

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

BEHOLDING THE UPRIGHT

For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

Psalm 11:7

One of mankind's greatest pastimes is seen in their practice of comparing themselves to others. This habit is that which gave rise to the cliché, "keeping up with the Jones". I believe this tendency was what gave rise to the slaying of Abel by his brother Cain. As he saw Abel's offering respected by the LORD, while his own was not respected. We see it in the brothers of Joseph as they saw his favor in the eyes of his father. We see it exhibited to some degree in the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, (see Acts 5:1-10) as they saw others giving of their possessions and thought they would appear as magnanimous in the eyes of their brethren. Peter was upbraided for this very trait when he looked at John and asked what was to become of him; "Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me." (John 21:22)

It is quite common for men to compare themselves unto others when they are judging the obedience to which the LORD has called HIS people. They often take comfort in their own levels of commitment and obedience to the ways of the LORD when they look around them and see others engaged in various activities which they would never even think of being involved in. Many "sects" and "denominations" pat themselves on the back as they think of their own "faithfulness" and wisdom compared to those they consider either too "strict" or not "strict enough."

We see many get on various hobby horses which they ride with secret pride, as they look around themselves and pick out the sins of others while counting their own failings as not nearly as bad. One of the more prominent areas of this is found when the subject of sodomy or (for the more tender conscience), "homosexuality" is discussed. One can quite readily gather a chorus of "amens" if this particular form of wickedness is exposed for what it is and the perpetrators are consigned to hell. "Gay marriage" (which is a misnomer if ever there was one) is roundly condemned yet if one should mention that divorce, fornication, or gluttony is equally hated in the eyes of HIM who is of purer eyes than to look upon sin, many grow silent and desire to move on to another topic since it hits closer to home for some who decry the "sodomites".

GOD hates sin; will judge sin; and will destroy the perpetrators thereof; for "the wages of sin is death." While we are indeed to be our brother's keeper, our obedience in following the LORD's commands is not to be considered by comparing ourselves to them or vice versa. Paul said, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2Cor 10:12)

The LORD spoke to the tendency of men to glory in "comparative righteousness" when HE said, "Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:2-5) It matters not how your walk compares to the relative (as you might consider it) wickedness of other men. The LORD calls HIS children to walk according to the ONE acceptable STANDARD which is given to them. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (1Pet 2:21)

When we compare ourselves to others we can possibly find areas in which we have succeeded in measuring up to the high calling which we have been given. Yet when we compare ourselves to the only STANDARD that is of any consequence, we must all confess that we have failed miserably and have no grounds upon which to consider ourselves as compliant to HIS way and most certainly can find no basis upon which to gain any acceptance in the courts of heaven. *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."* (Isa 64:6)

The scripture plainly tells us that the man who shall dwell in the presence of the LORD is of a sinless character and pure in thought and deed. *"Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."* (Psa 24:3-4) This can only have reference to ONE MAN, born of a woman, the MAN CHRIST JESUS. Men err to think that any one of them could ever be described in this fashion apart from being hid in the righteousness of CHRIST.

The Psalmist said that the LORD shall *"behold the upright."* Foolish men think that HE would compare men to other men and find some of them worthy of HIS favor based on their merits compared to others. Yet the only upright man upon whom HIS gaze is set is HE whom HE has made *"to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* (2Cor 5:21) There is ONE STANDARD of righteousness, and ONE who has measured up to that STANDARD, being the RIGHTEOUSNESS of GOD in HIMSELF. Apart from being found "in HIM" a man can have no righteousness at all. *"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."* (Heb 1:8-9)

The FATHER loves HIS SON with an eternal love and HE has ever been before HIS FATHER's face as that ONE beloved as HIS only BEGOTTEN SON. Before Adam was created, the LORD did *"behold the UPRIGHT"* and took pleasure in HIM. HE "loveth righteousness" and sees that perfect "RIGHTEOUSNESS" with HIM ever in HIS presence. Why would HE then look at fallen men to see their imperfections contrasted with that of others, when HE only desires to see HIS GLORY magnified in the ONE SOURCE from which it springs.

HE is indeed the *"righteous LORD"* who *"loveth RIGHTEOUSNESS."* None other will do. So how can a man be found in the *"secret place of the MOST HIGH"* except he be hidden in HIM who abides *"under the shadow of the ALMIGHTY"* (Ps. 91:1)? This can only occur by and according to the sovereign purpose of GOD who has created a people which HE chose in CHRIST from before the foundation of the world. Their union to and subsequent election in CHRIST makes them accepted in HIM as HE does impute HIS righteousness to them and they are seen in CHRIST as upright because HE is UPRIGHT.

Yet they are fallen in Adam, in this present evil world, as those subjected to vanity in order to become the objects of HIS redemption, as HE is pleased to display the glory of HIS grace in the giving of HIS only BEGOTTEN SON as an ATONEMENT for their sin. It is in this redemption that the sons of GOD are enabled to *"behold the UPRIGHT"*, finding in HIM their ALL in ALL, when they are born from above by HIS SPIRIT and enabled to hear the gospel of HIS glory declared.

The LORD said *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."* (John 12:32) Now in this HE specifically spoke of the manner in which HE would die. (see v.33), but there is also a veiled reference to the declaration of the fact that HE did indeed suffer for sinners, as HE is lifted up in the preaching of the gospel. The SPIRIT of GOD draws men to the LORD, but HE often does so in conjunction with the preaching of the gospel by those whom HE has sent for this purpose. *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Rom 10:13-15)

Those that are enabled to *"behold the UPRIGHT"* and rejoice therein are those who believe, calling upon the LORD. They desire no righteousness but that which is HIS and have no expectation of being given an entrance to HIS Kingdom, except upon the basis of HIS righteousness imputed to themselves. We believe and are sure that *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."* (Mat 16:16) Have you beheld the UPRIGHT? mam