

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume IX

Issue 50

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

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 CONFLICT OF HOPE

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Romans 8:24-25

Jeremiah is generally referred to as the “weeping prophet”. In fact he is the only prophet who wrote a whole book of weeping, which is entitled “The Book of Lamentations.” A lamentation is an expression of lament or deep sorrow. It is primarily associated with the shrieks of anguish and deep expressions of great loss such as occur at the death of a loved one or on the occasion of some great calamity. (see Gen. 50:10, II Sam. 1:17, Jer. 7:29)

The message of Jeremiah falls on completely deaf ears to a generation(s) which has been lulled to sleep by those who preach “*peace, peace when there is no peace.*” The present generation, for the most part, would define Jeremiah as “ineffective and out of touch”, since they have been taught to believe that one should only entertain positive thoughts and promote inspirational teaching which is designed to uplift the hearers rather than convict of sin.

The average religious organization, (most of which call themselves churches) is more interested in making folks feel good about themselves and keeping them entertained, that it is in delivering the stark and naked truth of GOD. The style of “worship” is much more important to most than the substance of it as long as it is set to a catchy tune. Having large numbers who attend meetings with bright and smiling faces is considered much more acceptable than a group of a few who mourn with bitter anguish over their own sin and the judgment of their nation.

Jeremiah faced much the same thing in his own day as the religious leaders of his time promoted idolatry and assured the inhabitants of Jerusalem that brighter days were ahead. Jeremiah could clearly see the certainty of approaching judgment as the LORD told him that there was no doubt that the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar were going to completely destroy their city. The prophets of false peace ridiculed his “negativity” and scoffed at such a “sour puss”.

Paul said, “*we are saved by hope.*” Yet it is “*hope*” that we have not yet completely obtained nor observed in a tangible way. We yet wait for that which we hope for, though at the present time we can’t see it nor can we say we possess it. Even as Paul said, “*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended.*” (Phi 3:13). This is the very “conflict of hope” which is present in those sheep whom the LORD has awakened and caused to believe the gospel. “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” (Heb 11:1)

Jeremiah expressed this very conflict in the writing of his Lamentations. In Lamentations 3:18, he says, “*My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD.*” He was stripped naked and bare and was convinced of the folly of trusting in anything he could either see or call his own. He had no hope at all which was tangible and could be witnessed by himself or others as being viable.

Yet he goes on to declare in verse 24 of the same chapter, “*The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.*” He expresses, that though he has no hope (which can be seen),

yet he has great hope in HIM whose mercy is new every morning, whose compassions fail not. (see Lam.3:22,23).

The modern day "soul winners" have reduced "salvation" to a formula which, if a man follows and fills in the blanks, he can "know" that he is saved beyond a shadow of a doubt. Many of these "converts" can tell you the day and the hour when they were "saved". This type of assurance is fine for those who are free from the "conflict of hope", and who are content to base their salvation upon some activity (or adherence to a formula) which they have performed.

Such "assurance" is of no value at all, however, to the man who is convinced that *"Salvation is of the LORD."* When told to believe; he confesses with tears, like the man with the lunatic son, *"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."* (Mark 9:24) He doesn't claim to have the answers but he is certain, who the ONE is who does possess both the questions and their answers, even as Peter confessed, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."* (John 6:68-69)

This is a hope which is "not seen" but is nonetheless that which those who have been given the gift of faith by the SPIRIT of GOD, wait for with patience and cannot be deterred, but rather *"take the kingdom by violence"* (see Mat. 11:12). O sweet conflict which can occur only by the operation of HIM whose mercy is new every morning and whose compassions fail not. *"Great is THY faithfulness"*. It is so sweetly true, as Jeremiah declared, *"The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD."* (Lam 3:25-26)

This is the patience of the saints. To whom else can they turn, upon what else can they be made to trust. *"And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee."* (Psa 39:7) *"I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."*(Psa130:5-7)

"I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD." (Psa 40:1-3) *"Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me."* (Micah 7:7)

Our Jesus is the God of hope; He works it by his power;
It holds the weak believer up, In the distressing hour.
The darkest cloud hope pierces through, And waits upon the Lord,
Expects to prove that all is true Throughout the sacred word.
True hope looks out for blessing great; And, though they're long delayed,
Yet hope's determined still to wait, Until they are conveyed.

#244 Gadsby's Hymns by R. Burnham

The outwardly religious man can never be satisfied with a hope that is not seen, and the man who is awakened by the LORD cannot find satisfaction in one which is. While the man of religion is bold in all of his assertions concerning faith, the little child of grace is often viewed as timid and weak and thusly despised by the wise and prudent moralists. Yet the one who possesses a steadfast hope (even while the outward man perishes) is convinced that those things which are seen are temporary and those things which are not are eternal. *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."* (2Cor 4:7-9) *"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?----Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."* (Psa 42:1-5)

mam