

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

BEAUTY AND BANDS

And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. Zechariah 11:7

One of the more startling statements in the New Testament, which the Apostle Paul made, was when he said, *"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."* (Rom 2:28-29) He goes on to explain this further, saying, *"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."* (Rom 9:6-8)

The LORD raised up the nation of Israel above all nations of the earth and committed unto them the law and the prophets. (see Rom.3:2) HE made a conditional covenant with them which required their strict obedience to the law. HIS purpose in raising them up was twofold. One is that HE would demonstrate to men HIS sovereign prerogative to love and cherish a people of HIS choice even as HE said, *"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."* (Rom 9:13) Secondly HE would expose the impotence and inability of men to obey the law and to keep that covenant, thereby demonstrating the natural unrighteousness of any who should be called the sons of GOD, and the absolute necessity of an imputed righteousness by which they might stand before HIM.

Those who were Jews by natural birth have for the most part stumbled at the revelation of JESUS CHRIST as the RIGHTEOUSNESS of HIS people, because they have continued to seek to establish their own righteousness in the sight of GOD by an outward conformity to the letter of Moses' law or at the least by an adherence to its moral code. (see Rom.10:3) Many Gentiles have adopted the same notion and do indeed perish in their own supposed righteousness and confidence in their acts of religion and "faith."

In order to understand the prophecies and promises dealing with Israel in the scripture it is vital that a man has a clear understanding of the fact that *"they are not all Israel which are of Israel"*. It is necessary to grasp the fact that national Israel is but a type of that true "chosen nation" which is spoken of throughout the scriptures as a "remnant". *"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."* (Rom 11:5) This "remnant" is made up of men from every nation, tribe, and tongue. (see Rev.5:9; Isa.62:1-5)

It is to this "remnant" that all of the promises are made. These people are those to whom the LORD made this promise, *"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the*

LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer 31:31-34) This is a covenant without conditions which is a manifestation of grace.

The people of GOD are called *“the flock of slaughter”*. Even as the Psalmist says, *“Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.” (Psa 44:22)* They are a despised and persecuted people. They have no natural defence, having not the ability to deliver themselves from their enemies or to prevent themselves from being led to the place of their own demise. Yet the LORD would magnify the glory of HIS grace in showing HIMSELF to be their SHEPHERD and MIGHTY SAVIOR, a true and faithful DELIVERER.

HE says *“And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock .”* HE said *“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:32)* It is the purpose of GOD not to simply put HIS people in a salvable state but rather to effect their complete deliverance from destruction and to provide them with the necessary provisions as HE leads them in and out to find pasture. *“To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.” (John 10:3-4)*

Thus in the passage before us HE says that HE has *“two staves”* (i.e., staves, implements of a shepherd). One of these HE calls *“Beauty”* (i.e. delightful or pleasant) and the other HE calls *“Bands”* (i.e.; a twisted rope or cord). I find in this an analogy to the *“grace and truth”* which the LORD has brought in by HIS appearing. John says, *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)* *“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17)*

TRUTH is indeed that which is the BEAUTY of HIS people. *“Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.” (Psa 96:6)* HE said I am the TRUTH. (see John 14:6) The LORD JESUS prayed, *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17)* So the LORD JESUS CHRIST has come to deliver HIS people by the TRUTH. *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32)* *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” (John 4:23)*

HE is pleased to send messengers of truth into the earth for the benefit of HIS flock. *“If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.” (Eph 4:21)* *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” (Isa 52:7)* It is in and by the TRUTH of the gospel of the LORD JESUS CHRIST that the children of GOD are delivered from those that oppress them. It is on this wise that it is prophesied of John, that he would through his ministry *“give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.” (Luke 1:77)*

GRACE is that which is manifested in *“BANDS.”* The grace of GOD is the active demonstration of the application of HIS love to that people which HE chose in CHRIST from before the foundation of the world. *“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:” (2Thes 2:13)* The grace of GOD does not just provide an opportunity of blessing for the sons of GOD but rather it is the very avenue by which all of the promises which the LORD has made to HIS people are delivered to them. There are no uncertainties in grace. As the LORD said, *“And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. “ (Isa 42:16)*