

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

YEA OR NAY

And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. Acts 28:24

When the LORD created the world, HE established a clear principle of right and wrong. Adam chose to embrace that which the LORD commanded him not to take of. By doing so he denied, not only the LORD's right to determine right and wrong, but in his own mind decided that he was a better determiner of that difference than the LORD was. He passed this nature (which led him to this position) on to his posterity and the calamities which have accompanied that determination still plague his offspring to this day.

Over the ensuing years the LORD has seen fit to restrain the natural wickedness of men in varying degrees in order to fulfill HIS purpose. When HE is pleased to remove those restraints, men will soon be consumed by their own pride and imagined ability to design systems of thought and governments in which they determine right from wrong according to their own feelings at the time. Solomon described this penchant and its results in this fashion, "*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*" (Prov 14:12) Left to themselves, men will always bring themselves to destruction, most often completely oblivious to the deadly course they are on, since they judge in themselves that they are right.

Since the beginning, those whom HE sends to warn them of their headlong path, are most often treated in a very unkind manner and counted to be impediments to the glory which they feel they are entitled to. "*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.*" (Acts 7:51-52) "*Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.*" (Mat 23:31)

We see this illustrated quite plainly as John the Immerser confronted Herod about his unlawful union with his brother's wife. "*For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.*" (Mat 14:4) From that time Herod sought to put John to death and then, ultimately, did so in a most egregious fashion. He determined that he could decide what was lawful rather than GOD. Does this not foreshadow the exact attitude that we see in today's society when all manner of perversion and disregard of the scriptures permeates the thinking of not just the heathen (which is to be expected), but many who profess to be the followers of CHRIST.

While there are many examples of man's general hatred and disregard of those, whom the LORD would send, throughout the scriptures, there is none so vivid and fervently pursued, than the rebellion of men against that ONE PROPHET which HE has sent in the end of the age. "*This is the last time.*" HE is that ONE whom Stephen spoke of as the "*JUST ONE, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.*" He spoke specifically to those Jews which ultimately stoned him to death, yet he speaks directly to all who disregard HIS station as the SAVIOR of sinners and that ONE who alone is the REVELATION of GOD to men. "*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*" (Heb 1:1-3)

There are many who would pay lip service to serving HIM, yet they deny what HE accomplished on Calvary's cross. They would tell us that he made salvation a possibility for all men by HIS sacrifice. Yet the scriptures plainly tell us that "*HE purged our sins*" and that HE "*obtained eternal redemption.*" Never once do the scriptures speak of HIS "redemption" as being open ended or producing a possibility for men to be saved by joining their faith to HIS work. This is a figment of the imagination of men who would glory in their free will and their own ability to produce faith according to that free will.

There can be no "middle ground" on this matter, either HE paid the price for the sin of HIS people and they are saved thereby or HE did not. This is a matter of right and wrong which is determined by HIM who said that HE came to save sinners and not just to make it possible for them to be saved by their own power. "*Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*" (Mat 1:21) "*Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*" (Isa 53:10-11) "*He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*" (Rom 8:27-30)

The blood of the only begotten SON of GOD has not been shed in vain nor can one sin for which HE has atoned remain to bring those for whom HE died into condemnation. HE has bought (or purchased) that possession which was given to HIM from before the foundation of the world. HIS redemptive work is absolute in its purpose and HE has clearly performed that which HE came into the world to do.

Religious men rebel at this plain truth, and go about to present HIS finished work as one which is really not finished but depends upon the creature to make it complete. They feel compelled to declare HIS work in a message which they believe is more palatable to the masses and one which they think will have a broader appeal. They conclude that men are "justified" by the act of believing, and that they have the power to persuade men to embrace it and therein "believe", and consequently "be saved". Yet the LORD laid the axe to the root of this concept in the simple message that HE gave to Nicodemus. "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" (John 3:3) John describes for us both the evidence and the ORIGIN of this "new birth", "*Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" (John 1:13)

The "evidence" of this "birth from above" (i.e.; born again) is the gift of FAITH, which is found in all of those whom the LORD is pleased to call from darkness to LIGHT. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" (Eph 2:8-10) Their "believing" does not precipitate the work of GOD to give them life, but rather it is the work of GOD which causes them to believe.

Thus, we read in Luke's account (i.e.; the book of Acts) that "*some believed*" and "*some believed not*", the word which Paul preached unto them. The only difference between these "two" camps of men, is the grace of GOD. "*This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" (Acts 4:11-12) "*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*" (1Pet 2:7-10) Have you believed? mam