

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

THE SMITERS SMITTEN

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. Isaiah 50:6

With one phrase the LORD stripped HIS hearers of any supposed adherence to HIS law, which they might entertain in their minds. HE magnified the glory of HIS law (“*Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thine heart*” and “*thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*”), as HE humbled men in the dust, saying, “*But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*” (Mat 5:39) I can think of no other teaching, which HE gave, that strikes any more squarely at the root of mans pride and demonstrates the innate rebellion which men have against HIS law. To say that this teaching is quite startling, is surely a great understatement. When a man is struck in his fleshly body, he will naturally desire to do the same to the one who struck him, even if he does not literally or physically strike back at his smiter.

This shows the work of the law written in his heart. “*An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.*” No one needs to teach a man to operate by this principle or have this for a mindset, for he comes by it quite naturally. No man has to be persuaded that it is wrong to steal. He knows that it is because he will become angry if someone steals something from him. He may excuse himself for stealing from someone else, but he will not excuse the same crime committed against himself. “*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.*” (Rom 2:14-15)

So, the LORD gives men no place to glory in their supposed “keeping” of HIS law regardless of how intent they may be in walking according to its precepts. The rich young ruler was convinced that he had kept the law from his youth, having a great respect unto it. Yet when the LORD revealed to him the “truth” of HIS law in SPIRIT rather than letter, he went away sorrowing. Paul recounts the exact same reaction in his letter to the Romans. “*For I was alive without the law once: (i.e.; a true understanding of it) but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.*” (Rom 7:9-11)

There is certainly no fault in the law, for it is holy, just, and good. The problem men have is that their flesh is weak, and they cannot “*keep the law*” (in its jot and tittle) and are, in reality, innately in rebellion against it. (see Rom. 8:3) Sin has rendered their keeping of the law to be, at best, in part and not completely. To fail in one part of it is to completely fail to keep any of it. “*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*” (Jas 2:10) So, are we then to throw up our hands in despair and give ourselves over to the lusts of our flesh. “*God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*” (Rom 6:2)

The remedy for the sons of GOD is not to be found in themselves, but rather in being given eyes to see the gracious provision that has been made for them by the LORD JESUS CHRIST. “*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.*” (Rom 8:3) “*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that*

hangeth on a tree.” (Gal 3:13) CHRIST used the very law that condemned HIS people, because of their weakness, to justify them by becoming their STRENGTH; bearing the debt of their sin, canceling their guilt by taking it upon HIMSELF, and making them faultless before the throne of GOD by HIS righteousness laid to their account. “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” (Heb 9:12) “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (Rom 8:31-34)

In HIS mercy CHRIST does make HIMSELF known unto those for whom HE has purchased this eternal redemption. The manner in which HE does so is to “smite” them, with tender mercies, revealing to them their sin, depravity, and utter weakness in the face of the law’s demands. HE unfolds to them HIS own “weakness” and “suffering” in their behalf. Broken hearts ensue and they cannot continue their rebellion against HIM. HE is the RECONCILER, who draws HIS people with cords of love and mercy. “*Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.*” (Psa 141:5)

In HIS mercy, the LORD does set forth the depths of HIS sorrows, so that HIS people might have some understanding of HIS great faithfulness and HIS fervent love for them. “*I gave my back to the smiters.*” HIS back was turned to HIS “smiters”, so that they could not “see” HIS face. They could not see HIS eyes which belied the great sorrow which HE bore, not for the physical pain (which was intense to be sure) but rather HIS being “*made sin*” for HIS people. Each stripe that the “smiters” laid upon HIM, was ordained by HIS FATHER to be carried out by the wicked hands of HIS crucifiers. HE yielded HIMSELF up as an offering for sin and by such stripes HE brought relief unto HIS elect. “*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. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*” (Isa 53:3-5)

Great pain is associated with “*plucking the hair*”, yet our LORD counted it but a light thing because of HIS love of that people whose pain HE gladly bore. Few things are more degrading to a human being than being “spat upon”, especially in the face. CHRIST bore the shame and humiliation of HIS elect because HE loved them with an everlasting love. The contempt of the law for sinners, and that of men for the LORDSHIP of CHRIST, were both demonstrated in this degradation of the SON of GOD. “*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” (Heb 12:2)

When HE walked among men, HE was clothed with humility, quite unlike any who have ever come before HIM or after HIM. “*Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*” (1Pet 2:22-23) HE submitted HIMSELF to the “smiters” in order to bear the guilt, shame, and condemnation which is rightfully due to those sons of Adam, who HE has loved from the beginning. All men are worthy of death, humiliation, and utter destruction, but HE has taken that which belonged to HIS elect, upon HIMSELF as their SUBSTITUTE and ADVOCATE. No doubt there were some among HIS “smiters”, who HE “smote” with the kindness of HIS mercy in revealing HIS glory to them, such as that centurion who said, “*Truly this man was the Son of God.*” (Mar 15:39) Yet the multitude of those smiters shall be smitten by HIM with judgment that they would dare to wound the LAMB of GOD. “*The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*” (2Thes 1:7-9) “Lo! He comes with clouds descending, once for favored sinners slain; thousand, thousand saints attending, swell the triumph of his train: Alleluia, alleluia! Christ reveals his endless reign.” Do you see HIM? mam