

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

STRONG DELUSION

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.

II Thessalonians 2:11

When Adam entertained the temptation presented to him by Eve, he embraced a very strong delusion. No one forced him to disobey the commandment of GOD, but he quite willingly partook of that which was forbidden by the LORD for him to eat thereof. Ever since that fateful day the sons of men have followed that same course, having inherited his corruptible (and now corrupted) nature as well as his guilt. Yet his actions were in no way contrary to the purpose for which the LORD created him. *“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.”* (Gen 1:31) Before Adam, ever had his first thought of such rebellion, the LORD had already told him exactly what he would do and what the consequences of that action would be. *“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* (Gen 2:17)

Part of man's rebellion against the GOD who rules in the Heavens and the Earth, is that he despises the absolute rule of GOD over all things. Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful king the world had ever seen up until that time if not even to the present day. The lives of his subjects were in his hand to do with them as he saw fit. His wealth was staggering, having taken the untold riches amassed by King Solomon into his own coffers, as he sacked Jerusalem. He even commanded that men worship an image made in his likeness. One can surely understand the sense of invincibility that he must have felt as he ruled without rival and had whatever he wanted at his fingertips. As men might judge he was rightfully proud of that which he had accomplished and possessed.

He even appears to have been a religious man as he extolled the GOD of Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego, forbidding any to speak against HIM. (see Dan.3:29-30) Yet we do not find that at that point he was personally desirous of falling upon his own face before HIM; having embraced the strong delusion that HE was merely great among a panoply of gods and that he (Nebuchadnezzar), was in control of his life and destiny. For in the dream that Daniel was able to interpret for him, the LORD told him, exactly what was about to occur, even giving him space to repent of his wickedness, which according to the delusion which he embraced prevented such action. The LORD sent this delusion and the LORD remedied it, though not in the manner which was pleasant to Nebuchadnezzar.

It appears that Nebuchadnezzar was an object of GOD's mercy and grace as the LORD caused his delusion to disappear in a field where he was eating grass like an ox. With bits of grass still upon his lips and dew upon his head, he was awakened from the darkness of that strong delusion and made this confession. *“And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and 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? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. 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." (Dan 4:34-37) Oh that the politicians of our day were brought to this same enlightenment!

Paul speaks of a "strong delusion" sent by the LORD. He defines both the reason for HIS sending it and the result of abiding in that delusion. He says, "for this cause." "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." (2Thess 2:10) Those who are outside of the mercy and grace of GOD have no love for the TRUTH, nor shall they be delivered from their sins. Such a message as this is roundly hated by those who believe strongly in the "free will" of men, and their ability and "right" to choose the way of GOD. They are not opposed to talking about GOD and mentioning HIS love and mercy to men. In fact, many are very zealous to do so. Yet they reject HIS TRUTH and substitute one of their own making. To love the TRUTH is to embrace it regardless of how contradictory it may be to man's natural understanding.

The LORD JESUS declared that "I-- AM the TRUTH". The TRUTH which the elect of GOD are caused to embrace, is that spoken by HIM, demonstrated by HIM, and wholly dependent upon HIM. By the grace of GOD they are caused (like Nebuchadnezzar) to bow at HIS footstool as they are given, not simply a knowledge of the TRUTH but, a love of it. A love of the TRUTH causes them to delight in HIS glory and not their own. A love of the TRUTH acknowledges that HE is the SAVIOR of sinners, who does so without any regard to their free will, ability, or desire. HE brings them from death unto LIFE without their aid or cooperation. HE purchased their redemption by HIS own blood before they knew HIS NAME or called upon HIM. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44) "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)

The result of abiding in this "strong delusion" is "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2Thes 2:12) These are extremely sobering words, which strike fear in the hearts of those who have been given a "love of the TRUTH" but are ignored by those who embrace this "strong delusion". Those who have been given a "love of the TRUTH" plainly confess that they are worthy of this "damnation" which is spoken of here and find themselves sadly drawn towards the pleasures of unrighteousness. Yet they are delivered from this "strong delusion" by HIS grace alone, and confess that JESUS CHRIST is their RIGHTEOUSNESS, to which they cannot add one iota. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1Cor 4:7) A man who is under "strong delusion" cannot deliver himself from it.

Men are born under this "strong delusion", which Paul describes to the Ephesians, as he reminds them of the only solution to this problem. Left to themselves they would surely have perished in this natural darkness. "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. 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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph 2:1-10) Just as surely as those shall be damned who "have pleasure in unrighteousness", so too shall those who are the "workmanship" of CHRIST walk in that way which HE has ordained for their good and HIS glory. CHRIST alone, is their DELIVERER from the darkness of "strong delusion". "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:3-7) mam