

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

STEADFASTNESS OF FAITH

For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. *Colossians 2:5*

Those who are born again by the operation of the SPIRIT of GOD and indwelt by the same, are each introduced to a warfare which heretofore they had not been acquainted with. When a man is dead in trespasses and sins, he may have natural qualms of conscience (in varying degrees) which produce in him feelings of regret and sorrow for what he perceives are moral failures and lapses on his part. To a greater or lesser extent, he may express remorse for his actions and even become depressed because of what he considers, weakness or even “sin” as he might define it. Yet he only laments his actions and has no understanding of the root cause of his state, nor the pervasive depravity which underlies his whole being.

The work of the SPIRIT of GOD is to convince men of “*sin, righteousness, and judgement*”. This “convincing” work is that which causes a man to begin to despair of any sort of relief from the curse of sin which he is increasingly made aware of. This despair is more gradual in some than in others according to the good pleasure of GOD, but all who are taught by the SPIRIT are confronted with their innate wickedness and inability to deliver themselves from it. It is this awareness that moves them (i.e.; the power of the HOLY GHOST) to cry out to the LORD for help, calling upon HIS NAME. This is the initial work of the LORD in HIS people to make them willing in the day of HIS power.

That man in this condition, upon hearing the gospel, must believe it, for there is a testimony by the same SPIRIT that JESUS CHRIST is the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE. That man thus awakened by the SPIRIT and shown the glory of CHRIST believes that which he hears, and gladly embraces CHRIST JESUS as LORD and MASTER. “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” (Rom 10:17) “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*” (Eph 2:8)

This work of “faith” is performed in the sons of GOD in order that CHRIST might be glorified, and it is this work of salvation which manifests the LORD’s purpose in the redemption of those for whom HE died. “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*” (Eph 2:10) Thus these same sons are brought along a pathway which is marked out by the LORD and culminates in their glorification and the gift of an inheritance with CHRIST forever. “*That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*” (Eph 2:7)

In their passage through this world of sin and sorrow, HE will demonstrate that HE does indeed put a difference between HIS sons and the children of wrath. They are a “holy people” (i.e.; set apart) unto the LORD. They are a “peculiar” people, in that HE works in them both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure, quite in contrast to the men of this world who are left to pursue their own way unto that very end, manifesting their appointment unto destruction. “*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)

The evidence of this work in the sons of GOD is seen as they are embroiled in a life and death struggle with their sinful flesh which according to that “new nature” which HE has given them, does ever strive against that flesh which once had free reign over them. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* (2Cor 5:17) *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”* (Gal 5:17) Paul describes this warfare and its outcome quite clearly, *“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”* (Rom 7:22-25)

So because of this continuing conflict, which often leaves the sons of GOD, discouraged and mindful of their great weakness, the LORD does bring great encouragement to them by the recognition of the mutual faith which is shared by those in whom HE is pleased to work and causes them to have fellowship with (whether in actual acquaintance or reported faithfulness; see Heb. 12:1,2) with one another. Thus, we read in Paul’s letter to the Colossians his great joy in considering the “steadfastness” of their faith in CHRIST.

The term “steadfast” means to stand ones ground, to be resolute, or unmoveable. The “FAITH” of GOD’s elect is CHRIST. Not CHRIST plus something nor anything less than CHRIST. HE is the “ROCK” of their SALVATION who cannot be moved. Thus, when Paul speaks of the “steadfastness” of their faith, he is primarily considering the OBJECT of their FAITH. It is impossible to have “steadfast” faith if the basis upon which that faith rests is not “steadfast”. Having established this FOUNDATION, he then considers the faithful work of the HOLY GHOST in keeping them from falling, which men left to themselves will surely do.

The saints of GOD are encouraged and built up in the FAITH by the mutual and shared belief in CHRIST and HIM crucified, of each one. When we see brethren faithfully following on to know the LORD and walking in obedience to HIS precepts, we cannot help but be strengthened and reminded of the goodness of the LORD to lead HIS sheep in and out to find pasture. We sometimes doubt our own standing in the LORD (since we are acquainted first hand with the self-deception we are prone to) yet we are encouraged by the work of the LORD in our brethren whom HE has given us great esteem for. This is why a regular assembling of ourselves together is of such vital need.

Over the course of his life, Paul, saw many walk away from the faith which they once professed. This is why he often warned those to whom he wrote, to watch and pray; to be diligent in that to which the LORD called them. This is why he warned the Ephesian elders, with tears, to beware of wolves in sheep’s clothing. There are multitudes of avenues down which false professors may be turned aside, but there is only ONE PATH wherein the DAYSTAR shines and the TRUTH is manifest. So, when the LORD is pleased to enable us to behold the “steadfastness” of the FAITH of HIS elect, we cannot help but be inspired to fight the good fight and lay hold upon ETERNAL LIFE. As we see “faithful” brethren, we are encouraged and made to rejoice in the LORD whose faithfulness is new every morning.

The “steadfastness” of the FAITH of the brethren whom we observe, serves to remind us that it is *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”* (Tit 3:5) If HE faithfully keeps our brethren from falling, will HE not do so for us, and all who tremble before HIM, though we declare our own weakness in faith, confessing with him who said, *“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”* (Mar 9:24) *“But ye are come unto mount Sion, -- To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, --- And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.* (Heb 12:22-24) Have you come unto HIM?
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