

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*

JUST AND RIGHT

Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly. *Nehemiah 9:33*

The natural thinking of men leads them to justify their own actions and blame GOD for HIS. The conscience of men (unless seared with a hot iron, see I Tim.4:2; Rom.1:28) ever testifies to them of their sin and shortcomings (see Rom.2:15) but in that same natural mind they seek out many inventions to excuse the actions produced by their proclivity to evil. Their very first invention is to deny that they are indeed innately evil. *"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* (Rom 3:12)

Though the scripture plainly testifies of their complete depravity, the natural man rebels at such a concept and rather entertains the notion that there is a spark of good in all men (especially themselves) which can be fanned into a flame with the right sort of coercion upon their free will.

To this end man has invented religion, which is the primary tool used to "fan those flames". Most are convinced that they can influence GOD's favor towards them by engaging in religious activities of one sort or another. These activities include but are not limited to "bible reading, soul winning, praying, doing good deeds, going to church, tithing, etc." None of those activities is in itself a bad thing, but any of them which are engaged in for the wrong reason are but a substitute for righteousness and therefore a stench in the nostrils of GOD. *"He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not."* (Isa 66:3-4)

The LORD looks not on the outward deeds of man's religion but rather searches the heart. HE has no regard to those things which man intends to offer to HIM by way of sacrifice, *"For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."* (Isa 66:2) The religion which man has invented is not interested in truth at all, except that it might serve unto his own profit. Men pursue religion for the benefit which they suppose it will grant them.

Multitudes have made "decisions for CHRIST" simply to escape the fires of hell which they have been stirred up to fear by the persuasive rhetoric of the preachers of doom. In fact many speak of their "religion" as fire insurance and are convinced that their decision to "get saved" is indeed a true salvation. They are encouraged in this delusion by the preachers of free willism who continue to stir them up to a life of religious works on the premise that they might gain even greater blessings for themselves from the LORD. This is the error of the Judaizers. *"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)

Man's quest for religious satisfaction motivates him to seek out all manner of religious experiences, many of which cannot be distinguished from emotional releases brought on by psychological pressures ministered by men, skilled in the art of deception, who are often themselves deceived. *"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."* (II Cor 11:13-15)

These "experiences" are often held out as "trophies" which purportedly prove that one has met the necessary requirements to be "bona fide" in the eyes those who share in them and of course ultimately quite a bargaining chip in the kingdom of GOD. (see Mat.7: 22-23) They also serve as quite a source of comfort and assurance for those who place their confidence in them, closing their eyes to the deceitfulness of the human heart, and relying on the activities of the flesh. *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* (Jer 17:9)

Yet that man, to whom the LORD has regard, is compelled (by HIS SPIRIT) to bow down before the footstool of GOD, confessing his sin, with nothing at all to bring unto HIM. He is ultimately made aware (by the same SPIRIT) of his utter and complete wickedness and inability to do anything to influence the favor of GOD towards himself. He knows himself to be utterly dependent on the mercy of GOD and completely worthy of destruction. He has no bargains to make, nor anything to barter with. He is shut up to the mercy of GOD even if he is ultimately cast away, confessing with Job, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."* (Job 13:15)

Such a mindset can only come by revelation which is the work of the SPIRIT of GOD in the appointed heirs of salvation, as HE quickens (brings to life) them causing them to be born again. It is as a result of this work that the gospel of the finished work of CHRIST appears to them as a sweet savor and a most desired haven of rest.

Nehemiah's confession (9:33) is the same thing the apostle Paul said; *"Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."* (Rom 3:4) It is the height of folly for men to seek to accuse the LORD of glory of any sort of wrongdoing. Yet these accusations are at the heart of man's rebellion against the preaching of the cross; which is foolishness to them.

The men of religion hate the notion that the work of CHRIST alone is that upon which all of the blessings of GOD to mankind is based. They feel that there has to be something that they can perform which will cause them to gain this favor. They are adamant that such a notion would be grossly unfair to those who put in great time and effort to perform religious deeds, only to see the publicans and harlots welcomed into the kingdom without this expenditure. They accuse GOD of unrighteousness and disregard the sweet sound of grace, refusing to bow down to HIM who alone can save them. *"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."* (Isa 55:1)

THE men of the world hate the cross of CHRIST because they find a great imposition in being compelled to fall down and worship CHRIST as the ONE TRUE GOD. This is much too narrow minded to suit them and they rail against HIM who would declare that HE is the *"WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE."* They are not all in agreement as to whether or not there is a GOD but they are all certain that HE cannot be the LORD JESUS CHRIST. They will not have this MAN to rule over them, nor to submit to HIS authority.

But there are those, from all cultures, walks of life, and backgrounds, who are the objects of GOD's mercy. They are taught of their own wickedness and drawn with cords of love to worship at the feet of HIM who shed HIS precious blood on Calvary's cross to purchase their eternal redemption. They have no accusations to bring against HIM, but rather acclamations of praise and worship. *"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."* (Rev 1:5-7)