

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 TABERNACLES OF GOD

To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

Psalm 84:1-2

Now that daylight savings time has arrived it is usually still light out as I take my daily walk, so I am able to observe things that I couldn't see when I was walking in the darkness. Just this afternoon I was amazed to see a young dogwood tree in full bloom, in a part of the property that is fairly grown up with thick underbrush and vines. Now at this time of the year it is not unusual to see the dogwoods in bloom but the time of their blooming is all but past as most of them are starting to shed their blossoms if they have not already done so. The thing that amazed me the most as I saw it for the first time was its location: all alone in the midst of the brambles and bushes. Yet there it was in its full beauty as though the blossoms had just opened this very day. I walked by the exact spot yesterday but did not see it. I would not have given it a moment's thought had I seen it amongst other trees of its kind or in some well manicured yard. But here it was seemingly completely out of place and totally disregarded by the tangle around it. Only as I was given eyes to see it (I could not see it yesterday) did its full beauty become appreciated.

Thus it is that the places where GOD is pleased to dwell with HIS people are hidden from view normally and only as HE is pleased to show them to us can we see them. The tabernacle was the temporary "House of GOD" as the Jews wandered in the desert. The true and living GOD does not dwell in temples made with hands, but it pleased HIM to condescend to man's weakness and to have him establish a "place" where HE would be worshipped and would make HIS presence known unto men. So the LORD gave detailed instructions to Moses about how this tabernacle was to be built even down to the number of rings that held up each curtain. No detail is insignificant in any of GOD's design even as we see in HIS creation; for the grains of sand stirred up by the crashing waters on the beach move in as much of a prescribed orbit as do the planets about the sun. HE is an absolute GOD who leaves nothing to chance or outside of HIS ordained purpose.

Once the tabernacle was built the Jewish nation went about its business, content with their religion. It was only when the "ark of the covenant" was stolen from them by the Philistines that those who valued it began to mourn. After the LORD had destroyed the Philistine's god, Dagon, and smitten them with disease, they couldn't get rid of the ark quick enough and took it to the house of Abinadab (see I Sam. Chap 5 and 6) where it remained until David in a highly religious fervor decided to bring it back to the tabernacle. He soon sadly discovered that GOD will only be worshipped as HE dictates and not however man devises. (see II Sam.6:3-9) They left the ark in Obededom's house and he was greatly blessed the whole time it was there. David came back for it but this time he brought the Levites with him and moved it according to the prescribed method of GOD. David danced before the LORD for the great joy that he had in seeing the ark brought back to Jerusalem (see II Sam.6:14)

David was a man after GOD's own heart and how truly did he yearn for the presence of GOD in the dry and thirsty land that he found himself in, pursued by Saul and then his own son Absalom. He writes this Psalm to the sons of Korah, who were spared (see Num.26:11) when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their followers were swallowed up in the earth after they made an offering not approved by the LORD. (see Num.16:16-21) Surely they could appreciate the fact that HE will be worshipped in spirit and truth and not in the motions of religion however fair and seemingly appropriate.

The New Testament church is that "place" (not a building) where GOD has promised to meet with HIS people. (see Mat.18:20) Yet I dare say that the vast majority of those who profess to be the sons of GOD and who claim to gather with HIS church have little if any knowledge of the beauty of HIS presence. Even those who have no printed liturgy are content to go through their "rituals",. They sing their songs, pray their prayers, and listen to the preaching of the Bible but they have no consideration of whether or not HE is truly dwelling in their midst. They are as content to go home when the time for the meeting is over as they were to attend in the first place.

Yet those sons of GOD who have been given eyes to see cannot help but cry out to the LIVING GOD and long for HIS presence. They cannot be content with religion however fine it may appear or well defined by scriptural example and order it may be. The fervor or solemnity of its practice can never fill the void that they feel, as they have a constant need to hear HIS voice and enter HIS courts. How beautiful are HIS dwelling places!

Nothing is more precious to the sons of GOD. *"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand (elsewhere)" (Psa 84:10)* Some have thought that ecstatic utterances and odd gyrations are the result of this desire, yet this is no momentary quest which is easily fulfilled by some charismatic excess or the touch of some "prophet's" hand. When they wake or when they sleep this desire ever burns within them and religion of any type is but a hindrance to them in finding a fulfillment.

They seek no glory but HIS. *"I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."* (Psa 84:10) Even the lowest of stations in this life is acceptable as long as they can commune with HIM. They need no recognition or approval of others nor can they be satisfied by a mutual admiration society or the assurances of men.

They feel that they must perish without HIS presence. *"My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."* (Psa 84:2) This is the very impetus to prayer and is the evidence of the SPIRIT at work in their lives, for how can a man have such desire except that HE gives it?

This is not a temporary mindset nor the product of a fickle spirit. *"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee."* (Psa 84:4) Notice that this blessedness is to those who "dwell" in HIS house and not just those who "visit" from time to time. The fleshly religionist is satisfied to come and go as he pleases, not so the son who really sees, he cannot depart for this is his "home".

Regardless of the circumstances, they will be found clinging to HIM. *"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools."* (Psa 84:6) Whether it be through tears of sadness or tears of joy, to whom else can they turn and upon whom can they rely.

All of their strength is found in HIM. *"They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."* (Psa 84:7) HE is their ROCK, their SWORD, and their SHIELD. They cannot fear anything but their own deceitful heart and HE is greater than their heart. (see I John 3:20) Oh Lord, open our eyes and stir our cold hearts that we may behold THEE in thy beauty. We languish and die without a glimpse of THEE. *"O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."* (Hab 3:2) *"O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."* (Psa 84:12)