

# 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*

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## NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S MAGNUM OPUS

*Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.* Daniel 4:37

The pathway of calling which the LORD is pleased to use in bringing HIS sons out of darkness and into the light is often quite varied. Yet there is one experience which is common to them all. We read of it in Hebrews, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Heb 12:6) "But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." (Heb 12:8)

Many look at this "chastening" as if it is describing "punishment" which is meted out by the LORD in response to some misdeed or wickedness which is discovered in the people of GOD. Yet the LORD does not deal with HIS children on a conditional basis, waiting to see what they will do and then responding with "correction" as necessary. The "chastening" which the LORD is pleased to apply is not a response to the conduct of HIS sons, but rather is a manifestation of HIS purpose to bring them into a wealthy place, that they might rightly consider HIS glory and HIS mercy. This "chastening" is continual in the lives of those whom HE loves and is more akin to instruction in righteousness than it is to retribution for sin.

When we read about those whom the LORD is pleased to call, one particular "chastening" is common to them all. HE will humble each one in the dust of repentance before HIM. To whom much is given much is required, thus we have recorded for us, throughout the scriptures, examples of men whom the LORD called and raised up according to HIS purpose, who were first brought to a low estate, and caused to tremble before HIM.

The Apostle Paul was raised up to great heights of experience (see II Cor.12:2; Acts 22:17) and knowledge (see Gal.1:15-19; II Cor.11:5) in the kingdom of GOD. Yet he first had to be humbled at the feet of this ONE whom he persecuted. Thus, he had an appointment on the road to Damascus which he neither welcomed nor expected. But the LORD would demonstrate HIS kindness to Paul as HE unfolded HIS purpose to make HIM the apostle to the Gentiles. Paul's intended pursuit was derailed, and he was brought down upon the ground in fear and trembling as the LORD revealed to him HIS NAME which is above every NAME. So, we see the "chastening" hand of the LORD upon this one, whom HE loved, from the beginning. We see the continuation of HIS mercy in the chastening of Paul as he was given a "thorn in the flesh", that he might not be lifted up with pride or puffed up with the abundance of knowledge he was given.

Job was an "upright" man among men and was brought down to a low estate in his flesh by extreme suffering, both in body and possessions. While this was indeed a chastening of Job, yet the culmination of that which the LORD would teach Job is not seen until the very last chapter when he is made to see himself in the LIGHT of the glory of GOD, who he had some knowledge of, but yet lacked the vital component of seeing the unfolding of the LORD's absolute glory. We see the same occur with Jonah as he was humbled before the very GOD whom HE disobeyed. Little did he know that the LORD had already prepared a fish, before he ever bought a ticket to Tarshish. There in that fish's belly, he was brought to confess, "Salvation is of the LORD."

Peter was a strong man, both in body and determination, yet because the LORD loved him, he could not be allowed to trust the arm of the flesh. Thus he was made to weep bitter tears as he fulfilled the LORD's prophetic words to him, "*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not--- the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.*" (Luke 22:31-34)

One of the most amazing accounts found in the scriptures of the visitation of grace upon a man is seen as the LORD performed HIS perfect work upon one whom HE had ordained as the destroyer of Israel. King Nebuchadnezzar was a vain and wicked king who worshipped a multitude of gods, but mostly was enamored of himself. Little by little the LORD bore witness to Nebuchadnezzar of HIS power, first when Daniel was enabled to interpret his dream. He testified of the LORD's greatness, (see Dan.2:47) as many carnal men do, yet he stopped short of seeing who the LORD is. For in the very next chapter we see him raising up an "image" (i.e. an idol) in the Plain of Dura, in the very face of HIM who said, "*Thou shalt not make any graven image*".

Through his act of wicked idolatry, the LORD was pleased to set the stage for yet another testimony to HIS own greatness, as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were cast into the fiery furnace. The LORD's hand is not shortened to save by many or by few, and this wicked king, once again, was brought to acknowledge the great DELIVERER, who preserved the lives of these young men in an impossible situation.

Yet the LORD was not yet through with HIS chastening of Nebuchadnezzar. For he was given another dream which troubled him greatly and Daniel was once again brought in to interpret this vision. He trembled before the LORD as Daniel revealed that which would occur. He may have even performed some deeds of kindness and reformed his conduct to some extent. (see Dan 4:27) Yet like all carnal religious men, this was a mere outward reformation, for soon he was once again lifted up in his natural pride as he surveyed the vastness and beauty of his kingdom and gloried therein without a proper regard to HIM who rules absolutely and had given him all of this.

The LORD was bringing Nebuchadnezzar exactly where HE designed for him to be, that HE might bring true repentance unto him, by revealing to him, his own weakness and the glory and power of the TRUE and LIVING GOD. Now to be sure, this was an extreme circumstance which the LORD was pleased to use. Yet the LORD will bring HIS people by a way which they knew not in order to accomplish the exact purpose that HE has for each one. The LORD will meet each one of HIS children at their point of rebellion. Though Nebuchadnezzar had expressed, in some measure, a recognition of the LORD's greatness, he had merely expressed that greatness as being superior to other gods which he compared HIM to.

The LORD told the children of Israel, "*Thou shalt have no other gods before my face.*" It is not sufficient for the sons of GOD to merely acknowledge that GOD is great. Rather they must be brought to the place of understanding that HE is without rival and that there is no GOD but ONE. This is the very truth set forth by CHRIST when HE said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6) and repeated by Peter, "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" (Acts 4:12)

Nebuchadnezzar was brought to this same place, as he "*extolled the KING of Heaven*". He recognized the power and grace of HIM who humbles those whom HE loves as he confessed, "*those that walk in pride, HE is able to abase.*" Now we cannot unequivocally state that Nebuchadnezzar was indeed one of the elect. But we can say that he was indeed brought to confess what everyone of those who are thus favored by the LORD must. He who had eaten grass like an ox now eloquently and clearly magnified the LORD of Heaven and Earth. "*I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*"(Dan 4:34-35) Can any who know HIM deny this?mam