

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XVI

Issue 51

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

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

PURE RELIGION AND UNDEFILED

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. James 1:27

The Bible sets forth many principles which are applicable not only to the context in which they are given but also in a general sense. For instance, the prophet Ezekiel writes, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" (Eze 18:20) Now the exact context of the passage is to show that the sons of a man are not accountable for their father's sins and vice versa, the father is not accountable for the sins of his children. Rather each person shall die because of their own sin. Yet this is the same principle that is set forth in the New Testament, where we read, that all men must give account for their sin, even as Paul says, "*for the wages of sin is death.*" (Rom.6:23) and is clearly expressed "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*" (Rom 5:12)

In the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians Paul sets forth another principle when he writes, "*For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*" (1Cor 13:9-10) Now in the context in which he writes he is speaking of the temporary nature of human understanding and the fact that there is coming a time when imperfect human understanding shall give way to a clearer understanding of spiritual truth. "*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)

This principle is at the very heart of what we read in the opening statement of the epistle to the Hebrews, "*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, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.*" (Heb 1:1-2) There is no need for the shadow when the SUBSTANCE is present. CHRIST is the SUM of all that the LORD would reveal to HIS children. We see the very culmination of this principle in the revelation given to John. "*And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*" (Rev 21:22-23)

This is further illustrated in the glorious declarations Paul made to the Philippians and to the Colossians: "*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*" (Php 2:9-11); "*Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*" (Col 3:11)

This principle is clearly set forth as the mystery which was kept secret from the beginning is now revealed. "*That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.*" (Eph 3:6) There can be no separation between those who are made ONE in CHRIST when HE who is the HEAD of the body is now come. "*And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church (i.e.; by the unveiling of it) the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:" (Eph 3:9-11) All doctrine which was given before this clear revelation, is seen to be but a precursor to the unfolding of the fullness of that which GOD has ordained from the beginning.*

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Eph 1:22-23) When that which is perfect is come that which is in part shall be done away.

We look for perfection and fulfillment nowhere else but in HIM as HE is made unto us, *“wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:” (1Cor 1:30)* To look at any exhortation or duty which is set forth in the New Testament, apart from a clear understanding of this TRUTH is to miss the mark entirely and to press upon the sons of GOD the same requirements that were unmet under Moses’ law, due to the weakness of the flesh. The corrupt flesh of the awakened sons of GOD is no different nor more inclined towards deeds of righteousness than that man who has never heard the gospel or been given grace to believe it.

Now we would never contend that the sons of GOD are not given many and varied exhortations and admonitions throughout the New Testament, but we would continually contend that such exhortations and admonitions are given to them in order to stir them up to look unto CHRIST to fulfill these things in them, and thus to rest in HIM as the fulfiller of all such things.

HIS strength is made perfect in weakness as we see HIS grace to be sufficient for us. All labor which is not that which Paul describes is superfluous and causes a man to have some confidence in his own performance. *“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” (Heb 4:9-11)*

When we labor to lay burdens upon the sons of GOD or we labor to perform what is required of us we become caught in a maelstrom of human endeavor which only serves to weaken the children of GOD, since HE alone can minister peace to HIS children by reminding them that HE is their PERFORMER in all things. Is this not what Paul alludes to when HE says, *“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 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 2:19-20)*

Such a doctrine will never subdue the carnal man but is a sweet savor to those who have been awakened to see themselves as corrupt and powerless, who have been caused to come unto HIM and find rest unto their weary souls. The carnal religious man must have continual threats and conditions placed upon him in order to bring even an outward appearance of obedience. The sons of GOD however find comfort and agreement in the words of the Psalmist who said, *“But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.” (Psa 130:4-5)*

When we read the definition, which James gives, of “pure and undefiled religion”, we are reminded how far short of this ideal any of us have come. What he speaks of (on the surface) seems simple enough, and our flesh would tell us to go and visit (i.e.; minister to the needs of) the orphans and widows and thereby fulfill at least a part of the requirement even if we have difficulty with the latter part. Yet if we understand anything about the commandments of the LORD, we realize that partial obedience is of no more use than a total disregard of them. HE demands perfection in all things and to fall short of that is to fail.

Yet the sons of GOD are not left without hope, for HE is our PERFORMER, and HE has already demonstrated absolute perfection in this “pure and undefiled religion.” HE has come to minister to the weak and helpless among mankind. In fact, HE has come to *“seek and to save that which was lost”*. HE is the SAVIOR of sinners. As such HE has demonstrated HIS suitability to be our GREAT HIGH PRIEST since HE was completely unspotted from the world, being tempted in all points, yet without sin of any kind.

So, we are stirred in our minds and hearts with a great desire to follow in HIS steps but ever reminded that except the LORD build the house they labor in vain that build it. Could we ever see a greater example of *“pure religion and undefiled”* than when we behold CHRIST who fulfilled the law, (not simply the letter of Moses’ law but that perfect law of liberty) in its jot and tittle. *“And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.” (Heb 10:21-*