

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XIV

Issue 36

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

SO GREAT FAITH

When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

Matthew 8:10

Throughout the scriptures the LORD has demonstrated HIS purpose to hide the true nature of HIS kingdom from the wise and prudent (i.e.; those whose confidence is in the flesh and their own understanding; who are in practice the purveyors of the power of man's free will) and revealing it unto babes (i.e.; those who have been shown their own weakness and inability and thus are dependent on outside help, most notably that of the LORD HIMSELF).

This is nowhere more clearly seen than in HIS use of Israel as typical of HIS elect bride, insofar as that HE gave unto them HIS prophets. *"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."* (Rom 3:1-2) They assumed, however, that because they had a written and declared word from the LORD, that they could thereby inherit the kingdom of GOD by their own obedience to its precepts and the orthodox practices outlined therein. What they could not see (hidden from them) was that the very law which they thought was their key to life, was in reality given to manifest their innate corruption and willing disobedience to the ONE who gave it.

This is much like those who would tell us that they believe the "Bible" and that they seek to abide by its precepts in order that they might gain GOD's favor or at least demonstrate their ability to be obedient to it in one form or another as a means of distinguishing them from those who have no regard to it. They might be found singing, "I'm using my Bible for a road map."

We certainly would never speak against anyone who desires to obey the written WORD of GOD, but we are also certain that men need something else besides a carnal knowledge of the things recorded on those pages which can be read by natural eyes. This is exactly what the LORD said to Nicodemus. *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* (John 3:3) Nicodemus was not ignorant of the Scriptures and he (being a Pharisee) embraced those precepts quite openly but he was in darkness nonetheless.

Many are those who expect that they can adhere to the precepts of the Bible and if they are persuasive enough they can get others to obey them too. In doing so they rely upon their carnal understanding and demonstrate that they have no understanding of either the purpose of those directives, the lofty nature of them, nor their utter inability to walk according to them in the fashion in which they are manifested by the teaching of the HOLY GHOST.

A man who looks at the teachings of the LORD and thinks in his heart and mind that he can abide by them and walk in obedience to them, has never been acquainted with the innate corruption that abides within him. Thus while he thinks that he sees; he is in reality blind to the truth and is yet in his sin and the Kingdom of GOD is hidden from him. This was exactly the mindset of the rich young ruler who came to the LORD saying that he had kept the commandments of GOD from the time of his youth. Alas, he went away sorrowing when he was

confronted with the spiritual nature of the truth of GOD which was revealed to him to be completely at odds with his own way and desire.

Thus we see Israel in the Old Testament used by the LORD to demonstrate the fact that HE has a chosen people in the earth who are the benefactors of HIS grace and mercy. Yet we also see that HE uses Israel in the Old and New Testaments as an illustration of those who are naturally religious and who go about to establish their own righteousness while rejecting the only true RIGHTEOUSNESS which is found in JESUS CHRIST alone. *"Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."* (1Pet 2:6-8) *"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)

Those who think that they see (by their own power, understanding, and free will) are in reality those who are blind. Thus we see the LORD upbraiding the Jews when HE said, *"Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel!"* The LORD had chosen this Roman Centurion as a vessel of honor, even though he was a member of a nation which was no friend of the Jews but rather their oppressor. This is all the more reason for "amazement" (HE as a Jew) that the gift of faith would be granted to a Gentile. Now in reality, HE was not surprised, since HE is that ONE who knows the end from the beginning and orders all things to occur according to the pleasure of HIS will.

Yet HE reacts with "wonder" (i.e.; HE marveled) as any man born of a woman and steeped in the Jew's religion might. For this is not a thing which can be explained by mere men. We see the Jews hateful reaction to HIS message concerning the widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian. *"But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian."* (Luke 4:25-27)

Those Jews rose in anger when HE told them that the LORD had chosen the Gentile widow of Sarepta as an object of HIS mercy over all those widows which were of the house of Israel and likewise HE chose the Gentile, Naaman (a Syrian no less) above all of the lepers which were in Israel at the time, just as much in need of healing as Naaman was. The LORD would demonstrate that HE has chosen a people from every tribe and tongue as the inhabitants of HIS kingdom and has cast out the bondwoman and her son. *"(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)"* (Rom 9:11)

This is one of the chief principles that differentiates that Kingdom which is from above from that one which is of the flesh. Flesh and blood cannot inherit that Kingdom for it is made up of those *"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* (John 1:13) Men cannot and will not receive this truth gladly unless convinced by the SPIRIT. Men can, in the flesh, learn the doctrine of election and can even vociferously defend it in the same. Yet they cannot love it and gladly bow their own knees unto an absolutely sovereign GOD apart from a new birth.

This Centurion demonstrated the result of a new birth when he declared his own confidence and belief in JESUS CHRIST as a MAN with absolute authority. This was that *"great faith"* which the LORD remarked about. True faith always has an OBJECT. CHRIST JESUS is that one and only OBJECT upon which "great faith" is based. Just like the Ethiopian Eunuch who declared, *"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."* (Acts 8:37) No greater faith than this can be found in Israel, Samaria, or the uttermost parts of the Earth.

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