

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume IV

Issue 40

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

THE JUST EXECUTION OF THE GUILTY

For God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. Nahum 1:2-3

Two distinct groups of people gathered in an open field outside of the Florida State Prison recently. One group was there to protest the State's execution of a condemned serial killer. The other was there to cheer and celebrate the well deserved execution of a man who had committed a heinous series of brutal and merciless murders. Both groups prayed and had clergymen present who quoted scripture in defense of their positions. One group gloried in the power and justice of the law and the other lamented what they perceived to be state sponsored murder. Which one of them was right?

The truth is that neither one of them was. The holy law of GOD says, "*Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*" (Gen 9:6) It plainly tells us that this man deserved to suffer the same death as those whose lives he took without pity. Paul said the state was ordained by GOD for the purpose of punishing evildoers. (see Rom. 13:1-4) When the LORD said "*thou shalt not kill*", HE had reference to the "murder of another human for personal gain" because there were many times when HE commanded HIS own servants to kill men, women and children in order to preserve HIS people and destroy those who HE intended to be destroyed. (see 1 Sam.15:3) So we can conclude that the charge that the state is guilty of murder when it executes a convicted murderer is baseless as far as the scripture is concerned.

We might well expect that those who have no understanding of their own depravity might indulge their carnal desires for revenge and "justice". We might even understand their propensity to appeal to the scriptures with some concept of righteous indignation, as they cheer at the comeuppance that this killer received, much like the Pharisees who cast the woman taken in adultery at the feet of the LORD. After all, religion has got to serve some purpose in the earth, doesn't it? All of this is but the common mindset of the natural man who sees the greatest of injustices to be those which are perpetrated against his fellow man. A good dose of revenge is good for the very soul of a reprobate man and gives him something to glory in as he favorably compares his own righteousness to the condemned.

However the man in whom the SPIRIT of GOD dwells, who is well acquainted with the wickedness of his own heart, must sit in silent wonder as he considers the mercy of GOD which has kept him from a similar destiny. (see I Cor.4:7) He cannot condemn the justice of GOD's law for HE has been brought to bow and confess to the righteousness of those rules even

though they cut him to the very heart and reveal to him the utter inability that he has of ever keeping them. He is quite certain that he is deserving of destruction according to those precepts yet he cannot help but love the ONE who gave them. He must say with Job of old, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."* (Job 13:15)

Yet at the same time, he must look with pity, upon those who are justly condemned, as he remembers the words of the Apostle Paul, when he said *"by the grace of God I am what I am."* (1Co 15:10) He can never get too far from the memory that were it not for the grace of GOD which has preserved him even to the present moment he would suffer a fate much worse than the punishment any human government could ever administer. (see Eph.2:1-13)

We who are the objects of GOD's mercy are well acquainted with the words of our LORD, *"But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* (Mat 9:13) Was it not for the fact that HE came to call sinners to repentance we would surely have perished in our sin. Though we are saddened on the one hand to see one of our fellow men, tasting the dregs of the cup of wrath which he has willingly drunk, we are at the same time, reminded by this example of justice carried out, of the ONE who drank that bitter cup in our behalf that we might be forever set free from the curse of the law. When the LORD JESUS CHRIST became a sin offering for us HE:

Suffered willingly. Most condemned men would do everything in their power to escape the just recompense of their deeds. Yet the LORD JESUS having the power to lay down HIS life as well as take it up again, chose to suffer for HIS elect's sake. Yea, HE even gladly embraced HIS FATHER's will and *"for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."* (Heb 12:2) HE did exactly what HE intended to do, which was to be the sin bearer of those sons which were given to HIM before the foundation of the world that HE might present them faultless before HIS FATHER's throne.

Suffered justly. HE committed no crimes of HIS own, *"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."* (1Pet. 2:22) HE was as innocent as a LAMB without spot or blemish. Yet HE suffered the death of a justly condemned man *"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) HE was never tainted with the corruption of our sin in HIS person in any way, even to the fact that HIS dead body was not laid in a tomb wherein a dead body had ever lain, yet HE was judicially determined to die a sinner's death because our sin was imputed (i.e.; laid to HIS account) to HIM. Make no mistake here, when HE trod the winepress of GOD's wrath in our behalf HE did so under the full weight and condemnation of our sin as a guilty man worthy of the death to which HE was brought. *"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."* (Rom 3:26) HE will not at all acquit the wicked, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST was judged and executed because HE became our substitute and paid our sin debt.

Suffered completely. When we take the LORD's supper, we eat the bread to remember HIS body which was "broken for us". Yet we read *"For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."* (John 19:36) Not one of his bones were broken but HIS body was. This means that HE literally died completely. There was no life in HIS body when it was laid in the garden tomb. Those nerves which sensed a woman touch the hem of HIS garment now lay silent and still. Those hands which healed the sick and gave sight to the blind were limp by his side. For three days HIS body lay in that darkness but upon the morning of the third day, HE who willingly died, willingly raised HIMSELF from the dead and became the first fruits of them that sleep. In the same fashion shall HE raise the lifeless bodies of HIS elect in the final day. *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"* (1Cor. 15:55)