

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 LOCATION OF FAITH

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. II Timothy 3:15

It is impossible to determine who the elect of GOD (i.e.; those who are ordained unto eternal life, see Acts 13:48) are as we survey the vast expanse of humanity, until such time as the LORD is pleased to call them out of darkness and into the LIGHT. *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* (2Cor 4:6) Yet they are no less the sons of GOD, nor are they regarded in any other way by HIM who knows those that are HIS, even while they were in their mother’s womb or later walking according to the ways of this wicked world. *“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”* (Eph 2:2-3)

The “times” of HIS elect are in HIS hands. (see Psa.31:15) HIS mercy has surrounded them from the beginning. Before they ever drew their first breath, HE has covered them under the shelter of HIS wings and held them in HIS hands from which they could not be plucked. Even when Saul of Tarsus, (before he became Paul the Apostle) held the coats of those who stoned Stephen, or got letters of reprisal against the followers of CHRIST, the LORD marked out his path, and directed his steps to bring him to a place of repentance and faith at the appointed hour on his Damascus journey.

We could say the same for every one of those whom the LORD is pleased to call out of darkness and into the LIGHT. Timothy was no different. Raised by a Jewish mother and grandmother, his father a Greek, the LORD’s mercy surrounded him and the instruction that he received while yet without understanding of the gospel of CHRIST, was used by the LORD to shape his life. The thief upon the cross was no less surrounded by the mercy of GOD, when he walked in the wickedness of those actions which brought him to his just end, than he was when the LORD said *“Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise.”* The LORD did not become acquainted with him when they met upon that hillside of Golgotha, but rather HE knew him from the beginning and brought him by a way which he knew not. Perhaps as a child, he too, was instructed in the Holy Scriptures, yet according to the natural depravity into which he was born, he rejected that counsel, but could not escape it.

Time would fail us to recount in detail the abundance of mercy which is visited upon those who are the sons of GOD or the multitude of pathways which the LORD has marked out for them to travel in order to bring them unto HIMSELF. But suffice it to say that HIS mercies are new every morning lest they should be consumed. Regardless of whether it was the rich young ruler who was of a high moral character or the woman taken in the very act of adultery. Where is boasting then? *“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?”* (1Cor 4:7)

Paul asks the very same question and then answers it quite plainly, “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is

justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” (Rom 3:27-28) This is a startling statement to the men of moralistic religion who expect that their “righteous living” must surely be regarded in a favorable light by the LORD. At the same time this is a misunderstood statement by the vast majority of those who teach about “faith” in the modern day.

Most “faith” teachers regard it as an activity which men can engage in; and do their best to try to convince men to “have it” or “exercise it”. Many books have been written seeking to accomplish this goal and to educate their readers as to the ease with which it can be performed. Now there is no doubt that there is an “exercise” of faith, but the “exercise” of faith cannot be understood until one is given the knowledge of the “OBJECT” of faith. A man is not “justified” by the “activity” of “faith” but rather by the ONE who is “*the FAITH of GOD’s elect*” (Tit. 1:1) “*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.*” (1Cor 1:30-31) “*Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*” (Gal 3:6) That which was “accounted” as Abraham’s righteousness was not the fact that he “believed”, but rather the fact that GOD was the OBJECT upon which he relied. Belief is of no use if the OBJECT of that belief is not JESUS CHRIST and HIM crucified.

So, that “FAITH”, in which the sons of GOD desire to be found, is that which is “*in JESUS CHRIST*” as Paul exhorts Timothy. “*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” (Heb 12:2) “*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*” (Gal 2:16) “*And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*” (1Cor 6:11) “*Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*” (Rom 5:9)

The “exercise” of faith, is not a “work” of man but is rather the “gift” of GOD. Sadly, faith is viewed by many as an ability which a man might operate in according to his “free will” and as such is no different than performing the deeds of the law. “*by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*” No activity of man can cause him to be accepted in the sight of HIM who hates the workers of iniquity, will not acquit the wicked, and views the “*righteousnesses*” of men as “*filthy rags*”.

So, one might ask: “where then can FAITH be found?” The FAITH of GOD’s elect is “*in JESUS CHRIST.*” Paul speaks of it as the “*FAITH of CHRIST.*” “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*” (Gal 2:20) “*But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*” (Gal 3:22) “*According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*” (Eph 3:11-12) “*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.*” (Php 3:9)

The “exercise of faith” in men is weak at its best state, so much so that it is nonexistent, as the LORD said “*If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*” (Mat 17:20) The great “faith boasters” think that CHRIST was exhorting HIS hearers to attempt great things yet HE was actually instructing them as to their “barrenness” of faith which cannot be discovered in them apart from HIS power to give such unto them.

“*Great faith*” (which is the gift of GOD) is illustrated for us by the Centurion at Capernaum, the woman whose daughter was vexed by a devil, and the woman with the issue of blood. In all cases they called upon HIM in whom they believed. It was not their exercise of faith which the LORD JESUS remarked upon, but rather the LOCATION of that FAITH. “I know not how the SPIRIT moves, convincing men of sin, revealing JESUS through the WORD, creating FAITH in HIM.” mam