

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 DEATH OF DEATH AND HELL'S DESTRUCTION

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57

The very first lie that was ever told to men came from the lips of Satan, when he said to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die." (Gen 3:4) Thus he is designated as the "father of lies" (see John 8:44) He did not tell Eve this lie to help her but in order that he might destroy her and her posterity. (see Gen.3:15) Even as Peter warns us, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" (1Peter 5:8)

The destructive power of death is not just in the fact that these bodies age and decay, or even in the fact that, the skinworms will ultimately destroy these bodies of flesh and blood, bringing them back to the dust from whence they were created, but rather in the ability of death to bring men into fear and bondage as their conscience testifies of approaching judgment. Therefore we read of that deliverance which the LORD JESUS has effected for HIS elect. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb 2:14-15)

Satan is said to have the power of death, not because he has some sovereign reign over death and can administer it whenever he pleases, but rather because he has been given the ability to wound the sons of men by his deception which in turn results in their ultimate destruction. The only ONE who has sovereign power and control to administer death is HE who says, "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." (Deu 32:39)

HE reiterated this fact when HE spoke to HIS disciples saying, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Mat 10:28) Let no man mistake the fact that life and death is in the hands of the ONE true and living GOD who made the heavens and earth and by whom all things consist. Even as Job has said of the finiteness of men, "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." (Job 14:5)

All men have been given an appointment with death by HIM who sets the bounds of our habitation, for which they cannot be early or late. "It is appointed unto men once to die." (Heb 9:27) One of the old Puritans said that the arrow of a man's death has already been let loose from GOD's bow the moment that a child is born. This is one event that cannot be avoided nor might I add brought to pass one moment sooner than that which is marked out by HIM who numbers the very hairs upon the heads of all men.

When Eve was deceived by Satan's lie and took of that forbidden fruit her body did not cease to function but the real power of death was brought upon her. Consequently, Adam knowing what she had done, ate of that same fruit and, in so doing, died the same death which she did; bringing the power of death upon all of their posterity, and they did both indeed "die" in that very day. The power of death is much more than the simple cessation of the beating of the heart.

The power of death arises out of sin. Sin has its strength (or power to condemn) by the law of GOD which is written in the conscience of every man. Though a man might delight in the commission of sin, there is nonetheless a bitterness associated with it, which cannot be escaped as a man contemplates the end of his days. This is exactly how Paul described the state of Simon the Sorcerer, "For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." (Acts 8:23) Even though he made a profession of faith in CHRIST yet he demonstrated that he was unchanged by the power of SPIRIT and without peace in the earth.

The power of death precludes any fellowship which a man might enjoy with his CREATOR and we see this manifested as fear when Adam said, "*I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.*" (Gen 3:10) Men have sought out many inventions in order to be able to cope with this "fear" and hide themselves from the gaze of the true and living GOD. The greatest of these inventions is the religion of the flesh. This takes on many forms but all of these forms are the product of man seeking to escape the coming judgment.

Some of man's religion(s) simply deny that there is any "judgment" and the followers of these "belief systems" go along as one who whistles as he passes the graveyard. Atheism and agnosticism are the clearest examples of this religion even as David described them "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" (Psa 14:1) Yet there are many others who while claiming a belief in GOD who nonetheless deny that the sin of men must be accounted for.

Then there are those religions which rely upon the notion that man is innately good. They convince themselves that man has intrinsic worth because of his supposed "godlike" qualities not the least of which is (as they put it) an eternal soul. They believe that GOD will recognize this "spark of good" and will ultimately receive sincere men as they pass from this life into a subsequent one of some sort. Most funerals are preached today by men of this persuasion.

Then there are those religions who also worship the freewill of men and rely upon psychology to insure men that they have the power to accomplish anything. This is the religion of Babel and the followers of it have not ceased to build a tower which reaches to heaven. (as they suppose) They believe that men can bargain with GOD, earn favor in HIS sight by good deeds and obedience, and that men can be persuaded by natural reason to embrace the truth of GOD.

Some of these psychologists have homogenized their thoughts with certain tenets of the faith of CHRIST, producing a very appealing product which is actually as much a lie as anything which the Serpent told Eve. They teach men that they can embrace the work of CHRIST and make it possible for HIM to save them which HE is quite unable (though they say willing) to do (according to them) without their approval.

This sort of false doctrine will satisfy men who can be satisfied with human reason but can do nothing to calm the fears of those who are awakened by the HOLY SPIRIT to see themselves as wicked and helpless sinners. They are stirred up to flee from the wrath to come but find no ability in themselves to embrace anything that would help them. They find themselves shut up to HIS mercy. But by the grace of GOD this is exactly the place wherein they find their greatest delight because they are given faith to believe that CHRIST has not merely made the salvation of HIS people possible but has actually procured it.

Death has indeed lost its "sting" to those who are given faith to believe in CHRIST's finished work. HE has put to death the power of death by HIS own death and destroyed forever the strength of sin by HIS resurrection from the tomb. No grave can hold the children of GOD for HE is indeed "hell's destruction." "*I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.*" (Hos 13:14)