

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XVII

Issue 37

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

IN THE MIDNIGHT HOUR

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

Acts 16:25

When I was just a teenager a man by the name of Wilson Pickett sang a very popular song by this very title. There is nothing commendable about that song (other than having a catchy tune), since it typifies the carnal pleasure seeking of the men of this world. It serves as a sad reminder of that place we were in when the LORD in mercy snatched us as a brand from the burning. *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."* (Eph 2:1-3)

Apart from the sovereign mercy of our gracious GOD, we would have gladly continued on in these pursuits unto our own well-deserved destruction. Who has made us to differ from another and what do we have that we have not received from HIS merciful hand? *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."* (Eph 2:4-9)

Paul points out that all of those, so quickened and awakened to flee from the wrath to come, were *"by nature the children of wrath even as others."* There was nothing in them or of them that set them apart from those who continue on their inevitable path to judgment and destruction. Yet the mercy of GOD upon HIS elect, is presently displayed in their deliverance from that path. For according to the purpose of GOD, HE would demonstrate that HE makes a difference between those who are the objects of HIS mercy and those who are not. This is in keeping with HIS own solemn declaration saying; I *"will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."* (Exo 33:19) Those who think they ought to receive HIS mercy or that HE should show mercy to all, will balk at this declaration. Yet that man who is convinced of his own unworthiness to receive anything except damnation from the LORD, will be amazed that HE will show mercy to any, let alone be upset because HE does not show it to all, especially themselves.

The SALVATION which the LORD is pleased to manifest in CHRIST is not merely a promise of deliverance from the certainty of judgment and the fires of hell, but rather a complete deliverance from the sin which doth so easily beset them. Thus, Paul says to the Corinthians, *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And*

such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1Cor 6:9-11) “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:10)

We read of several occasions in the scriptures whereupon the LORD acted at “midnight”. The first was when HE slew the firstborn in Egypt (see Ex.12:29). While this was a sorrowful occurrence in the households of Egypt, it was a time of great joy among the Israelites as the LORD “passed over” those houses where the blood of the LAMB was displayed and served as a harbinger of their freedom from the oppression of slavery.

Next we read of Samson who “arose at midnight” (see Judges 16:3) and carried off the gates of the city of Gaza; in the face of those who plotted his death. In this we see a picture of the LORD JESUS who was “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)

It was at “midnight” when Boaz awakened to find Ruth laying at his feet. (see Ruth 3:8) As a result of this we see another picture of the LORD JESUS who is our KINSMAN REDEEMER just as Boaz purchased the redemption of Ruth and took her to be his wife. Through that union we trace the lineage of the LION of the tribe of Judah, HE who tread the winepress of GOD’s wrath, alone and by HIS own ARM brought salvation to those which were given to HIM.

It is at “midnight” when David said he would arise and give thanks for the LORD’s judgments. (see Ps.119:62) For it is in the darkness of night that these judgments appear, but it is only as the LORD enlightens a man and causes him to rejoice in those judgments that he could possibly do so. By nature men scoff at the judgment of GOD, despising even the thought of it. While David was the penman of this Psalm, we nonetheless believe him to have recorded the words of CHRIST, for indeed HE prayed at midnight on several occasions, (see Luke 6:12; Mat 14:23-25; Mark 6:46). It was likely around this midnight hour when CHRIST was pouring out HIS soul before the LORD in intercession for those which the FATHER had given unto HIM, and HIS disciples slept due to human weakness, none watching with HIM as wicked men (according to the appointment of GOD) approached to bring HIM to the judgment hall of men.

It was at midnight when Eutychus fell from the third floor window, having fallen asleep. In this we see again the weakness of human flesh manifested, but we also see demonstrated the great mercy of GOD in restoring his life as Paul ministered unto him. (see Acts 20:7-12) Who can stand before the LORD or overturn HIS purpose. HIS word shall not return unto HIM void.

Then it was “at midnight” when Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto GOD according to the ordained purpose of the LORD. They were moved to do so by HIS SPIRIT which worked in them mightily, but they could have had no knowledge of the ultimate reason for their time of praise or their purpose for being in this particular jail at that particular time. The LORD would use an earthquake, a man’s natural fear, a bit of good news, and the glorious WORD of GOD to get the attention of a Philippian jailer who had no prior knowledge of CHRIST.

It is interesting that this jailer “sprang in” with a “light”. In this we see the picture of a man in nature’s night, awakened, fearing the worst, but having been given a “light” that he might see. The LORD sent a preacher with the only message that would do him any good, just as HE sent Phillip to meet with the Ethiopian Eunuch, Peter to Cornelius, and HE, HIMSELF, kept appointments with the woman at the well of Samaria, a blind beggar beside the road, and a short tax collector up a tree. Oh, how great is the mercy of GOD, to bring SALVATION to unworthy (and unseeking sinners). Truly these scenarios demonstrate that the LORD’s people shall be willing in the day of HIS power. How are HIS ways past finding out!

Paul told this man all that HE that needed to know; “Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST and thou shalt be saved.” One moment he has no consideration of what salvation even is; and the next he is asking how it might be his. This is much the same manner in which that thief upon the cross was suddenly brought to call upon the ONE who alone is SALVATION. mam