

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume III

Issue 39

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

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

ABSOLUTE LOVE

Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Isaiah 43:4

No playwright has ever written a script about a man who was in love with every woman he met while at the same time being a total failure in getting any of them to love him in return. Such a play could not exist because the central figure would be considered a pathetic failure worthy of sympathy rather than respect. Not only that but no one would consider such a universal attraction as true love. True love by its very nature is directed towards a specific object. A mother may have affection for infants in general but she will lay down her life for her own baby. It is natural for young men and women to be attracted to each other in general but when "true" love hits, all others are forgotten and their attention is turned to a specific individual.

Now we know no playwright would pen such a story, yet we have multitudes depicting the love of GOD towards men in just such a way. It is quite common to hear the message "GOD loves everybody" everywhere from the pulpit to the bumper sticker. In fact most people would be aghast if someone was to suggest that the bible does not teach such a concept. Yet the message and description of the love of GOD towards men is one of a particular nature. Paul wrote in the book of Romans the words of the LORD when HE said, "*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*" (Rom.9:13) Some have tried to tone down the plainness of this declaration by saying what HE meant was that HE just loved Esau less than HE did Jacob. But if we use that line of reasoning we could as easily say that HE hated Jacob less than HE did Esau.

One of the very central truths of the gospel message is the abiding love which the LORD has had for HIS elect children from before the foundation of the world. "*We love him, because he first loved us.*" (1 John 4:19) "*Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.*" (Jer 31:3) HIS love is so strong and absolute that HE will stop at nothing to gather HIS people to himself. The FATHER sent HIS only begotten son into the world to die an ignominious and painful death in order to secure the redemption of HIS own. The SON being ONE with the FATHER gladly undertook that awful contract and willingly laid down HIS life as a sacrifice in their behalf. When HE agonized in the garden of Gethsemane as the sin of those elect children was fully laid upon HIM and HE grappled with the reality of being despised in HIS FATHER's sight HE prayed specifically for them. "*I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.*" (John 17:9) HE had within HIS power; had HE so desired; to call for the angels to loose him from this burden but "*for his great love wherewith he loved us*" (Eph 2:4), HE bound himself to that altar with those very cords of love and HE paid our debt in HIS own body on Calvary's tree, hanging between heaven and earth as our substitute and mediator. O glorious redemption, O marvelous love, who can plumb its depths or scale its heights.

There was never a time since the foundation of the earth that the LORD's elect were not deemed honorable (i.e.; worthy, upright) in his sight. They have always been the objects of HIS love and have never been the objects of HIS wrath, nor appointed to such, though by their very

sin nature they have acted in the same fashion as all of the rest of Adam's race and are as worthy of death as any. (see Eph.2:3-5; I Thess.5:9) There is no more humbling experience in all the earth than for the LORD to make us aware of this very fact, for it leaves us with no room for boasting of any type since the only reason we should be included in the number of the redeemed is HIS sovereign love, mercy, and grace. Such a privilege is totally undeserved by any upon which it is set, and there is no work that can be done to earn it or any action which can overturn it. "Hail sovereign love that first began the scheme to rescue fallen man. Hail matchless, free, eternal grace that gave my soul a hiding place." (J. Brewer)

Not only did HIS love for us move HIM to purchase our pardon but also to do whatever is necessary to draw us to himself, to win our affection and to bind our hearts fast to HIS. HE is intent on making us aware of that which HE has done for us and of bringing us into conformity with JESUS CHRIST. In fact, HE has predestined HIS elect unto that very end. (see Rom.8:29) So the SPIRIT of GOD is at work in the world convincing the elect children of grace that they are unworthy sinners, deserving of destruction, and worthy of death. In order for a man to value the redeeming work of CHRIST and be drawn to HIS very bosom he must first be brought down to a place of abject helplessness and woe. "But thus the eternal counsel ran, almighty love arrest that man, I felt the arrows of distress and found I had no hiding place." (J. Brewer)

The LORD will stop at nothing to bring HIS people to a place of repentance before HIM. HE will even allow them to be turned over to their sin that it might work its awful consequences upon their soul, body, and mind that they might ultimately be made mindful by HIS SPIRIT's power of HIS gracious deliverance and be brought to a place of embracing HIM and being reconciled to HIM. (see I Cor.5:1-6; II Cor.2:1-11) HE will give men for thee and people for thy life. There are many moralists let loose in the earth who would gasp at such a thought, that GOD will even use the sin of men for HIS own purpose of gathering HIS people to HIS side. HE absolutely loves HIS people absolutely and desires their fellowship and their good and all other things and people must take a back seat to the accomplishing of that end. The gospel we preach is a message of redemption and reconciliation. HE has redeemed us from the curse of sin and now the gospel has been sent forth into the world to gather the redeemed by bringing them to a state of reconciliation in their mind and heart. *"We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 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."* (2 Cor 5:20-21)

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