

# 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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## OUR EPITAPH

*In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness. Jeremiah 33:16*

When I was but a lad, my grandmother would regularly (probably about once a month or perhaps sometimes more often) visit our local cemetery to tend to the graves of her various family members who were buried there. She would clean the headstones, pull weeds, and plant flowers, etc. On occasion I would accompany her to help her with this task which seemed to me, at the time, quite fruitless. As my attention span suffered and my work ethic waned, I would sometimes walk around and look at the various headstones. Her words of warning not to step on the graves rang in my ears as I scurried here and there. As I read the names and sometimes quaint sayings and verses inscribed on those markers, my imagination would be stimulated to wonder what these people did and thought, and how they died. I was especially enamored by those who had died around the time of the Civil War and in the World Wars. It was also quite sobering to read about those whose death occurred in infancy and at an age quite younger than myself.

We live in a time when it seems quite fashionable to shield the eyes and thoughts of young children from the reality of death in the quest to flood their minds with “positive thoughts” and influences. I think that this is a mistake, since the reality of death is much more certain than the life of the present age. For all are appointed unto death and none shall escape it, except those who are alive and remain at the LORD’s coming. The solemnity of this fact must be coupled with pointing out the ONE who makes this appointment. *“See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.” (Deu 32:39)* This solemn TRUTH is only tempered with the teaching that *“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” (Psa 116:15)* *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.” (Prov 9:10)* *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Pro 22:6)*

The whole scriptural teaching concerning the burial of the dead, has in many ways (perhaps due to cost or convenience) been supplanted by a growing acceptance of the practice of cremation. Now I am quite certain that the burning of a believer’s body has no detrimental effect upon his resurrection in the spiritual body which is given to the saints in that glorious day. But I am equally certain that the practice of cremation is essentially a pagan exercise. The heathen have always burned their dead. The LORD never prescribed such for HIS people, however. HE said that one day, the graves would be opened; and if we had no other example of the proper disposal of a body, that of the LORD JESUS should be a sufficient model.

The term “buried” occurs 97 times in the OT and 9 times in the NT and literally means, “interred”. The act of cremation is a willful destruction of the body whereas the act of burial is a committing of it back to the dust from whence it came, in the same fashion as the LORD buried Moses. *“And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.” (Deu 34:6)* Job understood this practice and process as he said, *“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” (Job 19:26)*

I don’t presume to change the course or mind of the multitude who seem determined to adopt the practices of the heathen, nor do I think that cremation somehow makes one unacceptable before GOD. However, I do solemnly contend that such a practice is not scripturally warranted for those who fear GOD and desire to walk in the LIGHT of the scriptures, in contradiction to the ways of the world. *“Be ye not*

*unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2Cor 6:14)*

The Psalmist accurately described the life span of men when he penned these words. *"Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah" (Psa 39:5)* James had this to say on the same subject. *"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (Jas 4:14)*

Due to the relative shortness of life, many people are quite concerned with their "legacy", and desire that they might be remembered in some fashion. There is no shortage of companies that specialize in such "memorials" which are then recorded in stone for men to read in the coming years. On these memorials is often recorded, not just the dates of birth and death, but some glowing testimony of the person's accomplishments and character. So, we might ask what is the "epitaph" of the sons of GOD? By what do they wish to be known?

The awakened sons of GOD can have no reliance or glory in any obedience, devotion, or act of kindness which they might perform, since the SPIRIT of GOD does convince them of their own corruption. *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom 3:10-18)*

In one fell swoop of this scripture, all of the expectations of discovering some righteousness of their own is taken away and they are convinced by the SPIRIT that *"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom 3:23)* They know that they must be numbered with those who confess with David, *"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psa 51:3-5)* They find no comfort in hearing accolades of their "good works" among men, nor might I add any desire to have such etched in stone in any marker that might identify their final Earthly resting place.

Our sin has gone over us as an ocean wave and we are swept off of our feet with no place to stand in the presence of a HOLY GOD. Was it not that GOD who is rich in mercy, has revealed HIS determined purpose to save HIS children, we, along with all of those who have fled for refuge to CHRIST, would surely despair. Though the night has certainly fallen upon us, yet the DAYSPRING from on HIGH has visited us, bringing HIS SALVATION and securing our REDEMPTION by HIS own blood on Calvary's cross.

Isaiah, in old times, prophesied of those who would cast themselves upon HIS mercy when he wrote, *"And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach." (Isa 4:1)* Truly HIS NAME is that wherein GOD's awakened children desire to be called. Their own names are reminders of their reproach. But HIS NAME, which is a NAME above all names, is that wherein they find relief from their innate darkness and the only ONE which is accepted in Heaven.

So, the NAME of JESUS CHRIST is the only NAME which is fitting for their EPITAPH. HE alone has done good. HE alone is their RIGHTEOUSNESS. *"In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness." (Jer 33:16)* HE alone is their SANCTIFICATION. Some entertain the notion that they are "being" sanctified by a continual process which more or less depends on their activity and will. HE alone has set HIS people apart (i.e.; sanctified) as the apple of HIS eye and the sheep of HIS pasture. And HE makes them completely HOLY by HIS action alone, they cannot add to that which is complete, nor can they take it away.

HIS NAME is the only NAME under heaven whereby a man must be saved. Some would read that as that he "might" be saved as if such is in doubt. The LORD said, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28)*

If any monument must be raised over our graves let it have this EPITAPH. *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1Cor 1:30-31)*