

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 STONE

But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel.) *Genesis 49:24*

When JEHOVAH instructed the children of Israel in the manner of building an altar of stones upon which they would make a burnt offering unto the LORD, HE forbade them to make it out of "hewn stone". "And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." (Exo 20:25) Thus, HE gave them the same instruction, as the LORD JESUS gave to the woman at the well of Samaria. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24) That worship with which the FATHER is pleased is not the product of man's will nor his ability. All that men would seek to do in this flesh, is but as those "hewn stones" which HE rejected as suitable material for an altar of worship. Whatever a man touches is "polluted" and unfit for the Kingdom of GOD, which cannot be inherited by flesh and blood.

Quite early on in the scriptures we see the SAVIOR, who was promised as the DELIVERER of HIS people, likened unto a "STONE". As Jacob pronounced his blessings upon his sons from his "death bed", he prophesied of CHRIST, as illustrated by his son, Joseph. He said that Joseph was a "fruitful bough" which grows up by a well (even as the WELL of everlasting LIFE), which spread "over the wall" (i.e.; the separation between Jew and Gentile) even though he was hated (i.e.; shot at) by his enemies. He triumphed because his hands were made strong (i.e.; triumphant) by the hands of the MIGHTY GOD of Jacob. (see Gen 49:22-24) Thus deliverance was brought to Israel, and though they were ultimately made captives in Egypt, the LORD made provision for them and spared them from the famine, through Joseph; who was sold into slavery for their benefit. All of this was done that HE might demonstrate HIS complete deliverance of them from darkness and oppression by that one which HE appointed as their LIBERATOR. The victory which Joseph brought could not be completely seen until many years after his work.

The same POWER that worked in Joseph, is that ONE who is that STONE of stumbling and ROCK of offense. "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." (1Pet 2:6-8) "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." (Psa 118:22-23)

This is that STONE of which the LORD JESUS testified, "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Mat 21:44) "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." (Isa 42:3) The LORD is of such tender mercy, that none who call upon HIS name as

broken and contrite sinners, shall in any wise, ever, be turned away. "That soul who on JESUS hath leaned for repose, HE will not, HE will not desert to HIS foes." Yet the most righteous of men who expect to gain HIS favor by their own activity, or works of faith, shall surely be destroyed, when that which can be shaken (those appointed to wrath) is stripped naked and bare before him, in eternal and unwavering judgement. "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." (Exo 34:7)

The LORD gave Moses, two tables of STONE, written with HIS FINGER. "And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." (Exo 31:18) Yet the children of Israel despised these "tables of STONE", in like fashion as we read, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John 1:11) "He is despised and rejected of men." (Isa 53:3) CHRIST is the LAW of GOD and it is impossible that any man should ever measure up to it. Were it not that HE who is the LAW of GOD, is also the FULFILLER of that law, we would perish. For that law written in tables of stone was but a SCHOOLMASTER to the bring us unto CHRIST. HE does show us the WAY more clearly, writing the LAW upon our hearts. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom 8:2)

In the days of Samuel when the house of Israel was beset by the Philistines and in great fear, the LORD did deliver them. "The Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel." (1Sam 7:10) Thus "Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us." (1Sam 7:12) This stone represented HIM who is our very present HELP in trouble. HE said HE would never leave, nor forsake those whom HE loves.

When Israel was once again in fear before the Philistines and their champion Goliath, the LORD raised up a SHEPHERD to do battle with him. "And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David." (1Sam 17:49-50) Is this not a picture of HIM who has removed the curse of the law from us. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." (Col 2:14-15)

Isaiah revealed the wickedness of Israel, who had despised the way of the LORD, embracing darkness and death. "Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." (Isa 28:15) Yet in spite of this open rebellion, the LORD would visit those that are HIS with this promise, "Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it." (Isa 28:16-18) The promises of GOD are without conditions and HIS yea is yea and amen. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." (2Tim 2:19) CHRIST is indeed our SURE FOUNDATION STONE.

"Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." (Rev 21:9-11) "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1John 3:2-3) CHRIST is all. mam