

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

THE TREE OF LIFE

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever". Genesis 3:22

It is necessary that a man be given an understanding of the purpose of GOD in the creation of all things (i.e.; known to men) in order to rightly comprehend the events which transpired in the Garden of Eden. Some have espoused the view that the LORD made the world and placed Adam in that Garden as an experiment or as some would say, put man on probation to see what he would do. Since we clearly see that GOD does all things according to the good pleasure of HIS will and that nothing can occur in this or any other world apart from HIS ordained purpose, then it follows that all of the events which took place in that Garden were according to HIS purpose.

They were certainly not random happenings, nor could any other outcome have taken place which would have been contrary to HIS purpose. Some often describe what happened to Adam as "a fall". We do not object to that description as long as we understand from what it is that he fell. The LORD created Adam without sin and in a state of innocence (see Eccl.7:29) but with a corruptible, carnal nature which could not correct itself. Thus Adam acted according to his own carnal nature and committed sin by disobeying the plain commandment of GOD.

So we would then say that he did indeed "fall" from the state of "innocence" (i.e.; not having any knowledge of good or evil) in which he was created. He did not, however fall from a supposed state of spirituality since he was created from the dust of the Earth and would remain in that state apart from a supernatural work of GOD upon HIM. Adam was the "poster child" of the natural man who lives and moves in a carnal state but does not have any spiritual LIGHT or LIFE.

Due to the weakness of our own carnal reasoning, the LORD allows us to consider things with a "what if" mentality, even though no "what ifs" ever occur in the determined purpose of GOD. So men often reason that Adam could have lived forever if he had not eaten of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil", and instead had continually eaten of the "TREE of LIFE". That premise has some merit in the understanding of men but fails to recognize that there are no "what ifs" in the demonstration of the will of GOD.

If we indulge our penchant for "what ifs", we might say that Adam could have dwelt in the paradisaical setting of Eden forever had he continued in his original state of innocence. This is a true enough supposition, yet we have to consider that he would have continued with the same nature that he was created with and would have been subject to the same malady that overtook him with Eve's proposal. It is impossible that men by "nature" could ever become "spiritually minded". *"the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* (1Cor 2:14)

Thus the reason for the creation of men, must be viewed in light of the work of redemption and the REDEEMER who would demonstrate the glory of HIS NAME in the bestowal of LIFE and LIGHT to those who sat in darkness. Before there was ever a sinner, CHRIST was the SAVIOR who created a world into which HE would come as the sinless SUBSTITUTE, making atonement for that people which were chosen in HIM, and loved with an everlasting love. HE justified them before the very law which Adam transgressed bringing upon his posterity the sentence of death.

CHRIST in HIS redeeming work undertook not only to satisfy the demands of a broken law but to deliver those elect children, for which HE died, from the very curse of sin itself and to indwell them

making them "new creatures". This is that work which is described by the LORD to Nicodemus when HE said, "*Ye must be born-again.*" The result of this work is seen in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, "*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*" (Eph 2:1-2)

A man does not have to do anything but to be born of flesh and blood to be in this state of being "*dead in trespasses and sins*". It is in this condition that a man, by nature, is "*condemned already*" for he will not come to the LIGHT because his deeds are evil. CHRIST is the LIGHT but men love darkness rather than LIGHT, and will seek to hide their nakedness by their own effort. We see this demonstrated continually by the penchant which he has for religion of the flesh or the mind.

So we see the LORD driving Adam and Eve from the Garden, that HE might illustrate the impossibility of men by nature having communion with HIM or enjoying fruits of HIS PRESENCE. Not only does HE demonstrate their inability but does also hide from their mind the TRUTH and bar them from knowing HIM. "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*" (John 6:44) HE has hid these things from the "*wise and prudent*" (i.e.; those who are satisfied with what they already know) and revealed them unto "*babes*" (i.e.; those whom HE has caused to see their own dire natural condition; crying out to HIM as FATHER).

By nature, all men have a desire to live in this flesh and will go to practically any means to preserve that life even if it means taking the life from another who may threaten their own. Even this very desire indicates the selfish nature of sinful men, quite in contrast to the nature of the LORD JESUS CHRIST who gladly and willingly laid down HIS own life in order that these sinners might have true LIFE. HE "*made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" (Php 2:7-8)

This is the evidence that man could not in his own natural ability or will, come into the presence of a holy GOD. It was therefore necessary that ONE who had no sin (see Ps.24:3-5) should become the SUBSTITUTE of those whom HE purposed to save. HE satisfied their sin debt with HIS own blood as their REDEEMER. HE delivered them from the sin which did so easily beset them as their SAVIOR. It was HIS purpose not only to remove the condemnation of their sin from the record of the Law, but to set them free from that same condemnation in their mind and heart by making them new creatures who delight in that work which HE has performed in their behalf.

When we see the LORD barring Adam and Eve from the Garden with a flaming sword, we understand that the LORD would not have corrupt men eating of the TREE of LIFE. Many religions teach that "heaven" is a place where men go after death to engage in whatever it was that gave them happiness in this sinful world. Yet Heaven is the abode of HIM whom David described, "*Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*" (Psa 115:3) Just as Adam and Eve were prevented from eating of this TREE of LIFE in their corrupted flesh, so too are the natural born sons of Adam unable to live forever in that state. Destruction is their portion forever.

None shall enter into that glorious city (wherein dwelleth RIGHTEOUSNESS) who have not been born from above with the seal of CHRIST's righteousness "*in their foreheads*" and the BANNER of HIS love in their hands. For here the LAMB is the LIGHT that shineth forever and the TREE of LIFE which is planted by the rivers of waters. Those who are made the inhabitants of this CITY cannot be barred from eating of that TREE, for HE is that ONE in whom is their delight both in the present time and more perfectly in the ages to come. Just as surely as their delight is in HIM, HIS delight in them is that which insured that they would be welcomed into that place which HE has gone to prepare for them. If it were not so, HE would have told us.

The natural man would desire to live forever, not so that he might worship the KING in HIS beauty, but rather to continue his carnal rebellion against HIS precepts. "*For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.*" (Psa 10:3-4) While the wicked are kept out by those Cherubim with the flaming sword, those who are in CHRIST are welcomed therein. Their desire is to be found where HE is. "*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*" (Rev 22:14-15) HE is THE TRUTH. mam