

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

NAUGHTY FIGS

The LORD shewed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. Jeremiah 24:1-2

When I was growing up I remember eating figs right off of the tree that grew in my grandmother's yard. It seemed back then that everyone had fig trees growing around the house, but nowadays you seldom see a fig tree. They seem more of a novelty rather than a common sight today. But fig trees are very common in the arid Mideast where figs are consumed with regularity. Because of the fragile nature of figs, they must be eaten soon after picking or they will spoil so they are most often eaten in baked goods, dried, or in fig preserves.

The LORD shewed Jeremiah two different baskets of figs. The fruit in one basket is described as good figs and the other as naughty figs. This is a very quaint use of the term naughty and I might add a somewhat humorous one. One usually associates naughtiness with action which it seems unlikely for a fig to be involved in. One can only laugh when he pictures a fig disobeying the tree from which it fell. The context of the passage, however, makes clear the meaning of the term to be those which are spoiled or rotten. In this illustration the LORD goes on to make the application that the good figs (those HE selected) represent HIS people and the "naughty" or "evil" figs represent the wicked who HE has rejected. Generally speaking, men don't like to consider the fact that GOD chooses some and rejects others solely on the basis of HIS own free choice. Men don't reject the notion that a choice is made, in this matter; they just do not want that choice to be made by GOD. They would rather take comfort in their own (supposed) "ability" and "desire" to choose GOD than to have themselves cast upon the mercy of GOD. But the man who has become acquainted with that boundless mercy finds comfort nowhere else.

The scripture is very clear that there is a separation made between the people of GOD (the elect) and the children of this world (the reprobate). Many descriptive phrases and names are used to describe this difference. The sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares, the faithless and the believing, the living and the dead, are all names used to set forth the fact that GOD has made a difference between HIS people and the men of this world. This is illustrated quite well in the passage we are looking at here in Jeremiah 24.

Since we teach and believe very strongly in the doctrine of GOD's unconditional election of a people in CHRIST JESUS, we are sometimes accused of spending too much time in discussing it. Our critics say we see it on every page in the scripture. We have to plead guilty as charged, because this precious truth is taught throughout the whole of scripture. This is not just some little optional doctrine which a man may take or leave at his own pleasure. This doctrine is the very basis upon which redemption rests. Had there been no election there would have been no

redemption. The very fact that GOD chose to save some is an indication that HE loves HIS creation and intends to save it. That which is despised is not usually preserved. The LORD described HIS choice of HIS elect bride when HE told the nation of Israel why HE loved them. (see Deut.7:6-8) Most of our critics think the epitome of gospel preaching is to tell everybody how much GOD loves all of them as if this will somehow melt their heart. We often hear them proclaim this error, saying, "GOD gives (owes) every man a chance to be saved." But salvation is not by chance, but is according to the design and purpose of the GOD who has loved HIS own from the foundation of the world.

In Jeremiah's vision of the two baskets of figs we see that :

- Any fig left alone will soon rot because the nature of corruption is in it. The "naughty figs" demonstrate the wickedness of man by nature. The curse of sin introduced death and destruction into this world. So it should come as no surprise to see a basket of rotten figs cast away. GOD is pleased to manifest HIS glory and grace by contrasting HIS choice of one basket of figs (in which was the same nature of corruption) with the other.
- These "naughty figs" most likely came from the same tree that the good figs did. The only difference between the spoiled and the good figs was that the good figs were freshly picked whereas the spoiled figs had been left to themselves and not eaten. GOD's choice alone makes the difference between the two bowls of figs. If the bowl of "good" figs were left till the next day, they too would have been spoiled. Without the mercy of GOD extended to them, even the "elect" would perish. All men without exception have the same sinful nature and left to their own selves will always choose the pathway of sin and destruction.
- The LORD selected a bowl of figs to be eaten when HE did not have to choose any. Some seem to think that the LORD is under some kind of obligation to save men because HE created them. The fact is that the election of a people in JESUS CHRIST is a great display of the grace and mercy of GOD. All men deserve destruction, yet GOD who is rich in mercy has chosen to save some. Had HE chosen to save none HE still would have been just and good and worthy of our worship. To demonstrate HIS grace in choosing to save some HE passed by others.

Who can fully comprehend the glory of GOD's grace manifested in a sin cursed world? Who can pronounce himself worthy of such grace? *"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)*

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