

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

OUR REPROACH

Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee. Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. Psalm 69:19-20

Apart from the grace of GOD being visited upon a man, he cannot comprehend the awful nature of sin nor the degree of arrogance which is exhibited in those who transgress even the least of GOD's commandments. Men often look at sin as being most prevalent in others and can easily recognize when someone mistreats them or wounds them in some fashion contrary to their own sense of justice. They would even swell up with pride when they overlook some wrong done to them, confident in their own mind that those who do such things will have "karma" (as they would call it, since such exists only in their imagination) visited upon them.

From time to time, they may be beset by their own conscience which accuses them of their own failures and departures from their own sense of morality or that which arises from some religious principles which they have learned by rote and natural education. Few men are totally ignorant of the basic ethics and values which they can read about in the Bible (though the ignorance of this precious Book is quite rampant in today's society). Yet they cannot escape the underlying truth which permeates a reading of this book because it is clear from Paul's teaching that they are without excuse. *"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."* (Rom 2:12-16) A man may convince himself to steal something from another man and even do so with a clear conscience (seared with a hot iron). Yet, every man believes it is absolutely wrong for someone to steal something from himself and will react with indignation at such a transgression.

When the LORD is pleased to awaken a man by HIS SPIRIT to see his sin in the proper light, he will fall down in repentance before the LORD. When David entered into his transgression with Bathsheba, he was quite pleased with his actions, and even continued to compound his sin by having her husband murdered in battle, in an effort to cover his tracks. The awfulness of his conduct is clearly seen by anyone who reads this account, and no one would excuse his actions. Yet he was blind, then, to the immensity of his crimes.

The LORD knew exactly where David was during this whole scenario and even ordered the steps which David took as he ascended the stairs to the rooftop where he espied Bathsheba in her bath. (see 2Sam.11.1-27) Yet David's sin was entirely his own, which thing the LORD would bring to his awareness when the time of HIS choosing drew nigh. For the LORD had prepared a prophet with the exact WORD of GOD which David needed to be confronted with. I can imagine that the anguish which gripped his heart and mind as Nathan's words thundered in his ears, *"thou art the man"* (2 Sam 12:7), was exactly the same as that which struck Peter as the LORD looked upon him (after HE had prophesied his denial) as he denied knowing HIM for the third time. (see Luke 21:61-62)

We can see the work of GOD in bringing David to repentance as we read Psalm 51. David described the absolute wickedness of his sin as he confessed that his transgression was completely and totally against

GOD. It is true that he sinned against his own family, he sinned against the nation of Israel, he sinned against Bathsheba, and he sinned against Uriah to name just a few. Yet all of that paled when compared to his awareness of the awfulness of his sin against the LORD. *"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."* (Psa 51:3-5)

The definition of the Hebrew word which is translated as "reproach" in the KJV, (appearing in the OT, 73 times) literally has reference to the shame which is associated with the uncovering of the nakedness of the sexual organs. This shame was manifested for the first time when Adam transgressed the LORD's commandment, willingly eating of that fruit which the Serpent had deceived Eve into eating. Immediately they knew that they were naked and went about to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. Sinful men continue this plan of action, *"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."* (Rom 10:3)

Yet these "fig leaves" are woefully short of hiding the "reproach" (i.e.; utter shame and disgrace) that is theirs by nature. Just as the LORD covered Adam and Eve's nakedness with a suitable covering, so too has the LORD JESUS CHRIST covered the reproach of HIS people by clothing them in HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* (2Cor 5:21) *"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."* (Rev 19:8) *"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."* (Rom 4:6-8)

In order to be both just and the JUSTIFIER of that Elect Bride which was given to HIM (see John 17:1-9), it pleased the LORD to not simply identify HIMSELF with Her but to actually bear Her shame and reproach which she had demonstrated continually since she was created. *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight."* (Col 1:18-22)

As a faithful HUSBAND assumes the debt of his espoused Wife, so CHRIST has borne the actual reproach and shame which rightfully belonged to Her. In doing so, HE made Her debt HIS own, and became the very "reproach" which was Her's, cancelling Her debt with HIS own blood. Arising from the tomb into which HE was carried, HE triumphed over death and has made Her to be without "reproach".

HE describes for us the depths of shame which HE experienced in bringing redemption to Her, whom HE loved from the foundation of the World. *"For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them. They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards."* (Psa 69:9-12)

HE had no reason in HIMSELF to be in shame. Yet for the love which HE had for HIS Bride, HE took Her reproach as HIS own. Even to the point of being cut off from the Face of HIS FATHER in utter ignominy and disgrace. *"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Mat 27:46) *"But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."* (Psa 22:6-8)

That should have been us, yet HE determined to redeem us by becoming our REPROACH.

How deep the Father's love for us, How vast beyond all measure!

That He should give His only Son, To make a wretch His treasure.

How great the pain of searing loss! The Father turns His face away;

As wounds which marred the Chosen One Bring many sons to glory.

Why should I gain from his reward? I cannot give an answer;

But this I know with all my heart: His wounds have paid my ransom. (by Stuart Townend, 1995) mam