

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

DEVASTATION AND PRESERVATION

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Psalms 91:7

Recently my son was traveling down the highway at about sixty miles per hour when a huge oak tree fell directly on top of his vehicle. The car was totally destroyed yet he and my grandson escaped the incident with hardly a scratch. Those who have seen photos of the car can hardly believe that they were not seriously injured or even killed. The most common reaction (sadly by those who profess to be Christians as well as those who don't) is for them to exclaim "boy he was sure lucky". One gentleman remarked that he should play the lottery as if some cloud of "karma" must surely be overshadowing him.

It causes me distress when men refer to such things as accidents or luck but I at least can bear it when I know that those who are thus speaking make no profession of faith, and obviously have no other frame of reference. But I find myself utterly dismayed when those who confess with their mouth that they know the LORD speak with the same language and apparent lack of understanding as those who are yet in spiritual darkness. Their own speech belies their ignorance of GOD's word and casts great doubt upon any "conversion" they may profess.

There is no such thing ever spoken of in the scripture record as an "accident". Everything that occurs in the heavens and the earth takes place according to the direct will and purpose of the GOD who rules in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the Earth. HE is the first cause of all events and nothing transpires that is not directed by HIS hand. " *The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.* "(Prov.16:33) The outcome of every hand of poker and every set of dice ever thrown has been determined by HIM who knows the end from the beginning. Each grain of sand, stirred up by the crashing of a wave at the beach, moves in as much a predetermined orbit as do the planets in their paths about the Sun. HE who numbers the hairs on our heads and clothes the lilies of the field in bright array has left nothing to chance, whether it be the fall of the tiniest sparrow from the sky or the preparation of a fish to swallow HIS prophet. How much more can we who have been brought out of darkness and into HIS glorious light, rejoice that HE, who has loved us with an everlasting love, shall direct our every step and bring us to HIS desired end. We are in HIS hands and most blessed.

I saw a marquee the other day in front of a (supposed) church building which said "Satan has a plot but GOD has a plan". Now to point out the many errors of such a statement is outside the space we have allotted for this article but suffice it to say that the intentions and designs of Satan need not ever be discussed in the same breath as the unfolding of GOD's purpose in the earth as if there was some rivalry between the two. Satan can do nothing that GOD does not directly allow and mark out for him to do. He is but a pawn in the hand of the LORD, like a dog on a leash or a trained seal balancing a ball on his nose. One only has to look at the LORD's dealings with Job to see that this is the case. Or to listen to Joseph's testimony to his brothers concerning the purpose of GOD in using their wickedness of selling him into bondage for their own preservation. "The

LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. " (Prov.16:4) Even the wrath and wickedness of man shall be used for HIS glory and shall in no wise thwart any of HIS purpose. Rather, HE shall use it to accomplish the very end for which it is designed. (see Acts 2:23)

Both the devastation and preservation which often befalls the sons of GOD are equally ordained in HIS hand for their good. The hymn-writer of old said "HIS purposes shall ripen fast unfolding every hour, the bud may have a bitter taste but sweet will be the flower." Had the life of my son and grandson been snuffed out in the midst of this devastation, (we are most thankful that they were not) it would have been no less a display of HIS mercy towards HIS elect than the fact that HE surrounded them in HIS hands so that not even the hair of their heads was harmed. The fact that they were preserved does not in itself mean that they are one of those elect sons anymore than their death would mean otherwise. One thing is certain, and that is that the LORD uses such incidents to teach HIS children a variety of lessons. Only the "stiffnecked and uncircumcised" ignore such instruction. O that HE might give us grace that we might be "exercised" by these lessons. (see Heb. 12:11) O for grace to have a tender heart that is easily taught and fashioned in HIS wise and loving dealings with us.

GOD intends to bring HIS sons into conformity with CHRIST both positionally as HE has demonstrated by the imputation of CHRIST's righteousness to them at the cross and experientially as HE works in them both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure. HE will chasten those whom HE loves continually. HE will not leave them to their own devices lest they destroy themselves. HE intends to save us in time as surely as HE does in eternity and will not let HIS children go on without correction. Sometimes this chastening takes on a very painful character but it is no less a demonstration of HIS mercy to us when heartache and sorrow overwhelm us than when we bask in the sunshine of the brightest day. *"Great is thy faithfulness."* (Lam.3:23)

Some have characterized the chastening of the LORD as though it is a threat rather than a promise. Surely the LORD will correct the lifestyle of a wayward son or daughter (sometimes with fearful consequences see I Cor.11:29-32) but HIS chastening is most often designed as a hedge rather than a hammer. The apostle Paul was well acquainted with such a hedge in the "thorn" which was given to him to prevent his being lifted up with pride. The LORD is quite willing and able to hedge about HIS garden both for its protection and for its strength. It is why HE brings us low and unable to rely on the arm of the flesh that we are reminded from whence our blessings come and WHO is the source of our strength. *"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."* (II Cor.12:9)

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