

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

WORD AND WORK

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.

II Thessalonians 2:16-17

The natural religious nature of man always causes him to seek to gain some level of comfort and confidence based on his own activities and faithfulness relative to others. This is clearly seen in the prayer of the Pharisee in Luke 18:11,12. It is also seen by the testimony of those whom the LORD says that he will cast away in the final judgment. *"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (Mat 7:22-23)

The religion of the flesh is consistently and constantly encouraging men to activity of one sort or another in order to establish a basis upon which they might prove their standing with GOD or gain benefits by levels of service. This religion promises to administer comfort to men as they compare themselves among themselves. It is quite common to hear men recount their various levels of faithful service and the blessings they have gained thereby, whether it be through soul winning, tithing, or any number of general good deeds which they are encouraged to be rightly proud of.

While we are quite certain that faith without works is dead, we are equally certain that HE which hath begun a good work in HIS children will also perform it until the day of JESUS CHRIST. (see Phil.1:6.) This "work" which HE performs is the SOURCE of all "good works" produced in the children of GOD. Rather than these works being the result of man's tedious and meticulous efforts which they can contemplate and recount, they are rather brought about in such a manner that the right hand does not know what the left is doing. *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* (Phi 2:13)

The greatest comfort afforded to the reborn sons of GOD is an awareness that HE who has called us will also preserve us even to the end and establish us in every good word and work according to HIS eternal purpose. (see I Thess.5:23: Isa. 46:11) While this is no comfort at all to the workmongering religion of the flesh; it is the end of all boasting in the same by those who have been caused to rest in CHRIST alone. When a man has been thoroughly instructed by the SPIRIT of GOD as to the unprofitableness of his own religion and convinced that even his "righteousnesses" are as filthy rags in HIS sight, then that man will quietly trust in HIM who is HIS hope and consolation.

One of the more curious and damnable errors that the flesh will take delight in is to hold oneself in higher esteem than the brethren because of some good deed wrought in him by the SPIRIT of GOD. Well did Paul write these words, *"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed*

to us, a measure to reach even unto you.” (2Cor 10:12-13) The man who is taught by CHRIST can find no solace in being “more faithful” than others nor can the degree of any of his endeavors minister a sense of satisfaction to him. If he is enabled to survey any works which are made manifest in him, he considers himself still at best an unworthy servant whose hands are empty before the LORD, and one who knows that any work wrought by him is first wrought in him by a faithful SAVIOR.

Paul says that the comfort of the children of GOD is given to them by grace; “*everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,*”. This “*everlasting consolation*” is brought about as the SPIRIT causes them to contemplate that which CHRIST has done for them as their eternal REDEEMER. HE has taken away the sins of HIS elect, canceling their debt, removing their guilt, and causing them to be forever justified by the very law which had them bound and condemned. Oh what sweet consolation is given to those who see CHRIST as their SUBSTITUTE, imputing HIS righteousness to them. “*So our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*”(2Cor 1:5) “*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.*” (Heb 6:17-18)

They also are blessed with “*good hope*”. Religious man, (by nature), “*hopes*” in many things. His confidence is placed in a variety of endeavors and often even upon his faith as he would describe it. The sons of GOD find no consolation at all in their ability to believe, endure, or perform any task which might (supposedly) gain them favor with GOD. In fact they despair of being able to do anything which could effect their deliverance. Yet they are given a “*good hope*” and not an empty one such as that upon which the flesh might take delight. This “*good hope*” is CHRIST alone, apart from any thing they might produce in the flesh. Even the faith by which they lay hold upon this HOPE is the gift of GOD, “*not of works lest any man should boast.*”

Since this work of consolation and hope is that of the SPIRIT; it comes as no surprise that HE is pleased to manifest HIS presence in those whom HE is at work. This is exactly what the LORD told Nicodemus, “*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*” (John 3:8) One cannot see the “*wind*” but one can see the effects of the wind.

They are established in “*every good word*” and “*work*”. The man who is devoid of this working of the SPIRIT is devoid of faith and salvation.

The reborn sons of GOD are given a delight in the “*word of GOD*”. They prize it and desire to be doers of it and not hearers only. “*No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies.*” (Job 28:18) David testified of old, “*With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.*” (Psa 119:10-12) They are led into truth by the same SPIRIT that gives them eyes to see it. The testimony of the sons of GOD can be found only in this WORD. “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.*” (1Pe 3:15-16)

They are established upon better promises and caused to produce fruit unto the glory of CHRIST. “*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) Let not any man think himself to be a follower of CHRIST who is devoid of good works. This is folly and is a hope without foundation. “*Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*” (Tit 2:12-14) mam