

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

PANTING

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. Psalm 42:1

One of the “constants” in the outworking of faith in the Christian’s life is that few things are constant. As the SPIRIT of GOD works in them both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure, (see Phil.2:13) HE brings HIS children through many different experiences. There are seasons of great light and seasons of looming darkness. There are times when zeal and fervor are at their peak and then there are times of comfortable complacency and even apathy. There are moments of great peace, when all is well in mind and soul and then there are moments when anxiety and even fear grips that same mind causing the child of GOD to reel to and fro as a drunkard.

Paul describes such varied states when he writes to the Corinthians telling them of his determination to be found among them as a faithful minister; “*in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*” (II Cor 6:4-10)

One of the most damnable lies that Satan (the accuser of the brethren) has seen fit to try to confuse the saints of GOD with is the notion that if they are true believers then they will always be living in a triumphant state, ever overcoming all obstacles and whenever they encounter any troubles they will always have victory in every situation. The purveyors of darkness have sought to thus accuse and trouble the saints in every age even as those “*physicians of no value*” and “*miserable comforters*” sought to upbraid and charge Job with unfaithfulness and disobedience.

This same notion is carried on in our day by those who teach the notion of “progressive sanctification”, “the power of positive thinking”, “name it and claim it”, and a “health and wealth gospel”. They would deride the children of GOD as having no faith at all because they are not attempting and accomplishing “great things” (as they would define them), while confessing “victory” and “triumph” on every hand.

The fact is that it is in the very doubtings and fears, weaknesses, and distresses (which the LORD sees fit to bring upon HIS own) that the LORD is pleased to teach HIS children a very vital lesson which those who are always “strong in the faith” going about to establish their own righteousness, can never learn or understand. This is that which Paul describes as he relates the trials that were given to him by his “thorn in the flesh”. “*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.” (2Co 12:9-10)

It is in this weakness brought on by the fires of afflictions, in body, mind, and soul, that the true sons of GOD are driven to CHRIST, confessing that they have no strength. It is when a man is weaned from the notion of discovering any “triumph” in himself and is in mind and heart brought down to the feet of CHRIST, crying out for mercy and grace to help in time of need, that his strength is seen. This is when the sons of GOD are strong, not when they are boasting and preening in their triumphant “faith” and imagined strengths.

In this Psalm, David speaks of thirsting after GOD; *“My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psa 42:2)* He uses the illustration of the deer’s (i.e.; the hart) longing for a cool drink of water. We might infer from this illustration that this “hart” is likely being chased by those intent on killing it. Perhaps a hunter on horseback with his dogs in hot pursuit, or possibly wolves that have set upon its trail and pursue its very life.

This is not a calm pastoral scene but one which is fraught with danger, uncertainty, and fear. When a man is awakened by the SPIRIT of GOD and is acquainted with his own frailty and the perils which beset him on every side, he, just like the hart, longs for deliverance. He is “panting” because of the weariness which besets him, but he is also “panting” as one that knows that the cool liquid of the FOUNTAIN of living waters can slake his thirst, cool his fevered brow, and refresh his aching feet.

Paul understood his own barrenness and confessed that he had not arrived yet at that place he desired to be. *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Php 3:13-14)* He makes here no boast of his triumph but looks longingly towards that ONE who is his STRENGTH.

He confesses that he sees the BROOK flowing in the distance and like one who has soothed his parched throat there in times past presses forward towards its lifegiving flow. *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” (Php 3:10)* *“So panteth my soul after thee, O God.” (Psa 42:1)*

Apart from being often overwhelmed and in great weakness, the children of GOD, are sure to develop a sense of self worth and find themselves approving of that place to which they have arrived. This is the exact place of self righteousness which the Jews had attained and that to which all, who are blind to the necessity of the constant grace and mercy of GOD, desire to be. It is natural that a man should desire his own comfort, yet this innate desire is the very cause of his destruction when he becomes satisfied with his own perceived standing and is not hungering and thirsting after the presence of GOD as a man who is perishing daily.

That salvation which the SPIRIT of GOD is presently working out in the sons of GOD is not that which they can presently boast in, but rather that which they longingly desire to see manifested in themselves. They can have no confidence in their present state but will pursue after HIM who is LIFE itself. *“Draw me, we will run after thee.” (Song of Sol 1:4)*

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.” (2Cor 1:3-10)

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