

# 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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## ALTOGETHER LOVELY

*His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

*Song of Solomon 5:16*

You can get a group of Christians together who come from different backgrounds and traditions and it won't be long until some disagreement will arise over some teaching of doctrine or practice. It has been this way ever since the days of the apostles. Disputes will arise among even the closest of brethren from time to time over various issues. We only have to look at the example of Paul and Barnabas and their disagreement over whether young John Mark should accompany them on their next journey to see that this is true. The contention between them was so sharp that they parted ways.

Now we know that GOD ordained this very event in order to send them to various destinations which would not have occurred if this dispute had not arisen. But that in no way lessens the heartache that such dissension often brings. There are certainly lines which must be drawn in the sand from time to time on various doctrinal issues. Yet some seem to carry a stick with them all the time in their back pocket, as if they are wanting to draw one just to get someone to cross it so they can have good reason to withdraw fellowship from them.

While I am not so naïve as to declare that all doctrinal distinctions should be forgotten, I am well aware of the pain that is caused on both sides of an issue when disagreements arise. Rather than being proud of ourselves in such situations, we cannot help but weep over these divisions even when we believe them to be necessary and cannot in good conscience continue together. Too often such disagreements have more to do with personalities and semantics than they do actual doctrinal error. But it has pleased the LORD to allow doctrinal error to creep in among HIS people from time to time for a purifying and cleansing effect and also to teach each one of us how prone we are to err if HE does not preserve us from it. Paul wrote to the brethren at Corinth saying, *"I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."* (1Cor 11:18-19)

Division itself is not necessarily a good thing but if we be the sons of GOD we are quite certain that even this shall work together for our ultimate good, even though we are, perhaps, unable to see it at the time. We are not free to pick and choose what doctrines we stand upon but are compelled by HIS SPIRIT to stand upon those truths HE has burned into our conscience. *"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."* (Rom 14:4) If HE has taught us truth then we have no option but to defend it and take our stand upon it to live or to die. I shall leave it to others who are more adept at casting men to the moles and bats (see Isa.2;20) over doctrinal issues to define those lines which cannot be crossed under pain of death. I can only declare what I believe to be true and speak against that which I see as error, whether anyone stands with me or not.

Knowing that there are many issues which the true sons of GOD may fall out with one another over, I believe there is at least one truth to which they shall all absolutely agree. It is set forth in the words of Solomon, as he writes of the bride's description of her HUSBAND and LOVER. She said, "*HE is altogether lovely*". Is this not what Paul meant when he said, "*Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost?*"(1Cor 12:3) Also John said, "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*" (John 16:13-14) This truth prompted Joseph Hart to write:

When is it Christians all agree,  
And let distinctions fall?  
When, nothing in themselves, they see  
That Christ is all in all. (Gadsby's Hymns #816)

The born again sons of GOD may be given various levels of understanding (see Rom.12:3) on different doctrinal issues but they all, without exception, will testify to the glorious beauty that they behold in the person of JESUS CHRIST. This is an amazing work of grace when one stops to consider that when CHRIST came in the flesh and walked among men HE did so in such a humble and unassuming way and suffered such an ignominious death that the scripture says, "*For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*" (Isa 53:2-4)

The LORD has hid HIS beauty from the "*wise and prudent*" and has revealed it unto "*babes*". A man in the flesh may see some good in CHRIST as far as his example of humanity was demonstrated. The religious man may even believe HIM to be a prophet and a teacher of high moral principle. Yet only those who are born from above can behold HIM as that ONE who is ALL in ALL, whose price is above rubies and exceeds that of gold. Only that man who has been given eyes to see can look on HIM with a longing desire to be made in HIS image, to prize HIS commandments, and to love those that HE loves as John said, "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*" (1John 3:14)

HE is altogether lovely to them:

**In HIS person as the SON of GOD.** "*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*" (John 1:14)

**Because HE first loved us.** "*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*" (1 John 4:10)

**Because HE demonstrated that love by the sacrifice of HIMSELF.** "*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*" (Titus 2:14)

**Because HE continues a present work in HIS people.** "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" (Gal 2:20)

**Because they see in HIM their only hope of acceptance with the FATHER.** "*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. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*" (Rom 5:9-11)

**Because HE is coming back to receive HIS own.** "*He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*" (Rev 22:20)

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