

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

THE EFFORT OF MAN

Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.
Malachi 1:4

As a young man, I often heard the saying, "The LORD helps those that help themselves." This is a commonly received thought which permeates the natural mind of men. It is also the very substance of what the average person believes the "preaching of the gospel" to be.

From the very beginning, man has sought out his own devices whereby he might seek to better himself and/or bring his "offerings" to the LORD. We see this demonstrated first in Adam and Eve as they sewed fig leaves together to hide their nakedness. They passed on this very trait to Cain who brought an offering to the LORD of his own labor. Time would fail us to tell of the likes of the builders of Babel's tower, Nadab and Abihu who offered strange fire before the LORD (see Lev.10:1,2), of Uzzah who steadied the Ark, (see II Sam 6: 3-7); of King Saul who saved the sheep from slaughter that he might offer them to the LORD, (see I Sam 15: 14-19), etc.

They all had good intentions and perhaps did the best that they could, but none of this was acceptable in GOD's sight, and not just unacceptable but reprehensible. Thus we see the LORD speaking through Malachi to the nation of Israel, "*And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee?---ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.*" (Mal 1:6-10)

When the LORD gave the Law to Moses, HE specifically said that whatever was to be offered to the LORD must be the very best. It was to be the "first fruits", those lambs which were without any spot or blemish. Not only that but only those priests which were ordained by GOD could make the offering and even those priests could not have any blemish, disease, or weakness. In this the LORD would demonstrate three things.

One is that HE receives only ONE OFFERING for sin, because everything which is of the earth, is corrupted in some fashion. Secondly, HE has only ONE PRIEST who is fit to make such an offering before HIM. Thirdly, that SACRIFICE was completely sufficient of itself to accomplish the redemption and atonement for which it was given.

There is a principle which is taught in the scriptures, which I call, the law of supercession. Paul speaks of it to the Corinthians when HE says, "*But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*" (1Cor 13:10) He illustrated this to them in the next verse, "*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I*

became a man, I put away childish things.” (1Cor 13:11) He also spoke of it, quite clearly, to the Philippians, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” (Php 3:8-10)

The purveyors of the “free will gospel”, tell men that the LORD JESUS has done all that HE could possibly do to save every man on the face of the earth. Now (according to them), HE has left the final decision as to whether or not these same men will be saved, up to them. All that they must now do is bring their “faith” to the LORD and when HE sees that then HE will be pleased. Thus they teach that men hold the key to “salvation” in their hands and can worship the LORD when they please. Great effort, eloquent and touching orations, and limitless amounts of money are spent in an effort to bring to this to pass.

This concept flies in the very face of all that we learn in the scriptures concerning the state of man by nature, (i.e.; dead in trespasses and sins) and the absolute payment for sin which CHRIST, the LAMB of GOD has made (see Heb. 9:12). Nothing that a man can bring unto the LORD is acceptable in HIS sight. In fact HE hates the “efforts” of men to “worship” HIM upon some other basis than that which is perfect and untainted. For every “effort” of man, is a rejection of the ONE TRUE OFFERING for sin that was made by the ONE TRUE PRIEST, JESUS CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUS.

Men can bring nothing good to the LORD because they are in their very nature, corrupt and unable even to approach unto HIM. Just like HE said through Malachi, *“I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.”* Thus, men are in a great dilemma, needing a sacrifice, but unable to offer it.

Man’s solution to this dilemma is to ignore this glaring revelation in the scriptures (see Rom. 3: 10-19) and to set forth to “do the best that they can.” The Jews and all of those who promote “law-keeping” (as an enhancement) are described by 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.” (Rom 10:2-3)*

The problem is not that they are not well intended nor that they lack fervor and commitment, but they are “daubing the wall with untempered mortar” (see Ezek. 13:10-16). The best that men have is not sufficient and GOD does not have a program whereby HE cooperates with men or grades them on some sort of curve, relative to others. In fact HE hates all offerings and sacrifices other than that which is made by CHRIST JESUS.

CHRIST alone is HIS STANDARD of RIGHTEOUSNESS. All which falls short of that PERFECTION, is but dung in HIS sight and HE will destroy all who would come unto HIM without that RIGHTEOUSNESS.

So, the fact is, that GOD does not “help those who help themselves”, but rather despises those who would think that they have anything of value to bring before HIS HOLY PRESENCE or that entertain the notion that they can improve their standing in HIS sight, by any action or thought which they might undertake, whether they claim to be “believers” or not.

“For Christ is the end (i.e.; conclusion or termination) of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” (Rom 10:4) We need not and must not go any farther than this “ONE OFFERING for sin.” “God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” (1Co 1:27-31)

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