

# GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XV

Issue 13

*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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## MANY ENEMIES

*Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High.* *Psalm 56:2*

There is probably no greater hurt and disappointment than that which a man experiences when he is betrayed by one who is a trusted associate and companion. The LORD JESUS can be touched with the feelings of such infirmities for HE experienced this and more firsthand. Zechariah prophesied of HIS great trial when he said, *"And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."* (Zec 13:6)

John describes the summation of HIS sojourn here upon the Earth. *"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not."* (John 1:10-11) Isaiah further clarifies HIS reception among those whom HE came to help, yea even to those whom HE loved. *"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."* (Isa 53:3)

The bitterness of rejection and disdain lingers in the heart of a man and has no remedy. Yet all of this and more did our LORD endure in order to accomplish the redemption of that people which HE loved with an everlasting love even though they had no esteem for HIM, nor did they in any wise seek to aid HIM in HIS hour of greatest need.

For even HIS own disciples, HIS most trusted and loyal confidants, slept as HE wept in agony in Gethsmane's garden. None eye, among men, did pity HIM nor did any rise in HIS defense when HE stood in the judgment hall. The only one to speak for HIM was the very one whom GOD ordained as the instrument of cruelty in appointing HIM to be crucified. *"Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified."* (Mar 15:14-15)

HE was born a Jew, and to the Jews HE came as the MESSIAH. *"But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* (Mat 15:24) *"Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers."* (Rom 15:8) Yet HIS own kindred did reject HIM and sought HIS hurt. *"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you ----- being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."* (Acts 2:22-23) Thus the very people of HIS own nativity counted HIM as the offscouring of the Earth.

Thus HE was an outcast in the very midst of those whom HE came to deliver and HIS purpose for coming into the world was not only disregarded but HE was hated and mocked and HIS message rejected. HE was indeed surrounded by enemies sworn to destroy HIM.

So the Psalmist captures and foretells, the sorrow and angst of HIS trials, as he pours out his own complaint unto GOD as the ready pen of the suffering PROPHET. Yes, HE was compassed about with the “strong bulls of Bashan”, and has left HIS legacy for those who have been compelled by the HOLY GHOST to follow “in HIS steps.” HE was hated for HIS message and the Kingdom which HE came to establish.

As ambassadors of CHRIST, we are not sent into the world to seek out conflict and to instigate battles or be the champions of various social causes, though there might be many which are worthy of our attention. The sons of GOD are not sent to seek out battles to fight in this world, nor to engage in crusades for justice, morality, and orthodoxy.

The true enemies of the people of GOD do manifest themselves in battle array each and every day, and they are not clothed in the robes of societal ills and injustice. There is nothing which Satan and his minions of darkness delight in anymore than getting the disciples of CHRIST sidetracked and fighting battles (which in and of themselves may be worthy causes) which are not **the** battle.

The true enemies of GOD’s people will make themselves known in three ways as they rise in opposition to the finished redemptive work of CHRIST.

First of all there are those who will oppose the clear proclamation of the gospel which declares that JESUS CHRIST has obtained eternal redemption for HIS elect Bride. These are external enemies who may through ignorance or design set themselves in opposition to the preaching of CHRIST as an absolutely triumphant SAVIOR who has accomplished in full exactly what HE set out to do, completely apart from any activity of men.

They usually consider themselves as friends of the Gospel, but their message declares a false savior who merely attempts to save men. In so doing they would fail to bring comfort to those who are sinners burdened under the weight of their sin and who despair of deliverance by any action of their own. Any who would break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax cannot be said to be the friend of CHRIST, who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Then there are those enemies, some working externally and some internally, which seek to sow seeds of doubt in the minds of GOD’s people as to the truth of HIS word and the faithfulness of HIS promise. They would include all of those who seek to bring the sons of GOD back into the bondage from which CHRIST has made them free, by demanding adherence to external codes and rules of conduct which they deem as necessary tests of ones faithfulness and standing with the LORD.

They are seldom those who would openly confess opposition to the message of free grace but in a very real practical sense, bring harm to the sons of GOD by persuading them to compare themselves among themselves rather than to CHRIST alone, and thus encourage them to go about to establish their own righteousness. HE is the only STANDARD by which any of the conduct of the LORD’s people is to be measured and nothing that men may “require” from the brethren can enhance that.

Then there is that greatest of all of the enemies of GOD’s people. That one who whispers in their ear night and day, that one who never sleeps, and whose ardor to destroy the sons of GOD is never abated. Some might, perhaps, think that I refer here to Satan, who is indeed an arch enemy of the sons of GOD, even as HE was to their MASTER who has crushed HIS head.

No, the one to whom I refer is this sinful flesh in which we presently dwell, which is currently in a pitched battle for the souls of the sons of GOD as it wars constantly against the SPIRIT that inhabits those who have been born from above. The flesh never rests nor does its nature ever change, though he (or she) alters its tactics from time to time. Sometimes it will present the joys of fleshly lusts with promises of great enjoyment. Sometimes it will do the same with various religious endeavors or activities which the natural man would deem benevolent and useful.

But the one purpose from which the flesh never swerves is to seek to turn the eyes of GOD’s children from the finished work of CHRIST and to encourage the sons of GOD to rely upon something else, whether it be doctrine, morality, or their own endeavors. mam