

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

THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL

But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.

Philippians 1:12

Paul is here speaking of the manifestation and demonstration of what the prophet Isaiah wrote saying, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." (Isa 9:6-7) The LORD JESUS CHRIST came into this world to establish HIS kingdom.

The Jews stumbled at this CORNERSTONE and even to this day there are those who are yet waiting for a "reign" of CHRIST which they expect to be an actual occupation of real estate here upon planet earth. But HE plainly indicated that HIS kingdom was not of flesh and blood; that is, it is not made of those things which appear to the natural eye. Yet HE told the Pharisees that it was in their midst and yet they could not see it. "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.(i.e.; in your midst)(Luke 17:20-21)

It is this kingdom of which HE spoke when HE told Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) This is a kingdom which is completely established by HIS hand and according to HIS purpose and its increase or progress can in no wise be hindered or derailed. Though the Prince of the power of the air goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour and opposes the establishment of this kingdom at every opportunity, yet even his machinations and spiteful activities are ordered by the KING of Kings to occur in such a way as to bring about the very end which the KING desires. Even as he was used in the trial of Job to accomplish the LORD's purpose to bring a benefit to Job. (see Job 42:5,6)

In the same fashion the LORD uses the sinful ways of men (even those of Saul before he was introduced to this kingdom) to accomplish HIS purpose in the establishment and furtherance of this kingdom. We see the persecutions which were brought upon the church being used as a means to disperse HIS messengers and send them out as bearers of the good news of this kingdom to the highways and hedges. "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." (Act 8:3-4) (see also Acts 11:19-21) HE also used the sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas to cause them to go their separate ways, multiplying the message which HE would send by their hands. (see Acts 15:33-41)

So regardless of the supposed "hindrances" (as men see them) GOD causes these things to work together for good to those who are the called according to HIS purpose. This is

what Paul is writing to the Philippians about concerning the imprisonment which he was having to endure for the gospel's sake.

I met a man many years ago by the name of Prem Pradhan. (He has passed from this mortal realm several years ago) The LORD had opened his heart to believe the gospel shortly after WWII while he was stationed in India. He soon left India where he had first heard the gospel and returned to his native land of Nepal. The LORD had given him a burden for his people and he began to preach the gospel there. (on his own I might add with no financial aid from others) (see Rom.9:1-4) Nepal was (is) a country which has several dialects (seven I believe) and Prem related how the LORD had revealed to him that he would be used to bring the gospel of the kingdom to them all. He had no idea how he would ever get to them all and often was vexed in his soul with that burden..

Nepal is (or at least was at that time, perhaps still is) a Hindu kingdom. The official religion of Nepal is Hinduism and while it was not illegal to be a Christian, it was illegal to change one's religion or to influence others to do so. As you might suspect he was soon arrested and imprisoned for six years. During that time in prison he came into contact with men from each one of those tribes who the LORD was pleased to bring to a knowledge of CHRIST while in that prison and to sit under his teaching. For many years in Nepal practically every church there was established by those men whom the LORD was pleased to raise up, even though many of them had to meet in secret. I share that with you to illustrate the LORD's unshakeable purpose to establish HIS Kingdom against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. HE often does it in ways that cause us to shake our heads with amazement but HE always does it in such a way that we must give HIM all glory.

Paul goes on to say that his imprisonment was used by the LORD to enable some to boldly proclaim the gospel who would perhaps not have been so bold had Paul still been in their midst. *"And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."* (Phil 1:14) Paul was used mightily of the LORD to teach many, but that same strong teaching was to some extent intimidating to some who were fearful of trying to measure up to him. The LORD took him out of the way. No man is indispensable to the increase of this kingdom. (see Isa.43:4) The LORD can raise up the stones to praise HIM so men need not think of themselves as somehow essential in the work of the LORD. HE raises men up and puts them down according to HIS own will. The LORD had a reason for removing Paul from the churches he ministered to and HE had a purpose in sending Paul to Rome, because HE had sheep there as well. Our LORD does not overcome circumstances, rather HE is the GOD of all circumstances, bringing them to pass as well as the desired result according to HIS sovereign purpose.

Some had evidently begun to preach boldly to establish their own "pecking order" and strut their stuff since they felt that Paul was now out of the picture. *"Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife."* (Phi 1:15) But it mattered little to Paul what the personal intent of these men was (Diotrephes still lives) as long as the gospel was preached. He was not endorsing their error nor sanctioning their little "preacher games" but recognizing that CHRIST is glorified in a true proclamation of the gospel regardless of a man's intent. The ministry of all men will one day be shown to be of such insignificance that the only glory seen will be that of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. (see Rev.4:4-11; I Cor.3:1-23) This will no doubt be a great shock to those "gospel preachers" who love the chief seats and to be given great deference and titles of respect.

The "furtherance" of the gospel is the work of GOD who calls men from a far country and ravenous birds from the east according to HIS purpose. HE shall not fail to establish HIS kingdom in the earth. Except a man be brought into this kingdom by the grace of GOD he can in no wise enter into it nor can he have any understanding of the working of it apart from the revelation of HIM who holds the keys to that kingdom and gives them to whomsoever HE will. *"I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."* (Isa 63:1)