

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XIII

Issue 7

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

WHAT THE DEAD CANNOT KNOW

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

Ecclesiastes 9:5

The primary purpose for the preaching of the gospel is to declare the glory of the blessed GOD. (see I Tim. 1:11) The LORD would demonstrate HIS glory in the revelation of HIS goodness (see Exod.33:17-19) and the fashion which HE has chosen to demonstrate that glory is in the unfolding of the redemption of that people which HE has loved with an everlasting love and chosen in CHRIST from before the foundation of the world. These are those people whom HE describes as HIS elect, HIS bride, and those to whom HE will show mercy.

The whole Bible, which is the written manifestation of the word of GOD, has this redemption as its theme from beginning to end. The primary character and subject of this saga, is the LORD JESUS CHRIST who is the REDEEMER, the ONE who is the very image of the ETERNAL GOD, the EVERLASTING FATHER, and the PRINCE of PEACE. There is no prophecy which does not have its fulfillment in the bringing in of this redemption by HIM. There is no exhortation given in its pages which does not point to CHRIST's righteousness nor is there any law which is not completely obeyed by HIM, who did no sin neither was guile found in HIS mouth, when HE walked among men as the SAVIOR of sinners and the SUBSTITUTE of the hopeless.

Every word which HE spoke is true and HE is the POSSESSOR and INHERITOR of every promise that has been made therein. HE is the sole DESIGNER and PREDESTINATOR of all events and nothing occurs in all of the creation which does not fulfill HIS purpose. HE makes no apology for this orchestration of all things (see Rom.8:28) nor is HE reluctant to rightfully take all glory to HIMSELF. (see Isa. 45:4-12; 46:8-13, Exod.34:14) Is it any wonder that those creatures which surround HIS throne cease not day and night to cry "*HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY who was and is, and is to come.*" (see Rev.4:8; Isa.6:3)

HE is that ONE before whom the heavens and the earth shall flee away (see Isa 13:13) "*And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.*" (Rev 15:3-4) So in order to make HIS glory known HE has ordained that the everlasting gospel be preached unto every creature which is upon the earth.

The same word which manifests those who are the enemies of GOD, (ordained unto a just condemnation), is also that which is used to make manifest those who are the objects of HIS sovereign mercy. This is even as Paul testified, "*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And*

who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.” (2 Cor 2:14-17)

The LORD does put a difference between those who are HIS people and those who are not, by the operation of the SPIRIT of GOD, (according to HIS grace), to give HIS elect, spiritual life by the new birth and the indwelling of HIS SPIRIT in them. Thus they are “quickened” (i.e.; made alive) which were dead in trespasses and sins. (see Eph.2:1) This tabernacle or house of clay, which is the body, including their natural understanding and the prevalent desire of the flesh is unchanged by this new birth.

Thus they are made “new creatures” which heretofore did not exist. Before this “new birth” they walked in the flesh and were completely satisfied to fulfill the lusts and desires thereof (including the religion of the flesh). (see John 4:21-24) They yet walk in the same body, but they now find that a conflict has arisen within their mind and they are no longer content to be ruled by the flesh. A great clash ensues as the flesh “lusts” (i.e.; wars) against the SPIRIT and conversely the SPIRIT lusts, (i.e.; conflicts) against the flesh. Where this conflict is absent, there can be no spiritual life and subsequently no activity of faith. (see Gal.5:17; James 4:1-6; Rom. 7:4-25)

The natural man will conclude, (especially when encouraged by religious fervor) that “faith” will cause a man to become more “righteous” and acceptable to GOD by the activities of his flesh. While this sounds reasonable to the flesh, it is the exact error that abides in those whom the scripture describes as ignorant of GOD’s righteousness because they seek to establish their own. (see Rom 10:3) This has been evident in men from the beginning as we see Adam and Eve covering themselves with fig leaves and Cain bringing an offering to GOD of his own labor.

The LORD’s people would continue in this same line of thought were it not that HE is pleased to stop them in their tracks by the operation of HIS SPIRIT which makes them who were dead to live. Yet the result of this quickening is that they are made, acutely aware of their spiritual poverty in themselves, and to fear the death which envelops them by nature, “*For the living know that they shall die*”. The man who is still dead has no such awareness for the “*dead know not anything*”.

Thus the preaching of the gospel to those who are “living” is a sweet message of comfort and the declaration of the righteousness of CHRIST is of great satisfaction to their weary souls. The dead may hear the same sound but it is not such a message of sweet relief for they do not know that they are helpless and hopeless, but are, rather, satisfied in their death even as the corpses in a graveyard rest peacefully and content with their surroundings.

The dead cannot know that they are dead. You can visit any cemetery you wish and you will never hear one of its occupants declare that they are dead, even though it is quite obvious that all of them are. Yet those who are awakened by the SPIRIT of GOD not only are aware of their deadness by nature, but are often gripped with fear that they may remain among the dead for they are acutely acquainted with the depravity of their own heart and have been given an aversion to the abode of the dead, even as Lazarus desired to vacate the tomb when brought to life. They desire to know that their names are written in the LAMB’s book of life but sometimes (perhaps often) fear that it is not. Thus the sweet message of HOPE is declared unto them in order that they might be reminded that only the living can fear this death. The dead have no such fear, they are satisfied with the message of death which assures men that by an act of their own free will they may approach unto the LORD, but the living want none other than CHRIST crucified.

The dead cannot know the nature of death nor feel the clamminess and coldness of that which clings to them as a moldy garment; nor can they shrink back from it, crying out for mercy and deliverance from its clutches. Yet those who are alive can do nothing else but cry out to HIM who alone can deliver them from that darkness that threatens to swallow them up, which they feel rising in their very bosom each day.

The dead cannot know the glories of the risen SAVIOR, the DESTROYER of death, for they cannot hear that sweet sound which evermore rings in the ears of the living, as they hear the gospel of HIS full and complete redemption declared by those sent to proclaim it. “*Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*” (John 6:68) mam