

# 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*

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## COME AND DINE

*Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. John 21:12*

This is one of my favorite verses of scripture. Each time I read it my mind draws a picture of the LORD standing on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias waiting for HIS disciples to finish their labor. HE has already prepared a fire, broiled some fish, and baked fresh bread in anticipation of their coming to shore. He knew exactly what these men needed. I suspect this was a welcome sight for bone weary men who had fished all night and caught nothing, yet at the very end of their labor they harvested more fish than they had perhaps thought possible. Then remarkably the LORD served them with the bounteous feast HE had both supplied and prepared. As we ponder this beautiful setting let us make a few observations.

**He watched over them from afar even though they saw HIM not.** They fished all night and now as morning breaks the LORD is standing on the shore. The scripture says that when they got to shore they found there a fire of coals. Now anyone who has done any outdoor cooking knows that it takes awhile for a fire to burn down to coals which can be used for cooking. Prior to that wood has to be gathered and a suitable spot picked for the fire. Then once the coals are ready it takes a fair amount of time to cook on them. The likelihood is that the LORD JESUS had been on that shore for quite sometime. Perhaps even all night, watching HIS disciples toil and grow weary in their unsuccessful attempts at fishing. No doubt they were a disheartened lot. But even in the midst of our discouragement the LORD never forsakes us, HE is only preparing us for something more bountiful and blessed. The failures we endure (in body, mind, and spirit) are just as much a part of the LORD's purpose for us as the successes are. (see II Cor. 4:17)

**He knew the exact spot where these men needed to be to reap a great harvest of fish.** I am somewhat amused by those who balk at the doctrine of the absolute predestination of all things when I see the unfolding of events such as those in this account. These fish had to be in the right place at the right time for HIM to tell HIS disciples where they would catch them. The GOD of heaven and earth leaves nothing to blind chance or fate but wisely determines the course of all things. Brother Spurgeon once said, "the grains of sand which are stirred by the crashing of the ocean waves upon the shore move in just as much a prescribed orbit as do the planets of our solar system." If GOD is not in direct control of all events then all events would be out of control. There are no isolated instances. The flight path of an insect in the rain forest of Brazil must be coordinated with the ramblings of a polar bear at the Arctic circle whether I comprehend it or not. Each event is ordered in the exact way in which GOD sees fit and all things must come to pass according to HIS sovereign will and in keeping with HIS unwavering purpose. Well has Solomon said, "*He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.*" (Eccl 3:11)(see Psalms 139:1-16)

**Though Peter had much skill as a fisherman he had no success until the LORD brought the increase.** Paul said "*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?*" (1 Cor 4:7) Old John Bunyan said that a chicken knows from whom his blessings

come as each time he takes a drink of water he looks to the heavens. Oh that the same could be said of men. By and large we like to take credit for our achievements while shirking the responsibility for our failures. How easy it is to consider that our success in our earthly endeavors can be traced to our own abilities, wisdom, or tenacity. Yet in reality the accomplishments and subsequent blessings which we enjoy are ours because of the direct action of the LORD.

**The word of the LORD causes us to realize our barrenness.** The LORD said to them, *“Children, have ye any meat”*. They were forced to admit that they did not. *“When HE (i.e.; the SPIRIT) is come, HE will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: “ (John 16:8)* We sometimes hear people delighting to have the “ten commandments” as their “rule of life”. When the SPIRIT teaches a man about the holy nature of the law, that law can only convince him of his inability to keep the law rather than it being some kind of guide by which he can order his steps. The law is a schoolmaster (and a hard one I might add) to bring us to CHRIST. All of our perfection and obedience is in HIM. As the hymnwriter has said, “Thou O CHRIST art all I want, more than all in THEE I find. Raise the fallen, cheer the faint, heal the sick, and lead the blind. Thou of life the fountain art, fully let me drink of thee, spring thou up within my heart, rise to all eternity.”

**The LORD invites HIS children to eat of those things which HIS hands have both provided and prepared.** “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling, naked come to thee for dress, helpless look to THEE for grace, foul I to the fountain fly, wash me SAVIOR or I die”. The biggest stumbling block of the gospel is that the grace of the gospel is free and cannot be bought, earned, or merited by anything the creature can do or think. HE says *“Come and dine”* to hungry souls who know themselves unworthy to stand in HIS presence. HE feeds those who have no food to eat with bread that the world can know nothing of. The righteous perish while sinners eat from a bountiful table to which they never added one thing. The LORD himself serves them with heavenly manna and living water and they neither hunger nor thirst.

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