

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume X

Issue 12

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

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

NOT AND NOW

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: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

1Peter 2:9-10

GOD who, alone, is eternal and inhabits eternity is in no wise bounded by time, since HE is the CREATOR of time and time only serves HIS purpose as a realm in which HIS creation exists. Yet time is very real to that creation; and those who are created (and therefore finite) cannot conceive of any realm which is not described in terms of the passing of time. Men often make attempts to speak of eternity past and eternity to come but the use of those phrases are but a proof of the fact that man cannot describe eternity since it has no past or future but simply is the abode of GOD to which no man can approach. *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."* (John 1:18)

We know that GOD changes not, nor are HIS decrees altered from one moment to the next. HE made this very clear when HE told Moses who HE was, *"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM."* (Exo 3:14) That which GOD has purposed, ordained, and appointed cannot be changed nor is it in any wise contingent upon any action or will of any of HIS creation, but rather the actions and wills of HIS creation are contingent upon HIS purpose. *"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."* (Jer 10:23)

These truths fly in the very face of man's consideration of his own importance and produce profound anger in those who worship the so-called "free will" of men. Yet to those whom the LORD teaches, these words are most comforting. Even as Peter says *"If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."* (1Pet 2:3) There is no greater source of peace to the sons of GOD than the revelation of JESUS CHRIST as the CHIEF CORNERSTONE. (i.e.; the ONE upon whom the whole building rests) *"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious."* (1Pe 2:7)

While Peter encourages those that believe he shows them to be in stark contrast to those who do not. *"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."* ((1Pe 2:7-8) JESUS CHRIST is that STONE of stumbling to those who believe not, even as surely as HE is that ELECT and PRECIOUS STONE to those who believe.

Just as surely as those who believe were "chosen" and "ordained" unto eternal life and given the gift of faith, those who stumble at this ROCK of offense were appointed to that stumbling as well. Who is sufficient for these things and wherein can any boast be made by the sons of men? *"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"* (1Cor 4:7) This is the very venue in which the grace of GOD is displayed. It is most glorious to those who have tasted of it, and reprehensible to those who have not.

Peter, here, speaks of those who are now manifest as the people of GOD as at one "time" being not the people of GOD, and a people who had at one "time" not obtained mercy but yet now have obtained it. Yet the scripture is quite clear that those who were appointed as vessels of mercy were never appointed to anything else. (see I Thes.5:9) Yea they were chosen in CHRIST before the world's foundation and created as the sons of GOD. There is no conflict in these two concepts when we rightly understand that GOD has created this world as a stage upon which HE would display the glory of HIS grace in the redemption and salvation of a people which HE has loved with an everlasting love.

Paul says almost exactly the same thing as Peter when he writes, *"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: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Eph 2:1-3)* GOD does demonstrate that those whom HE has appointed unto salvation are in and of themselves worthy of death, and differ from those who are appointed unto wrath, only in the fact that HE has shown mercy to them.

John declares this as well when he writes, *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."*(John 1:12-13) This is what the LORD told Nicodemus, *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* (John 3:3)

This was a startling message to Nicodemus; primarily because he, being a Jew, had the notion that one was an heir of the kingdom by natural birth, being a son of Abraham. Yet the LORD laid the axe to the root of his tree even as HE did the same to that of the Samaritan woman. Only the work of GOD in a man by the operation of HIS SPIRIT can cause a man to live and see the kingdom of GOD. *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."* (John 4:24)

Jew and Gentile alike are born strangers and enemies of GOD, manifest by wicked works and a disobedient spirit. *"For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* (Rom 3:9-12)

The SPIRIT of GOD alone can teach a man what he is "not" by nature and choice. Left to themselves men will imagine a vain thing and suppose that they have both the power and ability to choose the way of GOD as simply as they choose what color shirt to put on. They will suppose that the sincerity of their religion and their "good deeds" will surely influence HIM for their benefit. They will imagine that GOD will wink at their sin and in HIS magnanimity will surely not destroy them. Yet Peter says, *"Ye were not the people of GOD"* and *"ye had not obtained mercy"*.

It is this "mercy", however, which the sons of GOD have "now" obtained that has burnt like a live coal upon their conscience and brought them to despair and made them aware of their total inability to rescue themselves from the pit which they have dug with their own hands. It is this mercy which they have "now" obtained which has caused them to cry out to the SAVIOR of sinners and given them a hope in that work which HE has performed in the behalf of wicked men like themselves.

They "now" know that they have no natural claim upon any relationship to HIM (whom they now call FATHER), but rather rejoice in the hope of the promise that HE has declared unto those who believe. Indeed they are *"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people"* (1Pet 2:9) This was determined by HIM before the foundation of the world. *"That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."* (Eph 2:7)

mam