

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XIII

Issue 40

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

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

ENDURING RIGHTEOUSNESS

His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever. Psalm 111:3

All true and lasting righteousness is found in HIM whom Paul declares: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. (1Cor 1:30) CHRIST has demonstrated HIS purpose in the earth to establish a righteous kingdom by the satisfaction of HIS own law and the application of HIS own perfect obedience to it, by the imputation of HIS righteousness to those whom HE came to redeem. At the same time, HE has taken upon HIMSELF their sin debt. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom 3:24-26)

Great is the error of those who make this imputation and justification to be that which is conditioned upon the activity of faith, whether foreseen or presently manifested. This notion is to rob GOD of the glory which HE would declare in the gospel as the purveyor of the sum total of the righteousness of HIS elect. Rather than faith being a condition which men produce in order to obtain the benefits of that which CHRIST has procured, we read that faith is the gift of GOD which is the avenue through which the LORD would manifest HIS perfect redemption and justification to the conscience of those to whom HE is pleased to grant this faith.

GOD's people believe because of the blessing of salvation given to them rather than gaining salvation as a result of believing. Paul asks the question; "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14) The answers to all of these questions is "they cannot". Except it be that the LORD sends them HIS word; which work is manifested by the gift of faith. For indeed, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom 10:17) The LORD never sends HIS word in vain. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isa 55:10-11) If anyone should doubt that this is true he can see the demonstration of it in Acts 13:48, "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

The righteousness of CHRIST is the only grounds of acceptance which the elect of GOD have in the presence of HIM who is holy and undefiled. Men have no basis in themselves to approach unto HIM who "only hath immortality, dwelling in the light to which no man can approach." Even Adam, before he had sinned, did not have access unto HIM who "inhabitest eternity". Except the LORD should come down and commune with Adam, Adam had no means whereby he might search out and discover the LORD.

So it is that apart from the LORD applying HIS righteousness to those who have sinned after the similitude of Adam, none should ever be able to stand in HIS presence. The Psalmist asks a

question *“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?”* (Psa 24:3). Then he answers it quite plainly, *“He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.”* (Psa 24:4) This answer most certainly could not describe any of the fallen sons of Adam, for who among us has clean hands or a pure heart, no vanity nor deceit? *“For there is none good, no not one.”*

Yet there is ONE who was born of a woman, *“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:”* (1Pet 2:22) HE is indeed a purely righteous MAN, whose righteousness is from everlasting. HE is that ONE who is perfect in the FATHER’s sight, holy, and set apart, coming into the earth to do HIS FATHER’s will. Before the mountains were settled or the hills brought forth HE was without spot or blemish, the APPLE of HIS FATHER’s eye. HE is that ONE of whom the Psalmist speaks and HE is standing in *“HIS holy place”*. *“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”* (Heb 1:8-9)

There are basically three types of people in the earth:

There are those who have neither regard nor particular thought unto the necessity of any form of righteousness. They are basically unconcerned about whether or not they must stand in judgment before GOD. The Psalmist says that they are fools. *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”* (Psa 14:1) The Proverbs describes them, *“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.”* (Pro 22:3) By and large they are completely content with their philosophies and wisdom and are simply unmoved and unfazed by any declarations of the TRUTH of CHRIST. They consider any and all “religion” to be mere fables and only useful as a crutch for the weak. Festus and Agrippa are good examples of this.

Then there are those (who I believe comprise the vast majority of the population) who are exercised to some degree in their conscience (see Rom.2;15) about the necessity and desirability of possessing some form of righteousness. To this end they establish and practice various kinds of religions, perform good and charitable deeds, seek to be good stewards of the earth, try to be good citizens and patriots, lift up and encourage their fellow men, or at least they believe that they should be engaged in many helpful and industrious pursuits and place some value on those who do engage in these activities.

Religion of one type or another is considered by them to be very useful: to some even an absolute necessity and the standard by which they would judge whether or not a man could expect to receive the blessings of GOD. There are many who are content with a nominal practice of the religion of their choice but there are many avid and extremely devoted advocates of their particular brand of “service to GOD”. They are generally satisfied with their “faith”, certain of their salvation, and content with their traditions. As such they are like those Jews who went about to establish their own righteousness. Cain was just such a man as was the apostle Paul before his journey to Damascus.

Then there is another group of folks who have been convinced by a POWER outside of themselves that they do not possess one thing with which to recommend themselves to GOD. They tremble and fear to consider that they should have to stand before the throne of Judgment clad in any robe of righteousness which is not bestowed upon them by that ONE who clothes HIS elect with HIS own perfections. They are speechless before GOD, and like the Publican, can only smite upon their breasts and say “GOD be merciful to me a sinner”. They can point to no reason they should be given an entrance into the presence of GOD, except that HE has revealed HIMSELF as the SAVIOR of sinners, which they have no doubt they are the worst. By HIS grace they are made to confess that they believe that JESUS CHRIST is the SON of GOD whose righteousness endures forever and that in that righteousness they hope to stand. *“That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Rom 5:21)