

# 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*

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## TENDER GRAPES

*Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes. Song of Solomon 2:15*

The covenant relationship which the LORD has with HIS children is unbreakable and eternal. HE has loved us with an everlasting love. (see Jer. 31:3; John 13:1; Rom.11:29; II Thes.2:13-16; II Tim 1:9) Because of this eternal love for us HE has determined to establish a relationship with us that is both intimate and mutual. While HIS love for us is perfect and lacking nothing, our devotion to HIM is greatly deficient. This fact is generally recognized by most of those who profess faith in HIM, so it is not uncommon to hear exhortations and admonitions given to HIS followers which are designed to stir us up in the endeavor to love HIM more. Often programs are instituted, and classes taught for the purpose of bringing about a greater devotion among those who are professedly identified with HIM. Sadly, for the most part these activities and admonitions fail to produce the desired effect because this work is something which only the SPIRIT of GOD can accomplish in the hearts of the true children of GOD. Professors of faith who have not been born again by HIS miraculous work can be persuaded to walk in the ways of religion, sometimes even with great devotion for a season. The more excitement and activity that they can be stirred with, the longer that devotion will last. They may even develop good habits that shape their lives both religiously and morally. It is quite common for people to mistake these habits for a work of grace. The primary work of the SPIRIT in the hearts of HIS children is to give them a tender conscience and a desire to have close fellowship with HIM. It is to these privileged sons that the LORD comes, working in them the things necessary to draw their hearts and minds ever closer to HIM. No expense is too great, nor will the rod of correction be withheld to accomplish HIS purpose of perfecting their love and dependence on HIM. (see Ps.89:30-34) HE is intent on bringing us to profess and demonstrate our love to HIM and will stop at nothing to give us tender hearts which are responsive to HIS overtures of love and friendship. (see John 14:15-29; 21:15-17; Isa.43:4)

Solomon, speaking in words that perhaps he himself did not fully comprehend, describes the yearning of the bride of CHRIST crying out for the presence of the LORD with an awareness of her own fragility (i.e.; tender grapes) and need for HIS deliverance (i.e.; Take us the foxes, or literally take the foxes away which destroy the vines). Now while the love of CHRIST for HIS bride is strong we are but weak vessels made all so much more tender by the work of the SPIRIT upon our conscience. Thank GOD; HE is that ONE who “*will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax*” (see Isa. 42:3; Mat.12:20). He deals tenderly with HIS children even when HIS faithfulness to bring us to the place we need to be, requires that HE administer the rod of affliction and correction. (see Ps.119:71-75; Heb.12:5-10) HE will work in the hearts of HIS children to give them tender hearts with regard to:

1. **HIS presence and person.** Paul said, *"Oh that I might know HIM"* (Phil.3:10). HE has made us to delight ourselves in HIS fellowship and gives HIS children longing hearts to be made in HIS likeness. (see I Cor.1:9; I John 1:3.7) *"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for CHRIST. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win CHRIST"* (Phil 3:7-8) None of the allure of the trappings of religion or tradition can hold a candle to the true child of GOD's desire for the very person of CHRIST. The nominal professor of faith may grow weary in this quest but the pursuit of the knowledge of CHRIST is the very lifeblood of the freeborn sons of GOD.
2. **The place of prayer and worship.** Religious men are usually careful to make prayer and worship a part of their lives. On the other hand GOD's children's very existence depends on prayer and worship. For them it is not an acquired habit or duty, but the natural language of those whose hearts are made tender by the SPIRIT. *"And because ye are sons, GOD hath sent forth the SPIRIT of his SON into your hearts, crying, Abba, FATHER."* (Gal 4:6) All men will "pray" when the situation is desperate enough. Only the sons of GOD pray because it is their delight. Worship is not performed by them as a duty but because it is to them a joy. *"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living GOD."* (Psalms 84:2) The natural man prays in order to get something; the spiritual man prays in order to give.
3. **The beauty of HIS word.** *"For I delight in the law of GOD after the inward man:"* (Rom.7:22; see Ps.1:1,2) The word of GOD is something the true children of GOD are given a love and respect for. We don't judge the word by our practice; rather we judge our practice by the word. HE has written the law on the hearts of HIS children (see Heb.8:10-11). Legalists seek out the law and judge themselves righteous when they have walked according to its letter. The free born sons of GOD know that the letter of the law can only bring condemnation on sinners, which they readily confess that they are. Their delight is in the fulfillment of the law by JESUS CHRIST who is unto them the very WORD of GOD made flesh. *"For the law of the SPIRIT of life in CHRIST JESUS hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, GOD sending his own SON in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the SPIRIT."* (Romans 8:2-4)
4. **HIS payment for our sin.** The religious nature of man can be stirred by viewing depictions of the physical torment of our LORD. Yet those for whom HE shed HIS precious blood are moved by the understanding that *"HE hath made HIM to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in HIM."* (2 Cor 5:21) Oh the depths of HIS love, oh the boundless sea of HIS grace. *"But GOD commendeth HIS love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us."* (Romans 5:8)

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