

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 PLUMBLINE

Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more.

Amos 7:7-8

Men seek to define their own standards of that which is beautiful, that which is proper, and that which is satisfying. Yet these standards are constantly changing and are different between various peoples of the world and the times in which they live. Art reflects these ever changing standards as well as music and other forms of cultural expression. What one society holds up as worthy of note is completely ignored by another, even as what constitutes wealth and the things necessary to happiness in this life are quite markedly different in various regions of the world.

Yet regardless of where one goes or what age one may be from there are certain standards of structure building which do not change from one society to another. Those standards are the same regardless of where one may be. Even the most primitive of cultures hold to these standards to one degree or another.

Some ancient societies, such as the Egyptians and the Greeks sought great refinement in the implementation of these standards and used great skill in raising many edifices which demonstrate their devotion to these standards. Many of these buildings have stood for many years as a testament to their faithfulness to adhere in an undeviating manner to these principles.

There are really only three basic "standards" which one must be familiar with in order to construct a building which will be able to endure the passing of time and remain serviceable for years to come. To depart from these "standards" is to produce an inferior product. Those "standards" are "level", "square", and "plumb". Any builder in any society must employ these "standards" and cannot ignore them.

There is only one condition which can be defined as "level". There is only one condition which can be defined as "plumb" and there is only one condition which can be defined as "square". There are numerous shapes, angles, and curves which can be found in numerous buildings but all of those various shapes derive their form from their deviations from that which is level, plumb, and square. There are many "straight lines" which can be found as well but they all have their origins in those "standards" which do not deviate, and their definitions arise from their relationship to the same in one fashion or another.

The LORD is building or has built (depending upon your vantage point) HIS Kingdom with a STANDARD that does not deviate at all. *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Heb 13:8)* *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)* Paul declared it like this, *"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1Cor 2:2)*

In order to rightly observe this construction one must behold the STANDARD and recognize that this is an edifice which is *"built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building."* (1Kings 6:7) This is not the work of men but of HIM who is the wise MASTERBUILDER, *"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."* (1Pet 2:5) This is not an edifice which is

subcontracted or dependent on others to complete, nor do the materials of which this House is built participate in its construction. Each stone is shaped and placed by ONE BUILDER and HE well deserves the praise for that edifice which is without compare.

The LORD showed Amos a wall and then HE asked him what he saw. He could have commented upon the materials with which the wall was constructed, or perhaps the orientation of it in relation to other landmarks. Instead he saw HIM who held a PLUMBLINE with which the wall was constructed and that sight overshadowed the wall itself and struck fear in Amos' heart.

Israel (as typical of carnal men) have been shown a STANDARD but they have gladly deviated from it. Most by ignorance and natural rebellion, but some (as typified by Israel) have done so by going about to establish their own righteousness and walking in the ways of carnal religion. Much contentment is found in seeking out a religion which appeals to the flesh and exalts the free will of men. The flesh is always ready to worship a god of their own choosing and design. They are especially satisfied to find one who thinks like they do, answers when they call, and is always ready to deviate from one narrow standard. They love a god who "understands" their weaknesses and who will turn a blind eye to their transgressions, most especially when they compare themselves to the abject wickedness of all other men who don't walk in their way.

The wall that the LORD showed to Amos was perfectly plumb because HE who built it will not in any wise deviate from that STANDARD of RIGHTEOUSNESS which HE has set forth. A man may purchase a brand new level (sometimes called doctrine) from a hardware store (sometimes called a church) and he may commence to build with it, being sure to hold to the line which that implement indicates is true. But the truth is that nearly every level that I have ever bought (in over thirty years in the construction business) was off a slight amount when it was checked against itself. Now most of the time these deviations are so slight that they make little difference in the actual practice of construction. Yet when a plumbline is dropped from the top of a wall to the bottom it will quickly reveal the true standard of plumb.

JESUS CHRIST is the STANDARD by which all things shall be compared. HE is the PLUMBLINE in the LORD's hands. HE who is of purer eyes than to look upon sin will not accept any righteousness which does not meet that STANDARD. Isaiah commented upon the very best that men have to offer, saying: "*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*" (Isa 64:6) If a contemplation of the impossibility of finding favor in GOD's sight by any undertaking of one's own conduct, does not bring a man to despair, then he has never been awakened and born again by the SPIRIT of GOD.

The work of the LORD in the sons of GOD does indeed drive them to seek the RIGHTEOUSNESS of CHRIST who is the PLUMBLINE of the LORD. HE alone is the STANDARD by which acceptable PURITY is established. HE was "*in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*" (Heb 4:15) HE is that ONE, "*Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*" (1Pet 2:22)

CHRIST crucified is the only acceptable doctrine as we look to the PLUMBLINE. "*For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*" (Heb 9:24-26) The imputation of HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS to the elect and the imputation of their sin to HIM is the only doctrine which measures up to the PLUMBLINE.

It is HIS work alone which establishes the ground of the justification of HIS people. They cannot participate in a work which is finished. "*Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*" (Heb 9:12) What a glorious PLUMBLINE this is. All "gospels" must be considered false which do not present the work of CHRIST alone as the sole grounds whereby the sons of GOD are justified before the law. HE has cancelled their sin debt by HIS own blood.

HE is the PLUMBLINE of faith for if HE does not give men the gift of faith they shall never possess it. All who believe in HIM must confess with Paul, "*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) mam