

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

A PROFESSION OF FAITH

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.

I Timothy 6:12-13

Peter writes one of the most profound statements in the scriptures when he says, *“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) This is almost exactly what the Psalmist wrote, saying, *“Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.”* (Psa 85:13) Peter gives an exhortation to the saints while the Psalmist describes the work of the LORD in bringing that to pass. The LORD JESUS explained this operation to HIS disciples, as HE demonstrated true humility, *“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”* (John 13:15)

Many look upon the exhortations of the scriptures, and the instructions of the LORD, as simply setting forth a desired conduct which men are then able either to reject or to accept into their own lives. Their mindset is that they can pick and choose to be obedient or disobedient. Yet Paul describes the work of the LORD in the children of GOD in a different fashion. *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”* (Php 2:13) Now we are certain that the sinful flesh of the sons of GOD inclines them to disregard the exhortations of the scriptures, and if they were left to themselves, they would each quickly go “shipwreck” and depart from the FAITH once delivered to the saints.

Yet the LORD is FAITHFUL and will not forsake those whom HE calls, rather giving to each one the *“measure of FAITH”* which pleases HIM. They are each one made new creatures according to HIS purpose for each one. They can find no place of boasting in any obedience found in themselves, for HE is the ONE who makes them to differ from another, and all of their obedience is that which is wrought in them by HIS SPIRIT. *“LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.”* (Isa 26:12) This is in keeping with that covenant which HE established in CHRIST, *“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”* (Jer 31:33) HE declares the unfolding of that purpose to the Hebrews, *“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* (Heb 13:20-21)

It is impossible to rightly exhort, admonish, and encourage the saints of GOD to obedience of any kind, apart from a clear understanding of the work wrought by JESUS CHRIST through the blood of the everlasting covenant. It is this covenant which is established and delivered to the saints by the redeeming work of their SAVIOR and LORD. It is this work which is indelibly written upon the conscience of those whom the LORD has given LIGHT in the darkness so that they can confess that HE is both LORD and CHRIST, in whom all of their HOPE rests. This truth is delivered to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the weakness of the law and all of its demands, washings and sacrifices is revealed. *“Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and*

sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." (Heb 9:9) Yet the bringing in of a better HOPE did indeed give the "conscience" rest. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 9:14) As the sons of GOD are caused to look upon the finished work of CHRIST, they are satisfied with that which HE has accomplished and lay down any notion of enhancing their standing with HIM or gaining HIS favor, by the deeds of their flesh. Such notions are replaced with a desire to walk in HIS ways and to see HIM, alone, exalted.

Paul's exhortation to Timothy is to stand in that "profession" (i.e.; an acknowledgement or confession) which he has made in the marketplace of this world. In this he draws Timothy's mind to remember the example of JESUS CHRIST who boldly confessed the TRUTH before Pontius Pilate, even though HIS confession fell upon deaf ears. HE did not shrink back from declaring the whole TRUTH in the face of those who were HIS tormentors.

A man cannot "witness a good confession" (as CHRIST did) apart from the TRUTH being written upon his heart and mind by HIM who guides HIS children into all TRUTH. Thus, we might say it is written in his conscience. "Now the end (i.e.; the conclusion or purpose) of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." (1Tim 1:5) It is this "conscience" which compels a man to declare his allegiance to CHRIST and his unfeigned belief in the efficacy of the SAVIOR's work in redemption. It was just such a "conscience" that led Peter to confess, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:68-69)

It was this same "conscience" that compelled an Ethiopian Eunuch, to desire to be baptized in the nearest body of water. Evidently Phillip had instructed him as to the propriety of those who believe in JESUS CHRIST, following HIS EXAMPLE, in being immersed (i.e.; baptized) in such water. Thus, we see Phillip pressing upon him the sole requirement for baptism, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." Thus "he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts 8:37)

We see in this Ethiopian's request and confession, an illustration of that which Peter describes baptism in water to be. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1Pet 3:21) Many have tried to make the practice of water baptism to be about "joining the church", being made clean from their sins, being qualified to partake of the LORD' supper, etc. Peter clearly points out that no amount of water can put away the filth of the flesh. Only the blood of CHRIST can effect such a transaction. Being baptized in water cannot make a man a member of the body of CHRIST, only the SPIRIT of GOD can bring this to pass.

The LORD gave to HIS followers two activities which they are to obediently (and gladly) follow. One is "remembering HIS death until HE comes again" by the breaking of bread,(which illustrates the giving of HIS body) and the drinking of the cup, (which is the New Testament in HIS blood). The other is to be baptized (i.e.; immersed) in water, following HIS EXAMPLE and illustrating HIS resurrection and the same power which raises the dead to life.

Those who partake of these things do not do so because they are coerced, but rather as an act of the conscience which is made tender by the SPIRIT of GOD, so that a man desires to walk in obedience to HIS LORD. It is interesting to point out that the LORD commanded those eleven apostles to "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Mat 28:19) Yet we have no record that they ever literally did so.

The first time that Peter preached and exhorted believers to be baptized, he said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38) Each time "baptism" is mentioned in the book of Acts, it is carried out "in the NAME of CHRIST". Now is there an error in the practice of the apostles or did they not do exactly as the LORD told them? If one should do anything in the NAME (i.e.; authority) of JESUS CHRIST, they have done so in the NAME of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. For CHRIST is the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily. HE has a NAME which is above every NAME. There is no other NAME given among men, whereby we must be saved. No man can approach unto HIM who alone has immortality, except he come in the NAME of JESUS CHRIST. This is our profession, and we confess that JESUS CHRIST is the LORD of all things, whether they be in Heaven or in Earth. mam