

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

THE TIME WILL COME

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.

II Timothy 4:3

Religion is a powerful force in the earth. Men will hate, persecute, and kill one another in the pursuit and perpetuation of it. The Muslim religion has of late been in the spotlight for quite a few incidents which proves that very fact. Yet, over the years, that religion which is commonly called "Christianity" by some has produced its own share of atrocities, perpetrated by men who were zealous to preserve what they perceived as its purity and to protect its subsequent generations against those who were thought to be its enemies.

There is only one LORD, one FAITH, and one BAPTISM which those, who were first called Christians, at Antioch have followed through the ages. On the other hand there are hundreds of closely aligned substitutes, for that "*pure and undefiled religion*", which have been set forth by men in their quest to "improve" upon the original and make it into a kingdom of flesh and blood. It is these "substitutes" which have produced those who are ready to use the power of the flesh (i.e.; human governments and institutionalized religion) to defend and protect its supporters from all sorts of perceived "enemies" most especially those which it labels "heathens" and "heretics."

The weapons of warfare of true Christianity are not carnal but rest in the power of HIM who is the AUTHOR and FINISHER of its faith. "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.*" (2Cor 10:3-6)

The battle, to which the sons of GOD are called, is not that which is articulated by "conservative" radio and TV hosts or flamboyant "evangelists" and "positive thinking" preachers of varying stripes, whose smiles and upbeat message appeal to the religious flesh of men. In fact they are in essence as much and even more, the enemies of that "*faith which was once delivered to the saints*" as are the militant Muslims and other zealots armed with bombs and machine guns.

They sometimes speak of the benefit of "faith" in a generic and generally inoffensive sort of way. The "conservative" pundits usually lay a groundwork to "prove" that our nation is one which was founded upon "Christianity" and is therefore morally superior to other nations because of this fact. They equate "godliness" with those who agree with them and "godlessness" to those who oppose their political and world views.

The smiling preachers (never a one of them clad in a "leathern girdle") espouse the common message of the ability of men to accomplish great things and approach unto GOD by the power of their own free will, enabling GOD to aid them as they attempt great endeavors and perform mighty works of "faith" which are said to impress HIM even as they impress other men by their efforts and successes of one sort or another; especially the supposed conversion of the masses.

Yet none of this has anything at all to do with the “*preaching of the cross*” which is the only message which compels the saints of GOD to worship at HIS footstool. It is this message alone, which characterizes the declaration of sound doctrine. All other teaching which purports to have a basis in “Christianity” is superfluous and detracts from the offense of the cross, and ultimately negates such in the minds of the hearers who are “naturally” repelled by such.

Paul told Timothy that the “*time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine*”. Some construe his admonition to Timothy to be a prophetic reference to an age or time in the distant future when men would no longer desire to hear the truth. Yet it seems from the context of his remarks that he is apprising Timothy of the natural tendency of men (in all ages, particularly in his own) to move away from sound doctrine. He says “*This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.*” (2Tim 1:15) “*For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.*” (2Tim 4:10)

He had clearly declared that “*all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*” (2Tim 3:12) This persecution does not come from simply living in a godly fashion or remaining morally upright. Rather, the persecution of which he speaks is related to an unwavering commitment to the singular declaration and worship of the crucified CHRIST. This message in its stark simplicity is totally reprehensible to the natural man because it gives him no place to participate and therefore no place to glory. He will always seek to modify it in one fashion or other.

Each one of us has, beating within us, an evil heart of unbelief which remains unchanged and would seek to overturn the things we have been taught by the SPIRIT of GOD in the inward man.. If it were possible even the very elect would thus be deceived. The exhortations of the word of GOD applied to us by the HOLY GHOST through the preaching of HIS word, do indeed cause us to remember that form of sound words which is delivered to us. Yet we know that the enemy has sowed tares among the wheat, and some shall indeed pay no heed to these warnings and admonitions and shall embrace and encourage the errors which lead to their destruction.

Because of the close proximity of GOD’s children to those who love this present world, the admonitions such as Paul set forth to Timothy are all the more dire and appropriate. As he reminded the Corinthians of the idolaters among the house of Israel, “*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*” (1Cor 10:11-12) While we find complete rest in CHRIST we must never be complacent with the truth.

Do we not see this same sort of warning given to the Ephesian elders as Paul told them, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears”(Acts 20:28-31)? That warning is no less appropriate today than then.

The writer of Hebrews issues the same warning as the one Paul gave to the Corinthians, using a similar example. “*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.” (Heb 3:12-14) Those who are the true followers of CHRIST cannot be discovered simply by how they begin their journey but in what manner they complete it. The deceitfulness of sin is anything which would turn our eyes away from the absolute sufficiency of that which CHRIST has performed in the behalf of HIS elect.

Let no man judge himself to be a believer in JESUS CHRIST who has any confidence in any activity of his own flesh. “*But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.*” (2Thess 2:13)

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