

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 PEACEABLE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Hebrews 12:11

GOD has a purpose in all things, but that purpose is not always readily apparent. There is always a way which seems right to man but that way is never, the right way, and is that which leads to death when pursued. (see Prov 14:12) This is demonstrated quite clearly in the manner in which men approach the law of GOD and the purpose for which they think it was given.

The natural man looks at the law as a catalog of requirements which GOD has set forth, to give men a guideline as to how they should live their lives. There is no doubt that this law does set forth some very stringent guidelines, but the purpose of them is not to give the sons of GOD a simple rule to follow but rather to reveal the depravity of their own hearts as they see the enmity of their mind against such rules and to teach them of their utter inability to keep the law.

The rich young ruler asked the LORD for a simple rule whereby he might inherit eternal life. The LORD told him what seemed to him (at the time) a simple enough plan, "*Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.*" (Luke 18:20), as he replied, "*All these have I kept from my youth up.*" (Luke 18:21) He was quite satisfied with his performance as many are who claim that they keep the commandments of the LORD and even exhort others to do the same all the while shaking their heads in disgust at those who are lawbreakers.

Yet when the LORD revealed to this young ruler what the true nature of the law was, he went away sorrowing. What he thought the purpose of the law was and what the LORD showed him it was were two different things. The LORD used the law to teach him of the hardness of his heart. By this revelation HE manifested to him how far short of keeping the law he was, and therefore how far he was from inheriting eternal life by his own effort.

Paul points out this same very deadly trait which is exhibited by those Jews after the flesh, to whom Moses' law and the oracles (i.e.; prophets) were given. "*For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*" (Rom 10:3) Since they think they can keep the law they are satisfied that their own performance of it will make them acceptable unto GOD.

In point of fact, Paul, himself, testifies that he had the exact same mindset until, by the grace of GOD he was shown his own depraved heart, by a revelation of the absolute holiness of the law. "*For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.*" (Rom 7:9-11)

He testifies that he was "*alive*", (i.e.; satisfied with his performance) when he considered himself to be a lawkeeper, since he was "*without the law*", (i.e.; void of an understanding of the true

purpose and nature of the law.) Yet *“when the commandment came”*, (i.e.; the LORD revealed to him that nature and purpose) *“sin revived, and I died”* (i.e.; he was judged in his mind as a wicked man, and slain in his conscience, as he saw the utter impossibility of his keeping the law.) That *“commandment”* (i.e.; law) *“which was ordained to life”* (i.e.; a truly holy law, which in his own mind he thought could minister life to him by his performance of it.) *“I found to be unto death”* (i.e.; he discovered that the law which he expected to be justified by could only condemn him, not because of a fault in the law, but because the depravity of his own heart precluded him from keeping it.) He goes on to say that he was *“deceived”* by sin (i.e.; because of his own innate blindness to understand what he was) and was slain by the law when the holiness of it was contrasted with the true wickedness of his own heart.

It is a demonstration of GOD’s mercy when a man is “slain by the law”. As long as a man thinks that he can and does keep the law of GOD, that man will go about to establish his own righteousness before GOD and being unable to see himself for what he is, shall perish in his own righteousness being void of that one and only true righteousness which is found in CHRIST alone.

Yet when the LORD in sovereign mercy acquaints a man with his own innate depravity and secret rebellion against the law of GOD, contrasted against the backdrop of the utter immutability and holiness of that law, then that man will fall down and confess of a truth that he is a sinner without any hope of being found righteous before the LORD by his own obedience.

There are many who would confess that they are true believers in CHRIST, who nonetheless continue on with a notion that since they are now believers they are somehow able to perform the deeds that they are exhorted to do in the New Testament. It is no less a principle of legalism for those who claim to be saved by grace through the faith of JESUS CHRIST to look at the exhortations of the New Testament as a list of requirements which they faithfully work on keeping as obedient sons of GOD, than it was for the Jews to think that they could keep the Law of Moses and be justified thereby.

The exhortations of the New Testament must not be neglected in any wise, yet for a man to consider that he is able to perform them in his own power is the same error which the Jews were destroyed by. The reason that we are exhorted to perform acts of obedience, which we gladly confess are beneficial and good, is to drive us to CHRIST as our PERFORMER. The purpose of these exhortations is threefold:

To teach us that perfect law (or principle) of liberty to which the sons of GOD are called. This is in contrast to that *“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:”* (Eph 2:2) *“For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”* (Rom 6:20-22)

To remind us of our continual weakness in the flesh. When we are exhorted to esteem our brethren above ourselves or to love our wives even as we love our own bodies, we most certainly recognize the utter impossibility of actually performing this by our own power. Except it be that HE works in us *“both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure”*, we shall miserably fail.

To acquaint us with the character of CHRIST as that perfect MAN who did no sin neither was guile found in HIS mouth. All of those things we are exhorted to perform, HE has already demonstrated a complete obedience to. Would we pray without ceasing? CHRIST has already prayed that our faith fail not. Would we rejoice evermore? CHRIST is as a *“bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.”* (Psa 19:5) Let us be those who are, *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* (Heb 12:2) This is that *“peaceable fruit of righteousness”*, when we see CHRIST as our ALL in all, working all things for our good according to HIS pleasure. May HE thus *“exercise”* us.

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