

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

OUR HOPE

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.

I Timothy 1:1

It is difficult for men to hide that which their true hopes and dreams are built upon. This is demonstrated for us quite clearly as we look at the clamor surrounding the pope of Rome on his visit to this country. Thousands stand in line to catch just a glimpse of him as he rides by or to attend a meeting that he presides over. The reason for this is that many believe that this man is somehow the representative of CHRIST in the earth and they think it within their power to view CHRIST and fulfill some religious obligation which will recommend them to heaven. If this man (called the pope) were really a true apostle (let alone CHRIST's vicar) he would demand that all of the hoopla be stopped and that the only NAME under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved be the only ONE lifted up. (see Acts 14:12-15) Instead the multitudes of religious men and women exalt a mortal man in the place of GOD and demonstrate their willingness to worship antichrist. Any who seek a place of glory among men, even if it be in the name of CHRIST, is actually operating in the spirit of antichrist because CHRIST alone is worthy to be praised.

Many desire to give men titles such as Reverend or Father, when both are plainly prohibited in the scriptures. (see Ps.111:9; Mat.23:9) Or they set men apart as some separate class of individuals (the clergy) who somehow are a little more holy or acceptable to GOD upon whom they can rely for advice and instruction. This is actually quite a prevalent mindset among many who would never call a man "reverend" but they will confer titles upon men to promote the respectability of their own religion. After all somebody has got to be "in charge" don't they? They seem to forget, *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell."* (Col 1:18-19)

The hopes of many more are not even of a religious nature. This society in which we dwell is so materialistic that it is wholly given over to the pursuit of unrighteous mammon. Parents even push their children into all sorts of sports and entertainment venues hoping that they can hit it big. I enjoyed athletics and sports of many types growing up and still do but something is wrong with the picture when even many who claim to be followers of CHRIST think nothing of abandoning the gathering of the church to pursue sports and entertainment in the name of "family values" or preparing them for their future occupation. Youngsters are put in front of cameras and dressed provocatively in order to win so called "beauty contests" which are really ego contests for their parents. Young girls (and boys) are taught to prostitute their bodies for the cameras in the hopes of landing a modeling career or become stars. All of this has become acceptable because those who pursue such things to that extent have placed their hopes upon them and testify by their actions that they disregard the claims of CHRIST. HE said *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."* (John 14:15) He said *"Ye cannot serve God and mammon."* (Mat 6:24)

Those who have been given a hope in JESUS CHRIST have one overriding pursuit, one goal, and one desire. Paul described it thus, *"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."* (Phi 3:8-11) Religion allows a man to be satisfied with fulfilling a few duties, making some sacrifices, and learning a few doctrines, but that man who is awakened and given a living hope in CHRIST is consumed with the pursuit of HIM who is worthy of all praise. No substitutes will do nor can he be made content by some soothing words from a mortal man. This hope is :

A living (or lively) hope. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"* (1Pet 1:3) Most of the time when our hope is mentioned in the scripture a reference is being made to the expectation of the resurrection. This is a very present help in time of trouble. That faith which we have been given is not imaginary but alive. This is not a faith that is the result of something "we claim" but it is the evidence that HE has claimed us as HIS own.

A saving hope. *"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"* (Rom 8:24) It is this very expectation (that we shall receive that which we cannot yet fully see) by which we are saved in this world from the despair that would otherwise grip us had we been made aware of our sin and had no cure.

A patient hope. *"But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."* (Rom 8:25) That man who is given a hope in CHRIST has no other options. The ONE who has called him does also enable him to endure to the very end. HIS strength is magnified in our weakness and HIS provision for us is made obvious as we can turn to no other for HE has bound us unto HIMSELF with cords that cannot be broken.

A purifying hope. *"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."* (1John 3:3) This living hope in the minds of GOD's people is that which HE stirs up (see II Pet 3:1) giving them a desire after holiness in their inward parts. The religion of the flesh is pleased with some outward display but that hidden man of the heart cannot be deceived by such and will settle for nothing less than the operation of the HOLY GHOST who causes spiritual fruit to be born unto the glory of GOD.

An abounding hope. *"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."* (Rom 15:13) The natural man keeps looking within himself to find some hope but the man who is taught of CHRIST is given great hope as HE learns that all of his hope is in CHRIST and not in his ability to believe or remain steadfast in that belief.

A blessed hope. *"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."* (Tit 2:13) The religious man may sing "Wait a little longer please JESUS." But that man in whom the LORD has placed this blessed hope says, "Even so come LORD JESUS."

A steadfast hope. *"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."* (Heb 6:18-19) Our hope is sure and steadfast because it is built entirely on the WORD and work of the LORD JESUS CHRIST and not dependent on us in any wise.

An eternal hope. *"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."* (Tit 1:2) HE created the world with this promise in mind and not one jot nor tittle can pass away until all be fulfilled. Glory to HIS NAME!