

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

OUR SACRIFICE

I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good. Psalm 54:6

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews said, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” (Heb 13:15) There is a single SACRIFICE which, alone, is appointed and approved by GOD. Then there are many sacrifices which men by nature think that they can bring before GOD with the operation of their own free will, which they assume HE would be satisfied with. The Jews have in the past and also in the present entertained such an idea, unto their own destruction. As Paul says, “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end (i.e.; the complete fulfilment and satisfaction) of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” (Rom 10:2-4)

The error of the Jews (in general) is that they thought the LORD “dwelt in temples made with hands” and that sin could be expiated (i.e.; atoned for) by the continual offering of the blood of various animals. On top of that sort of “sacrifice”, they thought that they could render an obedience to the Law of GOD, by the activity of their flesh. They went about making prayers, intoning scripture verses, and tithing their money and even the leaves which grew upon their spice plants. Yet the LORD plainly told them that such things were nothing but hypocrisy, due to their innate sin which rendered their “obedience” null and void. The LORD JESUS had nothing but contempt for their “righteousness”. “Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.” (Mat 23:28) HE called them a “generation of vipers.” (Mat.23:33) What might be HIS assessment of this present generation of religious zealots who boast of their faith, obedience, and knowledge?

HE had given these same thoughts to Isaiah many years before; “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. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.” (Isa 64:6-7) Only the grace of GOD can reveal to a man the utter emptiness of his attempts at obedience to the LORD, let alone having any notion of doing something that could earn the LORD's favor. “Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, 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 17:9-10)

I often hear men say that the LORD is pleased with this or that particular act of adherence to HIS Law, or that HE is pleased with this or that activity which they might be engaged in or some activity which they avoid. I am sure of but ONE thing that HE is pleased with, and that is the obedience and sacrifice of CHRIST alone. CHRIST is the sole SOURCE of HIS pleasure. The only manner in which a man might be found pleasing in the LORD's sight is to be found “in CHRIST”. Paul gives a description of this place of standing in his epistle to the Ephesians, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to

himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace: Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” (Eph 1:3-11)

I am left dumbfounded as I read such a glorious passage of scripture which leaves no doubt as to the purpose of GOD in saving sinners which are chosen in CHRIST before the world was made. What grounds does any man have to boast or whereupon can he find a place to glory in any form of faith or obedience which he might have stirred up within himself. “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law (i.e. the principle) of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” (Rom 3:27-28) That FAITH which justifies is not an activity but rather a PERSON who is none other than HE who bled for sinners on Calvary’s cross and rose from the dead on the third day for their justification. “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (Gal 2:16) Paul expressed his desire to be found “in CHRIST”. “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” (Php 3:9)

By HIS grace the sons of GOD do indeed believe CHRIST, not simply having an activity of faith whereby they might express their belief in HIM, but rather they can cling to no other because the SPIRIT of GOD has convinced them that HE alone is the SUM of their SALVATION. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” (1Cor 1:30-31) They confess with Peter, “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 6:68-69)

Thus, they are made to confess that HE alone is the perfect SACRIFICE which none of Adam’s fallen race could ever have offered. CHRIST is the COATS of SKINS with which the LORD covered Adam and Eve’s nakedness. CHRIST is Abel’s OFFERING which the LORD had respect unto. CHRIST is the SWEET-SMELLING SAVOR which came up into the nostrils of GOD from off of Noah’s altar. CHRIST is the RAM caught in the thicket which was offered in Isaac’s place. CHRIST is that PASSOVER LAMB whose blood stayed the hand of the death angel from visiting each house where it was applied. CHRIST is that SACRIFICE which was demanded by the Law and HE is the complete fulfillment of that Law. “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” (Heb 9:11-15)

The ONE in the Psalm who says, “I will freely sacrifice unto THEE” is the LORD JESUS CHRIST. HE alone is a MAN approved by GOD. HE alone is the GREAT HIGH PRIEST appointed to make a SACRIFICE in the behalf of those whom the LORD has set apart. HE is that LAMB of GOD which was slain to atone for the sin of the sheep of HIS own pasture. HIS “praise” of HIS FATHER is that which comes up before the throne of GOD as a sweet perfume which HE applies to flowers of HIS garden, which is walled around and made fruitful ground by HIS work. As HE said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” (Mat 11:25-27) mam