

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 PROOF IS IN THE “PUTTING”

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. I Thessalonians 1:4

There is probably no greater quandary that occupies the minds of the children of GOD from time to time, than to question themselves as to whether they are indeed among the elect of GOD. It is usually a quite unfulfilling query which leaves them with no more comfort at the end than when they began this inquiry. Now the scriptures do exhort the sons of GOD to make their “*calling and election sure*” (see II Pet.1:10), and the man who is not concerned about the matter does not understand that salvation is sovereignly dispensed by HIM who says that “HE will show mercy to whom HE will show mercy.” At the same time, the seeker after GOD, cannot know those “secret things” which belong to the LORD and to expect that one can gaze upon the LAMB’s book of life and read the names written there is folly. The man who says that he knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that he is included in that number is making claims that he cannot prove regardless of his sincerity.

The sons of GOD are exhorted to be ever looking to CHRIST, to find their “assurance” in HIM and not in their discovery of their “election”. CHRIST is the SAVIOR of sinners. Many shall no doubt perish who are certain of their “election”, but none shall perish who have fled to CHRIST for REFUGE. Many shall perish who have received assurances of their inclusion, from observing their own deeds and obedience, from the lips of men who go about to offer such assurances, or from their attachment to some religious order or doctrinal scheme. But none shall ever be cast out who hate their own garment spotted with the flesh and desire to be clothed upon with the RIGHTEOUSNESS of CHRIST.

Knowing that the LORD has an “elect people” whom HE shall surely save, is in itself, a great comfort to the man who has been convinced by the SPIRIT of GOD, of his sin and depraved nature. If there were no “election” of grace; then which among the fallen sons of GOD could ever raise himself up from the dunghill of sins degradation. “*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*” (Rom 3:10-12)

Paul said, “*For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*” (Rom 8:24-25) Our HOPE is CHRIST. CHRIST born of a virgin without sin. CHRIST walking in perfect obedience having been tempted in all points even as we. CHRIST speaking TRUTH which cannot be overturned. CHRIST praying for sinners in the Garden with sweat as it were great drops of blood. CHRIST dying on Calvary’s cross to satisfy the claims of the Law, against those who had broken HIS commandments. CHRIST rising from the dead on the third day. CHRIST leading captivity captive and giving gifts unto men. CHRIST ascending back to HIS FATHER and seated upon that throne as the JUSTIFIER of them which believe in HIM. CHRIST interceding before that throne, as the GREAT HIGH PRIEST over the household of GOD, for those that come unto GOD by HIM. CHRIST who shall so come in like manner as HIS disciples saw HIM ascend on the Mount of Olives. “*So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*” (Heb 9:28) “*Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.*” (Heb 6:19)

Paul writes to the Thessalonians, "recognizing" their "*election of GOD*". Paul was indeed taken up to that "third heaven" where he saw and heard things which are unlawful (i.e.; not proper) to be uttered. (see II Cor.12:4) Yet, even then, he could not look upon that book which can only be opened and gazed upon by the LION of tribe of Judah nor could he read there those whose names are recorded by HIS eternal pen. So, when he writes of such, he is not sharing some secret information which he is privy to, but rather is making an observation wherein he perceives the peculiar work of the SPIRIT of GOD in the children of GOD, and in no others. "*But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (II Th 2:13-14)

The election of the saints can more readily be observed by their brethren than it can be by themselves. This is a good thing, lest they should be lifted up with pride and a sense of security in something other than their HOPE in CHRIST alone. But the election of the saints is discernable by their brethren and serves as a great source of encouragement to each other. The saints are stirred up to FAITH by the mutual FAITH of one another, building one another up and bearing one another's burdens. "*For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*" (Rom 1:11-12) "*Who, when he (i.e.; Barnabas) came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.*" (Acts 11:23) "*For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*" (III John 1:3-4)

Paul "knew" the election of these Thessalonians because he "remembered" their "*work of FAITH*". It could be opined that he had reference to their "good works", but I believe it is more accurate to consider that he has reference to that "work of FAITH" which is wrought in them by HIM who works all things together for good to them who are the called according to HIS purpose. Does HE not "*work in them both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure?*" Is not FAITH the gift of GOD? "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained (i.e.; predestinated) that we should walk in them.*" (Eph 2:10) Can any believe apart from this gift?

Paul "knew" their election because he saw their "*labor of love*". Religion can produce all sorts and extents of "labor". Yet only the SPIRIT of GOD can produce a "*labor of love*". This is that labor that seeks no recognition or reward and is entered into solely for the praise of GOD. "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*" (1Cor 10:31) "*My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*" (1John 3:18) "*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*" (1Pet 1:22) "*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" (Mat 7:22-23)

Paul "knew" their election because he could see their "*patience of HOPE*". The LORD is faithful to keep HIS children from falling. HE causes "patience" to have its perfect work in those whom HE loves and calls. We see this "patience" declared by Peter "*Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, 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 6:67-69) "*Come, humble sinner, in whose breast, A thousand thoughts revolve, Come, with your guilt and fear oppressed, And make this last resolve. Prostrate I'll lie before His throne, And there my guilt confess, I'll tell Him, I'm a wretch undone, Without His sovereign grace. Perhaps He will admit my plea, Perhaps will hear my prayer; But, if I perish, I will pray, And perish only there. I can but perish if I go; I am resolved to try; But if I stay away, I know I must forever die. But, if I die with mercy sought, When I the King have tried, This were to die (delightful thought!) As sinner never died.*" (by Edmund Jones, 1722-1765) May the LORD of electing grace make us to shine as lights in a dark world by the "putting on of HIS grace" by the work of HIS SPIRIT in us.

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