

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 BRIDE'S DESIRE

I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

Song of Solomon 5:5-8

As I drove down the highway this afternoon with the sun at my back and a thunderstorm in progress before me I saw the most beautiful rainbow that I think I have ever seen. It seemed to be a perfect arc, stretching from one horizon to the other. The colors of it were more vivid than any human artist has ever painted upon a canvas. Immediately I was reminded of the "bow" that the LORD set in the heavens as a sign of HIS covenant with Noah, never to destroy "all flesh" with a flood of water. (see Gen.9:11-17) I rejoiced in the remembrance of that covenant and the fact that the LORD has even now a covenant people which have been given to CHRIST who are the inheritors of an even more far reaching promise. *"For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."* (Heb 13:5)

Even as I enjoyed the blessedness of HIS promise and seemed to be able to hear those words from HIS very lips, that rainbow disappeared and I was enveloped in the darkness of the thunderstorm that suddenly surrounded me. My enjoyment of the beauty of those moments was quickly changed from an experience to a mere memory. The thought of HIS promise never left my mind but I could no longer enjoy the beauty of what I had just been experiencing when that bow was clearly seen and its beauty revealed.

One of the more puzzling and trying aspects of the Christian walk is that GOD is not always pleased to allow us to enjoy the fullness of HIS presence. HE does from time to time throw back the curtain and allow us to walk with HIM in the garden in the cool of the day, but HE is not pleased to enable us to continue that closeness at all times. It is this very fact that reminds us of HIS absolute sovereignty. HE would not have us to assume that we can have fellowship with HIM anytime we so choose. HE alone is the one who determines when HE will reveal HIMSELF and allow us to feast upon the "fat things" of HIS banquet table. But those times of blessings are so sweet that even a crumb that falls from HIS table is like a feast to that man who hungers for HIM.

This is one of the reasons that HE has given us HIS promise and has bestowed upon us the gift of faith for it is *"the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* (Heb 11:1) Whenever it pleases the LORD to hide HIMSELF from us yet HE does not utterly forsake us nor cast us off for HE has given us these great and precious promises which are set forth in the gospel upon which all of our hopes are built. We are encouraged by Isaiah's words, *"Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God."* (Isa 50:10) This is the same sentiment expressed by Peter when

he said, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."* (John 6:68-69)

It is impossible for those of us who are still clothed in this corruptible flesh to always know by our experience that we are the sons of GOD. That man who never doubts his own inclusion in the number of GOD's elect is probably ignorant of the fact that *"salvation is of the LORD"* and is not a product of his free will and ability to say a prayer. Neither is he well acquainted with his own sinful and corrupt heart of flesh which despises the way of GOD even when he is born again. Nor is he likely ever attacked by the accuser of the brethren.

If our salvation was in any way dependent upon our ability to "believe", "obey", or "trust" HIM we would all have no hope. Of if we were saved because we always felt that way, then we would surely despair. The modern day "soul winners" instruct men to "just believe and never doubt", yet true faith often says *"LORD I believe, help thou my unbelief."* They tell men that they must believe that CHRIST died for their sins. But how can a man be "instructed" to believe something that may not be true. We are quite convinced that CHRIST died to absolutely atone for the sins of HIS elect people and shall lose none of those whose redemption HE has purchased with HIS own blood. We cannot be certain at all times however that we are of that number nor can we know that someone else is.

But by the grace of GOD, HE is pleased to give us a reason to hope in HIS mercy because HE has made the promises of the gospel to appear to us as *"apples of gold in pictures of silver."* HE has put within HIS children the same mind that HE put within Job when HE said, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."* (Job 13:15) Our confidence is not in our power to "experience" HIS forgiveness whenever we feel like it but our "hope is built on nothing less than JESUS blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on JESUS name."

So the bride of CHRIST cannot help but long after HIM and to desire HIS presence, because the fact of her betrothal to HIM is manifested by the operation of the quickening power of the HOLY GHOST who awakens her from the deadness of her sin and makes her alive in HIM who she gladly owns as her LORD. HIS love for her is greater than she can imagine even though she often feels as though HE has forsaken her. Yet she can do nothing else but seek HIM and with strong yearnings desiring to tell HIM of her love. From time to time HE knocks upon her door, enters in and sups with her in such a way that she is overwhelmed but then HE is often gone as quickly as HE came. This so in order that:

She does not think that HE is her servant. The LORD will teach HIS children that HE is sovereign. Even though HE plainly demonstrated (when HE walked the earth) that HE would stoop to serve them (see Mat.23:11) yet HE does not now occupy such a role but is seated at the right hand of the FATHER from whence HE shall come in flaming fire .

She does not think that it is in the power of the flesh to enjoy HIS blessings. Our flesh will whisper to us that we can earn HIS favor by our supposed "obedience" or "religious service". If HE has walked with us today our flesh will tell us that all we have to do is duplicate the conditions and we can have the same blessing anytime we get ready. Though Paul was blessed innumerable he was only caught up into the third heaven once.

She does not grow complacent. Someone has said "familiarity breeds contempt". When we think of something as commonplace, the value of it diminishes in our eyes. That man who is in a dry and thirsty land appreciates a cup of water far more than the man who dwells beside a mountain stream. But sadly, that same desert dweller who takes up residence by the stream soon forgets the sweetness of that once treasured drink.

She does not trust in her experience rather than HIS promise. Modern evangelism teaches men that their experience is their salvation. The Bible teaches us that our salvation is CHRIST HIMSELF. *"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."* (Heb 6:18-20) mam