

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XVII

Issue 40

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

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

HIS WORKMANSHIP

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. *Ephesians 2:10*

Men often find great satisfaction in the accomplishment of a task which involves their expertise and applied effort, regardless of the levels of either. Those who are enabled to build great buildings as well as those who amass great fortunes through shrewd business dealings are able to survey their achievements with swelling pride. Yet they find no greater satisfaction in those attainments than those who have prepared a delectable dessert which others enjoy, planted a beautiful flower bed, or repaired a broken-down fence.

GOD made men with the ability to work at various tasks and endued them (to a greater or lesser degree), with different levels of creativity and skill in their endeavors. (see Ex.36:1-4) Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden to be its keeper. *"And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it."* (Gen 2:15) HE enabled him, with the necessary understanding and ability, to name all of the beasts of the field which HE had created and he was content in this task.

Yet when sin entered into his heart and its resultant curse was applied, his work became toil and his idyllic surroundings gave way to brambles. *"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."* (Gen 3:17-19)

No longer was the work which the LORD gave man to do, a completely enjoyable task, but became mixed with sorrow and disappointment, due to this curse which accompanied his sin. Yet in the midst of these trials and frustrations, HE still enabled man to find satisfaction in those tasks which he was sent to do. Those who are indolent and unproductive, may not be deprived of all happiness but, they can never know the contentment which the fruit of labor brings.

When Adam walked in the Garden in the cool of the day, he had no reason to be unthankful, nor was he lifted up with pride in any way in the accomplishment of that which the LORD directed him to do and fitted him for. Yet when sin had entered his heart and mind, so too did his mind change towards these things. It is common for men to glory in those things which they do, as though they have enabled themselves to perform the very tasks which they accomplish. By nature, man is unthankful, boasting in those things which he gains as though he caused himself to be different from other men.

Sadly, this manifests itself as his natural religious nature causes him to think that he is able to earn GOD's favor, by the activity which he is certain he can perform. It stands to reason in his clouded mind that he can bring something to GOD, wherewith the LORD will be pleased, even as Cain brought an offering from the field in which he had labored with his hands. Yet the LORD

had no respect unto Cain, and therefore not to his offering. On the other hand he had respect unto Abel and therefore received his offering of the first-fruits of his flock. There are many lessons which can be gleaned from this account, yet primarily we understand that GOD does not look upon the deeds and offerings of men in order to receive them unto HIMSELF. Rather HE receives men based on HIS sovereign choice to show mercy to whom HE wills. The only WAY whereby a man may approach unto GOD is in the perfect offering of CHRIST who shed HIS blood for the sins of HIS people. Men cannot "earn" HIS favor by their activity nor will they believe HIS WORD, apart from HIS gifts and calling. Cain showed HIS disdain for the LORD's sovereign prerogative by slaying that one (his own brother) (see John 1:11) chosen by the LORD, even as the world has slain the RIGHTEOUS ONE whom HE sent into the world.

The only work which is acceptable in the sight of a HOLY GOD, is a perfect work, which is without any mixture of weakness or error. There is only one "WORKMAN" whose accomplishment fits this description, and who can come into the holy place wherein GOD dwells. *"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. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."* (Psa 24:3-5) Many, is the religious man who has considered that he would be such a one, by his own device and obedience, yet there is only ONE who has ever lived up to this lofty standard and gained the blessings of GOD. HE is that ONE in whom we desire to be found.

CHRIST has come into the world as **the** WISE MASTER BUILDER of that Kingdom which is an everlasting Kingdom. Hiram was given eyes to see Solomon as a wise and glorious king over the carnal nation of Israel, but those who are given eyes to see those things from above understand that there is ONE greater than Solomon who is meant by the words of Hiram, recorded for us in the scriptures, *"Hiram said moreover, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, who hath given to David the king a wise son, endued with prudence and understanding, that might build an house for the LORD, and an house for his kingdom."* (2Ch 2:12) Paul, as an apostle, chosen by CHRIST, likened himself "as" a wise master builder (see I Cor.3:10) of those things given to him. Yet he understood that he was not "THE BUILDER", for he went on to recognize the temporary nature of all things built by men. Only that which stands upon this FOUNDATION shall stand the test when it is tried by fire. For this "temple" must be constructed by HIM whose purpose shall not fail. *"Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you."* (Zec 4:6-9)

The material of which this Kingdom is built are those "living stones" which are fitted and crafted by the hands of our glorious KING. *"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."* (1Pet 2:5) *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"* (1Cor 3:16) *"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."* (Eph 2:19-22)

This is what Paul declares when he tells the Ephesians that we are "HIS workmanship." This is no cooperative effort nor do the saints add anything to that which HE performs. But HE does perfectly demonstrate HIS work in HIS saints and presently sifts HIS wheat and winnows HIS grain according to HIS good pleasure. They are created "*unto good works*", and HE will not fail to produce such in those that are HIS, even as HE separates the wheat from the chaff. mam