

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

AN OLD TIME KING

For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Psalm 74:12

When the day of Pentecost was fully come, it pleased the LORD to pour out HIS SPIRIT upon "all flesh" in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. *"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call."* (Joel 2:28-32; see Acts 2:16)

Having fulfilled this prophecy in a manner which was never seen before or since, the LORD demonstrated the fact that *"salvation belongeth unto the LORD"*, and is not the result of the continued preaching and teaching of HIS truth. Now while it is true that the LORD has ordained the gospel to be preached in order to *"bring life and immortality to light"*, it is equally certain that the preaching of the gospel cannot and does not bring life, nor give light. Rather it serves as an instrument in the hand of the LORD to "enlighten HIS people" whenever HE is pleased to visit HIS word with power. The LORD testifies of this, when HE says, *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."* (Isa 55:11)

Paul spoke this very truth when he said, *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Rom 10:14-17)

He goes on to say that many have "heard" the word but did not believe it, so it is quite true that the mere exercise of "preaching" does not have power in and of itself, regardless of the skill, devotion, and desire of the one doing the preaching. *"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."* (Heb 4:2) Faith is the "gift of GOD" and unless it is granted by the HAND of HIM, to whom belongeth salvation, then it is impossible that men should believe. This is that which the LORD HIMSELF testified of to the Pharisees, *"Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word."* (John 8:43)

The Apostle Paul was likely in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and perhaps was even among the multitude who gathered as Peter declared the word of the LORD. Yet he believed it not. He was most certainly there when Stephen preached before being stoned. It is certain that

by the time he made ready to go to Damascus that he was acquainted with the gospel, since he was intent on destroying those who preached it. Yet upon that Damascus road, the LORD "sent" the gospel by HIS own mouth and Paul confessed that HE was LORD. He did not at that time become one of the sheep of the LORD, of whom the LORD had said, "*my sheep hear my voice.*" Rather he was one of the LORD's sheep long before he heard and believed, but it was not until the LORD "sent" HIS word with power that his eyes were opened and he heard and believed as a result of the LORD's power and purpose.

Men often suppose that men hear and believe on a constant and consistent basis, even as the Jews assumed that they could receive the truth of GOD in the same fashion, "*But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.*" (Isa 28:1) As HE did in a very vivid and manifest way on the Day of Pentecost, the LORD is often pleased to sweep many of HIS sheep into HIS kingdom and relieve their longings, in various outpourings of HIS SPIRIT upon them. These are those "*times of refreshing*" sent by the LORD, and is that for which the prophet Habakkuk prayed; "*O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.*" (Hab 3:2)

Revivalism is a concept borne in the mind of men wherein they believe that they have the power to cause GOD to pour out HIS SPIRIT according to their desires and level of earnestness in seeking after it. Like all concepts of "conditionalism", it misses the mark and gets the cart ahead of the horse. Yet it is true that that LORD does often work in the hearts and minds of HIS people to longingly express their desire as David did, "*O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*" (Psa 63:1-2)

In like fashion, Asaph begins Psalm 74 (from which our text is taken) with these words, "*O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.*" (Psa 74:1-2) So it is indeed a common desire among the saints, who have tasted that the LORD is gracious, to see HIM reveal HIS glory unto them and visit them with HIS SALVATION. The LORD never forsakes HIS own, though HE does, from time to time, cause them to walk through the valley of the shadow of death and the waste howling wilderness, that they might be stirred to seek HIM.

Yet that man who has never once seen the glory of GOD displayed, cannot long to see it displayed again, so it must be the work of GOD in the sons of GOD that would give them a yearning for HIS presence. And it is HIS purpose in showing them HIS glory (i.e.; revealed in the face of JESUS CHRIST) that causes them to be dissatisfied with this present evil world. "*For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*" (2Cor 6:14-16)

The "RESTING PLACE" of the sons of GOD is discovered in Asaph's Psalm as he declares his confidence in the KING. "*For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.*" (Psalm 74:12) He nor we, expect any deliverance (nor might I add desire any) which is not brought about by HIM who is our LORD and KING. HE does indeed work "salvation" in the earth as HE is pleased to dwell with HIS people in the Earth. "*If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*" (John 15:19) "*I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" (John 17:14-16) mam