

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume VII

Issue 9

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 SENTENCE OF DEATH

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.

II Corinthians 1:9

I once heard a man say that a "dog in the hunt does not know that he has fleas." Of course when the same old hound was laying around on the porch on a summer afternoon his slumber would often be interrupted by the need to scratch and bite at those pesky critters that seemed to crawl all over him. Paul describes the dangers and tribulations that had befallen him during his endeavors to preach the gospel to those to whom the LORD had sent him. He said, "*For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.*" (2Cor 1:8)

Despair is a very empty feeling and one which a man cannot deliver himself out of. If the LORD is not pleased to deliver a man from utter despair that man will surely perish. Judas is a good example of a man in the anteroom of hell with no deliverer. All that he could do was to destroy himself and then to endure an even greater torment. How sad it is to look upon the once great king Saul as he sits in the house of the witch of Endor and contemplates the fact that he has been cast off from being king of Israel.

The LORD describes HIS own actions in such seasons as these that HE brings upon men from time to time. "*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD.*" (Prov 1:24-29)

To be made mindful that there is no source of help for a man in himself is naturally that which brings men to despair. Now it would appear to the natural mind that such a state of despair is to be avoided at all costs. This is exactly the purpose that man's natural religion serves in his own mind. He can rest better at night if he thinks that he is fulfilling some purpose which is greater than the simple fulfillment of his own carnal desires. What he cannot see is that those things which he counts as "spiritual" are most often simply a device of his mind to label his carnal pursuits as holy and good because he has clothed himself in the garments of religion of one type or another and gone about to establish his own righteousness.

Yet what Paul is speaking about here is the greatest blessing that a man can be given. To be awakened to the fact that there is not one thing in this world that is worth living for and that

no part of our flesh and blood can either deliver us or perform any service to GOD that is of a lasting value, yet at the same time nothing that can befall us in this life is of any consequence nor can it prevent our service to HIM who has bought us, since our hope is CHRIST alone. He said in another place, *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."* (Rom 8:18)

Speaking of his trials to the Ephesian elders, he said, *"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."* (Act 20:24) This is what he meant when he said *"we had the sentence of death in ourselves."*

The natural man would be horrified to learn that he had been given a "sentence of death". Yet Paul said, rather joyously, *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* (Gal 2:20) Our sentence of death is :

Currently being experienced. We are not waiting until some future time for this to occur, but all of those who have been made alive in CHRIST, have also "died" in HIM. Paul said, *"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."* (Rom 6:6) *"How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* (Rom 6:2) *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."* (Rom 8:1-2)

The source of great freedom. Paul says, *"that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."* What a glorious revelation to the freeborn sons of GOD when they are shown that HE is their PERFORMER. All of their confidence is in HIM who has never failed in one jot or tittle to fulfill all righteousness in their behalf. They know themselves to be free from the law and all of its condemnation; neither can their flesh ever hold them captive. *"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."* (1Cor. 6:12)

A deliverance from the fear of men. *"So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."* (Heb 13:6) When we have been made to clearly see our standing with CHRIST who can be against us? What power on earth can overcome us? Even if these bodies in which we currently reside are beaten, hanged, or burnt beyond recognition we are not moved. *"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."* (2Cor 5:1)

A reminder of HIM who died in our behalf. *"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you;"* (John 15:20) We are called to follow in HIS steps but we are ever mindful that HE endured the curse of the law for us when we were unable to even recognize the sin which separated us from HIM. O the depths of HIS love and mercy that such a ONE as HE is, should suffer and bleed for such a wretched people as we are. *"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."* (Rom 5:6-11)