

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

CUTTING OFF A DOG'S NECK

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.

Isaiah 66:3

It is sheer folly for men to think that they have it within their own power and "free will" to worship GOD whenever they please or in anywise to approach into HIS presence by an activity which they perform as if HE was hungrily waiting on them to do so and would be disappointed if they do not. This is true, even if they are attempting to worship HIM according to the pattern which HE has described and required.

Two things that were a great "abomination" to the Jews, were swine and dogs. (see Lev.11:7; Deut.23:18; II Sam.3:8) Yet it is to these two things that the LORD likens their "sacrifices" and "offerings" which they brought before HIM in outward obedience to the Law of Moses. HE rejected their "offerings and sacrifices" because they made them, not out of reverence for HIM, a knowledge of HIS holiness (i.e. separation from them; see Ex.33:20), or a desire to be found faithful before HIM, but because they assumed that they could "establish their own righteousness" before HIM by the activity of their own flesh. They thought HE was a god like those of the heathen who dwelt in temples made with hands and who could be enhanced or magnified by their bringing (or adding) something to him.

Religious men assume that GOD will be pleased with their activity if they fulfill a certain quota and/or meet certain requirements prescribed by some form which they have derived of their own making or some pattern which they have derived from the Scriptures. This is what prompts men to rely upon "prayers", "creeds", and "liturgies" written by others, or even the rote recitation of the LORD's model prayer which HE gave to HIS disciples. (see Mat.6:9-13) It is that which causes them to exalt the letter of the law. It is that which causes them to be divisive (i.e.; schismatic or heretic) over various practices and seasons which are mentioned in the scriptures. (see Gal.4:10; Tit 3:9-10; I Cor 11:16-18; Col.2:8)

This tendency has its clear illustration in the notion that a man can become a "Christian" simply by reciting a prayer which some have called "the sinner's prayer". Yet it is no less manifested by those who: take satisfaction in being sure that their times and orders of worship coincide with the letter of the scriptures or their "confessions of faith", what a woman puts on her head, if she wears jewelry, etc., or if certain days are kept in a special manner, or water baptism is performed by the right person and in keeping with their own tradition.

There is no attitude or condition with which GOD is pleased to find in men, other than that of a broken and contrite heart. No man ever yet stirred himself up to take hold upon the horns of this altar except those in whom the SPIRIT of GOD first performed this work of repentance and godly sorrow. When a broken and contrite heart is missing, there can be no approach unto the LORD and any activity; regardless of its mandate, is an abomination unto HIM. *"When ye come to*

appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear.” (Isa 1:12-15)

Nothing that men in the flesh bring before the LORD, regardless of its “orthodoxy” is that which pleases HIM. HE is pleased in nothing or no one other than HIS beloved SON and those who are found hidden in HIM. No man can make any approach unto GOD nor have any expectations of being received into HIS presence outside of that ONE who is the SAVIOR of sinners and the PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS of HIS elect.

The Pharisees were very sincere, morally upright, and deeply religious men, as attested to by Paul (see Gal. 3: 4-6) and witnessed by the LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF as HE spoke of their devotion and faithfulness to tithing and their standard of fleshly righteousness (see Mat.23:23; Mat.5:20). The manifestation of HIS rejection of them is seen as they thought they could be justified by their own actions and went about their devotion, tediously trying to establish the grounds of their own righteousness. They have many followers in the present day among many who in a measure make a profession of having faith in CHRIST, but think to add to themselves something which will cause them to be made more acceptable to HIM.

This is exactly why the Pharisees stumbled at HIS words and hated HIS way. HE gave them no grounds upon which they could glory and revealed that those who were morally bankrupt would go into the kingdom before they did. *“Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.” (Mat 21:31-32)*

The religious flesh of men, hearing that “repentance” is a requirement, will even seek to produce in their flesh a sort of “repentance” which is thought by most of them to be sufficient, even as their formulas for men to follow to be “saved”. This being a product of their own free will, it is but that which Paul contrasts to the Corinthians, *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” (II Cor 7:10)*

A man cannot even sorrow for his sin in a proper fashion or in any wise be led into true repentance apart from the work of the HOLY GHOST to humble him in the dust to the abhorring of his own flesh. When Job was finally brought to see what he was in the light of the glory and holiness of GOD he said, *“I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:6)*

Job was a very morally upright man, knowledgeable of truth, and regularly made offerings for his own sin and that of his family, yet when true repentance was given to him, he abandoned all hope of being made righteous before HIM who is absolutely righteous by anything less than the application of perfect RIGHTEOUSNESS to HIM by the power of GOD.

Such is the manifestation of the SPIRIT to those whom the LORD is pleased to call. HE will give them a desire for a broken and contrite heart, and will in HIS own time work repentance in them. HE will cause them to see their own powerlessness, and their abject need of HIS mercy, lest they perish. They will identify with the publican who could not even so much as lift his eyes up towards heaven smiting upon his own breast and crying out for mercy.

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” (Psa 51:1-7)

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