

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

MIRROR, MIRROR

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. *II Corinthians 3:18*

Most everyone is familiar with the children's story about "Snow White". One of the characters (the evil queen) has a magic mirror which she looks into every day, asking it who the fairest in the land is. Of course the mirror answers that she is the most beautiful one in all of the land, until one day, to her surprise and horror, the mirror replies that there is one who is fairer than she. She can no longer take any delight in beholding her image in that mirror until she has destroyed the most beautiful, "Snow White".

We can see, in the actions (and reactions) of the evil queen, an illustration of the carnal man who in his natural religiosity looks at the reflection of himself in the mirror of his own self-righteousness and finds many things which are pleasing to him. He is content to look upon his own deeds as those which are pleasing both to himself and the LORD to some extent. His base desire is to compare himself to others as a measure and standard of his righteousness or acceptance with the LORD.

Rather than mourning his imperfections, he makes excuses for them and expects that he can make improvements which will ultimately negate his shortcomings. While natural religion requires that he admit to some faults yet he considers that his faults are no worse than many and in many cases far fewer than great numbers of others.

His ultimate hatred of the LORD's STANDARD of righteousness is demonstrated as he, by nature, despises the notion that the LORD requires absolute perfection. Surely, he reasons, his righteousness (even with his imperfections) must count for something and be somewhat acceptable in the LORD's sight, if for no other reason than simply that he is a human, which he imagines is a most noble creature endued with natural goodness.

The LORD used the Jews (especially the Sadducees, and Pharisees) to manifest the natural hatred of mankind for that ONE whom HE has sent into the world as a perfect Man. In the beginning of HIS earthly ministry many of these leaders sought HIM out and marveled at HIS wisdom. Yet as time went on, they perceived HIS unassailable character to be a real threat to their power. *"But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance."* (Mat 21:38)

As long as their mirror of self-righteousness boasted to them of their fairness among men they were content. Yet when it was revealed unto them, how far short of CHRIST's perfections they came, they hated HIM and set about to destroy HIM, according to the ordained purpose of GOD. *"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."* (Acts 2:22-23)

Natural men are content with their righteousness relative to others, totally and willingly, ignorant of Paul's admonition, *"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."* (2Cor 10:12)

Paul's use of the word "glass" here refers to a mirror and he is simply telling the Corinthians that those who are born again cannot be content to rest in their own "righteousness", knowing that such is as filthy rags in the sight of GOD. (see Isa.64:6) Rather, their contentment, (i.e.; liberty) is found as they look into the mirror of GOD's grace and see there, not their own imperfections, but the perfect righteousness of CHRIST in whom they stand. For it is in the imputation of HIS righteousness unto those that believe, wherein they stand fully accepted in the BELOVED who is their SUBSTITUTE and MEDIATOR.

Thus Paul says that the children of GOD with "open face", (in contrast to that veiled face which Moses had and the veil which is upon those who are under the law, see 2 Cor. 3:13-17) now can plainly see that all of their righteousness is found in CHRIST. This is the "liberty" which is given to them which does not come as a "result" of their efforts or the fulfillment of certain duties and requirements, but is given to them according to the promise which is discovered in the gospel.

The sons of GOD are exhorted to *"Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom 6:11) Some have assumed that Paul is merely saying "act as though this were true", when in reality he is stating a clear fact which is built upon the concept that he states in the preceding verses. *"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."* (Rom 6:6-8)

It is commonly received among the multitudes of those that preach a mixture of law and grace that men must endeavor to change their own lives (by an adherence to various commands). They make the blessings which come to the sons of GOD to be dependent upon their obedience and acts of "faith". This is obviously manifested in the message of the "health and wealth" preachers but is more subtly taught by those who would opine that the "law" (which was given to Moses, with veiled face) is the believers "rule of life".

The sons of GOD must look to HIM who fulfilled the law in its jot and tittle and has now rendered them by that same law to be perfectly just before HIM and completely accepted in the BELOVED. *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."* (Rom 8:1-2) The law and grace "mixers" say they believe this to be true, but that such must not be "overemphasized" or that we must not ignore "man's responsibility" lest we encourage men to sin.

How foolish such a notion is. Paul addresses this very argument. *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* (Rom 6:1-2) There is only one thing that can make the sons of GOD hate sin and desire righteousness in their inward parts, and that one thing is the "free grace of GOD." The work of the SPIRIT in the sons of GOD leads them to liberty, and not bondage.

Thus the only way that the sons of GOD are "encouraged" to walk in the freedom which CHRIST has given them, is as they are enabled to "behold HIS image" in that mirror, for indeed the glory of GOD surrounds that view and they are "changed" thereby. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* (2Cor 5:17) If a man looks into this glass desiring to see himself compared to others or to discover some personal righteousness in fulfilling some duty, then he is yet "in his sins" and cannot look into the glories which the sons of GOD see, for he does so with a vail upon his face.

Paul, using a similar illustration, told these same Corinthians in his earlier letter: *"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."* (1Cor 13:12) All that we know and understand about our standing in CHRIST is necessarily limited by our unbelief, ignorance, and mortality. Yet he says that the day is coming when all of that shall be removed as faith turns to sight and rather than looking in a mirror to see a "reflection" we shall be enabled to see ourselves as we truly are in CHRIST. Gone will be our doubts, fears, and nagging unbelief.

We shall know ourselves even as HE presently knows us. Without sin or hint of condemnation. The sons of GOD have sipped this wine in measured amounts in the present age, yet we shall drink it new with HIM when we see HIM face to face and the troubles, doubts, and fears which have clouded our view are swallowed up in rejoicing as we worship HIM with unfettered desire and cast our crowns before HIS feet. "Worthy is the LAMB!"

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