

# 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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## A CONSUMING FIRE

*For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.*

*Deuteronomy 4:24*

We have often heard men say that the GOD of the Old Testament is a GOD of wrath while the GOD of the New Testament is a GOD of love and forgiveness. The prevailing thought is that GOD has somehow "mellowed out" and is not quite so exacting in the present day as HE was in the days of old. Of course this is a complete and utter error since GOD reveals HIMSELF as immutable or unchangeable and is the same yesterday, today and forever.

The error that these deluded guides make is that they suppose GOD has had this change of attitude or character, making HIM now more apt to forgive and forget. Yet this is just the opposite of what HE reveals about HIMSELF. *"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."* (Mal 3:6) The very reason that HE does not consume HIS chosen people right along with those HE has appointed to destruction is that HE changes not.

This is the only basis upon which the elect might have the hope of salvation. HE is indeed a consuming fire and the fact that HE will not alter the thing which has gone out of HIS mouth (see Ps.89:34) is the very foundation of the hope of those who have been given faith to believe HIS word. *"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."* (Heb 6:17-20)

The religion of the flesh and free will is built upon the notion that GOD demonstrates HIS love for the whole human race by making salvation "available" to each and every one. All they have to do is bring their faith and complete the transaction which HE anxiously waits for them to do. The fly in the ointment with this scenario (besides having no basis in the scriptures) is that by nature man is dead in trespasses and sins, will not seek the LORD, nor will he come when called.

The scripture indicates that the love of GOD is demonstrated by the particular and peculiar nature of it. HE clearly states that HE does not love everyone the same. *"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."* (Rom 9:13) HE has not only set HIS particular love upon a people which HE chose in CHRIST before the foundation of the world but HE has determined to save them from their sins and deliver them from the destruction which they richly deserve.

The sons of GOD have never been the objects of HIS wrath even though they are as guilty and worthy of condemnation as any of the rest of Adam's offspring. They have been appointed as the heirs of salvation just as much so as the reprobate have been ordained unto destruction. *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1Thes 5:9) *"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this*

*condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Jude 1:4)*

Those who are the objects of HIS mercy, are brought to confess that they are worthy of destruction, they know that in themselves dwelleth no good thing and the only reason that they do not perish with the rest of the world is simply because of the goodness, grace, and mercy of HIM who changes not. They could have no confidence at all in HIS mercy if HE was not so.

The writer of Hebrews (which we believe to be Paul) quotes this passage from Deuteronomy in order to confirm the very fact that the hope of the sons of GOD is upon this firm foundation. *“And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb 12:27-29)*

HE does consume:

The accusers of HIS people. There are basically three accusers of the brethren. The Law does breathe out threatenings and slaughters and is just in demanding the destruction of all sinners. The soul that sinneth shall die. All have sinned. All have broken the law. Satan rightly knows their wicked tendencies and their secret love of his treasures in this world. He also stirs up the men of this world to mock their inconsistencies and Adamic ways. Their conscience does smite them and brings to mind their wickedness.

CHRIST JESUS has silenced the Law, *“To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”(Rom 3:26)* *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Rom 8:1)*

CHRIST JESUS has bound Satan and hears not his accusations, having been tempted in all points by him, HE did triumph over him. Though HE has loosed him for a season that HE might use him for HIS own purpose yet he is as a toothless lion who merely roars and can devour none of those for whom CHRIST has been made SURETY. *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Heb 2:14-15)*

CHRIST JESUS does give the guilty conscience rest. *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:14)* *“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” (1John 3:20-21).* As Berridge wrote, “Does conscience lay a guilty charge, And Moses much condemn, And bring in bills exceeding large? Let Jesus answer them.”

The sin and guilt of HIS people. CHRIST came not simply to pay the sin debt of HIS people, which HE did absolutely by HIS death on Calvary’s cross, but HE was “made” sin for them. Their sin became HIS and HIS righteousness became theirs by imputation. As HE became sin so were they made righteous. They are justified, priests and kings, heirs and joint heirs with CHRIST.

The enemies of HIS people. *“I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.” (Isa 63:3-4)* All of the enemies of GOD’s people are the enemies of GOD. HE has made a show of them openly.

*“For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” (1Cor 15:25-26)* *“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”(1Cor 15:55-58)* A CONSUMING FIRE indeed! mam