

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 WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Ephesians 6:13

Religious men are quite satisfied with that which is partial. Most will confess that they are less than perfect. Most would also acknowledge that they are sinful and fail to walk in complete obedience to the commands of the LORD. By and large they would then espouse that the LORD takes this into consideration and is willing to overlook their failures as long as they are trying to do the best that they can. They think that partial obedience is of value in the Kingdom of GOD. They think that partial righteousness is better than none. They think that doing good deeds in the flesh is of greater significance to the LORD, than failing to perform them. Moreover, they are convinced that their attempts at obedience and their willingness to walk in an outward conformity to HIS precepts is considered by HIM to be of great worth.

Yet this notion is completely at odds with the teaching of the scriptures which tell us; *“whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”* (James 2:10) *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”* (Gal 3:10) So we can clearly see that a “partial” obedience is a “complete” disobedience. The LORD demands perfection and will be satisfied with nothing less.

The rich young ruler is a good example of the average religious man. He was morally upright and seeking to be in an outward conformity to the precepts of GOD. He expressed his belief that he was a “keeper” of the law. We hear many today who tell us that they too are “lawkeepers”. They have not committed murder nor robbed any banks, and most assuredly they have remembered the Sabbath day and given a tithe of what they possess. They oppose abortion, support prayer in schools, are extremely patriotic and even vote for “conservatives”. Surely such things are of worth in the Kingdom of Heaven, are they not?

The LORD destroyed the very foundation of this young man as HE pointed out how far he was from measuring up to the standard of righteousness which the LORD demands, which is “perfection”. *“Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor.”* (Mat 19:21) The LORD did not deny that he had kept the “law”, yet his “lawkeeping” was of no use in the LORD’s kingdom. Many similar religious men feel that they can gain the LORD’s favor by walking in obedience to HIS precepts. Yet HE overturned that notion when HE said, *“So---when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”* (Luke 17:10)

Let that man who thinks that he may find acceptance with the LORD by his deeds of faith and obedience, regardless of the sincerity and level of devotion he may exhibit, read the LORD’s assessments of all of mans “righteousnesses”. *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”* (Isa 64:6) Everyone knows that sin is hated by the LORD,

yet HE regards even the greatest attempts of men, at producing "righteousness" to be as "filthy rags" (i.e.; a menstuous cloth). Man's "righteousnesses" are reprehensible in the LORD's sight and will be rejected in the same fashion as the wickedness of his heart is cast away.

The reason for this "rejection" is not simply to emphasize HIM as a hard TASKMASTER, but rather to demonstrate the absolute necessity of the perfections which dwell in the REDEEMER of sinners. HE told HIS disciples that HE is the "WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE" and that no man could come to the FATHER except it be by HIM. HIS glory is manifested as HE was tempted in all points like as we are, yet HE had no sin. HE alone could be the REDEEMER, and to accept partial obedience would be to count the blood of CHRIST to be an unnecessary offering. If a man could earn or deserve the favor of GOD, then CHRIST died in vain.

When the Psalmist asked the question, "*Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?*" (Psa 24:3); he only had one MAN in mind for there has never been but ONE who is described in his answer, "*He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*" (Psa 24:4-5) CHRIST alone is the RIGHTEOUSNESS of GOD and subsequently the only RIGHTEOUSNESS which the people of GOD possess. Partial righteousness is total wickedness, regardless of the protestations of religious men who think that they shall be recognized for their good deeds. CHRIST alone is the recipient of all of the FATHER's blessings and only those who are completely hidden in HIM shall escape the wrath to come.

Thus, Paul exhorts the people of GOD to "put on the WHOLE ARMOR" of GOD. There are no degrees of being found clothed in the RIGHTEOUSNESS of CHRIST. Nothing less than HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS will be accepted in the Kingdom of GOD. Any righteousness which is not HIS and all who stand in such shall surely be cast into the lake of fire prepared for those whose names are not written in the book of life.

The LORD has provided a COVERING for all of those for whom HE has shed HIS precious blood. To be "partially covered" is to be "totally naked". "Tis of one piece and wove throughout, so curious wove that none, can dress up in this seamless coat, till JESUS puts it on." Not only does HE provide a COVERING which shields HIS people from the condemnation of the Law, but that same COVERING protects them in the day of battle, as the flesh lusts against the SPIRIT and the SPIRIT against the flesh. Apart from this COVERING they shall fall.

Thus, Paul exhorts the Ephesians (and all of the little children of GOD in all ages) to put on this "WHOLE ARMOR." This is one word in the Greek. It is used three times in the NT. Twice here in Ephesians and once when the LORD was accused of casting out devils by the prince of devils. HE said, "*When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.*" (Luke 11:21-22) Those who walk in darkness are indeed trusting in the armor of their flesh and are satisfied. Yet when HE who is stronger is come, HE takes away that confidence so that those whom HE "overcomes" are caused to trust, not in themselves, but in HIM. HE is their ARMOR and ARMORBEARER.

"*Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth*". CHRIST is "*the TRUTH*". "*Having on the breastplate of righteousness*." HE is the RIGHTEOUSNESS of HIS elect. "*And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*." HE is our PEACE. "*Above all, taking the shield of faith*." HE is our SHIELD and EXCEEDING GREAT REWARD. "*wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*." The fiery darts of Satan's and our conscience's condemnation are quenched in the blood of CHRIST. "*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*." CHRIST is the LIFTER UP of our heads for our REDEMPTION draweth nigh. HE is the SHIELD and SWORD of HIS people and HE is mighty in battle. HIS own ARM has gotten HIM the victory. "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*." (John 1:1) Are you clad in this ARMOR of GOD? Nothing less will protect you and preserve you until the end. mam