

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 DIFFERENCE

For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? I Cor. 4:7

One of the greatest needs that men have as they gain a proper understanding of the truth, (which is set forth in the scriptures) is to unlearn those things which they have obtained by their natural understanding. All men are born into this world in a state of rebellion and their natural understanding of the Word of GOD is skewed by that condition of spiritual darkness. Solomon said, *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* (Prov 14:12) This is the same sentiment expressed by the Psalmist, when he wrote; *"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."* (Psa 58:3)

The only way that any man can ever come to a right perception of GOD's Word is by the revelation of it to them by the SPIRIT, as HE quickens them in the new birth. They are, by this birth from above, made capable of spiritual understanding and it is to them alone that LIGHT is given to dispel their darkness.

The quantity of LIGHT that each is given is according to the Sovereign operation of GOD who gives to each the measure of faith which pleases HIM. (see Rom. 12:3) But in all cases, the LIGHT is given to dispel darkness, and often is applied (accompanied by many struggles) as their flesh seeks to hold onto its "security blankets" of error which they have walked in since the days of their youth. Some of these false ideas are so ingrained that their removal is quite painful, both to them and those around them.

This condition is made even worse in those who have been entrenched in religious traditions, doctrines, and practices which have greater foundation in natural understanding than that which is taught by the SPIRIT of GOD. It is futile for men to attempt (in their own power) to correct the thinking of those who are convinced that their way (and often the way of their fathers) is not contrary to the Scriptures. Until the LORD is pleased to quicken a man's understanding he will resist such correction, often even unto the shedding of blood.

We see this clearly demonstrated in the Jews rejection of CHRIST and in the actions of Saul of Tarsus, who was a Jew of the Jews, and went about to destroy the very work of the GOD whom he claimed to serve. Yet even this human darkness is ordained by HIM who would demonstrate the glory of HIS grace in delivering those whom HE loves from this Stygian night. For it is against the backdrop of this darkness that HIS LIGHT is made to shine in its glory.

Saul was, one moment, walking in the darkness of his own mind and religion, yet when the LORD was pleased to reveal HIMSELF, he was bathed in LIGHT and HE, whom he persecuted, had become his LORD. He was still in relative darkness (even being struck blind physically) yet he would never again be able to take satisfaction in that darkness, but was made to be a seeker of TRUTH and LIGHT. So is the grace of GOD revealed in giving HIS children a love of the truth.

I have observed over the years that GOD's people know the truth when they hear it. This observation is in keeping with the LORD's declaration. *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* (John 10:27) Yet due to their ingrained "learning", they often have a continuing struggle to cast off the bonds of religion and tradition which they have long embraced. The very strongest and most enlightened of GOD's children are very imperfect in their understanding, which led Paul to observe, *"And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he*

knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."(1Cor 8:2) So it is a wise course to declare what we know to be true without equivocation, but to leave the reception of that truth in the hands of HIM who is able to make men wise unto salvation according to HIS ordained purpose.

Some of the things which GOD's children must "unlearn" are:

The state of man by nature. Everyone who sees a newborn baby thinks how innocent and pure that he (or she) is. And no doubt that in a comparative fashion, the baby is innocent to the degree that its corruption has not yet fully developed to the observation of men. Yet the truth is that all human beings are completely corruptible and their corruption will soon be demonstrated for all to see. David said, "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" (Psa 51:5) He was not referring to the physical act by which his conception took place (as some have opined) but rather of the fact that he was born with a love and propensity to sin, and that sin was not defined by the things which he did, but rather what he is. He was a sinner born into a race of sinners, all worthy of death, "*For the wages of sin is death.*" (Rom.6:23) The LORD JESUS very plainly said, "*there is none good but one, that is, God.*" (Mar 10:18) Paul voiced his own agreement saying, "*There is none righteous, no, not one.*" (Rom 3:10)

Men hate this doctrine (most especially religious men) because it strips them of any hope of ever gaining the favor of GOD through any activity which they may perform. Some say they believe it, and yet they still go about seeking to establish their own righteousness through their own "faith", "good deeds", or "adherence to this creed or that". All of man's attempts at pleasing GOD must be counted as dung, so that he might by the grace of GOD be found in the righteousness of CHRIST, apart from which he has no hope of acceptance with GOD.

The ability of men to exercise faith. This error is at the center of just about every false doctrine concerning faith. It is impossible that a corrupt fountain should bring forth clean water, and so it is equally impossible that true faith could spring from the well of a man's free will. The LORD said to the Pharisees (who are an illustration of man by nature), "*Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.*" (John 8:43) We read that faith cometh by hearing, so that if a man cannot hear, he cannot believe. There is only one way that a man can "have faith", and that is to have it bestowed upon him by the gift of GOD's grace. It can come no other way. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*" (Eph 2:8)

The worthiness of a man to be saved. It is only natural for man to consider that he has some intrinsic value which causes him to be worthy of GOD's favor. From this notion arises the thought that man is eternal and cannot be destroyed. Yet the LORD said, "*fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*" (Mat 10:28) The LORD went on to say that HIS children are of "*more value than the sparrows*", but HE had reference to the great love which HE has for those HE has chosen to be the heirs of salvation and not to any intrinsic worth in men. David expressed with great amazement that the LORD would even take notice of men, let alone deliver any of them. "*What is man, that thou art mindful of him?*"(Psa 8:4) Man in his natural state is fitted for death and in that "*hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.*" (Ecc 3:19)

The work of CHRIST as the SAVIOR. Just as men naturally believe that they have a "free will" by which they are enabled to desire whatever they wish, so too do they naturally believe that it would only be "fair", if GOD made the salvation of men to be dependent on something that they do. All of man's religions are built upon this premise. Those who would purport to preach the gospel (which is no gospel at all) of "free will" tell us that CHRIST died to make salvation a possibility for all men, but actually saved none, leaving the final choice of this momentous matter in the hands of men. If this be true then none shall be saved, since men cannot come to HIM in their own power and have no ability to generate "faith".

The truth is that JESUS CHRIST is the, actual, SAVIOR of sinners. HE came into the world for this very purpose and cannot fail to accomplish exactly what HE set out to do. HE chose a people from before the foundation of the world. HE knows them all by name. HE shed HIS blood for their redemption and HE calls them to HIMSELF when it pleases HIM. They can never perish because HE gives unto them eternal life. "*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*" (John 6:37)

How the sons of GOD can be known. Many tell us that a man can know he is saved simply by making a free will decision and resting upon that. Those who are the sons of GOD have been given faith which they cannot escape. Their HOPE is CHRIST and not their faith. mam