

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

THAT WHICH DEFILES

And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Mark 7:20-23

We have just gone through one of the most divisive presidential elections in recent memory. The feeling on the part of many conservative pundits is that the present administration is the root and cause of our decline as a nation. Most seem to be convinced that if we could have just elected a "conservative" candidate then our troubles as a nation would be behind us. Instead of that happening however, the incumbent candidate was reelected, (according to GOD's sovereign purpose), and now we have more dire predictions of the ruin which he is sure to bring us into. A great number seem to be oblivious to the fact that the road to ruin was paved long ago.

While it is very comforting to lay blame for failures and decline on the lack of leadership or the absence of this or that law, the sad reality is that the state of our nation and its decayed moral fiber is being manifested by the choice of the leaders we elect. Most folks are more concerned with their favorite TV show than they are with "the fiscal cliff" that we hear so much about.

Abortion is a terrible practice, drug and alcohol abuse is certainly extremely harmful to individuals and society alike, and homosexuality is an unnatural and decadent practice, which is an evidence of GOD's judgment upon a nation. (see Rom. 1:21-32) Yet it is sheer folly to think that even the most conservative of leaders can "solve" these problems through legislation. The rise of these "problems" is but an indicator of the innate wickedness of a society that wants to pick and choose the "vices" that it is willing to allow. "Conservative" legislators and activists rail about "gay marriage" while they engage in adulterous affairs and pornographic entertainment. They prosecute a war on drugs, yet they are often intoxicated with "legally" obtained spirits. They want to cut the budget while enriching themselves at public expense.

The LORD JESUS CHRIST confronted this hypocrisy which all men, to a greater or lesser extent, are all guilty of. There is a notion which resides deep in the heart of men that causes them to view sin as an external matter. In the case of politics the fault always lies with the "other" party and their policies. The Pharisees were upset that the disciples of the LORD ate without washing their hands. Being Jews they were very strict "legalists", yet they were more interested in washing the outside of the cup, while neglecting the inside. (see Mat 23:25-28)

So the LORD told them that the things that men take in do not defile them, but rather the wickedness which is within defiles them as it is manifested. The LORD was very clear that men are not sinners because of any substance or activity which is external, but rather that men demonstrate their innate sinfulness because they are inwardly corrupt and unfit for the kingdom of heaven. Men sin because they are sinners. This is a far more serious and deadly problem than the things which they do.

Men would like to think that by engaging in various religious activities or refraining from certain indulgences that they can become holy. It is this principle which is at the heart of the notion that by making a profession of faith, being baptized in water, or by performing good deeds that they can merit the favor of GOD or alter their eternal destiny. This is the very basis upon which Paul pointed out the folly of going about to establish our own righteousness and the fatal results thereof. (see Rom. 10:3-4)

Paul said, *"The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."* (1Tim 1:9-10) In this he points out the fact that the law exists because men are by nature corrupt and to every good work reprobate. No law against sin is necessary among those who are not sinners. The love of wickedness is that which causes wickedness and it is bound in the heart of every man. *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* (Rom 3:10-12)

So men are in a condition from which they cannot escape. They are sliding towards their just destruction with no remedy in their hand. They have abused themselves, despised the way of GOD, and lapped up iniquity like water. Yet, the false prophets encourage men to solve their problems by "accepting" the LORD as if the power to do so is a product of their own free will.

I recently read an account of a famous football coach who gathered his staff together after a national championship victory. He asked each one if he felt any different after having won this title. Each one admitted that he did not. Then he told them that this is but an empty "accomplishment", compared to that "accomplishment" of accepting the LORD into their life. I have much respect for this gentleman for his demeanor on and off the field but I totally reject the error which he set forth in presenting "salvation" as something men could "accomplish".

There is only one MAN who has ever "accomplished" salvation. HIS name is JESUS CHRIST. No man by whatever "endeavor" he may attempt can ever add to or gain this "salvation" because every man is dead in trespasses and sins and utterly defiled thereby. This is why the LORD JESUS told Nicodemus, *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* (John 3:3) The literal meaning of the LORD's words, as we look at the Greek, are, "except a man is born from above". Men cannot and will not "change" themselves into something which they are not by nature. Apart from being made a "new creature" by the operation of free and sovereign grace, all men shall perish in their own sin and receive the just recompense of reward for being rebel, alien sinners. *"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."* (John 3:7)

Salvation is a gift which is secured by CHRIST and then applied by the HOLY GHOST to the most undeserving of men. There is no place wherein a man can boast of any accomplishment thereto. Paul said he would glory in nothing but the cross of CHRIST whereon the LORD alone obtained eternal redemption for HIS people.

1 What wisdom, majesty, and grace Through all the gospel shine!
 'Tis God that speaks, and we confess The doctrine most divine.
2 Down from his shining throne on high The Almighty Saviour comes,
 Lays his bright robes of glory by, And feeble flesh assumes.
3 The mighty debt his chosen owed Upon the cross he pays;
 Then through the clouds ascends to God, 'Midst shouts of loftiest praise.
4 There he, our great High Priest, appears Before his Father's throne;
 There on his breast our names he wears, And counts our cause his own.

#51 Gadsby's Hymns, by Samuel Stennet

Oh sinner! Contemplate your dire situation. Trust not in your own supposed ability to believe or obey the commandments of CHRIST. May GOD give you grace to find REFUGE from the wrath to come upon all who are defiled without remedy. CHRIST alone is the sinner's hope. mam