

# GRACE GAZETTE

Volume X

Issue 24

*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*

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## LIMITED SOVEREIGNTY?

*And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.*

*II Samuel 24:1*

Almost everyone who claims to believe in the GOD of the Bible, the one true and living GOD, would also state that they believe this GOD is sovereign. Yet most have varying degrees to which they believe that "sovereignty" extends in exercise. While one often hears the words "sovereign GOD" bantered about by various bible teachers and preachers and in general discussions, most place some limits or parameters around exactly how "sovereign" HE is and the occasions on which HE might exercise that "sovereignty".

Most believe that HE is surely in control of the major events which occur in the heavens and the earth. Especially as is related to what is often referred to as the "forces of nature." The weakest among them will espouse HIS ability to "send rain on the just and the unjust", to control the whirlwind, and cause the Earth to continue on its constant path around the Sun. Most will concede that HE marks out the point and the time of the death of men.

Yet many of them will question whether or not the calamities, such as the Indonesian tsunami, or the tragedy at the world trade center, were actually a result of HIS sovereign purpose manifested for men to see or the result of some other "force" which from time to time slips some things by HIM who is seated in the heavens and causes HIM consternation in HIS quest to only do "good" things. One of the problems with such a view is that man's definition of "good" and that which GOD sees as "good" are often at odds with one another.

The most popular concept in the minds (and Theology) of "believers" (as they would define themselves) today is what I would call "functional agnosticism". An "agnostic" is one who is not sure there is a GOD and even if there is HE is not involved in the activities of everyday life on the earth. The "functional agnostic" believes that there is indeed a GOD but that HE has essentially made the earth like a wind up toy which will go in a general direction and HE will make course corrections from time to time based on the activities of "evil forces" and the "prayers of men" offered up according to their "sovereign" free will.

Yet the scripture indicates that there are no "competing" forces of good and evil but rather one GOD who is as David said, *"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."* (Psa 115:3) Nebuchadnezzar ultimately came to bow down before HIM confessing, *"I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"* (Dan 4:34-35)

Many well meaning teachers try to make excuses for why evil exists in a world presided over by a Holy GOD. Yet HE makes no apologies to anyone nor leaves any room for doubt as to why evil

exists in the world. *“That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.” (Isa 45:6-7)* The “apologizers” quickly tell us that the context of the verse simply means that HE causes bad occurrences to take place from time to time and has nothing to do with “evil” insofar as the wicked activities of men and angels.

Yet the LORD says that HE declares the end from the beginning and ordains all things to occur in the earth, even to being the FIRST CAUSE of the wicked actions of HIS subjects. *“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.” (Isa 46:9-11)*

We see a good example of this in the passage we have taken as a text. The LORD “*moved David*” to number the people and then HE sent judgment upon David and the whole nation of Israel for this “numbering” since it was an act of pride and self reliance. David’s conscience even “smote him” after he had completed the task and he confessed his sin, saying, *“I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.” (2 Sam 24:10)* The LORD will humble HIS people and give them faith even when HE uses a trip to a rooftop to bring it to pass. (see Ps. 51)

In dealing with this passage many rush to point out that the same incident described in I Chronicles 21, says that Satan “*provoked David.*” This only serves to bolster the point that all actions by men, angels, and devils are ordained by the One True GOD to accomplish HIS purpose and in no wise can be found working contrary to it. In the same fashion the LORD brought Job to Satan’s attention, provoking him (in his own wickedness), to desire to bring tribulations on Job in an endeavor to cause him to depart from the LORD. (see Job 1:8) The LORD used Satan as a tool to accomplish HIS purpose of bringing Job to a place of humility and blessing. *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom 8:28)* *“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” (Psa 76:10)* *“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.” (Pro 16:33)*

It is important that the people of GOD be reminded of the absolute sovereignty of GOD that they might in turn be reminded of the mercy of GOD in dealing with all of those whom HE has hid in the bosom of CHRIST from before the foundation of the world. There is absolutely no place for men to glory in any thing, either real or supposed, which would make them the recipients of HIS mercy, except HIS mercy which is dispensed according to HIS sovereign will.

When a man is given the privilege to behold the complete redemption which is wrought by the shedding of CHRIST’s blood in the behalf of HIS elect, then and only then can he fully rejoice in a full and free salvation which depends in no fashion on the deeds, faith, or prayers of men. This redemption is not a remedy for an unforeseen problem, but rather that grand display for which the world was created. *“And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.” (Rev 19:5-9)* All hail KING JESUS; MIGHTY REDEEMER and LORD of Lords!