

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume X

Issue 52

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

LESSONS FROM A TRAGEDY

The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. Psalm 74:20

I doubt that anyone is ignorant of the tragedy which took place in Connecticut in the past few days. Every news outlet has spent countless hours in covering the unfolding of the sad events which took place in the community of Sandy Hook elementary school. We are all touched in some manner with the grief that has gripped that whole community, but, most especially by that of those who lost their loved ones.

It is only natural that men should look upon such occurrences and ponder the reasons why such events take place. It is impossible that anyone could come up with an answer which would be sufficient for the inquiring minds of all people. Yet we are convinced that there is a very clear answer, though it is roundly rejected by the vast multitudes who will ask the question.

In order to make sense of such an incident one must first understand whose world this is, in which these events took place. Most men believe that there is a GOD who created the world, but most men reject the notion that every event which occurs in it happens according to the Divine purpose of the ONE who made it. The majority of men view the world as though GOD created it and then more or less left it alone to go on its merry way, intervening here or there from time to time to cause various "good things" to occur or to prevent "bad things" from happening. All the while, toeing a fine line which separates the performance of HIS will from the supposed free will of man which HE is either unwilling or in many cases unable to overturn.

By nature men reject the notion of an absolute GOD. Paul said, "*when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*" (Rom 1:21) Because of their benighted condition men choose to believe in any kind of god other than the ONE true and living GOD. In this condition most men believe in a "dualistic" notion by which they explain "good" and "evil". The popularity of the Star Wars movies proves this in modern times.

Most believe there is a "force" for evil, and a "force" for good. Most in their natural state believe that this good "force" will triumph over the evil "force" simply because it is "good", as they would define it. Some even take delight in equating this "good force" with the one they call god and the "evil force" to the one they call Satan.

We are quite convinced that Satan is real, that he is presently alive and powerful, and going about seeking whom he may devour, along with his own legions of demons bent upon the same purpose. Yet we are equally certain that the ONE who created Satan to fulfill HIS own purpose owns him and has him on an unbreakable chain from which he cannot escape. Though Satan is the father of lies and hates the rulership of ALMIGHTY GOD; every action which he takes does but fulfill the purpose of the ONE who knows the end from the beginning. One only has to read the book of Job to see this dynamic played out, as the LORD told Satan to consider Job; or by contemplating the tragic life of Judas Iscariot.

The LORD uses Satan as a pawn in HIS purpose of manifesting the glory of JESUS CHRIST in the redemptive work which HE has performed in the behalf of HIS elect and the calling out of each one whom HE hath ordained unto eternal life. All power in heaven, earth, and hell resides in the hand of HIM who holds HIS own sheep there and calls them each by name.

So we are certain that this tragedy which occurred at Sandy Hook was no happenstance but occurred directly to fulfill the purpose of HIM who *“forms the light and creates the darkness”* (see Isa. 45:7), The LORD never apologizes for HIS actions and neither should we do so for HIM. So what can we learn from this awful unfolding of events.

1. That men are inherently and innately evil. *“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.”* (Psa 58:3) We should not be shocked when we see such atrocities take place but rather should marvel that GOD who is rich in mercy is pleased to restrain the wickedness of men lest we should continually and ultimately consume one another. *“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”* (Psa 76:10) *“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.”* (Rom 3:10) While it is true that some men are comparatively “more evil” than others, the fact remains that there is not one shred of righteousness in any man by nature and each will pursue his own destruction and that of others unless restrained by the hand of the GOD of all mercies. Paul said it best in writing to the Corinthians, *“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?”* (1Cor 4:7) And just as clear to the Romans, *“Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?”* (Rom 9:21)

2. GOD cannot be brought into judgment by any of HIS creation regardless of how HE sees fit to unfold HIS purpose in the earth. When we dare to say (or merely read what HE said about HIMSELF) that GOD predestines all things that come to pass, there are always those who immediately think that we are “accusing” GOD of evil. GOD cannot be “accused” of anything by the potsherd of the earth because we have no grounds from which to bring an “accusation”. In fact the LORD would make HIS glory known in the earth by describing HIS own actions of the absolute direction of all things. *“For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.”* (Isa 45:18) *“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) *“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?”* (Isa 45:7-9)

3. The LORD will bring glory to HIMSELF as HE causes all things to occur for the benefit of those upon whom HIS everlasting love is set. *“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) Though it does not seem possible to the natural man, the LORD will yet cause even this tragedy to bring blessings in the lives of those who are the apple of HIS eye. *“Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”* (Psa 30:4-5) HE will give peace that passes understanding to those who are the objects of HIS affection, and though their hearts may break and their sorrows seem overwhelming, yet HE will minister grace and peace to those that are HIS. Rebels will rail against HIM but those of a broken and contrite spirit will testify with Job, *“Though HE slay me, yet will I trust HIM.”* The GREAT PHYSICIAN now is near.