

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 SILLY DOVE

Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. Hos 7:11

We see two principles which are set forth throughout the scriptures. One is the absolute determination of GOD to punish sin and destroy sinners. The other is HIS determined purpose to demonstrate HIS love to HIS chosen people. Both of these principles have their culmination and are met in the giving of HIS only begotten SON as a SIN BEARER and SUBSTITUTE for that people. It is impossible that both of these principles could have coexisted apart from the conception of the scheme of redemption and the covenant promise of HIM who cannot lie but will be both JUST and the JUSTIFIER of those that believe.

The judgment of GOD for sin is seen throughout the pages of the Old Testament, both in HIS dealings with the heathen nations and with that chosen nation upon which HE would use to demonstrate HIS everlasting love for that people which HE chose in CHRIST from before the foundation of the world. There was no difference (i.e.; they were all alike sinners, worthy of condemnation {see Eph.2:3}) between those heathen nations which HE would destroy and the sons of Jacob, whom HE would deliver out of bondage; except that HE chose them according to the good pleasure of HIS will. *"For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."* (Deu 7:6-8)

When we read the book of Hosea we can see, illustrated most clearly, the LORD's determined purpose to manifest HIS love for HIS bride and HIS determination to justly punish sin. We marvel at Hosea's faithfulness and provision to an unfaithful wife, yet we are completely dumbfounded when we realize that the LORD used him to illustrate HIS own utter faithfulness to HIS to that bride of HIS choosing, who has not only been unfaithful but has despised HIS overtures of kindness. *"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."* (Rom 5:6-10)

Ephraim was one of Joseph's two sons which were born unto HIM in Egypt by the daughter of an idolatrous, heathen priest. It appears that Jacob considered them as his own sons by adoption as he did in a measure remove his blessing from Reuben and Simeon (see Gen.48:5; 49:3-7) giving it unto Ephraim and Manasseh. Though Manasseh was Joseph's firstborn son, it was unto Ephraim, the second son to whom the greatest blessing came. In this we are reminded that the blessings of GOD to HIS children have not come unto them through the first Adam but through the LAST. *"And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last*

Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.” (1Cor 15:45-47)

We see the name of Ephraim mentioned 37 times in the book of Hosea. He is there used as a type of the nation of Israel, and as such an illustration of the carnal, fleshly man, who is nonetheless made as a vessel of honor in the sight of GOD and whom the LORD would ultimately bless with deliverance, as HE has made HIS elect subject unto vanity. We see Jeremiah use the same image as he sees in him the awakened child of grace exercised by his transgression and calling upon the NAME of the LORD. *“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.” (Jer 31:18)*

The children of GOD cannot be differentiated from the rest of the world as all men are born into this world in the weakness of natural flesh. Apart from the grace of GOD which sets them apart in CHRIST as a people chosen in HIM from before the foundation of the world, they would surely arrive at the same destination as those who are appointed unto wrath. This fulfills the purpose of GOD in demonstrating HIS everlasting love for those who are HIS and upon whom HE would be pleased to grant salvation which is purchased by the precious blood of CHRIST.

When they are “born again” by the SPIRIT of GOD and indwelt by HIM they are made “new creatures”, old things are passed away and all things become new. Yet their flesh remains as it was when they were born, a rebel against GOD and opposed to all that is good. Yet now this “new man” is no longer in bondage to his flesh, but rather the SPIRIT works in him and wars against the flesh which would daily desire to bring him back into that bondage. A desperate struggle ensues, and it is sometimes not apparent who the victor will be, yet such is the grace of GOD that HE will preserve that work which HE has begun and will not forsake that which is HIS.

Thus, we see Ephraim described in the book of Hosea as “*joined to idols*” (4:17); committing whoredom (5:3); and “*oppressed and broken in judgment*” (5:11). Paul said the same thing, “*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*” (Rom 7:18) He is likened unto “*a cake not turned*” (7:8); which denotes his unsuitableness, like as a cake which is burned and inedible. He is called a “*silly dove*” (7:11) who seeks out help from Egypt (i.e.; the place from whence he is delivered) and winds up in servitude to Assyria (9:3). He stupidly makes the same mistakes over and again and brings upon himself bondage and fear.

The chastisement of the LORD is continually upon Ephraim, because whom the LORD loveth HE chasteneth. The LORD will correct the ways of Ephraim though it be through much tribulation that the sons of GOD inherit the Kingdom which is prepared for them. HIS rod and HIS staff are their COMFORT, even though for the present no chastening seemeth to be joyous, but afterwards yieldeth its perfect fruit. “*Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb.*” (Hos 9:16). The LORD will keep HIS children from falling even though HE may lay HIS hand heavily upon them. HE will deal with the iniquities of those whom HE loves. “*Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*” (John 15:2)

We can see quite plainly, throughout the book, the utter unsuitableness of Ephraim to the kingdom of GOD. He has nothing in himself that would serve as a recommendation thereto and if he should gain anything it would have to be by the mercy of GOD. This is exactly what we see occurring as the LORD “*hides his sin*”. “*The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid.*” (Hos 13:12) “*And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.*” (Zec 10:6-7)

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