

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume VI

Issue 1

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

THE LAMENT OF ZION

But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Isaiah 49:14

The LORD has clearly promised to never leave or forsake those whom HE calls HIS children or HIS elect. In fact we read in this very passage from which we take our text that HE says, even though a nursing mother may forget her child (as unlikely as that may be) yet HE will never forget or cast off those whom HE loves with an everlasting love. *“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.”* (Isa. 49:15-16) As HE told Joshua that HE would never forsake him (see Josh.1:5) so HE will never leave nor forsake any of those for whom HE has shed HIS precious blood. (see Heb.13:5)

By nature all men are convinced that the blessings and judgements of GOD are dispensed according to their faithfulness, relative to one another. (see Luke 13:1-5) Even after a man has been born again he is not completely free of such a mindset. (see John 9:1-3) Many of GOD's children (to varying degrees) still entertain the notion that GOD's acceptance of them is in some measure dependent on their relative obedience. We are quite sure that every occurrence which takes place in the lives of GOD's people is meant for their ultimate benefit even when they cannot see it at the time. (see Rom.8:28)

Paul preached to the believers at Antioch *“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”* (Acts 14:22) This “tribulation” can take on many forms but it is certain that all of GOD's children shall be exercised by troubles of one sort or other in their journey to the celestial city. The LORD JESUS said, *“In the world ye shall have tribulation.”* (John 16:33) Paul told Timothy, *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”* (2Tim.3:12)

Sometimes the “tribulations” and “persecutions” of GOD's children are external. These are administered to them by others who physically abuse them, sometimes even unto death. Paul recounts his own persecution of the early saints before his conversion in Acts 22:4. (see Acts 7:58; 8:3; 9:1) History itself records for us the horrific persecutions and tortures which many of the true sons of GOD have endured for HIS name's sake down through the annals of time. Those types of “persecutions” are clearly seen and such tribulation as this cannot be mistaken. Even though the degree of physical suffering may be much greater to those who are called upon to endure such troubles, yet the reality of “tribulation” is no less a fact to all of GOD's little ones who are privileged to walk in more civil and outwardly peaceful times. All of GOD's children are called upon to endure “tribulation”.

When the word “tribulation” is mentioned in our day, the minds of many are immediately turned to think of an imaginary “period of time” which the dispensationalists have dubbed the “great tribulation”. The tribulation of which we speak, which the sons of GOD are called upon to endure has nothing to do with “prophecy” nor “ages to come”.

All of the "tribulations" and "troubles" which befall the sons of GOD are ordained by HIM for their benefit because it is impossible that HE should ever cause anything to transpire for their hurt. (see Ps.91:10-16; Isa.63:9; Pro.3:23). These troubles are not necessarily visible to others, since they are often the product of their own sinfulness and unbelief. The LORD is pleased to vex HIS children with their own wanderings and disobedient tendencies in order that HE might convince them of their barrenness and their absolute dependence on HIM. By such "troubles" HE is pleased to make them aware of specific faults and failings in their lives, but sometimes HE is pleased to cause them to have great lamentations and forays into darkness without any apparent "reason" for their chastening. All of the chastening of the sons of GOD is not brought on them for specific "sins" that they are made aware of in the particular trials that they are going through. Sometimes HE is just pleased to remove their comforts even as HE did the prophet Jonah. (see Jonah 4:6,7) Sometimes HE is pleased to acquaint them with darkness of soul even as HE did with Jeremiah. (see Lam.1:13)

It is as a result of these times of vexation of spirit and wanderings of the mind that HE is often pleased to lift up their heads with joy as HE brings to their minds a remembrance of HIS great and precious promises. We cannot appreciate the depth of HIS blessings apart from a genuine acquaintance with the depravity of our own nature. The glibness and shallow character of modern "Christianity" is a manifestation of a lack of such an acquaintance. The average so called "believer" today has no understanding of the furnace through which the genuine sons of GOD are carried through. He cannot imagine what would ever prompt the sons of GOD to lament the day of their birth as Job and Jeremiah did. (see Job 3:1-16; Jer.20:14-18) We speak not here of external trials such as sickness or financial trouble, but of a much deeper vexation of spirit which only those who have had some acquaintance with the vileness of their own hearts can know. It is this acquaintance that would cause even the true sons of GOD to question whether or not the LORD has cast them off. The nominal "believer" finds such a condition abhorrent because he believes that the enjoyment of the LORD's blessings are not only his right but thinks that he can have them whenever he wants just by thinking positively about what GOD has promised to HIS own. There is a "relief of mind" which religious men may possess as they warm themselves by a fire which they have kindled. (see Isa.50:11)

The true sons of GOD, however, can never be satisfied with such a fire but are compelled to cry out to the LORD for warmth and light. (see Isa.50:10) They are quite convinced that *"Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."* (Psa 127:1) The power of positive thinking offers no comfort for those whose hope is in CHRIST alone. That man who is acquainted with his own dark heart knows that the LORD should cast HIM off daily and would not be surprised if HE did except that that same gracious LORD is pleased to apply the sweet healing balm of the gospel to his very soul and allay his fears and give him strength to stand.

For this very reason the LORD of great mercy has ordained that the gospel be preached as a *"healing for the nations"*. (see Rev.22:2; Ezek.47:8-11) Well did the LORD describe HIS ministry, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."* (Luke 4:18-19) What a glorious privilege has been given to the SONS of GOD not only to be acquainted with their own utter barrenness and fitness for destruction but to hear the gospel with hearing ears. *"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall."* (Mal 4:1-2)