

# 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*

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## THE ASSURANCE OF HOPE

*And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.*

*Hebrews 6:11*

John Newton penned a hymn about two hundred years ago that addresses a desire which is common to the awakened sons of GOD wherein he said:

'Tis a point I long to know, (Oft it causes anxious thought),

Do I love the Lord, or no? Am I his, or am I not?

#283 Gadsby's Hymns

Modern "theology" (if it can really be called that, it is perhaps more aptly termed man-ology) seeks to give "believers" assurance by reminding them that they have made a decision to follow CHRIST and therefore (since their inclusion in the kingdom is dependent on their action) they can just decide to have assurance based on their own determination. Norman Vincent Peale popularized a concept that has become the very mantra of the "post-Christian" era, in which we live, that he called "the power of positive thinking".

The central point of this concept is that men have the power to be and do anything that they make up their minds to be or do. Self doubt is considered a great weakness and men are encouraged to achieve great and mighty things through the casting out of their fears and weaknesses by focusing on the great power that they have to visualize something as being true simply because they believe strongly that it is.

This concept is so interwoven into the mainstream thinking of the vast majority of those that call themselves Christians that the truth as it is revealed in the scriptures seems to be spoken in a foreign language. Self doubt and loathing, (to the modernist), is to be shunned at all cost, yet this is the very basis upon which the foundation of repentance is laid in the heart of those whom GOD is pleased to call by HIS SPIRIT. Until a man is emptied of all hope and confidence in himself and stripped naked and bare before a HOLY GOD, he is quite incapable of casting himself upon the mercy of GOD.

Job was a man who was fairly satisfied with his understanding of who GOD was and how HE works in the earth among men. Yet he was brought to a place he had never been before when confronted with the true and living GOD face to face, which caused him to cry out, "*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*" (Job 42:5-6) Gone in a flash were many of his triumphant declarations and he found himself in the same place as the publican. "*And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*" (Luke 18:13)

When a man is brought to such a state by the SPIRIT of GOD then all of the assurances and encouragements of men become as so much dung and can minister no help nor relief from the gloomy cloud of sin's blackness that he is made acquainted with. David, a man after GOD's own heart, said, "*There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head:*

*as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.” (Ps 38:3-8)*

Should GOD be pleased to leave HIS children in such a state of complete despair then I am sure that most would go completely insane or even be suicidal. But the same mercy that plows the field also sows the blessed seeds of the gospel which are designed to cause the field to blossom as a rose and send forth a fragrance sweeter than wine.

There is indeed a “BALM in Gilead”, there is a GREAT PHYSICIAN who does bind up those running sores and applies the mollifying ointment of HIS grace to those sin sick souls who cry out day and night for HIS mercy. HE is pleased to make them aware that it is HE *“Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2Tim 1:9-10)*

The gospel message which is sent by the LORD (see Rom 10:15) does not confer life but it is used by GOD to inform HIS people, that have been given life by HIS SPIRIT, that JESUS CHRIST has cancelled the sin debt of all of those for which HE shed HIS blood and has given them the kingdom. The foundation and basis of all that HE would have them to rely upon is the work of JESUS CHRIST in their behalf. *“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 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; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” (Heb 6:17-20)*

Because of this flesh we are plagued with, we yet see through a glass darkly and we even find ourselves doubting from time to time whether or not we are indeed included in that number of those for whom HE poured out HIS soul as an offering for sin. But we can never abandon that hope that is set before us. We have confidence that JESUS CHRIST is indeed the only SAVIOR of sinners and it is to HIM that we cannot help but look with expectancy from that gift of faith which we have been given. We are even as Job exclaimed, *“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” (Job 13:15)*

As we hear the glorious gospel of the blessed GOD we are ever encouraged to look outside of ourselves unto HIM who is the AUTHOR and FINISHER of our faith. The work of HIS SPIRIT leads us into all truth and even gives us (from time to time) sweet foretastes of the glory which shall yet be revealed in us. (see Rom.8:18) The more we are acquainted with HIS provisions for us the less confidence we have in anything that is spotted with this flesh, most especially any reliance upon our ability to believe and/or remain steadfast. HE alone is our HOPE. *“Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col 1:27)*

Only in HIM do we have any assurance whatsoever for it is in HIM that we have the assurance of hope. We cannot have any assurance which is built upon the false foundation of our own actions but rather our assurance comes as HE is pleased to manifest the glory of HIS grace in the face of JESUS CHRIST to our conscience through the work of HIS SPIRIT as HE applies the truth revealed in the gospel to our very souls. Blessed assurance indeed.

As we began with Newton’s hymn so we close with the same.

Lord, decide the doubtful case; Thou who art thy people’s Sun,  
Shine upon thy work of grace, If it be indeed begun.  
Let me love thee more and more, If I love at all, I pray;  
If I have not loved before, Help me to begin today.

*“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” (Gal 5:5)*