

# GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XIX

Issue 4

*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*

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## LET BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Psalm 133:1*

When the LORD poured out HIS soul in Gethsemane's Garden, HE prayed, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." (John 17:11) Now I would not be so bold as to think that I could capture in a few words, all of the import and meaning of that prayer, yet I believe one aspect of HIS desire is illustrated in the words of the Psalmist as he delighted in the unity of the brethren. It is the LORD's purpose to bring HIS children together in bonds of love and familial ties with one another.

The natural man loves "unity" as long as they are confederate with one another in some carnal pursuit or some act of rebellion against the sovereign rule of the LIVING GOD. We see this most clearly illustrated on the plains of Shinar as the people became unified in one purpose. "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Gen 11:4) We see it in the opposition to the KING who is set upon the LORD's holy hill of Zion. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." (Psa 2:2-3) "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." (Prov 11:21)

Yet the "unity" of which the Psalmist speaks, is summarily despised by these same natural men, because it is not in the nature of man to desire the glory of GOD above all else. Men love religion, morality, and what they deem "good works", all of which they will pursue in lock step, for they can take glory in all of these things. Yet that "unity" of purpose to exalt and honor CHRIST alone, is foreign to their nature and will be avoided at all costs. Thus, we see Paul describing this manner when he wrote to the Corinthians saying, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." (1Cor 1:18) "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness." (1Cor 1:23)

Natural men will "join hand in hand" in any message except that which is designed to humble men in the dust and take away all grounds which they might have to glory. Thus, we see men unite to oppose the absolute sovereignty of GOD to choose one vessel unto honor and another to dishonor as it pleases HIM. As long as the supposed "free will" of men is set forth, the men of this world can find a place of agreement. This is illustrated as "politicians" and others speak of various "faiths" which men are involved in which they deem to all be of some benefit to mankind in general.

There is no clearer illustration of this natural hatred of the rulership of CHRIST than in the "unity" of Jew and Gentile alike to destroy HIM. "And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were (i.e.; beforehand) at enmity between themselves." (Luke 23:12) "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death." (Mat 26:59) "But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar." (John 19:15) These same Jews despised Caesar, yet they were unified with Rome in this one desire to unseat the KING of glory.

Peter declared this very fact to the nation of Israel on the day of Pentecost. *"Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain"* (Acts 2:23) Even this very wickedness of men was according to the predestined purpose of HIM who knows the end from the beginning, yet this in no wise diminished the evil which was in their hearts in this quest. Rather, it serves to illustrate the unified resolve of men by nature to not have this MAN to rule over them. *"But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him."* (Mat 21:37-39)

Religious men will be confederate in their attempts to dethrone HIM by opposing the definite atonement of the LORD for HIS elect bride. In order to exalt the free will of men they will minimize the extent and purpose of the work of CHRIST as they promote the notion that HE died for the sins of all men, merely making their salvation a "possibility", which depends upon their action of belief to make it effectual. In doing so they deny that HE actually purchased the redemption of HIS elect with HIS precious blood, which then ultimately negates HIS power to rule in HIS kingdom, making men to have the final say. This is the foolishness of men.

Quite in contrast to this natural bent of men, we see the LORD's work on the behalf of those whom HE has called HIS sons (and purchased with HIS blood) and in whom HE works *"both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure."* Paul's exhortation, *"Let brotherly love continue."* (Heb 13:1); does not fall on deaf ears, but upon those whom the LORD gives ears to hear. HE has both bought HIS sons with HIS blood and ordained them unto good works and the love of one another. *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* (Eph 2:10)

The natural man is not disposed to love his neighbor, even as himself, let alone above himself. It is a rare occasion to see this exhibited in the world, and unity of brethren in CHRIST can only occur as HE is pleased to cause them to "see eye to eye" (see Isa.52:8) by the indwelling of HIS SPIRIT. We see this unity and brotherly love exhibited in the life of the only perfect MAN who has ever walked upon the earth. *"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."* (Rom 5:7-8)

HE has shown us the proper extent of true brotherly love as HE willingly and gladly denied HIMSELF for HIS brethren. Can any of those for whom HE prayed, be satisfied with a measure of love one to the other which is not like HIM? Certainly, HE is our IDEAL and EXAMPLE that we should follow in HIS steps even as Paul describes the love of CHRIST in the 13 Chapter of I Corinthians. *"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth"*. (1Cor 13:4-8)

This is the very PATTERN the sons of GOD are called upon and led by the HOLY GHOST to follow. *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."* (Php 2:3-5) This is that "oneness" which CHRIST desired would be found in those for whom HE prayed. To be satisfied with something less is to deny CHRIST.

Paul's exhortation to let brotherly love continue is not given to the world, but rather to those who are called to be HIS children. Something cannot "continue" unless it has already begun. We love HIM (and those whom HE loves) because HE has first loved us. *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* (John 13:34-35) *"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."* (1John 3:14) *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."* (1John 4:7-8) To be without brotherly love is to deny the gospel. Do you love the brethren with a "pure heart fervently"? CHRIST did.

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