

# 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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## THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS

*And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*

*Luke 15:2*

The kingdom of GOD is an illustration of great contrasts. *"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."* (Mat 20:16) *"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."*(Mat 23:11-12) *"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."* (Luke 14:27) but HE also said *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* (Mat 11:29-30)

To those who have not been given understanding, (as were the Pharisees) these things seem to make no sense. Yet to those who are given eyes to see they are a great comfort and the very basis of sound instruction. Joel of old, prophesied, *"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call."* (Joe 2:32) Yet the LORD plainly said, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."* (Mat 7:21)

Everything about the kingdom of GOD is quite contrary to the natural thinking of men. It makes perfect sense to men that they should seek revenge for those who have wronged them. Yet the LORD said, *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."* (Mat 5:44) *"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."* (Mat 5:39)

Just when the natural man has studied his Sunday school lesson and is convinced by this that perhaps he should just roll over like a dog and wet himself, whenever confronted with conflict, Paul comes along and says, *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* (James 4:7) *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."* (Eph 6:10-13)

It is not surprising that we hear many "churchgoers" say, I just don't understand the Bible. Unless the LORD is pleased to give a man understanding he will never "get it". We see multitudes wandering about as "sheep with no shepherd", the "blind leading the blind" and falling into the ditch on the left and the right. *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of*

*the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1Cor 2:14)*

We live in a highly religious society and the religion of choice in our society is “Christianity”. Its basic precepts have been taught quite openly and continually for many years. Vast numbers of fine folk have “learned” what the Bible says and are able to defend their particular “brand” of Christianity (as they would call it) against the other brands. One looks at all of these “brands” and is made to wonder if the apostle was right when he said, *“One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” (Eph 4:5)* Of course each “brand” is quick to step up and say “ours is the one”. Some more vehemently than others and some even more credible than the next.

I remember that the LORD asked, *“When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8)* There is no shortage of prophets and their followers. There is no lack of fine facilities that have been built “in the name of the LORD” nor folks to fill them up. We see many in their zeal who are willing to give their bodies to be burnt and to sacrifice their worldly goods to the voracious appetites of those who preach about a god who needs their money to get things done or a savior who would save everybody if he can just get enough of this worlds goods to pay men to convince folks to let him; or finance the latest gimmick in that quest.

The vast majority of those who call themselves Christians are convinced that GOD is dependent on them in some way. Some of these same folks (“unbeknownst” to themselves) have *“changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” (Rom 1:25)* Deceivers have been loosed in the midst. *“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Jude 1:4)*

Grace (pure unmerited favor) is no longer grace, (in their eyes) but rather a mixture of man’s free will with a dose of GOD’s mercy and just a dash of human endeavor. This is a fine recipe for the natural man’s thinking, who believes that, after all, GOD should do something for HIS creation especially those who would help themselves and that HE has made salvation a possibility if we can somehow convince men to take advantage of it by scaring them with the horrors of hell, drawing them a roadmap through Romans, or enticing them with the sheer bliss of heaven which must surely be a place filled with all sorts of carnal delights that will keep them satisfied through the ages to come.

Yet that man who is convinced of his own depravity and utterly hopeless condition, by the operation of the HOLY GHOST, can find absolutely no comfort in this contrived formula which depends on his ability to do anything. Such a man as that is convinced that such a recipe spells his doom rather than his deliverance. If he must supply faith then he will despair for all he can do is lament his lack of faith. (see Mark 9:24) If he must take the first step, he faints for he knows that he is lame in both feet. Hell is real enough to him without the need for someone to rub salt into his wounds. He stands in need of a PHYSICIAN and not a taskmaster. He can hardly find any enjoyment in a consideration of eternal bliss because he finds himself to have no hope of ever entering such a place.

But oh, when all hope in any human merit or endeavor is extinguished the LORD is pleased to cause him to hear the sweet sound of this message and ultimately apply its healing balm to his despairing heart, *“This MAN receiveth sinners”.* Oh could it be possible. Could such a wretch as I be made whole by HIM. He cannot help but cry out with blind Bartimaeus, *“JESUS thou SON of David, have mercy on me!”*. He must join with the publican in saying, *“O GOD be merciful to me, a sinner.”*

And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior’s blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain—  
For me, who Him to death pursued?

Amazing love! How can it be,

That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me? Charles Wesley

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