18-19)*

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