

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

A CLOUD OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT

And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

Exodus 14:20

The LORD has always put a difference between those who are HIS people and those who are reprobate. Paul said; *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* (1Cor 1:18) This is the great line of demarcation. HE takes great delight in those to whom HE is pleased to cause to hear the sweet sound of the gospel which is proclaimed in the natural hearing of all men but only revealed unto those whom HE loves. *"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."* (Mat 11:25-27)

The LORD sent a plague of darkness upon the land of Egypt which was so dark that it could be felt. Yet the houses of the children of Israel had light. (see Ex. 10:21-23) The exact same thing is illustrated for us as these same children of Israel stood trapped between the approaching army of the Egyptians on the one side and the Red Sea on the other. There was no apparent escape and the Israelites began to cry and complain of what seemed to be their certain destruction.

Moses told them to stand still and they would see the SALVATION which the LORD had wrought. (see Ex.14:13-14) The very CLOUD which had gone before them to lead their way now was put between them and the Egyptians as a barrier which could not be crossed by either side.

It was a CLOUD of illumination unto those whom the LORD would save and a CLOUD of darkness unto those whom the LORD would destroy in order to make HIS power known. *"For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show 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 9:17-18)

The CLOUD displayed light on the one side and illuminated the waters of the Red Sea so that the children of Israel could see the passage which the LORD made through those chilly waters. Yet the very same CLOUD which showed the way of salvation to the Israelites was that which blocked the vision of the Egyptians. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to the religious men of this world (i.e.; those that perish). They are convinced that there is something men can do to accomplish their salvation or at least comply with it by their own effort, faith, or free will.

Yet to the sons of GOD who have been given eyes to see the glory of CHRIST's salvation, the preaching of the cross is the most blessed sound they have ever heard. The preaching of the cross is the preaching of an accomplished salvation, CHRIST has purchased the redemption of HIS people. The preaching of the cross is the proclamation of a completed salvation, there is nothing left to be

done. The preaching of the cross is the declaration of a triumphant SAVIOR who has “triumphed gloriously” over all of the enemies of HIS people and is presently seated at the right hand of the FATHER ever living to make intercession in their behalf.

This CLOUD was not only a source of illumination but was a shield or barrier which prevented the Egyptians from coming near or doing harm to those whose deliverance the LORD was about to display. Even as the LORD promised Abraham. *“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”* (Gen 15:1), and as Moses prophesied, *“There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.”* (Deut 33:26-27). Thus also did Zechariah testify, *“For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.”* (Zech 2:5) And Peter summed it up by saying, *“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* (1 Pet 1:5)

In the same fashion as those whom the angel of the LORD struck blind outside Lot’s house in Sodom, and wearied themselves to find the door so did these Egyptians weary themselves to find a way that they might destroy the work of GOD but they could not. There is hardly a greater force of deception at work in the world than those who would attempt to make the preaching of the cross of limited or none effect by adding the duty works of men to that which CHRIST has finished. Yet those whom the LORD will give light HE will lead into all truth *“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”* (2Tim 3:13) *“For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* (2Tim 3:6-7)

Some tell us that CHRIST has made an attempt to save all men and has now left the outcome of whether or not any will actually be saved in the hands of men, desiring that all men would take advantage of it and just hoping that some will. This is a cloud of darkness which hides the true work of CHRIST from the wise and prudent. If the LORD has done all that HE can to save a man and the man is still not saved then that man is without help. The cloud of light shows us that CHRIST has *“obtained eternal redemption”* for every man for which HE shed HIS precious blood. If HE has “obtained it” then it belongs to HIM and there can be no doubt that HE will possess it.

The LORD has made no failed attempts to redeem or purchase the eternal salvation of HIS people, just like HE did not fail to provide a perfect means of escape for the children of Israel from the Egyptians. The preaching of the cross is a great stumbling block unto the multitudes who are convinced that man’s free will must be involved in HIS salvation. They delight in a mixture of GOD’s provision of the means of salvation and their own ultimate effort to gain it. Yet they totally miss the truth as they wander about in darkness and *“receive not a love of the truth that they might be saved.”* They are not in a position to *“stand still”* and see the salvation of the LORD.

No man shall be saved who has any confidence in anything to effect that salvation other than that which is supplied and accomplished by the LORD. This is the “gift of faith” which is applied by the LORD to those who believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST. *“Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”* (2Tim 1:9-10)

“It is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:” (1Pet 2:6-10)

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