

# 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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## MY FLOCK, MY PASTURE, SAITH THE LORD

*And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD.*

*Ezekiel 34:31*

When Paul was on his final journey to Jerusalem, he met with the elders from the church at Ephesus. He gave them wise counsel and issued a most sobering exhortation. *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* (Acts 20:28) He left them with no doubt as to the primary work to which they were called and equipped by the SPIRIT of GOD. This is no calling which is issued by men, their committees, or the vote of any congregation. Neither can a man take up this calling as a career choice. The *"HOLY GHOST hath made you overseers."*

As in all things which are true, Satan has made his counterfeits which mimic in many ways those who are truly called by the SPIRIT of GOD. Thus, Paul issues a most dire warning of the certainty of apostasy and its leading cause. *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves (i.e.; out of those present) shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."* (Acts 20:29-31)

He warned them of two things: 1. That grievous wolves would raid the flock with the intention of preaching some other message than JESUS CHRIST and HIM crucified. This is illustrated over and over again through the ages and is most notably true since there is not one of those early churches which stood the test of time nor left any credible witness to TRUTH in their locales. 2. That some of those who were numbered with them and seeming to be in good standing, would nonetheless seek places of preeminence among the flock in order to gain a personal following and build edifices (I am not speaking of bricks and mortar, but of ideas and errant doctrine which does not center and rest in JESUS CHRIST and HIM crucified) of their own. Now we are certain that none of this has ever taken place apart from the fulfilling of the ordained purpose of GOD, but that does not diminish the wickedness of those involved nor negate their sin. (see Mark 14:21)

We live in an era which is characterized by the "cult of the pastor (or preacher)" wherein congregations depend on the ministry of individuals rather than the ministry of the body. There is no shortage of those who desire to fill these positions of prominence, privilege, and honor. Just like Israel of old, who desired a king like the other nations, many today desire to have these "pastor kings", "worship leaders", and all sorts of other "professional" positions. They gravitate to fixed orders of "worship", preselected hymns, and scoff at the concepts laid out by Paul to the Corinthian church, (see I Cor.14:26-40); believing that human order is the same as that of the HOLY GHOST.

Ezekiel brought a very similar message to the nation of Israel, in particular to those who were the "shepherds (i.e.; pastors)" of the flock. *"Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye*

*eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.”* (Eze 34:2-4) By nature all men will seek their own benefit so we are not surprised to see such things take place, and because of the natural man’s penchant to have a “king”, not surprised that men will willingly allow themselves to be fleeced by hucksters and charlatans, with a Bible in one hand and the other in people’s pockets. Those who are called of GOD are not seeking the wealth of those to whom they are sent. (see I Tim.3:3, Tit 1:7,11; I Pet.5:2)

The LORD has a vested interest in those whom HE is pleased to call, “my flock”. HE distinguishes them from those who belong to another shepherd. “*But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*” (John 10:26-27) The distinguishing characteristic of those who are “HIS flock”, is that when they are called, they will follow HIM, for they are given faith to believe that HE is the GOOD SHEPHERD who gives HIS life for the sheep. They will not follow another shepherd, because they are made to know that HE alone has the words of eternal life as Peter confessed. They may not be able to sufficiently explain how or why they know this to be true, but each will make the same confession. “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” (Rom 10:17)

The Psalmist David, wrote, “*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*” (Psa 23:1) Many who, in reality, are not HIS sheep often quote this verse with presumptive “faith”, thinking that HE is some sort of universal SHEPHERD trying HIS best to round up as many sheep as HE can get. They even figure that they will let HIM be their shepherd whenever they need HIM. They take comfort in this sentimental consideration, quoting it at funerals, and beside sick beds. Those who truly, are HIS sheep take delight in what David said in the next verses, “*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*” (Psa 23:2-3)

David said, “*For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*” (Psa 84:10) The sheep have no desire to feed in a pasture that is not HIS. They desire those “green pastures”, which HE has planted and tended specifically for that flock which is the object of HIS everlasting love. “*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) “*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*” (Rom 8:9) The delight of the sons of GOD is not simply to find pasture but to be led by HIM into HIS pasture. “*And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*” (John 10:5) “*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.*” (Psa 122:1)

David said, “*he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*” The LORD makes no apology for being jealous of HIS own glory. And well HE should, for HE is the GREAT I AM, who does according to HIS will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. HE does all things “*for HIS NAME’S sake*”. HE has a NAME which is above every name. HE is also jealous for the blessing of those whom HE loves, and nothing will deter HIM from bringing them out of darkness and into the LIGHT. What a glorious GOD and SAVIOR HE is!

The sheep will bow down before HIM and worship at HIS footstool while the goats will “but” when HIS sovereign, reigning grace is declared by those sent to proclaim it. HE is the GOOD SHEPHERD who gives HIS life for the sheep and knows HIS own sheep by name. (see John 10:11,14.) HE is the GREAT SHEPHERD who has risen from the dead and triumphed over it, breaking its grip as HE became the FIRST FRUITS of them that sleep. (see Heb.13:20) HE is the CHIEF SHEPHERD who comes again to receive that possession which HE has purchased. (see I Pet 5:4) “*All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*” (1Pet 5:5)

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