

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

A PRECIOUS SIGHT

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

Psa 116:15

One of the Puritans wrote some words to this effect, "the arrows which mark out our death have been let loose from the bow of GOD, long before we were born." HE is indeed the GOD of life and death even as Job has said, "*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass*" (Job 14:1-5)

Even many who make no profession of faith in CHRIST, at all, will readily admit that the number of days which a man has upon the earth is predetermined and that he shall surely keep that appointment. Yet they look upon that in a fatalistic view and simply resign themselves to it as an inevitable occurrence.

Those, on the other hand, who have been led to see the workings and predestination of all events, in heaven and earth, by the hand and purpose of a gracious and absolutely sovereign GOD, find a place of great comfort and peace in that knowledge. Rather than a simple blind inevitability, born out of a cosmic necessity, they see the sovereign hand of GOD working all things together for good to those who love HIM and are the called according to HIS purpose.

Though they might not enjoy entertaining the thought that "*it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this, the judgment.*" (Heb 9:27), yet they most certainly recognize that to be absent from the body is to be present with the LORD. (see II Cor.5:8) It is given unto them to find comfort in the fact that HE who has loved them with an everlasting love, has even laid down HIS own life for them as HE tasted death for every man (see Heb.2:9) that HE undertook to die for. HE has in that death and HIS subsequent resurrection from the dead forever swallowed up the sting of death and in its place given them an abiding hope that their own death is but a temporary sleep.

Adam was made a mortal creature out of the dust of the earth. He was the highest creature of all of those which were placed upon the earth. He was given a nobility and depth of understanding which gave him power to rule over all of this earthly creation. He had an ability to see that the creation of all things was the handiwork of GOD (see Rom.1:19-22) and in a measure to commune with GOD insofar as the LORD was pleased to commune with him. He knew that GOD was much higher than himself and for a season was submissive to that order.

Yet Adam disobeyed GOD and subsequently brought death upon his own posterity as he was banished from the Garden wherein was the TREE of LIFE. Though Adam was created upright yet he was nothing but flesh and blood and as such, had neither lot nor part in that Kingdom of GOD which cannot be inherited by flesh and blood.

Some look at the creation of Adam as an experiment by the LORD which went awry or one wherein the LORD was ambivalent about the outcome and simply left it all up to the free will of

Adam. This is sometimes referred to as the probationary view. Yet it is outside the realm of possibility that anything in the heavens or the earth is left to occur by chance, since all things must occur according to HIS own purpose. *“But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” (Psa 115:3)* We can know what the will of the LORD is by looking at whatever events take place. Nothing can occur apart from the sovereign purpose of GOD.

So we know that even Adam’s acts of disobedience did not take the LORD by surprise nor did they occur outside of HIS predestined purpose for the creation of the world. GOD created the heavens and the earth as a display of HIS glory in sending HIS SON to redeem that people which HE loved with an everlasting love. In this purpose HE chose to magnify the glory of HIS grace in loving them even though they sprung from Adam’s loins in the flesh as sinners, condemned to die under the justice of a broken law.

Man could never have broken the law had he not been made subject unto it, which he was in Adam. *“For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.” (Rom 8:20)* Therefore we read that *“in Adam all die” (1Cor 15:22)* So it was necessary for death to come upon all men that the glory of GOD’s grace might be magnified in the deliverance of HIS elect from the lasting effects of death.

In order for those which are mortal to have any hope of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven it is absolutely necessary that they be changed. *“As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” (1Cor 15:48-53)*

GOD has chosen physical death as the means whereby HE would redeem HIS people from the curse of the law in that HE sent HIS only begotten SON into the world to die for sinners. *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Eze 18:20)* HE has *“become sin”* for HIS people and thereby taken upon HIMSELF the curse which was due unto them according to the law. Thus HE has satisfied that curse and they cannot be subject to the lasting effects of death, since HE has made them righteous by the imputation of HIS own righteousness to them. *“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.” (John 10:28)*

HE has also chosen physical death as the means whereby this mortal flesh might be shown to be what it is, totally unfit to inherit the Kingdom of GOD. Thus death in these mortal bodies must occur in order that the heirs of the Kingdom might be raised from that death and fitted with bodies that cannot decay or be corrupted.

Therefore even the very death of the saints of GOD is precious, in HIS sight, because it is the avenue through which he would bring them to experience the same power of the resurrection of which the LORD JESUS CHRIST is the FIRST FRUITS. (see I Cor 15:20,21) HE chose to illustrate the usefulness of death for the benefit of HIS children when HE raised Lazarus from the dead, waiting two days before setting out on HIS journey when he heard Lazarus was sick.

HE told HIS disciples, *“And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe” (John 11:15)* Lazarus was only raised in a natural body in order to illustrate the power of the LORD over death of any kind. HE simply used death for HIS own purpose and for the good of those whom HE had already ordained unto eternal life.

Death reminds us of what we are by nature. Death reminds us of our helpless condition before a HOLY and ETERNAL GOD. Death causes us to remember the sin which does so easily beset us. But a consideration of death also drives those, who have been awakened to flee from the wrath to come, to embrace the ONE who is the RESURRECTION and the LIFE. They are made to rejoice that even death itself is but the servant of that ETERNAL GOD who shall bring them through it, that where HE is they might be also. (see John 14:3)