

# 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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## UNMARKED GRAVES AND WHITED SEPULCHRES

*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them. Luke 11:44 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Matthew 23:27*

There are few things which the LORD JESUS CHRIST spoke against with greater fervor than the religious hypocrisy and deadness which was exhibited by the Pharisees. They are the epitome of mans religious self. This is especially revealing when one considers that the Pharisees were held in high regard among the rank and file Jews of that day and were considered the holiest of men. The natural religious mind is always seeking out men (or women) that it can put upon a pedestal and set up as paragons of virtue and/or great teachers and revealers of spiritual secrets.

Out of this fertile ground many a religious leader has sprouted. Great shamans and gurus who love to have the preeminence and parade their deep knowledge of "spiritual" truths find a comfortable place to nurture their narcissism and convince even themselves of their own great knowledge and value to men.

Many a religious man would much rather marvel at someone else's devotion than he would be bothered by the sacrifice he deems necessary to become such a one himself. This is the very soil from which the concept of "holy men" or the "clergy" has sprung. Every religion of men has its priests, reverends, monks, bishops, and elders, etc. which it views as a class of men very much separate from the rank and file usually called the laity.

These Pharisees were extremely moral men. They spent many hours in "prayer" (with themselves) and the study of the scriptures. They were sticklers for tithing, even counting the number of leaves in their herb gardens and systematically giving ten percent of them to the LORD. They would not even think of defiling themselves by entertaining or conversing with a Gentile or coming near a dead body. Yet the LORD likened them to graves.

Such is HIS consideration of all of the supposed righteousness of men. Well did Isaiah describe the very noblest and highest of man's endeavors and accomplishments. *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."* (Isa 64:6) Men look upon the outward appearance but GOD looketh upon the heart. And HE knows what is in the heart of every man, regardless of his infidelity or his professed religiosity.

If HE considers even the most sincere and devoted thoughts of men as a "menstruous cloth" (i.e. filthy rags), then where does that leave us as we contemplate our own depravity. *"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."* (Isa 1:6) We can see the sheer folly of a man who thinks that he has anything of value to bring unto the LORD or some worth in himself to offer.

Thus the LORD describes these "holiest of men" as "unmarked graves" and "whitewashed tombs." Those who have been taught by the HOLY GHOST to know themselves can testify

that they too can be described as such. They know that unless the LORD is pleased to grant to them a righteous covering, yea even the righteousness of the blessed SAVIOR they can have no hope or expectation of entering into the presence of a Holy GOD.

**Unmarked graves.** I remember being fearful as a lad, when walking in the cemetery, because I had been warned that it was “bad luck” to step on a grave, yet all of the graves were not clearly marked so one was left to wonder what doom might await the very next step. We are quite relieved now that we have discovered that there is no such thing as “bad luck” or “good luck”, for that matter, since *“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.” (Prov 16:33)* But there is still danger lurking for those walking among the dead. Many are the snares and pitfalls that await the seekers of religion.

To call these Pharisees an unmarked grave is indicative of the fact that the innate religious nature of man is like a deep hole over which some sticks covered with leaves and grass have been placed. A man who is sincerely desirous of avoiding the dead can nonetheless fall into this pit because he cannot see it for what it is and cannot readily tell where to step. Religion (especially modern Christianity, so called) is a snare and stumbling block from which few are ever rescued. The LORD said that the Pharisees encompassed land and sea to make proselytes and after they had succeeded they made those who were thus converted even worse off than before. (see Mat. 23:15)

The average church goer today has been lulled to sleep with the sweet lullaby of free will and universal atonement. But there are a fair number who have gone to sleep on the enchanted ground of supposed sound doctrine and practice which they embrace in the letter but are strangers to the inner working of the HOLY GHOST who produces the fruit of the SPIRIT in those that HE teaches. (see I Cor.2:4-5)

Those who are the subjects of the SPIRIT’s teaching are not unmarked graves but as the LORD said, *“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” (Mat 5:14)* *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2Cor 5:17)*

**Whited sepulchers.** It was a common practice in bible times to whitewash the outside of a tomb to make it more aesthetically pleasing. The LORD called the Pharisees “whited sepulchers” because they (like natural religious man) desired to make themselves appear to be “holy” in the sight of men when in reality their hearts were far from the LORD.

Man is attracted to religion because it affords him the opportunity to appear righteous in a measure. It is within the power of men to “join the church” but it requires the work of GOD to be placed in the church whose names are written in heaven. A man can attend the meetings of the church and even be involved but only the LORD can cause him to worship in SPIRIT and truth. A man can become well versed in doctrine, history, and tradition but only the SPIRIT of GOD can conform him to the image of CHRIST. A man can be dipped in water but only the LORD can baptize him with fire. A man can say “I’m sorry” but only the LORD can perform a work of repentance in a man that needeth not to be repented of. A man may teach others and even gain a following but only the LORD can lead a man into all truth.

The Saviour empties whom he fills, And quickens whom he slays,  
Our legal hope he kindly kills, To teach us gospel praise.  
He wraps in frowns as well as smiles, Some tokens of his love;  
And if he wounds, or if he heals, In both his grace we prove.  
No sooner we begin to mourn, And feel a broken heart,  
But Jesus cries, “Return, return, And let me heal thy smart.”  
My legal self may Jesus kill, And make my heart alive;  
My guilty wounds may Jesus heal, And make my spirit thrive.

#894 Gadsby’s Hymns by John Berridge

*“Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.” (2Co 1:10)* [www.gracechapelobrien.net](http://www.gracechapelobrien.net) <http://wayfarerblog.blogspot.com/> mam