

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

MNASON OF CYPRUS

There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. *Acts 21:16*

The Bible has been compared to a mine from which many jewels are placed to be gathered as the LORD sees fit to show them to the miners. Some of those jewels are as plain as the nose on your face and can be seen clearly, without even so much as a coat of dust, hindering their discovery, and can be found without any sort of digging or labor at all. Yet, often, there are jewels of great value which are found in the most obscure of places and not so easily espied.

We are sure that there are no superfluous words to be found in the Scriptures, and all events which the LORD saw fit to include therein are surely given for the profit of those who are called by HIS grace and given eyes to see and ears to hear what the SPIRIT says to the churches. We are cautioned to add nothing to those scriptures nor to take anything away. (see Rev.22:18,19)

The book of Acts is a treasure trove, for sure, as we read the unfolding of the events which transpired in the early days of the ministration of the gospel to the four corners of the world even as the LORD commissioned HIS apostles in Matthew 28:19,20 and then promised to endue them with power to perform that commission, "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*" (Acts 1:8)

Many, over the years and especially in our day have run where they have not been sent and sought out many and varied devices, to accomplish what they consider to be a blanket mandate for the conversion of disciples. It is much easier to run than it is to wait upon the LORD even as HE instructed HIS disciples, "*Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*" (Luke 24:49) It is no more obedient unto the command of the LORD to go where HE has not sent, than it is to dally and neglect that which HE has commanded to be done.

The LORD is both the AUTHOR and FINISHER of our faith, even as HE is the ONE who, alone, sends HIS messenger to those whose ears HE has prepared to hear. We think of the example of the Ethiopian to whom Phillip was sent, (see Acts 8:26-40), of Lydia whose heart the LORD opened and provided the apostle Paul as a messenger of truth, (see Acts 16:14) and Cornelius (a gentile) to whom Peter was sent, only after the LORD prepared Peter to go to him, by revealing to him that whatever GOD has made clean is clean indeed. (see Acts 10:1-48) This illustration is repeated over and over again, as we see those Jews of every nation gathered on the day of Pentecost and Peter endued with power to preach unto them, with three thousand believing that which was preached (Acts 2:14-41) We see a Philippian jailor put in a situation of dire distress and the messengers of the LORD bringing him a sweet consolation. (see Acts 16:34) And we see a group of gentiles at Antioch desiring to listen to the message of Paul, and then as many as were ordained to receive eternal life believing upon the day appointed by the LORD. (see Acts 13:48)

Neither the hearers nor the messengers had prior knowledge of that which the LORD was going to perform, but it is quite clear that all events which transpired to bring about these results were ordained by the LORD to occur in the exact fashion which they did, and both the hearers and the messengers were enabled by the LORD, so that HE alone might be glorified.

Over time the purpose and importance of preaching and preachers has often been skewed by those who fancy themselves as exclusive messengers of GOD's truth. The sons of Diotrephes are naturally drawn to the practice of preaching and it is both their desire and bent to seek to make the calling and gift of preaching a license to take unto themselves a particular status among the sons of GOD, usually replete with some sort of title (i.e.; elder, bishop, reverend or pastor, etc) to set them apart from the rank and file. Paul warned the Ephesian elders of this in Acts 20:28-30, specifically mentioning the desire of some to "*draw away disciples after them.*" The rise of the notion that there is a "clerical class" among the sons of GOD has been a thorn in the side of the church from its very inception. (see Rev.2:6,15) This error is encouraged by the natural bent of men to desire a king to rule over them, even as the children of Israel did.

The church of CHRIST; however, has only one HEAD and is made up of members who are individually made priests and kings and given gifts which are each one necessary and useful for the building up of the body of CHRIST. "*And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal (i.e. the whole body).*" (1Cor 12:6-7) "*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*" (Eph 4:15-16)

While we would in no wise seek to minimize or dismiss the importance and usefulness of the gifts of preaching and teaching, we would be remiss to allow the use of these gifts to render negligible, (either in fact or in the thoughts of the brethren) the other gifts that are given to the saints for the benefit of the body. All are not teachers yet all are given gifts which are necessary for the edification of the body of CHRIST. The purpose of the meeting of the saints is to manifest their love for and dependence upon one another as members of the body of CHRIST, as they worship the LORD together and remember HIS death until HE comes again...

In that meeting, there will likely be the exercise of the gifts of those whose calling it is to edify the saints through teaching, but we must not conclude that the purpose of the meeting of the church is primarily to hear someone preach or teach nor should we conclude that the ministry of the saints one to another is limited to that meeting time and place.

We see here in this verse before us a clear example of a ministry which was given to this man, Mnason, which was not that of preaching or teaching nor manifested in the setting of a formal meeting of the saints. This man's ministry to the saints was both necessary and useful and he was prepared by the LORD as well as sent to perform it. He provided hospitality in the form of giving these weary travelers a place of lodging.

Showing hospitality to the saints is indeed a gift for which all are not particularly suited nor equipped. Yet it is a blessing both to those who are given this ministry and to those who are the recipients of that gift. This was mentioned as a requirement for those widows which were prospectively to be supported by the early church. "*Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.*" (1Tim 5:10)

I can personally testify of the great blessings that I have received in being a partaker of the hospitality of brethren as well as the equal blessing that has been bestowed in those instances when I could provide this hospitality to others. This should not be minimized and is surely as much a benefit in a practical fashion as a great oration. GOD is pleased to manifest HIS grace and mercy in every ministry of the saints one to another.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."(Php 2:5-9) mam