

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

A BRAND FROM THE BURNING

And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Zechariah 3:2

Noah did not apply for the job of building a gigantic boat in which to save the animals of the Earth along with his wife, his three sons, and their wives. In fact, we have no reason to believe that Noah was any different than the rank-and-file men of his day. The most common opinion among modern Bible scholars (as they would like to be known) is that Noah was a righteous man and upright in HIS conduct, which caused the LORD to take notice of him and to single him out for this momentous task. Yet the testimony of the scripture would indicate that *“there is none righteous, no not one”* as we read the account in Genesis about how Noah came to be the builder of the Ark. *“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.”* (Gen 6:5-7) *“The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.”* (Gen 6:11-12)

So, upon what basis was Noah “chosen” to be the builder of the Ark and the “savior” of the human race along with the animal kingdom? We read the answer in verse 8; *“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”* (Gen 6:8) This is a simple phrase which is pregnant with a multitude of TRUTH, which clearly sets forth the fact that the grace of GOD is the cause of the blessing of GOD’s people and that they cannot gain such by any activity of their own. To ignore this plain truth is to miss the gospel and further pervert the understanding of men as to how the blessings of GOD are visited upon men.

Many seize upon the word “found” as though this infers Noah’s seeking of GOD’s favor. Yet the scripture indicates that men gain the favor of GOD according to HIS sovereign mercy, rather than through their effort. *“I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick.”* (Isa 65:1-3)

In the 11 chapter of Romans, Paul uses GOD’s preservation of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal (see I Kings 19:18) to illustrate HIS preservation of that “remnant”, (which HE shall save) to teach the clear lesson of GOD’s sovereign grace. There is no other explanation which ensures the deliverance of those whom HE has determined to save. *“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”* (Rom 11:5-7)

This is a totally unpalatable doctrine, to the religious flesh of men, which is certain that men can and will do something to “earn” GOD’s favor. In fact, men by nature so strongly believe in this idea that they are willing to blaspheme GOD and accuse HIM of unrighteousness in doing exactly what HE said that HE would do. *“For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willet, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” (Rom 9:15-16)*

Grace and merit are two mutually exclusive concepts. There is no mixture of the two. Favor shown on the basis of merit or activity is the payment of a debt, whereas mercy is bestowed according to the sovereign prerogative of GOD. A man cannot be said to “deserve” mercy. “Mercy” and “grace” are closely related as we see “grace” occurring as a result of GOD’s mercy, but they are not synonymous since all of GOD’s creation (mankind, especially) (*“Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever.” (Psa 136:25)*) are the recipients of HIS mercy in one form or another, while grace is mercy applied to a particular people for a particular purpose. *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” (2Tim 1:9)*

The LORD’s creation of Satan is a testimony to HIS sovereign prerogative to do as HE will with HIS creation. Who can bring an accusation against HIM who knows the end from the beginning and orders all things to occur according to HIS good pleasure? Satan is indeed the embodiment of evil, the father of lies, and one whom the LORD has been pleased to use in the unfolding of HIS purpose in the Earth. We see this manifested as HE pointed out HIS servant Job to Satan, and dared him to try to turn Job away from seeking the LORD. We see it when HE would use Satan to tempt the LORD JESUS in all points like as we are. And we see the utter triumph of CHRIST over Satan, foreshadowed, as HE succumbed to none of Satan’s bold attempts to turn HIM aside. We see it as he entered into Judas, a vessel before prepared unto destruction, and unwittingly fulfilled the purpose of GOD in delivering CHRIST into the hands of HIS tormentors, that HE might become a PROPITIATION for the sins of HIS people. (see Mat. 14:21; Acts 2:23)

When a man is given eyes to see the state of man by nature, (*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 2:3)*) and the helpless condition that he had willingly entered into (see Gen.2:17); (*“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;” (Eph 2:1)*), he cannot help but be struck dumb with amazement that the LORD did not destroy men completely, let alone to ordain some unto “eternal LIFE” in the everlasting covenant. And not simply to deliver them from certain destruction but to raise them up to be trophies of HIS grace throughout the ages to come. *“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.” (Eph 2:6-7)*

Thus, we see Zechariah reporting the LORD’s rebuke unto Satan, which centers around HIS everlasting love for “Jerusalem” (i.e., the holy city, which is synonymous with HIS Kingdom, made up of that elect remnant which HE has redeemed with HIS own blood). HE said she is as an ember which is snatched out of the fire which would have ultimately consumed it. An ember in the fire has no power to keep itself from destruction. *“It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” (Lam 3:22-23)*

So is every one of those who are made the recipients of HIS grace, completely apart from any merit or activity which they are the author of. CHRIST alone, is the “AUTHOR and FINISHER” of our FAITH. One of the greatest descriptions of the application of GOD’s amazing grace to HIS elect children is found in Ezekiel’s prophecy, *“Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.” (Eze 16:3-6)* Has the LORD made you to live? mam