

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

BABES AND SUCKLINGS

And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.

Matthew 21:16

When the LORD said, *"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."* (Mark 10:25), HIS disciples were astonished. It was widely considered by the Jews that outward financial acumen was a direct indicator of one's favor with GOD, especially when coupled with an outwardly religious demeanor. Therefore it was quite a shock for them to hear HIM destroy that very notion, and establish a complete disconnection between earthly prosperity and the true blessing of GOD. Not only that but HE established the impossibility of a man entering (or being a part of) the kingdom of GOD who had any confidence in his riches, ability, or self-worth.

Religious men are no different in every age of man's existence upon the earth. They always contend that the endeavors of men are the basis upon which blessings are bestowed upon them. Some boldly say that by a man's works and obedience HE can gain an entrance into the Kingdom while others acknowledge that admission to the Kingdom is by grace, yet they nonetheless, declare that the everyday blessings of the enjoyment of that entrance are enhanced by ones "obedience" and attendance to "duty".

The assumption on the part of both camps is that man possesses the "ability" to perform works of righteousness which would influence GOD's bestowal on them of a variety of rewards based upon their varying levels of "faithfulness" as they exercise their free will. In fact the vast majority of those who exhort men to "have faith" seem to consider that true faith is a function of that will.

Thus the notion has arisen that men are actually saved by an exercise of this "free will faith". Therefore, "evangelistic" (as they describe themselves) preachers plead with men to "believe" as if they can "choose" CHRIST just like they can choose a can of beans from off the shelf at the supermarket. Rather than "faith" being declared to be the gift of GOD which simply manifests those who have been given faith to believe by the AUTHOR and FINISHER of our faith, they would have men to consider themselves to be the deciding "factor" in their own salvation.

The operation of the SPIRIT of GOD in quickening the elect sons of GOD from the deadness of sin is manifested in them by showing them their inability to "believe", approach unto GOD, or to perform any function which might result in their deliverance. They find themselves in despair, full of sin, and quite hopeless apart from the mercy of GOD. As the father of the possessed child who cried out with tears, *"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."* (Mark 9:24), so too do they long for deliverance but find no aid in their own ability. The platitudes of the proclaimers of "free will" offer them no substance upon which they can find any relief.

Faith is the *"gift of GOD"*, it is not *"of works"* (i.e.; a manifestation of the free will of man) lest any man should find grounds upon which to boast. Rather it is the operation of GOD in those whom HE has loved from before the foundation of the world and is bestowed upon them according to

HIS sovereign pleasure in order to manifest HIS deliverance of them from the bondage and penalty of sin. The man who is "without faith" can have no understanding of the things of GOD. *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* (Heb 11:1)

The LORD has declared HIS purpose to produce praise in those who are both unable and unwilling to give it apart from HIS enabling power. Thus, *"out of the mouths of babes and sucklings"* HE has perfected praise. HE is a jealous GOD and will share HIS glory with none as HE confounds the wise and prudent and reveals the deep things of GOD to mere babes. This leaves men with no grounds upon which to boast in either their entrance into the kingdom of GOD nor their subsequent blessings which flow to them as the children of GOD.

Paul clearly expressed this very truth to the Corinthians saying, *"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"* (1Cor 4:7) All revelation and understanding which is found in the sons of GOD is that which has been bestowed upon them by HIS gracious hand. *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."* (John 16:13)

HE will teach the sons of GOD to "know the TRUTH". *"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* (John 8:31-32) HE did not say that they would "become" HIS disciples by believing but rather they would be manifested as HIS "disciples indeed", by the fact that they would be taught the TRUTH and continue in HIS word.

The SPIRIT will always testify of the total sufficiency of CHRIST unto those who are given ears to hear. *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."* (John 16:13-15) The work of the SPIRIT is to exalt and magnify the person and work of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

That work of CHRIST in the behalf of HIS people is one which is completely "finished". They are forever justified, sanctified, and glorified by that which HE has accomplished for them in HIS life of obedience, HIS death on Calvary's cross, HIS resurrection from the dead as the FIRST FRUITS of them that sleep (i.e., are dead); and HIS ascension back to the right hand of FATHER as their GREAT HIGH PRIEST where HE ever lives to make intercession for them.

Yet there is a work which HE presently performs in them which is the fulfillment of HIS purpose wherein they were predestined. *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* (Eph 2:10) *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* (Phil 2:13) This is a current operation of HIS grace wherein HE is pleased to work in each one according to HIS sovereign will. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove (or manifest) what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man (i.e. everyone whom HE has given the gift of faith) the measure of faith."* (Rom 12:1-3)

GOD will get glory in HIS people both in giving them the kingdom through CHRIST's redemptive work and in bestowing upon them those gifts which HE has held in store for them. *"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah."* (Psa 68:18-19) mam