

# 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*

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## THE CALLING OF SINNERS

*But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* *Matthew 9:13*

After spending the night in prayer, the LORD chose twelve men from among those who were HIS disciples to occupy a particular office known as the “apostles”. *“And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles: Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.”* (Luke 6:12-16)

All of these apostles were simple, common men, most of them earning their living as fishermen. Levi (or Matthew) was a “tax collector” (or publican), who was called from his tax table by the LORD. His calling and the LORD’s subsequent dining with him, occasioned the Pharisees to criticize the LORD for companying with those they considered unfit to abide with. *“And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?”* (Mat 9:11) In their query they made it quite evident that they did not consider themselves to be such lowly creatures. In this they demonstrate the natural bent of men to despise those whom the LORD calls and at the same time to consider themselves to possess traits and characteristics which would be acceptable to the LORD, not to mention that they thought they could come in to the presence of the LORD to present these things.

These “apostles” did not grow up expecting to travel the path which the LORD had marked out for them. *“And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”* (Isa 42:16) They were each content in their chosen “professions” and probably assumed that they would live out their days in those occupations. There is no evidence that any of them were particularly “religious” or that they were scholars or learned men. For we later read of Peter and John, *“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”* (Acts 4:13)

So, I think that it is fair to say that the calling of the “apostles” is also typical of the LORD’s calling of “sinners” unto HIMSELF. *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”* (John 15:16)

Sinners are not those who seek out the LORD, rather they are those who are sought by HIM. Even as HE described HIS purpose to save Zaccheus. *“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”* (Luke 19:10) The LORD saw Zaccheus in the branches of a tree and commanded him to come down, for HE was going to abide at Zaccheus’ house that very day. This was, no doubt, a great surprise to Zaccheus, but he was powerless to resist the command

of the LORD. *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."* (John 10:27-28) Whenever the LORD seeks a sinner, HE will find him and bring HIM to HIMSELF.

There is nothing in a "sinner" that would recommend HIM to the LORD. HE does not call men to HIMSELF because of their status, faithfulness, or religious devotion. In fact HE bypasses all such "qualifications", and seeks out the lowliest of men. *"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and 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."* (1Cor 1:26-29)

HE seeks those "sinners" that are "lost". It is true that all men are by nature "sinners", that is described for us in Romans 3:23, *"for all have sinned and come short of the glory of GOD"*. Yet all "sinners" are not "lost". In order for something to be "lost" it had to be in the prior possession of the ONE who "lost" it. The LORD set forth this truth very plainly in this parable. *"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."* (Luke 15:8-10) HE also taught the same truth in HIS illustration of the SHEPHERD seeking the "lost sheep" while ninety-nine were safely in the fold. The LORD has possessed HIS people from the beginning, having subjected them unto vanity, in order to demonstrate the glory of HIS grace in their redemption. HE came to seek and to save that which was "lost".

HE saves those sinners that HE seeks. Modern preaching (for the most part) characterizes the LORD as "trying" and "hoping" to save all of mankind. To the natural mind this seems like a fair and equitable approach and one which sits well with religious sentiment. Yet in order to promote this concept one has to declare that the LORD of Glory who does all things according to the good pleasure of HIS will, must ultimately fail to accomplish HIS purpose. No where in all of the scriptures can such an idea be found. The LORD did not just come to "seek" lost sinners but to "save" them as well. Salvation by any measure must be complete or it is no "salvation" at all.

Thus we can be certain that HIS "calling is effectual", or is sure to accomplish the purpose for which it is sent. *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."* (Isa 55:11) Peter declared on the day of Pentecost, those to whom the promise of the gospel was given, *"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."* (Acts 2:39) The "promises" of the LORD must be applied to those to whom they are given. *"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."* (2Cor 1:20) There is no shadow of turning with HIM, what HE has promised HE will do. *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."* (Php 1:6)

The LORD makes it plain throughout HIS WORD that HE puts a difference between those who are "sinners" and those who are "righteous". That difference is manifested by HIS calling of sinners to repentance. Righteous men, such as the Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray, or those that brought the adulterous woman to the feet of the LORD do not consider themselves in need of repentance, especially as they compare themselves to those they view as wicked. Yet the man who is convinced that he is a sinner, can but cry out for mercy, when the LORD calls his name. He is quite unconcerned as to his status compared to other men, for he knows that he is not worthy of the least of the LORD's mercies even as Paul declared, *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."* (1Tim 1:15) The gospel declaration of the complete and finished work of CHRIST in the behalf of sinners, is life and light unto HIS soul. Have you heard HIS call? mam