

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

PAUL'S DETERMINATION

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

I Corinthians 2:2

We have all heard the phrase used, "he is a jack of all trades and a master of none." This usually describes some sort of "handy-man" or "shade tree mechanic" who is somewhat proficient in many areas of endeavor but is not necessarily greatly skilled in any particular discipline. Paul was the exact opposite of that. He was a man who was highly skilled in both an understanding of the deep things of GOD and was given the ability to set these things forth in a very straightforward and detailed manner, which would strike at the very root of man's objections to various doctrines which are not readily received by men. The ninth chapter of Romans is probably the epitome of the depth of his understanding in such matters as well as his ability to confound the wise and take away any argument that might be raised against those doctrines.

Most of the doctrinal fabric of the gospel which is set forth in the New Testament was written by him. He was indeed a master of his craft as one born out of due time, and directly instructed in these things by the LORD HIMSELF. *"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus."* (Gal 1:15-17)

He was to some extent not completely received by many of the original apostle's followers and was often reiterating the fact that even though he was not among those who walked with the LORD during HIS earthly ministry, he was nonetheless *"not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things."* (2Cor 11:5-6) He preferred to manifest his apostleship by the demonstration of the power of the SPIRIT which was upon him, than by platitudes and oratory which tickled the ears and impressed the hearers.

There is no shortage of skillful "preachers" in the present day. There are schools and seminaries (of every stripe) which churn out "trained" and "qualified" preachers with the regularity of a cookie machine at the Keebler bakery. They all have the proper credentials to get jobs as mercenaries in the "army of god". Many are great orators who would probably even rival one like Apollos, but just like him, yet need the way of GOD, expounded unto them more perfectly. (see Acts 18: 24-28)

Some of them are no doubt wolves in sheep's clothing who deceive others, being deceived themselves. There are also some of these silver tongued "angels of light" who are intent on gathering to themselves a following and are willing to tell men exactly what they want to hear in order to have preeminence and enrich themselves with this worlds goods. They are able to expound upon many texts and produce polished and powerful orations which leave their hearers spellbound or in some cases, rolling around on the floor and foaming at the mouth.

Paul was well “qualified”, having been taught “of GOD” and needed not that any mere man should teach him, since CHRIST HIMSELF was his INSTRUCTOR. He confessed that his skills as an orator were lacking, yet he left an indelible mark upon all who heard him because his message always centered on the one truth that the preaching of the true gospel always does, “JESUS CHRIST and HIM crucified”.

Paul could have drawn from the vast compendium of the knowledge which he possessed on a multitude of topics which could actually all be profitable to the children of GOD in one way or another. Yet he declared without equivocation, *“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”*

He “determined” that this was crux of the matter. Regardless of what else he could say, he would declare the finished work of CHRIST. A man may be confused about many of the things taught in the scriptures, but if he rings this one bell consistently and singly he will not ever miss the gospel. There are many “issues” upon which men may go to the right and to the left but by equivocating on that which CHRIST has performed in the behalf of HIS elect is to miss the “one thing needful.”

We are sometimes accused of thinking that all men are lost who do not agree with us doctrinally. Such is not the case. However we are convinced that there is not more than one gospel, and the true gospel is that which declares that the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD. We have not looked upon the LAMB’s book of life, to see whose name is recorded there, but we have “determined” along with Paul that any message which attributes the salvation of the people of GOD to anything other than the work of CHRIST cannot be the true gospel. *“Christ is all.” (Col 3:11)*

It does not matter what else a man may preach or how sincerely he may do so, if he misses or misrepresents the sufficiency and efficiency of the blood of CHRIST to atone for the sins of HIS people; he has missed the true gospel and is guilty of declaring “another gospel”. (see Gal.1:6-9)

Paul determined to preach JESUS CHRIST, the eternal SON of GOD; *“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” (Phi 2:6-9)* *“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.” (Col 1:15-19)*

Paul determined to preach the atoning work of CHRIST as the sum total of the sinner’s hope. *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,” (Gal 6:14)* *“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” (Heb 9:12)*

Paul determined to preach CHRIST as the SAVIOR of HIS people and not one who offers salvation to all but actually procures it for none. *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”(1Ti1:15)*

How high a privilege ’tis to know Our sins are all forgiven
To bear about this pledge below, This special grant of heaven!
To look on this when sunk in fears, While each repeated sight,
Like some reviving cordial, cheers, And makes temptations light!
O what is honour, wealth, or mirth, To this well-grounded peace?
How poor are all the goods of earth, To such a gift as this!
This is a treasure rich indeed, Which none but Christ can give;
Of this the best of men have need; This I, the worst, receive.