

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 ANTIDOTE OF FEAR

But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.

John 6:20

Franklin Roosevelt, in one of his presidential speeches, made this statement, "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." This sort of pabulum is very acceptable to those who believe that a man can "pull himself up by his own bootstraps" or "conquer his enemies" by the exercise of his own mind. These are, perhaps, comforting words to those who are theorizing about fear in general but they are just so much psycho-babble to those who are in the grips of real terror. Those who are in this dark place, understand that there is a sense of dread, which cannot be escaped by adopting empty platitudes or the power of positive thinking.

David was a man who often found himself in places of real fear. I think of the numerous times when Saul had sworn to kill him and even mobilized his army to hunt him down. David did not look to his "inner man" for strength like the prophets of our day, who "*prophecy lies*", counsel their followers to do. These "*physicians of no value*" prescribe a medicine which cannot heal the hurt of the daughter of Zion. Rather, David's antidote for his fear is found in Psalm 56:3; "*What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*"

I think of the time when Nathan the prophet delivered the truth to David and he recognized the heinous nature of his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah. (see II Sam.12:1-13) He was primarily moved, not, by the fact that he had sinned against a dead Uriah or even the nation which he ruled over. Rather he recognized that his crimes were against GOD HIMSELF. He was gripped with horror at the thought that the pure delight of his very soul might be justly taken from him. He cried out in the anguish of his soul, "*Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.*" (Psa 51:11-12) The "decisionist" preachers of our day would just tell him to remember that he had decided to be a believer and to simply expect that good things would happen to him. Such advice is merely empty words for the man in fear for his own soul.

Fear is the result of sin. If we had no sin there would be no fear. (see I John 3:21) When Adam ate the fruit supplied by Eve, the first result of his eyes being opened to discern good and evil, was that he became afraid, because he knew himself to be a sinner. "*And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.*" (Gen 3:10) The man who recognizes the great divide that is made between him and the GOD of heaven and earth by his own, innate wickedness must of necessity fear and tremble in HIS presence. Job, in seeing the wickedness of his own heart and its contrast to the holiness of GOD said, "*Then would I speak, and not fear him; but it is not so with me.*" (Job 9:35) Dread and terror shall grip all men when they are brought face to face with the JUDGE of all the earth. (see Rev.15:4)

When David sought to bring the Ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem and the LORD struck Uzzah dead in the process, we read that David was at first displeased with what the LORD had done but then his displeasure quickly turned to fear when he realized that he was the one who

rightly should have been struck down. *"And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?" (2Sam 6:9)* Who is there among the sons of GOD that has not been in the very same place? Fearing HIS judgment but unable to flee from it and shut up to doing anything but casting themselves upon HIS mercy. Even as Job said, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."* (Job 13:15)

Fear is not a delightful experience, yet its presence in the lives of the children of GOD is a demonstration of the mercy of GOD towards them, as HE uses the opportunity of it to cause them to cry out to him for deliverance. We can see this plainly demonstrated here as the LORD placed HIS disciples in a perfect situation for "fear" that HE might show them the very cure for that fear. The wicked are seldom troubled over their sin, believing it to be a mere inconvenience, and see not the sword of doom hanging precariously over their heads. (see Ps.73:4) Yet how often are the children of GOD reduced to fear because they have been given a tender heart to know that their just reward is destruction.

The manner in which the LORD would teach HIS own to cry out to HIM is seen here as :

HE left his disciples for a season. *"Jesus was not come unto them".* We do not read of an instance when the disciples became "fearful" while they enjoyed HIS presence. Yet even when HE was in their midst, but they were not "aware" of HIS presence, they were affrighted. We see this very thing on another occasion when HE was asleep in the boat (perhaps the same boat) and a storm arose which threatened their lives. (see Mark 4:37-41) Did these situations occur by mere chance or were they not the design of HIM who would teach HIS disciples to call upon HIM in times of trouble and to know that HE is near in the greatest of perils?

HE taught them very plainly that it was necessary in the fulfilling of HIS purpose for HIM to go away from them. Yet HE made provision for them as HE said, *"because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."* (John 16:6-7) We yet see through a glass darkly, yet HE who has not left us comfortless, does lift us up and allay our fears by the application of HIS word by HIS SPIRIT.

HE caused HIS disciples to be in the darkness. *"And it was now dark".* The LORD is the creator of both darkness and light. *"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things."* (Isa 45:7) All things are caused to work together for the benefit of those whom the LORD is pleased to call by HIS grace. (see Rom. 8:28) Darkness serves HIS purpose in causing HIS people to recognize their own limitations and the paucity of understanding and knowledge that they have of spiritual things. Here in the darkness on this stormy night HIS disciples were in much fear, even though HIS approach to the boat was the very deliverance which they stood in need of, yet they were affrighted by HIM. *"And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."* (1Cor 8:2)

HE caused a great storm to arise. *"And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew."* The LORD designs the trials of HIS people even as surely as HE designs their deliverance from those trials. *"There hath no temptation (i.e. trial) taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* (1Cor 10:13) It is in the great troubles that beset the sons of GOD in this life that they are taught to trust the LORD. *"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."* (2Cor 12:9-10)

HE gave them the antidote for their fear. *"It is I, be not afraid."* I can think of no greater comfort for these toiling and fearful sons of GOD than to hear their LORD and MASTER say *"It is I".* The LORD said *"My sheep hear my voice."* It is impossible that sinful men should comfort the sons of GOD, yet three words spoken by the SHEPHERD of the sheep is enough to remove all their fear. Can you hear HIM today?

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