

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

DENYING CHRIST

It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

II Timothy 2:11-13

Paul's dedication to the people of GOD cannot be denied. Yet we would be remiss if we did not point out that his determination to preach the gospel, at whatever cost it may entail, was borne out of his unswerving diligence to fulfill the calling of the ONE who brought him out of darkness and into the LIGHT. He constantly declared the redemption of the elect which CHRIST secured by the shedding of his blood for the remission of their sin. He was never equivocal in proclaiming the LORD's purpose to bring HIS people into the enjoyment of that salvation through the preaching of the gospel. Thus we read in his letter to Timothy, "*Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*" (2Tim 2:10)

Modern "evangelism" is devoid of this concept as men traverse the globe trying to persuade men to "be saved", as if they had it within their power to complete a transaction which (they tell us) is hanging in the balance. Paul preached the gospel to all men, but he knew that the purpose for which he was sent was to declare this message to bring HOPE and RECONCILIATION to those whom the LORD had chosen from before the foundation of the world, and who HE would, in his own time, awaken that they might hear that gospel. He did not frantically look here and there in the hopes that he might make some converts but rather traversed an often, rugged road to bring "*life and immortality to light*" for those appointed to hear it. "*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.*" (2Tim 1:9-11)

Salvation is a completed work which CHRIST alone has accomplished. Yet the LORD is pleased to bring the "knowledge" and "enjoyment" of that SALVATION to the people for whom it was secured through the preaching of the gospel and the gift of FAITH. "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*" (Rom 10:13-14) Paul spent his life in seeking to fulfill the calling that he was given to declare this gospel of the glory of the Blessed GOD. "*Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" (Eph 3:7-8)

Paul was not "taught" the gospel by men, but rather directly from the ONE who appointed him to be an Apostle. "*But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" (Gal 1:11-12) Therefore he did not have to "unlearn", false teachings from men with incomplete understandings of the unfolding of the mystery of CHRIST. Thus, he says, "*if we be dead with HIM, we shall also live with HIM.*" If a man does not grasp what it is to be dead in CHRIST, it is impossible that he should

have any understanding of what it is to be alive in CHRIST. Paul declared both when he said, *“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 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 2:19-20)

The Law never died, it is in full force and effect even this very day. Yet those who are “in CHRIST” are not under its jurisdiction, for by HIS death HE has completely satisfied the Law and removed those for whom HE has stood as a SUBSTITUTE from any of its claims. As Paul told the Romans, *“For the law (i.e.; the principle) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”* (Rom 8:2) The sons of GOD are not called to live “under the Law” of Moses which can only minister condemnation, due to the weakness of the flesh, but rather are “*made alive*” in CHRIST. We were one time “married” to the Law, but that union has been broken by death, not ours in the flesh, but rather by the death of our SUBSTITUTE who in effect slew the power of the Law to condemn us. *“my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”* (Rom 7:4)

So that now a completely new creation is made which is caused to operate under a completely different set of principles, than that “old man” who could only serve GOD in outward forms and the traditions of religion. That “old man” took pleasure in his “free-will”, and reveled in partial obedience to the Law, considering that the LORD would surely be pleased with his effort if not his performance.

Paul says we are done with all of that for we could find no satisfaction therein, and needed a more sure solution to the dilemma of sin which does so easily beset us. This is that SOLUTION: the death and life of CHRIST in whom we have our being. Crucified and yet alive in HIM. We are dead yet we live. We suffer and yet we reign. We confess that it is in HIM alone that all of our LIFE is found and that we are hid in HIM. If we deny that TRUTH we prove that we have never been given life, but merely act in a religious manner as the multitudes do. Thus he says, if we deny HIM, HE will deny us.

Some who hold on to the thinking of the “old man” consider that Paul is saying that it is possible for a man who is “alive” in CHRIST, to “deny” HIM (in some fashion) and then HE will turn away from us, since we have shamed HIM and ourselves. To consider such a thing is to completely disregard the very context of his remarks and revert to a conditional mindset that makes the blessing of GOD upon HIS children to be dependent on what they do or don’t do. This is a grave error.

He addresses the same thing in his letter to the Hebrews speaking of those who *“have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”* (Heb 6:5-6) It is impossible to renew them unto repentance for two reasons. 1. These of whom he speaks cannot fall away. He says *“if”* they shall fall away, not that any shall. 2. Any among men who have heard the truth of GOD and deny that it is so, give evidence that they are not men of “faith” at all. CHRIST alone is the HOPE of the sons of GOD, any who reject this HOPE shall surely perish. He says he is persuaded of better things for them. *“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition: but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”* (Heb 10:38-39)

If any should doubt this to be Paul’s message to Timothy, let him but read the last sentence, *“If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.”* Our standing in CHRIST does not rest upon what we do or our supposed “faithfulness”, but rather upon that which HE has done in the behalf of HIS elect, who are hidden in HIM from the beginning. We are weak vessels at our very best, we are full of doubts and fears, and even demonstrable “unfaithfulness” as we can see manifested in Peter’s denial of the LORD, just as the LORD told him he would. Yet Peter’s standing with the LORD did not depend upon Peter but rather on the faithfulness of CHRIST to preserve him in spite of Peter’s denials. HE told Peter, *“Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”* (Luke 22:31-32) This is the SALVATION of the elect even as HE prayed for them all in Gethsemane’s garden. *“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.”* (John 17:9-10) The LORD will never forsake any of those whom HE is pleased to make “alive in CHRIST”, they are HIS forever, HE has bought them with HIS own blood. Are you alive in HIM?