

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

A HOLY FOREST FIRE

But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the LORD: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it. *Jeremiah 21:14*

There are several certainties which are set forth in the scriptures, but none is more greatly assured than the judgment of GOD upon the sin of this world. HE may show mercy, but HE will indeed cause HIS justice to be manifested to men and angels. We need look no further than Calvary's cross to see that demonstrated. If HE would spare not HIS own SON, but deliver HIM up to die, in order that HIS justice be satisfied, then how foolish would a man be who would assume that HE will overlook even the least of transgressions, whether they be of creatures in the heavens or in the earth.

HE would not even disregard the sin of HIS own elect, that people which HE loved with an everlasting love, then how much less shall HE spare the reprobate who have despised HIS counsels and spurned HIS overtures of kindness. Those who will not worship at HIS footstool, who will not magnify HIS NAME, and who will not repent of the evil deeds wrought through the wickedness of their own nature, shall surely be destroyed by the lash of HIS Holy LAW and the sword of HIS everlasting destruction.

Men, acting and thinking according to their carnal reason, (see Prov.14:12) believe that they can perform some good deeds which will be acceptable in GOD's sight, and that these "good" actions will negate the sins which they freely admit that they have committed. Most would declare their understanding that GOD helps those that help themselves and assume that as long as they live according to a moral code of some sort, while avoiding the grossest of sins, that this shall be taken into account and considered sufficient for their acceptance into the kingdom of Heaven. One only has to attend the average funeral to see this philosophy on full display.

Others rest in their actions undertaken by their supposed "free will", as they rely upon the religion of whatever type they have chosen. This is no where more clearly demonstrated as the rank and file of those who claim to be the followers of CHRIST, profess that they have brought their faith to HIM, and that HE has recognized it, approved of it, and granted to them justification and salvation, based upon it.

This is but a refuge of lies which will be swept away in the last day by the besom (i.e.; broom; see Isa. 14:23.) of destruction as surely as those who consider that their morality shall gain them that same place of favor. That man who will trust in his own faith, shall surely be disappointed, for the faith of men is not the FAITH of CHRIST. It is upon that FAITH alone that any man could possibly find a true RESTING PLACE.

The Psalmist describes the man who shall be able to dwell in the presence of GOD. *"Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."* (Psa 24:3-5) There is only one MAN who fits this description and who upon HIS own merits is able to "ascend into the hill of the LORD". For HE alone has performed according to this standard.

The only place of standing in the "holy place", is that which belongs to CHRIST. If any among the sons of men hope to be found in this "place", then they must be found "in HIM". The glorious message of the gospel is that HE has fulfilled all righteousness, and kept every jot and tittle of the law; not simply for HIMSELF; but for that people which HE has loved from before the foundation

of the world. They alone have a standing before GOD, not because of their merits nor even their faith, but because HE is their SUBSTITUTE, PERFORMER, and ADVOCATE before the throne of GOD. They are manifested in the earth as those who confess their irreparable wickedness while calling upon HIS NAME and clinging to no other HOPE of righteousness than that which is found in HIM and applied to them through HIM.

Modern "Christianity" (quite in contrast) would give hope to men based upon the actions which they undertake as "free moral agents"(a misnomer and oxymoron if there ever was one.). The advocates of such a message reject the "complete" work of CHRIST as they describe that "work" as one which has no certain result but rather fails to accomplish HIS desired end in many cases as HE must yet wait upon the activity of men in order to obtain but a portion of that which HE purchased with HIS own blood. Thus the multitudes of those who profess "faith" are in reality relying upon their own ability rather than HIS. This is a bag full of holes and a well with no water.

Jeremiah was a prophet who was roundly hated by the majority of those in Israel and Judah; not because he told them things that were untrue, but because he told them things that they did not want to hear. They were so intent upon pursuing that sort of religion which was pleasing to their flesh, that they disregarded his warnings and declarations of coming judgment as being an inconvenience. In this they were much like those whom Paul describes as deceived by Satan, *"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."* (2Thes 2:10-12)

Today's "Christianity" is built upon the pursuit of pleasure rather than a desire to know the TRUTH and to embrace the Sovereign will of GOD regardless of one's personal benefit. Job expressed a concept which is totally contrary to that which the rank and file among today's "believers" (so called) would express. He said, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"* (Job 13:15) He did not seek the LORD for "loaves and fishes"(i.e.; personal benefit) but rather he confessed that he was compelled to cast himself upon the mercy of GOD, whether he perished or not. Those who persuade men to make a "decision" to "be saved" in order to escape hell, preach a message which is totally centered in men rather than a desire to magnify the glory of GOD's grace in the salvation of sinners. They would opine that men can escape coming judgment by a simple act of their own free will rather than being dependent on the Sovereign mercy of GOD.

The LORD declared that HE would "kindle a fire" in the "forest" of the "doings" of the nation of Israel. In like fashion and according to the principle which HE established there, will HE destroy all of the works of men and show them to be but dung and refuse, which is fit only to be burned. *"But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."* (Heb 6:8) *"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."* (John 15:5-6)

Peter writes; *"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"* (1Pet 4:17-18) The LORD will thoroughly purge HIS floor as HE has now come to separate the wheat from the chaff even as John the Immerser declared, *"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."* (Mat 3:10-12)

This purging (cleansing) and burning takes place in the proclamation of the gospel of GOD's glory. Those for whom it is prepared receive it with gladness, bowing down before HIM who is the KING of Kings and LORD of Lords. They flee from those who would stroke their egos and teach them to rely upon their own works and faith. HIS sheep hear HIS voice and they follow HIM. They desire no righteousness but that which is HIS. No sanctification but that which is the work of HIS hands. And no justification except that which is established by the shedding of HIS blood on Calvary's cross. Have you heard HIM today? Is HE your MASTER? mam