

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

REIGNING GRACE

That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:21

The scriptures are full of comparisons and contrasts. Many of these are found in the book of Proverbs where the wisdom that the LORD gave to Solomon is on display. Some of them have rather nuanced meanings such as; *"He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears."* (Prov.26:17) or *"The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with."*(Pro 17:14) While others are quite plain (and I might add; salted with a bit of humor) such as, *"It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house."* (Prov 21:9) or *"It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman."*(Prov 21:19)

Paul was a master at the use of comparisons and contrasts in declaring the glorious truth of the gospel. This is nowhere more clearly displayed than in the verse which is before us. Apart from an understanding of the insidious nature of sin, and the death which results from it, (see Rom. 6:23) one cannot begin to understand the glories of the grace which is demonstrated by our LORD towards a corrupt and sin debilitated humanity.

"Sin hath reigned unto death." As the LORD prophetically declared unto Adam, *"in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Gen 2:17), this soon came to pass. Now we know that Adam's physical body did not cease to function on that day, but we do know that "death" entered into him and his corruption began gnawing at his vitals. Nine hundred and thirty years later came the ultimate triumph of that corruption which was, first, ushered in by his initial disobedience.

The death of the physical body is the manifestation of a triumphal enemy insofar as its power over this mortal flesh is concerned. Solomon in his wisdom recognized the vanity and temporary nature of this fleshly realm. *"For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool."* (Eccl 2:16) *"All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."* (Eccl 3:20)

The introduction of death to the human race, serves a two-fold purpose. One is to demonstrate the LORD's hatred of sin and its insidious nature, along with HIS determination to pass judgment on all who violate HIS holy law. Secondly, and more importantly HE would use it to demonstrate HIS glory in the redemption of sinners, from the condemnation of the law and its resulting curse of death. *"Surely, the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."* (Psa 76:10)

The "reign" of "sin unto death" is a testament to the power and purpose of GOD. It is a force, over which HE has complete control at all times. *"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."* (Deut.32:39) HE, alone, assigns the time, place, and circumstance of death. *"Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.-----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) HE is death’s sole MASTER before whom the earth must tremble. “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) HE that holds the keys of death and hell is an absolute POTENTATE, whose will shall be done in the Earth as it is in the Heavens.

Just as the LORD designed death and appointed it to accomplish HIS purpose, so too has HE already marked out its utter demise when that purpose is fulfilled. *“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” (1Cor 15:26) John saw this from afar. “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” (Rev 20:14) “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” (Rev 21:4)*

In the same fashion as “*sin hath reigned unto death*” so too does HIS grace hold the trump card, as HE demonstrates HIS mastery in bringing glory to HIS matchless NAME by manifesting the righteousness of CHRIST unto eternal life. Just as HE ordained the “reign of sin unto death” in the whole human race, so too has HE ordained the imputation of CHRIST’s righteousness upon those who are the called according to HIS purpose. This is the means and basis, whereby HE would bestow eternal life upon them, who are dead in trespasses and sins by nature.

Thus we can compare the “reign of sin unto death” with the “reign of grace through righteousness.” They are both ordained of GOD. They both have their chief manifestation in the sons of men. They both redound unto the glory of GOD who is not ashamed to say, *“That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.” (Isa 45:6-7)*

Yet it is in the contrast of these two principles wherein we see the fullness of HIS glory in the manifestation of HIS mercy, telling Moses, *“I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.” (Exo 33:19)* The purpose of death is to set a stage for the unveiling of HIS glory in the bestowal of mercy upon unworthy wretches. Mercy and not condemnation is that which the LORD would showcase in the revelation of HIS purpose in the creation of the world in bringing glory to HIS NAME.

It is this revealed mercy and grace which is set forth in the declaration of the Gospel even as the angels first proclaimed to those shepherds on the hills of Judea, *“Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:10-11)* HE has not sent messengers into the world for the purpose of declaring threats of hell and destruction to the inhabitants of the earth. Rather HE has sent HIS emissaries forth with a message of HOPE unto all who believe. *“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.” (Isa 40:1-2)*

In this we see the “reign of grace” displayed especially when we read of that PROPHET which was sent into the world to declare the day of our GOD. *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.” (Isa 61:1-3)* Even this “vengeance” which HE declares is against all that would set itself against the sons of GOD who are the objects of HIS mercy and the recipients of HIS grace. *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” (Isa 55:7)* mam