

# 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*

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## A FORM OF GODLINESS

*Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.* *II Timothy 3:5*

Paul begins this chapter by telling Timothy, “*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*” (2Tim 3:1) Many, upon reading this, assume that he is speaking of some occurrence which will take place far in the distant future. Many modern day “futuristic prophets” teach that the “last days” is referring to a period which is yet to take place in the earth or which they identify as this particular time in history, in contrast with the days in which Paul lived.

Yet a perusal of the scriptures without such preconceived notions leads us to see that these days in which the apostle lived as well as the present age in which we currently abide, are the last days which were ushered in when CHRIST appeared in the earth as the FINAL and GREAT PROPHET of GOD. “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.*” (Heb 1:1-2) John recognized this truth quite plainly saying, “*Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*” (1John 2:18)

So Paul was not apprising Timothy of some worsening of man's nature which would arise two thousand years in the future but rather warning him of the corruption which is in men by nature and which will manifest itself in spite of the great revelation which has been made known unto the sons of GOD. He is warning Timothy of this inalterable fact and what will arise as a result of it.

The LORD is pleased to gather his children to himself when and as HE sees fit. It is but a testimony to the corruption of men and the purpose of GOD, that during these “ingatherings”, there are also many false disciples who are drawn in among the saints, but having no root soon wither or are eventually choked out by the cares of this world as HE demonstrated in the Parable of the Sower. HE reinforces this notion when HE told HIS disciples of the wheat and tares which are to grow together until the time of the harvest.

Paul spoke of this sobering truth, to the Ephesian elders, when he told them that of their own number there would arise teachers of perverse things which would reinforce the message of the wolves sent to deceive the church of GOD. (see Acts 20:30) So strong are these deceptions that even the very elect of GOD would be carried away by them, “*if it were possible*”. (see Mat.24:24)

While the elect of GOD cannot be destroyed by these ravaging wolves and those who lie in wait to deceive, they are nonetheless sometimes wounded and scattered by them. Thus the exhortations abound in the scriptures, urging the sons of GOD to be diligent and watchful, being wise as serpents but harmless as doves. “*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*” (Heb 3:12)

Paul mentions those who have a “*form of Godliness*”, and admonishes Timothy to turn away from such. To entertain or encourage these deceivers (and deceived) is to be a partaker of their

sins. They must be warned, rebuked and admonished with the word of GOD, if perhaps there be among them a brother who might be recovered. (see 2 Tim 2:26; Jude 1:23)

Satan has a counterfeit for nearly every truth that the LORD is pleased to work in HIS people. It is often very difficult to discern between the precious and the vile and thus the SPIRIT of GOD prompts the sons of GOD to watch and be diligent, shunning error and cleaving to those things which are sound and true. *"And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."* (2Pet 3:15-17)

Thus the scriptures warn us of those who have a "form of godliness". In the construction industry a "form" is a device which is used to shape that which becomes part of a building but it is not itself a part of the building. That which is a "form" is not in reality that which it resembles. So too are these "forms of godliness". They appear to be genuine yet they miss the mark in very important details, most especially, they deny the POWER which produces true GODLINESS, and thus seek their own glory in order to establish their own righteousness. Some of them are:

The preaching of salvation by the free will of men. There is probably no greater error that has been introduced into, so called, gospel preaching, than the notion that a man can be saved whenever he chooses to be. There is no doubt that those who are saved do willingly embrace the truth of the gospel, but there can also be no doubt that they will not do so until they are "*made willing in the day of HIS power.*" (see Ps.110:3) "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*" (John 6:44)

The preaching of the "new birth" as the **result** of faith rather than the new birth being the **cause** of faith. Some say this is a minor point yet in reality this is the very basis upon which we can discern between that which is true and that which is error. A man must be "born again" (i.e.; born from above) in order to "see" the Kingdom of GOD. This new birth precedes the gift of faith from the hand of GOD. The sons of GOD who believe are "*born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" (John 1:13)

The juxtaposition of liberty and license and the confusion of will worship and self denial. One thing that Paul makes abundantly clear in his teaching is that "*all things are lawful*" to the sons of GOD. Nothing can bring them into condemnation whether it be substances or practices. However, those who would view the indulgence of their flesh as being "liberty" are themselves in bondage as much so as those on the other hand who make lists of things the children of GOD should not do, saying "*touch not, taste not, handle not*". Expediency and the benefit of the brethren are the rules whereby the sons of GOD are to use and not abuse the things of this world.

The supposition that GOD is pleased with the good deeds of men. This concept is systemic to our flesh in which the law of GOD is written. If we value the good deeds of ourselves or others, then surely GOD must have the same opinion, the flesh reasons. Surely GOD is more likely to bless the man who walks in accordance to the law, than those who openly rebel against it. Yet to hold this view is to deny the scriptures which tell us that even our "*righteousnesses are as filthy rags*" before the LORD and that there is "*none righteous, no not one.*" Man has nothing in himself whereby he might be found acceptable in GOD's sight, regardless of whether he is a Democrat or a Republican, Gentile or Jew, teetotaler or libertine. "*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of GOD.*"

The practice of outward displays of worship in order to be seen of others. "*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.*" (Mat 6:6) "*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" (John 4:23-24)

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