

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

SINNERS

When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Mark 2:17

Joseph Hart (1712-1768), one of the most blessed hymn writers that the world has ever seen penned these words,

“What comfort can a Saviour bring To those who never felt their woe?

A sinner is a sacred thing; The Holy Ghost has made him so.

New life from him we must receive, Before for sin we rightly grieve.

This faithful saying let us own, Well worthy 'tis to be believed,

That Christ into the world came down, That sinners might by him be saved.

Sinners are high in his esteem, And sinners highly value him.” (#89 Gadsby's Hymnal)

It would be difficult if not impossible, to find any person who actually believes that they have never committed any sin or done wrong things from time to time. The natural man has some understanding of his own fallibility and imperfection. Yet it is very rare to find a man who not only knows that he has sinned but that feels himself to be a “sinner” from head to foot.

As Hart says, “A sinner is a sacred thing” because apart from the regenerating work of GOD, no man will ever be able to see, understand, and hate his own innate depravity and recognize his inability to approach unto an absolutely HOLY GOD who “*will by no means clear the guilty.*” (Exo 34:7) “*and will not at all acquit the wicked.*” (Nah 1:3)

By virtue of being born into Adam's race, all of mankind is in a dire circumstance, worthy of condemnation, estranged from GOD, and possessing no ability to appease HIS wrath nor gain HIS favor. Compounding that problem is that he is, by that same nature, in rebellion against the law of GOD and though he might perform outwardly religious acts, does nonetheless despise the dominion of the ONE who does “*according to HIS will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.*” (Dan.4:35) He will mistakenly believe that his propensity to forms of worship is some evidence of a conformity to righteousness. (see Rom. 10:3)

By nature, he is unconcerned and unaware of the egregious nature of his crimes because he is willingly ignorant of the glory of the ONE against whom these offences have been committed. (see Rom. 1:18-22) He believes that righteousness is defined by a comparison to other men, (see Luke 18:11; II Cor.10:12), and will make excuse for things he sees in himself that he will condemn in others. (see Rom 2:12-16) All men are alike in this and all are without excuse.

The LORD JESUS startled the Jews with the declaration of HIS purpose, “*I came not to call the righteous.*” If they had had any spiritual light at all they would have rejoiced to hear such an encouraging word, yet because they were spiritually dead (as all men by nature are) they were affronted. They had already expressed their displeasure that HE would consort with those whom they considered much lower on the scale of what they supposed “righteousness” to be when they questioned his disciples about HIS practice. (see v.15-16)

Since the LORD knew their self-righteous mind, HE responded by declaring HIS purpose to minister to those who have no righteousness of their own. As long as a man holds to some notion of earning favor in the sight of GOD by any action of his own, he cannot and will not seek the only RIGHTEOUSNESS which is acceptable to the LORD.

That is why HE declared HIMSELF to be that *“stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner”* (Luke 20:17) and as Peter described HIM, *“a ROCK of offence.”* (1 Peter 2:8) HE is offensive to all who believe that they can approach unto GOD by any other means than through HIM.

A man who does not know he is ill does not seek out a physician. He is not overly concerned with a few aches or pains here or there but is confident in his “health” and is not troubled at all. Yet that man, who discovers one morning that his legs no longer work or is bleeding and cannot staunch the flow, or finds some malignancy eating away at his vitals, will drop all that he is doing and seek out one who can help him with his need. In the same fashion that man who is awakened by the SPIRIT of GOD to see his hopeless and helpless condition as a rebel against the Kingdom of GOD, is compelled to cry out for mercy to HIM who alone is able to help him.

These are those “sinners” whom the LORD came *“to call”*. As Hart writes; paraphrasing the words of the LORD JESUS, recorded in Matthew 11:28;

“Come, ye weary, heavy laden, Lost and ruined by the fall;
If you tarry till you’re better, You will never come at all.

Not the righteous, Sinners Jesus came to call.” (#723 Gadsby’s Hymnal)

Who are these privileged “sinners”?

They are those who have no righteousness of their own. The Jews went about to establish their own righteousness and thus despised the righteousness of CHRIST, so too are all of those who rely upon their religion (of whatever sort or denomination it may be) including good works, relative morality, decisions for CHRIST, adherence to laws or rules of order, baptisms, “spiritual gifts”, etc. Paul had religion in abundance yet he said, *“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”* (Php 3:8-9)

They are those who despair of approaching the KING because they see themselves clothed in filthy rags and woefully unprepared to stand in judgment before HIM. They are fearful and afraid that their sin will overwhelm them and insure their ultimate doom. This is that which gripped the heart of the Philippian jailer who cried out, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* (Acts 16:30) and those who were *“pricked in the heart”* on the day of Pentecost who said, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* (Acts 2:37)

They are those who tremble to consider that their sin is a direct affront to GOD. David committed adultery with Bathsheba which ultimately resulted in his ordering the death of Uriah. In doing so he wronged the nation of Israel, his family, Bathsheba, and (not to mention) Uriah. Yet when the LORD had confronted him by the mouth of Nathan the prophet and he was broken in repentance he recognized that his sin was primarily against GOD HIMSELF, saying *“For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.”* (Psa 51:3-4) Religious men or those with natural repentance (such as a sobered-up drunkard) may express regret over their actions, but only an awakened sinner can see that his overwhelming guilt is in disregarding the commandments of a HOLY GOD, for which he has no remedy.

They are those who are compelled to seek the SAVIOR. The LORD JESUS said, *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”* (John 6:37) These are those whom the LORD came to call. True “sinners” can never perish for the *“gifts and calling of GOD are without repentance”* (Rom.11:29) “Not the righteous, not the righteous, Sinners Jesus came to call.”

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