

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

A CONTRAST OF PRINCIPLES

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Matthew 5:38-39

Nicodemus was completely befuddled when the LORD JESUS told him “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (John 3:3) In so doing the LORD laid down a principle which defines the difference between the realm of flesh and blood and the Kingdom of GOD, which cannot be inherited by flesh and blood.

When men fail to see this stark divide they can in no wise have any understanding of either that which the LORD came to do nor how it is that men are made a part of that kingdom. Nicodemus, just like all religious men, figured that there was some activity which he could perform in the flesh which would enable him to find a place of favor with GOD. He assumed that he could learn the precepts of the LORD’s teaching just like he could learn the precepts of any other field of study and therefore he sought a private word with the LORD.

Yet the LORD plainly told HIM that unless he was “born again” with a birth which had its origin in heaven, just like he was born the first time in flesh and blood with a birth which was of this earth, he could neither enter nor comprehend that kingdom which the LORD came into the earth to establish. (see John 3:5) This is exactly what Paul told the Corinthians when he said, “*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*” (1Cor 2:14)

The natural understanding of men causes them to view the teachings of the LORD JESUS CHRIST in HIS “sermon on the mount” as a collection of moral platitudes. Yet that same natural understanding inevitably recoils at HIS teaching and sets about to explain why HIS teaching could not possibly work. The teachings of CHRIST are not set forth to be moral “life lessons” for men in general but rather to demonstrate the contrast of the principles upon which the Kingdom of GOD stands with those (principles) of the realm of flesh and blood in which all men abide by nature.

All of Adam’s race are born with the “*work of the law*” written on their hearts (according to Paul in Romans 2:13-15). This is demonstrated each time a two year old child strikes back at another child who has struck him over some toy that they both want. By nature men believe in the fleshly principle of “*an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.*” No one ever has to teach a man that stealing is wrong. Just wait until someone steals from him and you will see his indignation against stealing or any other “injustice” which he perceives. This natural “principle” shall bear witness against him in the day of judgment whether or not he ever heard of the Ten Commandments.

The primary principle of the realm of flesh and blood is to meet force with force, hatred with hatred, and to exact “justice” against all perceived “injustices”. The LORD JESUS contrasts these natural principles with those of HIS kingdom. HE said, “*resist not evil*” (i.e.; that which is committed against one’s person, not the evil which arises out of the Satanic realm see James

4:7); turn the other cheek when smitten, pray for those that mistreat you, and if a man demands something of you, give him more than he asks for.

Every man, by nature, recoils at these teachings and can no more “adopt” them than a leopard can change his spots or an Ethiopian, the color of his skin. (see Jer 13:23) Apart from supernatural revelation it is impossible that a man could ever embrace these teachings or comprehend the spiritual nature of them or their application in them by the SPIRIT of GOD.

GOD’s children are not called to be violent or vengeful, rather to be as harmless as doves; more ready to forgive than to demand “justice” or apologies. These principles are at the very heart of the LORD’s teaching of HIS disciples when HE said, *“But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”* (Mat 23:11-12) This is reiterated by Paul when he said, *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”* (Philip 2:3-5)

Even the man who is “born again”, will find that his flesh will chafe under these principles and constantly war against the “law of his mind” (see Rom. 7:23) seeking to bring him under the bondage of the “law of sin and death”. Yet while his flesh rages against these principles there also burns within him a desire to be conformed to the image of CHRIST, and he must confess that anything less than the purity of CHRIST’s example and the demonstration of HIS righteousness is but “filthiness” in the sight of GOD.

Since religious men view the LORD’s teaching as setting forth moral principles which are to serve as a guideline for life, they assume that they can adopt these principles and go about doing good by a partial implementation of them. They figure that the LORD will be pleased by their efforts and deeds and will overlook any shortcomings which they might demonstrate since they are sincere in their quest. Yet in this endeavor they demonstrate an ignorance of the spiritual nature of these principles and despise the perfect righteousness of CHRIST by going about to establish their own righteousness. Just like the Jews in their view of the law of Moses according to Paul; *“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”* (Rom 10:2-4)

The principles of the Kingdom of GOD are directly opposite to those of the realm of flesh and blood and are designed to demonstrate to the sons of GOD their absolute need of a PERFORMER. These principles are not simply “good ideas” or “lofty goals”, rather they are the “gold of the realm”. This is a Kingdom of Perfect Righteousness and only the Righteousness of CHRIST is sufficient. Fleshly endeavor and the effort of free-will, at its very best, will never be of any value here. Only the GOLD of HIM who “is our RIGHTEOUSNESS” is an acceptable specie.

As a good religious man Peter was willing to demonstrate a certain level of forgiveness but he was quite shocked at the extent of the forgiveness required in the Kingdom of GOD. *“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.”* (Mat 18:21-22)

The rich young ruler was a morally upright man who was interested in gaining “eternal life”, yet he was utterly dismayed when the LORD described to HIM the nature of “perfection” in HIS Kingdom. *“Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.”* (Luke 18:22)

Modern religious merchandisers assure their hearers of great blessings which can be theirs by “tithing” and “sowing seeds of faith” (i.e.; money), yet the only acceptable principle of giving in this Kingdom is demonstrated by the widow who gave all that she had. (see Luke 21:1-4)