

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

NON-VERBAL MINISTRY

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:16

It is likely that no other concept, (which has arisen in the thinking of the church in general), has had a greater negative impact and hindrance to the strengthening of that body, than the idea that there is a certain class of men (i.e. the clergy) who are appointed to be the sole ministers of the church. I believe this to be the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. (see Rev.2:6,15) To even open a discussion on this matter is to risk the ire of those who fancy themselves as these "sole ministers".

It is ingrained in the natural man to desire a king and there is no shortage of those who are happy to fulfill that desire and occupy that office on some level. While most will gladly acknowledge that CHRIST is the sole KING of HIS church, they will not all acknowledge that the saints are completely equal in authority of function in that church. Paul understood this quite clearly when he exhorted those who were elders to lead by example rather than "power". *"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."* (1Pet 5:2-3)

We are certain that the Church of JESUS CHRIST has ONE KING and that HE has delegated HIS authority to all of HIS children alike. *"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. 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 1:5-6)

The manifestation of certain types of gifts does not give grounds for a man to be lifted up in the midst of the church anymore than the lack of those particular gifts, should relegate him to some secondary tier of importance as to the ministry of the saints. Those who support the "clergy concept" generally interpret the "work of the ministry" which Paul mentions in Ephesians 4:12 as that of "preaching and teaching".

A thorough study of the passage and its context belies this notion and reveals that the "work of the ministry" (as it is described here) is that which the children of GOD are "perfected" to perform to one another. The gifts of teaching and preaching are for the purpose of instructing the saints in general that they might in turn understand and be equipped to perform the "work of the ministry" to one another.

The body is edified and strengthened or knit together (i.e.; compacted) by that which *"every joint supplieth"*. Only as every joint is performing that "ministry" to which they are called is the church "knit together". This means that the "ministry" cannot be simply "preaching and teaching", but must consist of something else which is supplied even by those who are not given verbal gifts.

We have no desire to minimize the blessing and importance of sound teaching and preaching among the saints of GOD, This is a vital gift and calling which the church must not neglect nor

consider in any less importance than that which the scriptures plainly set forth as the LORD has seen fit to commit it to faithful men. *"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."* (Tit 1:9) *"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine."* (Tit 2:1)

Yet we find that the spoken testimonies of the saints in recounting the dealings of the LORD with them are often as timely and useful as those messages which are the result of labor in *"word and doctrine"* (I Tim. 5:17). These are meant to be for the encouragement of the saints. *"Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy."* (Psa 107:2) *"But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place."* (Acts 12:17)

The LORD teaches HIS children every day in the trials, failures, and triumphs of daily life and it is unfortunate that some regard these "lessons" as inferior to those which are gained by exposition of the holy scriptures and give minimal (if any) opportunity or encouragement for the sharing of them in the congregation of the saints. One should not replace the other nor should either be neglected. *"Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us."* (1Sam 7:12)

Yet there is another form of ministry of the saints one to another which is equally as important as any other and is often not considered as ministry at all. These "ministries" may be the most powerful of all since they don't involve the tongue, which according to the scriptures *"is set on fire of hell"* (James 3:6). The easiest thing on earth to do is talk about doctrine.

This non-verbal ministry is not about words but is a true demonstration of the power of the HOLY GHOST as HIS work is manifest in those in whom HE works both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure. This is a manifestation that HIS people are doers of the word and not hearers only. *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."* (James 2:26)

This non-verbal ministry is first demonstrated as the saints of GOD give proper regard unto the declaration of the LORD that *"where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* (Mat 18:20) Those who value the presence of CHRIST cannot neglect or forsake the assembling of the saints without neglecting a meeting with CHRIST HIMSELF, if they indeed believe that what HE said is true.

This desire to assemble with the saints also demonstrates to those who regularly gather; the mutual love, esteem, and respect that each has for the other in valuing their fellowship above the activities, cares, and attractions of this world. Together they can enjoy the presence of CHRIST in a fashion which is unique. This is a "ministry" of encouragement since the saints are individually and daily assailed with their own thoughts of unbelief, disobedience, and unfaithfulness, while they are apart from this assembly. The gathering of the saints is a testimony to the faithfulness of GOD to keep HIS own from falling as each is reminded by the presence of the others that, at least, some have not forsaken the faith once delivered to the saints.

The children of GOD are exhorted to "bear one another's burdens", and it is in this assembly that those burdens are made known and shared as each one "feels his brothers pain and with him bears a part." This is perhaps the greatest "ministry" which the saints can perform to one another and is a clear demonstration of action which manifests the true children of GOD. *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* (John 13:34-35)

By all of this we are reminded to what degree our LORD loved HIS own brethren. *"Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."* (John 13:1) *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* (Rom 5:8) *"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."* (1John 4:11)

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