

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 FOLLY OF DUTY

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Luke 17:10

Solomon wisely wrote, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”* (Ecc 12:13) In some ways it is not much different than that which the LORD JESUS said to HIS disciples, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”* (John 14:15) Yet in the essence of that which is to be the motivation for “keeping” the commandments of the LORD and what that “keeping” is; there is as much difference as night and day in what these two men spoke. Solomon speaks of the duty which is laid upon all men to obey GOD, while CHRIST speaks of “true obedience” as the manifestation of HIS grace at work in HIS children.

Solomon thunders forth the demands of the law which can in no wise be abrogated and the neglect of which must, of necessity, bring forth the sentence of death upon all who fail in that duty. *“Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers.”* (1Tim 1:9) The man who is under the law (which includes all men at one time or other) and steeped in his own religion of righteousness (whatever form that may take) breathes a sigh of relief as he reads the law and views himself as not guilty of such heinous crimes as are recorded there. Or if he has strayed from the straight and narrow at times he is sure that reform and commitment to change are surely that which can overcome such digressions and he has confidence in his ability to continue therein.

If any man takes comfort of any sort in his own ability to perform that which the LORD requires, then that man is a stranger to grace and is yet in his sins regardless of how outwardly conformed he may be to the letter of that which he might describe as the law. We have seen a rise in the last few years of multitudes who crusade to have the “Ten Commandments” plastered in their yards, courthouses, and wherever they feel is an appropriate place. They are generally convinced that the societal evils we see all around us can be remedied by reminding men of these “Ten Commandments”. They entertain this notion because they in general consider themselves to be “keepers” of these laws and hope that they can somehow bring about “reform” in others to match their own “keeping” of such.

We are certainly not opposed to the scriptures being displayed anywhere someone wishes to print or place them. However we do not entertain the notion that the “Ten Commandments” are the essence of GOD’s “law” any more than we think that inundating men with them will in any wise cause them to “keep” them. We are certain that “perfection” does not come by the keeping of those “laws” since the LORD never denied the rich young ruler’s claims of having “kept” these “laws” from his youth up. Yet HE told him that he was not

yet "perfect". (see Mat.19:16-21) Neither do we find anything but condemnation when we read the law of GOD and are confronted with our utter disregard of it and reminded of our disobedience to its most simple of precepts by the convicting power of the HOLY GHOST who is constantly at work in those whom HE has awakened to see their own depravity.

When one of the Pharisees asked the LORD to state the greatest commandment, HE replied, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."* (Mat 22:37-40) This is that which will shut the mouth of all erstwhile "lawkeepers" when the LORD is pleased to reveal to them how little regard they have to either.

This is the exact place which the apostle Paul found himself, when he said, *"For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."*(Rom 7:9-14) When the SPIRIT of GOD showed HIM what the law was, he was slain by it.

So while "duty" demands that we fulfill these "requirements", it offers no help or support in doing so. Who can deny that the law demands perfect obedience, yet who can render it unto HIM who will accept no less than this perfection? Knowing what we "should" do or even must do, is no consolation to the man who knows himself to be a sinner through and through and completely incapable of delivering such obedience.

When the SPIRIT of GOD is pleased to awaken a dead sinner and reveal to him the complete righteousness of JESUS CHRIST as the SUBSTITUTE for sin, that child of grace can no longer seek to be found righteous in the sight of GOD by the performance of any duty or the presentation of personal merit. He is satisfied with that which CHRIST has performed for HIM, fulfilling the law in his behalf and declaring him just before GOD as one who has never sinned. Such a man is *"reconciled to GOD"*. *"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight."* (Col 1:19-22) *"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."* (Eph 2:13)

Just as surely as JESUS CHRIST is their PERFORMER in providing for them a perfect righteousness in the satisfaction of the law so is HE their very present PERFORMER in constraining HIS people to walk before HIM in love. *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* (Phil 2:13)

Love is the golden chain that binds
The happy souls above;
And he's an heir of heaven that finds
His bosom glow with love. #1082 (v.5) Gadsby's Hymns, by Joseph Swain

"If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15) *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* (John 13:35)

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