

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

PESTILENCE IN THE HAND OF GOD

For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

Exodus 9:15-16

Unless a person has been marooned on a desert island, completely out of communication with society, there is no way that they could not have become acquainted with the latest reason for men to panic and wring their hands in despair. Of course, we have reference to the "Covid-19, coronavirus" which is, seemingly, the subject of every news cast and talk show around the world. We would certainly not wish to make light of any disease which causes pain, anguish and death to the inhabitants of the earth.

Yet we would desire to recognize that just as surely as the heart of kings is in the hand of the LORD to turn them wheresoever HE pleases, (see Prov.21:1) all pestilences, diseases, and calamities take place in the earth according to the purpose of a Holy and Eternal GOD who says of HIMSELF, *"I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: 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 45:5-7)*

Much of the comfort of the sons of GOD arises out of a knowledge of HIM whose hand cannot be stayed and who will perform HIS will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the Earth. Sadly, in the present day in which we live, it seems that the vast majority of those who make some profession of being the followers of CHRIST, more intently follow the mindset of the world rather than casting all of their care upon HIM. Not a one of us knows what tomorrow holds for us, yet we can know and take delight in HIM who directs the events of tomorrow as surely as HE does in the present time. *"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. (Rom 14:8)*

We would certainly never tell anyone to throw caution to the wind or to disregard a prudent consideration of matters of our health and well being. We are to be good stewards of all of those things which the LORD has given to us, being wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Even as Paul gave advice to Timothy concerning such matters, *"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."* (1Tim 5:23) Yet we must not succumb to the wisdom of the flesh that would have us to believe that we can by "chance" contract a deadly virus, fall off of a cliff, or die in a plane crash apart from the ordained purpose of HIM who has numbered our days even as HE has the hairs upon our heads. *"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)*

Such knowledge as this, when applied by the SPIRIT of GOD, must be of great encouragement to the sons of GOD, as they stare into the uncertainty which appears to the flesh and captures the imaginations of the fretful who know not GOD. We will stand with David who said, *“But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” (Psa 115:3)*

When David had sinned against the LORD in numbering the people, (see 2 Sam 24), HE sent the prophet, Gad, to give David three choices of how HE would deal with David’s sin. One was HE would send seven years of famine, another was that David’s enemies would pursue him, or the final one was that the LORD would send three days of “pestilence” upon Israel. David said, *“I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.” (2Sa 24:14)* Thus, the LORD sent this “pestilence” (i.e.; plague, or deadly disease) upon Israel, and slew seventy thousand of David’s subjects, who were themselves not even guilty of David’s transgression.

David realized that even a pestilence in the hand of the LORD, is a demonstration of HIS mercy, because David understood the depths, of the wickedness of his sin against the LORD. Even as Jeremiah declared, *“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.” (Lam 3:21-24)* So David worshipped the LORD and *“the plague was stayed.” (2Sam.24:25)*

When a man is brought to understand the depths of his depravity and his worthiness to be destroyed, then he can find no reason that he should not be immediately destroyed. That HE should spare any of us is but a testament to HIS everlasting love of that people which HE gave to CHRIST from before the foundation of the world, and for whom CHRIST has shed HIS precious blood to redeem. *“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me (or that shall befall me in the realm of men).” (Heb 13:6)*

The LORD has plainly declared (over forty times in the OT) that HE sends “pestilence” to accomplish HIS purpose. HE sent Moses into Pharaoh’s court to declare HIS very purpose for raising Pharaoh up to a place of power. *“For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.” (Exo 9:14-16)* Paul declares the same thing to the Romans, *“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” (Rom 9:16-18)*

The pestilence which the LORD would send in the earth, whether it be in 2020 AD or 1400 BC, is but a demonstration of HIS purpose to manifest HIS glory in the redemption of that people which HE gave to CHRIST. All of the calamities and sorrows of this world are given to demonstrate the sinfulness of men and the resultant curse which that sin has brought upon the earth. CHRIST came as that ONE who would set HIS people free from this curse forever as HE has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. HE has made HIMSELF an offering for sin, making the sin of HIS people, HIS own, and carrying it away as far as the east is from the west, as HE obtained eternal redemption by the offering up of HIS own body and the shedding of HIS own blood for sin.

The LORD would show the rebellion of men against HIMSELF according to HIS ordained purpose, as CHRIST, *“being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” (Acts 2:23)* Men wickedly treated CHRIST but the LORD meant it for good as by the means of HIS crucifixion and ultimate resurrection HE has brought many sons to glory. Are you one of HIS? mam