

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume X

Issue 42

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

CHRIST, OUR SUFFICIENCY

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.

II Corinthians 3:5

Paul speaks about the incomparable joy of being able to declare the gospel in the earth when he says, *"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place."* (2 Cor 2:14) It has pleased the LORD to send men into the earth with this most blessed of messages. *"And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Rom 10:15)

Some (especially in the present day) believe that the primary reason for preaching is to "save souls". Paul however, understood that the true purpose of preaching is to declare the "glory of the blessed GOD". (see I Tim.1:11) It is in this declaration of HIS glory that HIS redemption and salvation of unworthy sinners is made manifest. HE is the object of the message of the gospel, HE is the power of the gospel, and HIS complete and finished work is the subject of that gospel.

When those who are awakened by HIS SPIRIT hear this good message they are given faith to believe it and rejoice in the deliverance which is made manifest by the blood of CHRIST. This is why Paul said, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Rom 10:17) Some have construed the meaning of Paul to be that salvation is the result of faith, yet the salvation which is wrought in CHRIST is the very object of faith, so it is impossible that faith could be the cause of salvation. Rather, faith (which is the gift of GOD, see Eph.2:8; 4:8) is the result of that salvation which is purchased for the sons of GOD by CHRIST HIMSELF. *"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."* (Act 13:48) *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* (Heb 11:1)

The purpose of preaching must be understood in order to make sense of what Paul goes on to say in the second chapter of I Corinthians, *"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"* (2 Cor 2:15-16) If the preaching of the gospel is for the purpose of "saving souls" then it must be a failure because Paul plainly declares that the same message which is a savor of life to those who "are saved" is a savor of death to those who perish. This would be confusion to say the least.

The preaching of the gospel is first of all a sweet savor in the "nostrils" of the FATHER because HE delights in the glory of HIS SON even as HE declares by the Psalmist, *"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."* (Psa 2:6-9)

It is a sweet savor unto HIM as it is preached to those who are "saved" and it is a sweet savor unto HIM as it preached to those who "perish". HIS purpose is fulfilled in both cases and HE is

pleased when CHRIST is lifted up in the proclamation of HIS complete and total redemption of each and every one which HE came into the earth to redeem.

Those who are "saved" by the blood of CHRIST are those who receive the word of GOD with gladness. To them it is the very "perfume" (savor) of life. They believe it because the power of GOD works in them both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure, even as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, saying, *"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."* (1Thes 2:13) John said that all such *"were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* (John 1:13) There is no place of boasting for them for they were chosen by HIM, in CHRIST, unto this salvation before the foundation of the world.

Those who perish are made manifest because they do not believe the record which GOD has set forth concerning HIS son. *"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."* (1 John 5:10-11) Those who perish do not believe on HIM.

The same message which is the perfume of life to those who are saved is an odor of death to those who perish because the *"preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness."* (1 Cor 1:18) The LORD JESUS plainly declared the reason for this unbelief, *"But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* (John 10:26-27) Those who perish despise the truth of GOD because they hate the AUTHOR and FINISHER of SALVATION and will not bow down before HIM. They are ordained unto this condemnation by HIM who said, *"Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated."* (see Hab. 1:12; Jude 1:4)

Paul anticipates the natural reaction of the flesh to the doctrine of GOD's unconditional election of HIS people unto everlasting joy and HIS unconditional reprobation of the wicked unto eternal damnation, by saying *"And who is sufficient for these things?"* (2 Cor.2:16) It is essentially the same thing that he said in anticipation of the same objections in Romans 9:18-21, *"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 honour, and another unto dishonour?"* By nature man, worships the god of his own free will.

We are certainly not sufficient (i.e.; able) in our flesh to rejoice in this most solemn of truths, yet by the grace of GOD revealed in JESUS CHRIST, we see HIM as our SUFFICIENCY in all things and can but bow down before HIM and give HIM all honor and praise both now and forever for HIS unspeakable gift of life to such unworthy wretches as we know ourselves to be. We glory in HIM who formed the light and created the darkness, and say even so FATHER for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Those who wish to soft pedal the truth of GOD's sovereignty over man's destiny is the same crowd who purports that the purpose of preaching is to save souls. No one has ever been eternally saved by any other means than the blood and righteousness of CHRIST offered as a SUBSTITUTE for sinners. HE is the sole SUFFICIENCY of HIS people. *"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.----- For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 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. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."* (2 Cor 4:1-7)

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