

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

GO TELL PETER

But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. Mark 16:7

The last time we saw Peter in this narrative of the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, he was skulking away in tears. Peter was a man among men, probably a large, bearded man who was a no nonsense kind of guy. He said what he meant and meant what he said and carried a sword to back it up. He was a bold man, not afraid to take a risk or step out in faith. (see Mat.14:28, 29; John 18:10) In fact it was he who proclaimed the faith which GOD gave him when he confessed to the LORD, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" (Matt 16:16). Yet it was this same Peter who cowardly denied the LORD when questioned about his relationship to HIM by a young maiden. Then after a third denial, with an oath to boot, the LORD caught his eye, the cock crowed, and Peter went out and wept bitter tears.

Bold and impetuous Peter had said with utter confidence, "*Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.*" (Matt 26:35) Now as the SAVIOR looks at him, he is reminded of his brash statement of a few hours ago and he experiences, firsthand, the painful truth that Solomon wrote many years before; "*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*" (Prov 16:18). He weeps alone with a broken heart, not only because of his sin of denial but because he knows himself to be unworthy to be called a follower of JESUS CHRIST. Maybe he can hope for some sort of forgiveness, but he is sure that his close relationship with the LORD is forever destroyed. Yet just as surely as the LORD had a purpose in Peter's confession, HE also had a purpose in his denial. And that which HE would work in Peter as a result of this denial was a work of "*a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*" (2 Cor 4:17) Peter was being fitted for an appointment on Pentecost when HE would feed the sheep of GOD.

As Mary and Martha made their way to the tomb in the early hours of the morning, they had no idea they would find the stone moved let alone discover an empty grave. Yet as the LORD always does, HE provided a messenger to give them the comfort and instruction that they needed. The word "angel" literally means "messenger" in the scripture, and we see one of them put to that use here. He had a specific message for a specific people. The women were not instructed to go to the market place and broadcast this information but to tell the LORD's disciples and particularly Peter. Old broken hearted Peter. Old Peter who felt himself to be rightly cut off from the LORD's presence. Peter who was crushed under a load of guilt. Unworthy Peter, denying Peter. Yet the LORD singled him out because HE knew that his child, buried under a load of guilt and conviction. needed a special word of encouragement.

We cause ourselves the greatest of pain, when we walk contrary to that which the LORD has taught us. If we were children of the bondwoman or mere servants we would surely be cast off for our waywardness. Yet the LORD purposes that all things should work together for the good of HIS people, the sheep of HIS pasture. HE has already prepared the balm of restoration for us

before we follow our impetuous nature into the bramble patch of disobedience. HE has sent the messengers of peace before we have ever experienced the unrest of separation from HIM. The sweetness of HIS restoration makes us wonder why we have ever strayed. The glory of HIS presence and the delight of fellowship with HIM makes us hunger for an obedient heart.

The affliction of the LORD's people is never a payment for sin. The Roman church has been very much in the spotlight of late. One of her principle doctrines is rooted in ascetic philosophy rather than the scriptures. The teaching that men should do penance for their sin or that somehow by the afflicting of the body and spirit that we will atone for our transgressions and make ourselves pleasing in HIS sight is nowhere to be found in the scriptures. *"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb 10:14) "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb 9:12)*

The affliction of the LORD's people is only for a short while. The only affliction which the LORD's people ever experience is in this lifetime. The Roman concept of purgatory is only a means of trying to "scare" men into serving GOD or an avenue to collect money. If a man's heart is not changed by the new birth, no amount of threats or fears will cause him to serve GOD. If a man dies outside of the redemptive work of CHRIST no amount of time or suffering will afford him an entrance to heaven. The whole purpose of affliction is to bring us restoration now, not to punish us for our failure. *"For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (2 Cor 4:11) "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18)*

The joy of being restored to the fellowship of the LORD makes us forget the sorrows encountered in our separation. When Peter stood on the day of Pentecost, filled with power from on high, and preached the gospel of redemption in JESUS CHRIST he was no longer mired down with the sorrows of his denial. GOD had done HIS perfect work of restoration in Peter. HE had taught Peter a valuable lesson which he could not forget. He now was fitted to feed the sheep of GOD. *"I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Ps.30:1-5)*

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