

# 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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## A PURE HEART, A GOOD CONSCIENCE, AND UNFEIGNED FAITH

*Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.*

*I Timothy 1:5*

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul gives him this exhortation, “*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*” (2Tim 4:2-4) Most bible teachers treat this passage as though it is referring to some future age beyond that which in which Timothy lived. Many of these self styled prophets point to this present time as the “age” of which he is speaking.

The truth is that Paul was not referring to a particular future age but, rather, the natural course of all churches to depart from the truth as it is in CHRIST. He warned Timothy of it and this has been demonstrated time and again down through the ages. In order that men be not lifted up above measure or think themselves to be something when they are nothing the LORD is often pleased to remove their candlesticks and leave them to their own devices. HE does this to winnow HIS wheat and shake that which can be shaken so that those things which cannot be shaken shall remain. The wheat and the tares always grow side by side and the ultimate purpose of this threshing and winnowing is to differentiate those that walk in true faith from those who willingly abide in the comfort of dead religion as well as to make known those whom HE has sent as true preachers of the gospel. (see I Cor. 11:19, John 16:13; I John 2:19)

It is often true that men become puffed up with knowledge and then like the rich man, say to themselves, “*take thine ease*”. Even as Christian went to sleep in by-path meadow (in Pilgrim’s Progress), they waver from their own steadfastness even though they may outwardly still hold to the letter of doctrine by which they were once humbled. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked and we must be constantly on our guard, lest we “swerve” from the “truth” into vain jangling (i.e.; empty talk). We are all bound by nature to fall into the ditch except the LORD should see fit to deliver us by the operation of HIS SPIRIT in leading us into all truth, not in the letter, but in the power thereof.

Many churches point to their “pedigree”, “rules of order” or “statements of faith” as proof that they are still steadfast and walking in the light, yet how often have these become mere sparks which their own hands have kindled and their own fires by which they seek to warm themselves, while Ichabod has been written on their doorposts.

There is more to doctrinal soundness than an accurate rendition of doctrines codified in verbose “confessions of faith” penned hundreds of years before. The purpose of preaching, teaching, and exhortation is not to enable us to be able to repeat certain shibboleths which define orthodoxy but rather that we might be edified and encouraged to emulate CHRIST by loving one another even as

CHRIST loved us. This is exactly what Paul means when he says, *"the end (or purpose) of the commandment (or teaching) is charity (love).*

The concept of "love" (in the scriptures) has been so cheapened over the years that it most often denotes (in the minds of many who profess faith in CHRIST) some sort of common respect which should exist between all men of every stripe. This is demonstrated when the "love" of GOD for men is defined as some general feeling of goodwill to each and every one of the human race. Clearly HE denies this concept when HE says, *"Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated."*

Yet the scripture is replete with exhortations for the children of GOD to love one another. The LORD even states that it is by this that the discipleship of HIS children shall be demonstrated to the world. *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* (John 13:35) John states that it is only by loving one another as brethren that we can know that we are the children of GOD. *"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."* (1John 3:14)

The "love" which is the "purpose" of sound doctrine is a particular love between the children of GOD which stems from a work which only the LORD can perform in them. It cannot be found in the unregenerate. It is that love which arises out of:

A Pure Heart. Peter says almost exactly what Paul tells Timothy when he exhorts the children of GOD, *"See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."* (1Pet 1:22) So what is this "pure heart"? David asks *"Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?"* and then answers his own question, *"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."* (Psa 24:3-4)

A pure heart is the product of the indwelling of the HOLY SPIRIT in a man. It is discovered not by finding men who have no sin, but rather in the testimony of those who are convinced that their only righteousness is that which is imputed to them by HIM who they are certain is the only SOURCE of righteousness. JESUS CHRIST the RIGHTEOUS. A pure heart is one which is not double minded, but is staid upon HIM as its only hope. When a man is taught this truth by the SPIRIT and not by the letter of doctrine it will cause him to forbear with his brethren and overlook their many faults since he is quite aware of his own which are covered by the blood of CHRIST.

A Good Conscience. *"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"* (Heb 9:14) A "good conscience" describes the state of a man's understanding who, having heard the gospel and been given grace to believe it, rests in the finished work of CHRIST. He is completely satisfied with that which CHRIST has done and has no desire or expectation of adding anything to it. Such a man takes great delight in Romans 8:1 which says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."* (Rom 8:1) A man who is taught this truth by the power of the HOLY GHOST understands that his brethren enjoy the same standing and does not sit in pharisaical judgment of them nor demand that they conform to his own standards of propriety. *"Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."* (Tit 1:15) (see Rom. chap 14)

Faith unfeigned. Paul fondly recalls the *"unfeigned faith"* of Timothy's mother and grandmother. (see II Tim.1:15) He is speaking of a faith which is not forced or learned by rote but one which is firmly seated upon a proper OBJECT. This sort of faith is that which is only the result of the gift of GOD as he mentions in Ephesians 2:8. In the same fashion in which the LORD grants faith to HIS children HE also causes them to love one another. This is not optional behavior on the part of each one but rather that to which they are compelled by the SPIRIT of GOD. *"He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."* (1John 3:14) *"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."* (1Thes 4:9) *"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."* (1Pet 3:8)

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