

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

FAITH, LOVE, AND HOPE

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. I Thessalonians 1:3-4

The primary purpose of preaching the gospel is to magnify the NAME and work of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Any other benefit that might arise from such is of secondary importance. If CHRIST alone is not glorified in the proclamation of the reconciliation which Paul spoke of, (see II Cor. 5:18,19) then such preaching is wasted upon the vanity of men, who might suppose that there is some compelling reason why the ETERNAL LORD of GLORY should shed HIS blood to redeem sinners other than HIS own purpose to bring glory to HIMSELF.

Because CHRIST is the central subject of the Gospel, Paul has described it thusly, "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*" (1Tim 1:15) This is the message which shall be declared throughout the ages to come, "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*" (Rev 5:12)

The rejoicing of the saints, both in this world and that which is to come is in the exaltation of HIS NAME which is above every name. "*Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.*" (Eph 1:20-21) This is the everlasting SONG of the ages, "*CHRIST is ALL!*"! Let every creature that hath breath praise HIM in the heavens and the earth.

It is upon this rich tapestry that all of the designs and details of the redemptive work of CHRIST are seen. If a man should fail to see the GLORY of CHRIST in each and every one of these details then it is impossible that he should be able to comprehend anything of the breadth and the depth of the gospel. To preach any message which would give a man a basis upon which to hope which is not JESUS CHRIST alone is to declare a counterfeit gospel. CHRIST alone will be glorified by the redeemed as well as those heavenly creatures who look on in adoring wonder at the unfolding of all which HE has been pleased to perform.

When Paul said "*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*" (1Cor 2:2); he eliminated all other declarations as being improper. This is exactly what Peter meant when he said, "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" (Act 4:12) The NAME and AUTHORITY of CHRIST is the very basis of sound gospel preaching. Anything that is added to it or taken from it, is a deception which is worthy of damnation.

The introduction of man's free will as a modification of the complete and finished work of CHRIST, is to pervert the truth and give man a place that he might glory in his own works. If CHRIST is said to only make "salvation possible", with man providing the "missing link" of faith, by an action of his own free will, then man's "authority" must be greater than HIS who is the

AUTHOR and FINISHER of our faith. This is a notion which cannot be tolerated but must be opposed at all costs, by those whose hope is built on nothing less than JESUS' BLOOD and RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It is with this in mind, that the Apostle Paul, commends the faith, love, and hope of those saints in Thessalonica. To suppose that a man could by nature possess any of these attributes is to deny the scriptures which plainly teach, *"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* (Rom 3:12)

FAITH is clearly the *"gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."* (Eph 2:8-9) Whenever you find true faith, you will find those who confess that it is *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;"* (Tit 3:5-6)

FAITH rests in its OBJECT which is JESUS CHRIST. Those who truly believe might despair of ever discovering the operation of faith in themselves, but they never despair of casting themselves upon HIM who is their FAITH. (see Job 13:15; John 6:68) True faith is much more readily seen in us by our brethren, than it ever is by our own eyes. Paul declared that he knew WHO it was in whom he believed. (see II Tim.1:12) The man who boasts of how much faith he possesses is ignorant of the nature of true faith; as is the man who considers that he can believe by an act of his own will.

LOVE of the brethren is the true evidence of the work of GOD's SPIRIT in the sons of GOD. Even as HE declared, *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* (John 13:35) The man who is without this LOVE is devoid of the working of the HOLY GHOST. *"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) Many will offer substitute proofs of HIS SPIRIT's work, such as an adherence to particular doctrinal schemes, faithfulness in various activities or fleshly manifestations of one sort or another, yet to be without this love is to be an imposter in the kingdom of GOD and to be as that one who had no wedding garment.

This LOVE is "unfeigned", "uncontrived", and not merely theoretical, because it is the product of HIM who works in HIS people both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure. It is that which causes brethren to bear one another's burdens, esteem one another above themselves, forbear and forgive one another, and see to the needs of one another. *"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."* (1John 4:20-21) *"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"* (James 2:15-16) This is that *"labor of love"* which Paul speaks of to the Thessalonians.

HOPE is that which is said to be with "patience". Even as Paul writes to the Romans, *"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."* (Rom 8:24-25) While faith is that which surveys the wondrous works which GOD has wrought in times past as well as standing upon HIM as the basis for all blessing, hope is that which is clearly focused on that which is yet on the "horizon", and does ever yearn for that which faith causes one to expect based on the OBJECT upon which it stands.

The work of FAITH is the gift of GOD and is that which rests in HIM as its AUTHOR and FINISHER. The labor of LOVE is that evidence of the SPIRIT's presence and continued operation in the saints of GOD. The patience of HOPE is that gift which is bestowed upon the sons of GOD that causes them to look forward to the fulfillment of all of the promises of GOD, in which they have been caused to believe. *"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1Thes 5:8-9) mam