

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

HORSES, WIVES, AND GOLD

But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. Deuteronomy 17:16-17

The Bible is full of illustrations which prove the estrangement, disregard, and outright rebellion of the natural man against HIS CREATOR. From the earliest, halcyon, days of man's existence in the beauties and comforts of Eden, there has lurked within his psyche, a propensity towards his own destruction. We see this as the LORD set forth a prohibition against him eating of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A righteous man has no need of the law. "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." (1Tim 1:9-11) The very existence of this prohibition indicates the natural proclivity of man towards evil.

I am sure such a statement will serve to raise the eyebrows of many who consider that man fell from a righteous state into unrighteousness. Yet the LORD created Adam to be exactly what Adam was in order to demonstrate to men, their inability to gain the glory of HIS Kingdom through their own effort or ability. Adam was made from the dust of the earth and his disobedience to the one command that he was given, proves his contrary nature to those things which have a heavenly origin. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." (1Cor 15:50)

The LORD told Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6) Adam was of the earth and could not embrace those things which can only be received through a spiritual birth. He became corrupt because he was corruptible, as is all flesh alike. "There is none good but one, that is, God." (Mar 10:18) "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Rom 3:10-12) So we conclude that Adam, even before he disobeyed the direct command of GOD, was still as a creature of the dust unfit for the kingdom of Heaven.

Thus we see the mercy of GOD demonstrated as HE would manifest the sin nature of men, in order to display the glory of HIS grace and mercy in the redemption of that people which HE chose in CHRIST from before the foundation of the world. How glorious does the redeeming work of CHRIST appear as HE put on the likeness of sinful flesh in order to be made an offering for their sin and to give them an inheritance (which HE purchased with HIS own blood) that they could in no wise have ever attained unto. We often hear some speculate on what would have happened if Adam had never sinned. This is a foolish speculation, much like wondering what

would happen if water ran uphill. Adam was not part of a failed experiment but rather a means whereby the glory of CHRIST might be magnified in the earth. *"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:31-32) "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." (Heb 2:14)*

Long before the Israelites ever asked to have a king like the other nations, (see I Sam 8:1-22) the LORD had already set forth various prohibitions which were to be the guide of whoever became their king. The wickedness and injustice of the rule of Samuel's sons precipitated the cry of the Israelites for a king. Yet the LORD told Samuel that the real cause of this desire was because the people had rejected HIM. *"And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." (1Sam 8:7)* Such is the nature of man.

About four hundred years elapsed between the LORD's commands in Deuteronomy and the reign of Saul as the first king of Israel. As we read of the various kings which subsequently ruled Israel, we find none of them that obeyed these precepts completely, and we find one king in particular who blatantly fell prey to all of those things which the LORD commanded them not to do. In order to demonstrate the folly of even the wisest of men, the LORD gave to David a son who would succeed him, and who would even be the one privileged to build the temple of GOD in Israel. *"And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." (1Kings 4:29-34)*

Yet Solomon went the way of all flesh and despised the way of GOD. Even turning a deaf ear to one of his own proverbs, *"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* (Pro 16:25) The LORD told the kings not to multiply horses, yet we read that Solomon had forty thousand horses (see I Kings 4:26). The LORD told them that the reason they should not do this was so that they would not be tempted to return to Egypt, yet Solomon received tribute from the nations that bordered Egypt. (see I Kings 4:21). He told them that they should not multiply wives (i.e. practice polygamy), yet that is exactly what Solomon did, as we read that he had a thousand wives and concubines, even taking Pharaoh's (ruler of Egypt) daughter to be his wife. He also amassed a fortune in silver and gold in direct disobedience to that which the LORD had prescribed. In fact, he had so much gold that it made silver to be of little worth. (see I Kings 10:21)

Now we are sure that in and of themselves, the LORD did not regard horses or their possession as being evil, even as HE did not utterly condemn the practice of polygamy, nor does HE regard gold as being a wicked treasure. The prohibition of these things is given to these kings because the LORD would have men to recognize the wickedness of their hearts as it is bound in the heart of man to abuse those things which GOD has given for the benefit of men. Paul said, *"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."* (1Cor 6:12) Solomon is the poster child for excess being that which leads to destruction and sorrow. His horses and the strength of his army was a source of pride. His wives ultimately led him into idolatrous worship. And he learned all too late that gold and the possessions of this world are vanity. All that man desires in the flesh is corrupt. May the LORD impress upon our hearts what Paul declared. *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."* (1Cor 10:31) CHRIST is ALL. *mam*