

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

A MAN POSSESSED

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:12-14

Each week the local newspaper has a section devoted to the arrest record of the county sheriff's department. It chronicles in detail each capture that is made and the names of the people who are thus detained. When a person is arrested (or apprehended) that person is taken into custody without regard to their desire. In fact the "arrestee" is not consulted as to their willingness to be apprehended nor their wish to go with the officers who arrest them.

On several occasions, when the LORD JESUS was upon the earth, HE delivered some who were "possessed" by evil spirits (i.e.; demons or devils). These people did not choose to be "possessed" by these powers but were nonetheless held captive (apprehended) by them until they were set free by the power and purpose of the LORD. (see Mark 5:1-16; 9:14-29)

The Pharisees brought a woman who was taken in the very act of adultery and cast her at the LORD's feet hoping that they could confound HIM. She did not go with these men willingly but was "apprehended" by them and brought in shame before the LORD. Now these hypocrites intended this action for evil but the LORD intended it for good that HE might show mercy to this guilty and undeserving sinner. (see John 8:3,4)

Paul said that he was "apprehended" of JESUS CHRIST. In other words he is saying that he was "arrested" or taken by the LORD without any regard to his own action or will. In fact in reading of his initial encounter with the LORD in the book of Acts (see chap. 9) we discover that he was taken into custody by the very one whom he persecuted. He had no desire to follow CHRIST and was not looking for HIM when this encounter took place. Because of man's sinful nature and his natural enmity for the things of GOD none will ever "choose" to embrace CHRIST and become HIS disciple unless HE first takes them into custody or arrests them on their pathway of destruction. This is a totally disregarded fact in the majority of "preaching" that we hear today. Men are cajoled, persuaded, and plead with to do something that they are both, totally unable and unwilling to do. By nature men choose sin.

Paul was well acquainted with the fact that we love HIM because HE first loved us. Had he not quickened us in our sin and delivered us from our darkness we would surely perish. HE apprehended us when we were neither looking for HIM nor desiring a place in HIS presence. HE has "possessed" us, detained us, and brought us in a way that we knew not.

When a man is thus apprehended he is made a new creature and has a new nature implanted within him. HE has both possessed us and transformed us. A man who would not and could not believe now embraces the glad tidings of the gospel. That which at one time was shrouded in darkness now becomes the light of his life. The man who desired the opposite of holiness now

longs for conformity to CHRIST. This is indeed a work of sovereign, saving grace. (see I Tim.1:12-17)

Paul goes on to say that not only was he “apprehended” by CHRIST, but that now as a result he desired to “take captive” the life of CHRIST. The work of the SPIRIT in us is to bring us into a greater likeness to our SAVIOR. HE is working in us both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure and admonishes us to “work out our salvation”. (see Phil.2:12,13) HE makes us painfully aware of how far we yet have to go. Paul says “I count not myself to have apprehended”. We have not yet arrived at a state of perfect likeness to CHRIST but we are determined to arrive there, “*for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*” (Rom. 13:11). In this quest to which we are called we are admonished to:

Press on to the finish line. “*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” (1 Pet. 1:13) Do not be discouraged HE will never forsake us.

Give the flesh no opportunity to dominate. “*But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*” (Rom. 13:14) Remember that this sinful flesh is not a friend to our conformity to CHRIST.

Turn away from the former things that bound us and seek the truth. “*Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*” (Rom.13:12) The ignorance of our past does not need to be revisited.

Put on the new man (i.e.; embrace our new nature). “*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*” (Col 3:12-13)

Give thanks in all things. “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*” (Col 3:17)

Pray without ceasing. “*But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*” (1 Peter 4:7) The time is short

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