

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

FEW AND MANY

Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?

Luke 13:23

It was generally the consensus of opinion among the Jews that all who were born of Abraham's natural seed would ultimately be saved. The message that the LORD JESUS taught, introduced questions about this in the minds of many and was part of the reason for many rejecting HIS teaching. (see Luke 4:23-30; John 6:63-66). The man who asked this question most likely was one seeking to prop up his own mistaken notion about this "general salvation".

Yet, as the LORD did on many occasions, HE did not directly answer the man's question but rather directed him to a matter of far greater concern to the man. It matters little whether or not we can determine exactly who will be saved, or whether it be few or many, if we ourselves are not found among those HE owns when HE comes to judge the quick (i.e.; living) and the dead.

Thus the LORD startled him (no doubt) by saying "*Strive to enter in at the strait (i.e.; narrow, tightly constricted) gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*" (Luke 13:24) It is interesting that the LORD moves the man's attention away from a consideration of "if there be few saved" to the more sobering thought that there will be "many" who shall seek to enter in who shall not be able.

Both the word "few" and the word "many" are comparative numbers. One may have a family reunion and have "many" people present. Yet that same group of folks would be "few" if they were in a football stadium on New Years Day. The important lesson that the LORD taught and is reiterated in the faithful proclamation of the gospel is that there is only ONE WAY of salvation which has been manifested to men. The LORD JESUS said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6) This is that "narrow way" of which HE spoke, "*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*" (Mat 7:13-14)

One can find little if any similarity to these words of CHRIST with that pabulum which is served up by the multitude of "so called" preachers peddling their wares in today's religious marketplace. To listen to them one would have to conclude that a man would have to actively seek his own damnation in order to perish in the final conflagration prepared for the wicked. They tell us that GOD has done everything HE could possibly do to save every individual and all that a man has to do in order to be saved is just "believe". This is something that they tell us is so easy that anyone can do it whenever he decides to and can even fill out a coupon to prove it.

There are numbers of other "gospel vendors" who tell us that "just believing is not enough". Then they add all sorts of other actions that a man must take in order to be saved; from being baptized in water, jabbering in an unknown language, or fulfilling other sorts of duties and acts of obedience, or embracing various theological confessions drafted by men. The only thing that the first group (just believe) and the second group (believe and do) have in common is that they

believe that man's salvation is the result of his own free will and that CHRIST only made salvation a possibility with the final outcome dependent on the action of the man to complete it.

The prevailing thought, that the natural man is born with, is that there is a cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil. This notion is common in just about all societies and cultures. Out of this innate error arises the idea, in "christianity" (so called) that GOD has offered up a plan or method of snatching as many folks as possible from the snares of the devil. Thus is presented the teaching that GOD is desperately trying to get men to do something that many are unwilling to do and thus HE is left with a partially fulfilled desire, since as these "entertainers" tell us, HE can only save those who let HIM save them though HE wants to save everybody.

Since they believe in a modicum of success for the god who (they say) loves everybody the same, they generally retreat to the position that far more men will be saved than will be lost since they believe HIS success is measured by the numbers of those "saved". Therefore they conclude this is proof that HE is on the winning side of this cosmic struggle. Some have opined that Hell is a testament to the failure of GOD to save everyone, but will in reality be quite small. There is no evidence in the scripture to support this notion but much that proves the opposite. The LORD said that many would perish and few would be saved. (see I Pet,3:20)

Any teaching that purports that the ABSOLUTE GOD of the universe, can in anywise fail to fulfill HIS own purpose and desire, flies in the face of the scriptures and is an absolutely blasphemous notion. The "success" of GOD cannot in anywise be measured by the potsherd of the earth. HE has plainly declared that HE measures HIS own success in the performance of HIS own purpose. *"Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory."* (Isa 46:8-13)

What folly is exhibited by men in trying to determine who it is that the LORD will save or if there are ultimately many or few (as they would judge). Some ride the bandwagon of a "broad" salvation and make it almost impossible to be lost. Others ride the bandwagon of defining what a man must confess and believe (or do) to the point that it would be impossible for anyone other than themselves, (and they are suspicious of one another) to be saved. Some even narrow it down to what kind of preacher one must listen to. *"But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble."* (Psa 37:39)

There is no help for trembling sinners in the creeds and confessions of faith, drawn up by well educated and well meaning "preachers" and "teachers". There is no help for them in a GOD who can only stand by and watch them slowly drift into hell, powerless to save them apart from their cooperation. There is no help for them in the baptismal waters, membership in proud religious organizations, regardless of their heritage or longevity, or contrived "evidences" which are the product of coercion, the power of suggestion and outright fraud.

The only place that a sinner, who finds himself terrified at the thought of standing before an all consuming GOD, can find any comfort is in the words of that same GOD who says, *"The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."* (Isa 66:1-2) This is the same SAVIOR who is mighty to save, and even commands them saying, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* (Mat 11:28) *"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."* (Isa 63:1)