

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 TERRORS OF THE GRAVE

For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. *Psalm 88:3*

As we read through the Psalms, we are reminded in detail of the sufferings of our LORD and the depths of fear and dismay which HE willingly endured in the behalf of those sinners whose redemption HE purposed to secure. Indeed HE was “*a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.*” (*Isa 53:3*), especially as HE poured out HIS soul as an offering for sin; both in the Garden and upon Calvary's rugged cross. There is no darkness which did not overtake HIM, no pain which HE did not feel, and no terror from which HE shielded HIMSELF. (see *Heb.4:15*)

HE was despised and rejected; not only by those whose pain HE bore; but was cast out to the loathing of HIS flesh by the very ONE who sent HIM into the world to fulfill HIS purpose, and tasted the abject terror of hell (sheol, i.e. the grave, “*The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.*” (*Psa 116:3*)) itself as HE was forsaken by the FATHER whose will HE expressly came to fulfill. “*For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*” (*John 6:38*)

In point of fact HIS own dismay was greater than any other human could possibly ever be; directly because HE had a completely pure desire to obey HIS FATHER in every jot and tittle. Yet imagine the dilemma HE found HIMSELF in as HE faced the prospect of becoming that which the FATHER loathed. Thus HE sweat great drops of blood as HIS soul was wrung out within HIM as a dew soaked cloth and HE said “*Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*” (*Luke 22:42*)

Some have wrongly suggested that HE was asking to be delivered from the physical sufferings to come, upon the cross, which HE must bear in the behalf of HIS elect. Yet the reality is that HE was presently pressed even unto death in HIS soul, and being in the anteroom of hell, was tortured by the conflict of desiring to do HIS FATHER's will, yet only being able to do so by being cast out of the presence of HIM in whom HIS soul delighted. Has there ever been a more impossible task faced by a man or a place of greater consternation and conflict endured by one born of a woman? Consider this that HE who is LIFE itself, sees directly into the yawning abyss and dark abode of the horror of death of which HE is the very ANTITHESIS, and which no man could possibly abhor with greater loathing, yet HE underwent its terror for HIS own people.

If one should ever question the determination and resolve of GOD to bring just retribution to sinners, he need look no further than Gethsamane's garden and the barren hilltop of Calvary upon which that ONE who was made sin for HIS people, hung in ignominy and shame, an outcast among men and rejected by a HOLY GOD who cannot look upon sin. HE “*will by no means clear the guilty.*” (*Exo 34:7*) nor will HE in any wise, “*at all acquit the wicked.*” (*Nah 1:3*)

If HE spared not HIS only begotten SON, the APPLE of HIS eye, that ONE who had no sin of HIS own but is yet judged as a sinner because of that people for whom HE stood as a SUBSTITUTE, then where shall those appear who have disregarded HIS commandments and loved the wages of unrighteousness, who having no SINBEARER must face the terrors of the hell to which they are appointed. “*And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and*

the sinner appear?" (1Pet 4:18) "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 15:4)

There is no greater terror for men, than that of being cast forever into the darkness of sheol (i.e.; hell, the grave) when once that yawning chasm has been opened to their understanding. The very first and greatest lie to men that has spewed forth from the mouth of Satan, is that which he told to Eve, *"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die." (Gen 3:4)* As she entertained that notion, and being deceived thereby ate of the fruit which was forbidden and gave it to Adam, they were both immediately made aware of their nakedness before GOD. They sought by their own devices to cover themselves as they sewed fig leaves together.

Is it then any wonder that down through the centuries of time, man has devised (and been willingly deceived by) all manner of devices and subterfuge whereby to shield his own mind from the terrors of the grave into which all flesh must of necessity come. He has sought out the various religions, philosophies, and excesses of that same flesh in order to make his approaching end more palatable.

Some adopt a cavalier attitude towards their approaching death, giving little or no thought to that which awaits them. *"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." (Pro 22:3)* Others run to a religion, usually that of their forefathers, which makes sense to them and makes them feel at peace, loving its traditions, creeds, and practices. *"They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." (Jer 6:14)*

Some simply deny that the grave is anything to be feared. Their philosophy disregards the CREATOR and worships and serves the creature. *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." (Psa 14:1)* By denying the glories of the CREATOR, they deny HIS right to do with HIS own as HE wills, and the absolute certainty of their own horrific destruction, believing that they simply die without further consequence.

Nothing is more common among the rank and file of men than a consideration that those who die are all in a happy place, free from worries and cares, and surely engaged in whatever carnal activities gave them their greatest pleasures when they walked among the living in this world. Yet the scripture paints a completely different picture of the finality of the grave for the sinful flesh of mankind. The LORD said, *"Ye shall surely die"* and the awaiting appointment of every one of Adam's sons hangs like the sword of Damocles over their heads. *"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Heb 9:27)*

Even large numbers of those who call themselves Christians, adopt much the same philosophy. Most would admit that man is headed for his own destruction, yet has within his ability to escape from the awful fate of hell, by a simple act of his own free will in making a decision to avail himself of a sort of salvation which the LORD has provided by dying on the cross for all people and patiently waits to see who will take HIM up on the offer.

The work of CHRIST is not that which is offered to men at a "discount". The gospel of GOD's glory is not depicted in a message which declares that CHRIST suffered the horrific terror of the grave which swallows up men without measure, only to fail in the objective which HE set out to perform. JESUS CHRIST cannot be in anywise disappointed in the outcome of that death and suffering which HE endured. *"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." (Isa 53:11)*

Everyone of those for whom HE stood as a perfect SUBSTITUTE, shall indeed be delivered from the terror of the grave, both in this world and that which is to come. HE has once tasted the pains of death for those whom HE has loved with an everlasting love and they are set free. *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1Cor 15:55-57)*

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