

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

HEPHZIBAH

Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

Isaiah 62:3-5

The will and purpose of GOD never changes. Some would have us think that heaven is like a big war room where various battlefronts are monitored constantly and new plans are constantly being implemented to solve this problem and that. Most preachers we hear, today, seem to think that GOD "reacts" to an assortment of setbacks to HIS will and is seeking to stem the tide of those who would overturn HIS purpose in the earth. Nothing could be further from the truth. GOD acts but HE does not react. The scripture says HE declares the end from the beginning (see Isa.46:10) which literally means that HE controls all things and nothing transpires outside of HIS purpose. HE is an absolute, immutable, Sovereign GOD who rules in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of this world and there is none that can stop HIM nor even question HIS doing. (see Dan.4:35) If this were not so, it would be impossible for the prophets of old to have prophesied what would come to pass with any degree of certainty. The very fact that every jot and tittle of every prophecy given to men by GOD has been or shall be fulfilled proves that GOD is in total control of all things. It is difficult for me to understand how some can find comfort in a god whose purpose is constantly being thwarted and his desires continually dashed.

Of course, there are always those who say GOD just knew ahead of time what was going to happen. Now the scripture does indicate that GOD knows all things past, present, and future. *"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."* (Acts 15:18) However each time the word foreknowledge, foreknow, or foreknew is mentioned in the scripture there is an activity described which has to do with determining the outcome of that which is known ahead of time. (see Rom. 8:29;11:2; Acts 2:23; I Pet.1:2) The Greek word can even be translated "prearrangement". GOD does indeed know all things because HE has decreed all things and none of HIS purposes shall fail. In this, we take great comfort. Were this not the case then the preaching of the gospel would be a vain endeavor and its sweet and refreshing sound would fall upon deaf ears that GOD desperately wanted to hear. *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."* (Isaiah 55:11) Now we can rest assured that everyone who is intended to hear the gospel shall indeed hear it and believe it according to the prearrangement of a Sovereign GOD. (see Rom.10:14) Nothing is left to chance.

The elect people of GOD are described in this passage in the book of Isaiah. HE says that HE shall call HIS people "Hephzibah" which literally means "my delight is in Her" or "Her in whom is my delight". HE goes on to say that she shall be called "Hephzibah" BECAUSE HE delighted in

her. Now, this prophecy of Isaiah was not fulfilled in his lifetime so he was predicting a future event which came to pass when the LORD JESUS CHRIST came into to the world with the anointing to preach the gospel and to lay down HIS life as a ransom for HIS Bride, imputing HIS righteousness to her and taking away her desolation. She is now called married. When the world looked at the elect of GOD they could see nothing in them which set them apart but the LORD our GOD looked upon them with great affection and eternal love.

This affection was eternal and not because of any action on their part. There was never a time in the annals of creation when the LORD did not delight HIMSELF in HIS elect people. *"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."*(Eph 1:4-5) They were never the objects of HIS wrath nor were they appointed unto this end even though in their nature they were as deserving of destruction as all sinful men are. (see Eph.2:3; I Thes.5:9)

This affection was demonstrated by HIS undertaking their redemption. The LORD most certainly could have kept them from falling into sin and ruin had HE so desired. Yet the LORD's purpose was to manifest the glory of HIS grace in the redemption of a people by the atoning work of JESUS CHRIST the RIGHTEOUS. HE so loved these people that HE gave HIS only begotten SON to make satisfaction for their disregard and breaking of HIS law as HIS justice demanded. Though they were not appointed to wrath they were still guilty of sin and in order to maintain HIS justice HE fulfilled the law in their behalf and imputed HIS righteousness to them.

This affection is now made known and openly declared in the proclamation of the gospel. The LORD's love for HIS people has always been constant. They have always been the apple of HIS eye, the sheep of HIS pasture, the ones in whom HE delighted. HIS true purpose in the earth, however, was kept secret from the foundation of the world. The Jews thought themselves (as an earthly nation) to be that elect bride, but the LORD appeared and forever broke down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile and demonstrated that HE has an elect people from every tribe and tongue in the Earth. In the redemption of HIS people, the LORD has now made plain HIS intention which was determined before the very foundation of the earth. Though this bride, in whom HE delights, has always been known and loved by HIM, now in the proclamation of the gospel, this glorious truth is made known to the sons of GOD. The curse and guilt of their sin had convinced them of their desolation but the gift of faith to believe the revelation of the sweet message of mercy in the redeeming work of CHRIST has brought life and immortality to light and has enabled them to say, *We "are now the people of GOD, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."* (1 Pet.2:10)

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