

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 WEALTHY PLACE

For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

Psalms 66:10-12

What is extremely valuable to one man may be absolutely worthless to another. Some people view old furniture as junk while others revere it as “antiques”. Some cultures judge the wealth of a man by how many cattle he owns while others do so by the size of his stock portfolio. So we can see that wealth is a relative thing, and it is clear that all men do not desire the same treasures. However it is also clear that all men do place value on certain things and it is those things which men will pursue with the utmost endeavor.

The man who treasures gold and silver will normally seek gold and silver according to the degree with which he loves it. That man who loves travel will generally order his life in such a way as to facilitate that travel. That man who places great value in acquiring property will usually be about the business of obtaining it. Whatever a man considers his greatest priority is that which he will pursue with all of his heart. If he is unable to gain that which he most desires he will be most miserable. A good illustration of this is found in the case of Ahab as he desired the vineyard of Naboth. Ahab became literally ill because Naboth would not sell it to him,. (see I Kings 2:4-6)

Such is the pathway of the natural man, as the LORD directs his steps to either fill himself with the delights of this world or be sorrowful as he sees them slip from his grasp. The natural man is delighted with such things as he can obtain in the realm of this fleshly existence. He is happy when he is successful and sad when he is not,

This even carries over into the realm of his earthly religion. There is a “spirituality” which is of the “flesh”, because it is tied to the enjoyment of this flesh even when the supposed pursuit appears to be beyond this present world. Take for instance these Muslim terrorists who are willing to lay down their own lives, it seems, for such an altruist cause. Yet when examined their motivation is really to be exalted through their martyrdom and to gain (in their twisted mind) great blessings in heaven, such as seventy virgins. This mindset is in reality no different than that which is proposed by these modern day hucksters who impress men to “sow their seeds of money” (by faith of course) into their coffers.

The payoff is always some great blessing either now or the promise of one yet to come as these “sowers” reap great rewards in heaven one day because of their “faithfulness”. In fact most all religious activity is motivated by a desire and belief of personal benefit yet to be derived. It is quite common to hear these men masquerading as gospel preachers trying to

impress men to serve the LORD for the great rewards which are presently being earned by them now and/or in heaven for them by every act of obedience they perform.

Now it is true that even biblical Christianity is buttressed by great and precious promises of great gain which is to be had by those who are given grace to believe. Paul said, *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* (Phi 1:21) He also said, *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."* (1Cor 15:19) But I believe it is true that those who are true believers are compelled to believe by the faith implanted in them by the gift of the HOLY GHOST and they can do nothing else. This is what motivated Job, in the midst of all of his trials to exclaim, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him."* (Job 13:15) He plainly said that he could do nothing else but fall down at HIS feet regardless of what might befall him.

We hear men all the time pressing men to believe the gospel in order to escape a burning hell forever. Yet Job said even if the LORD should cast him into hell, he would yet bow his knees before HIM. An escape from the destruction of hell is not granted to men on the basis of whether or not they obey the LORD or believe the gospel, but that deliverance is granted on the basis of the righteousness of CHRIST being imputed to their account because HE has paid their sin debt in full. What could a man ever do to earn or gain such an escape? True faith in CHRIST is not exhibited by those who think that they have gained something by believing but by those who simply are compelled to worship at HIS feet regardless of what may befall them in this life or that which is to come.

This is what the Psalmist speaks of as he recognizes the many trials and heartaches that are brought upon the sons of GOD by the hand of the LORD. He said, *"THOU broughtest us into the net."* The children of GOD are not turned aside from following hard after HIM even though they are aware that it is HIS hand that has directed their afflictions and caused their pain. The greater their affliction the closer they are drawn to HIM, they can really do nothing else. The religious world recoils in horror at such a thought and would mimic the sentiments of Job's wife, as she was incredulous that Job would continue to worship GOD even though HIS hand was laid harshly upon him. The world follows CHRIST for the loaves and fishes but the true sons of GOD are compelled by HIS grace to follow HIM even in famine.

The wealthy place to which the LORD's people are brought does not appear any great treasure to the natural man. Even as Simon the Pharisee spoke in disgust of the woman who bathed the LORD's feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head (long hair is a woman's glory see I Cor.11:15) as we see in Luke 7:36-39. The great treasure of this woman was not seen in some benefit that she derived as a result of performing this act of worship but was in the very act of worship itself, though she gained no comfort by it and was overwhelmed with the thought of her own sin. Only those who by GOD's grace are privileged to be given the gift of faith can ever have any comprehension as to the greatness of this treasure. But they are ever as Peter said, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."* (John 6:68)

The sons of GOD often go through this world with very little comfort, as the world might judge. Yet as James said, *"Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"* (James 2:5) Our LORD said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."* (Mat 5:3-4) *"Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet."* (Luke 7:44-48)