

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

THE FAITH OF CHRIST

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Galatians 2:16

I don't suppose there is a doctrine, having to do with the salvation of sinners, which is more fundamental to the gospel, than that of "justification". Yet there is probably no other doctrine anymore misunderstood and misapplied than this. Everyone who claims to preach the gospel must at some point examine this truth and set forth the supposed meaning and import of it.

If a man errs on the teaching of this doctrine, then it is certain that practically every other doctrine which he would seek to set forth will necessarily be skewed or twisted as a result. The basis, upon which men are expected and exhorted to be the followers of CHRIST, will revolve around demands to fulfill the law or perform some duty, in some respect, if a man fails to grasp the true grounds upon which the "justification" of the saints of GOD fully rests.

Paul's letter to the Galatians was written primarily to set the record straight on this very matter and a proper understanding of this book is necessary to having a proper understanding of sound doctrine, which relates to this subject, and in essence the very nature and purpose of the preaching of the gospel itself.

The natural religion of man requires that he be found performing some deed (often even called faith) in order to gain the attention and favor of GOD. Practically every religious order and sect in the Earth maintains this notion in one form or another. Sadly even the majority of those who profess to be the followers of CHRIST and who would claim to revere HIS teachings hold to this same line of thought in varying degrees and applications.

If we narrow the broad range of those professing faith in CHRIST down to those who would declare that salvation is by grace, we still find the preponderance of teaching which yet holds that men are required to "do something" in order to be justified. This "something" is generally defined by them as "faith". They tell us that that all men are born under the wrath of GOD, with the sentence of condemnation upon their heads. The only way that this sentence can be lifted is for them to express faith in JESUS CHRIST who has graciously provided a means of justification for all who will take advantage of it.. At the moment that this faith is "seen" in them, GOD then lifts this sentence of condemnation and pronounces them "justified".

The scripture does speak of "justification by faith", but the "faith" by which the sons of GOD are "justified" is not their own faith (of which they have none) but rather the "*faith of CHRIST*" which Paul describes for us here in Galatians 2:16 and further defines in verse 20. "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" (Gal 2:20) Thus the "faith" by which he lives is the faith by which he is justified.

How else could the apostle speak of being "*crucified with CHRIST*" unless he was "*in CHRIST*" when HE was crucified? It is this union with CHRIST which is described as being from before the foundation of the world. "*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world*" (Eph 1:4) Thus we observe that the entire basis of our "justification" is in that which HE has performed for us before we ever drew our first breath. "*For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,*" (1Thes 5:9) So in order to properly

understand “justification by faith” then it is most necessary to look at what the scripture says about the “*faith of CHRIST*”.

The LORD JESUS CHRIST, though HE thought it not robbery to be equal with GOD, nevertheless became the SERVANT of GOD, humbling HIMSELF to the death of the cross in order to redeem that bride which is HIS. This HE did as a human being, taking upon HIMSELF the likeness of sinful flesh, walking upon this earth as a perfect MAN, without sin, and full of faith. At every turn of HIS life HE demonstrated the perfect faith of a perfect MAN. When HIS disciples were vexed with fear, HE slept in the confidence that HIS heavenly FATHER would keep HIM in perfect peace, since HIS mind was staid upon HIM. When HE prayed in Gethsemane, HE committed HIMSELF to the will of HIM who sent HIM. HE prayed for those whom the FATHER gave HIM, in complete satisfaction that HE would keep them according to HIS promise. When HE hung upon the cross, and breathed HIS very last breath, HE committed HIMSELF into the hands of HIM in whom HIS soul delighted. Thus we see the “*faith of CHRIST*” in action.

Paul says, “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it (i.e.; the faith) is the gift of God.*” (Eph 2:8) We see the “*faith of CHRIST*” in its manifestation in men, as HE is pleased to grant faith to those who have none, nor possess the ability to gain it by any other means. This faith is applied and provided by HIM apart from any work, duty, or effort on the part of those to whom it is given. This is the “*faith of CHRIST*” since HE is the provider. “*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.*” (Acts 13:48)

The “*faith of CHRIST*” is that body of truth upon which the children of GOD rely, find comfort in, and have an abiding HOPE therein that HE shall keep them from falling, preserve them until HE returns for HIS purchased possession, and dwell with them forever. This is the doctrine of CHRIST, which is synonymous with the “*faith of CHRIST*”. Paul speaks of this when he recounts his own rebellion against that which he now delights in, “*But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.*” (Gal 1:23)

This is that “*faith*” which he summed up to the Corinthians, when he said, “*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*” (1Co 2:2) The same which he singled out as an exclusive truth which could not be compromised or changed. “*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*” (Gal 1:6-9)

This “*gospel*” which Paul preached and which we here describe as the “*faith of CHRIST*”, is not the product of man’s reason, intellect, or free will; but is that which is delivered to the saints through one method, “*For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” (Gal 1:12) Since this TRUTH belongs to CHRIST, HE alone can give men the ability to embrace it. “*For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*” (Acts 2:39)

The sole grounds of the “*justification*” of the saints of GOD rests upon the work which CHRIST has performed as their MEDIATOR, SUBSTITUTE, and REDEEMER. This is the “*faith of CHRIST*”, for HE did undertake their redemption most gladly, wherein all who have fled to HIM for refuge desire no other place of standing, “*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” (Heb 12:2)

It is upon this SOLID GROUND that the sons of GOD can rejoice that HE has satisfied the jot and tittle of the law, fulfilling it completely and bringing in that BETTER HOPE through grace. “*For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.*” (Heb 7:19) Many would seek to bring the sons of GOD back into bondage and slavish fear from which they have escaped by the “*faith of CHRIST*”, by preaching duty works to them.

They do not believe that HIS grace is sufficient to subdue the hearts and minds of GOD’s people, just as many of these Galatians evidently thought. Paul was not reluctant to lay his axe to the root of their tree, when he said, “*The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith.*” (Gal 3:12) We are justified by the “*faith of CHRIST*”, and it is by the same that we now live. All other ground is sinking sand.