

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

JUGING OURSELVES

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 1 Corinthians 11:31

One of the most difficult things that we are called upon to do as children of GOD is to simply be honest. Each one of us desires to be seen in a good light by others. This often leads us to be less than truthful. Sometimes, we find ourselves embellishing some story of our exploits or perhaps failing to report every detail of our journey for fear that our flaws may be uncovered and we appear less competent than we want others to believe we are. Or we try to appear more spiritually minded than we really are. This conduct is understandable and somewhat excusable given our need for acceptance by others. But there is a behavior which is equally prevalent, totally inexcusable, and if unchecked will lead us to destruction. That is: when we fail to be totally truthful with our own selves.

Peter said, *"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of GOD."* (I Pet.4:17) We have a great responsibility to set a watch on ourselves. Our LORD said *"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* (Mt.26:41) One of the biggest mistakes that we can make is in not recognizing who our main struggle is against. In order for even the greatest general to be successful in battle he must first identify his enemy and then accurately assess his enemy's strength. In the same fashion we must first recognize that our greatest foe is not the forces of evil which surround us, though they are great and not to be trifled with. The greatest source of conflict for the children of God is our own flesh. *"For the flesh lusteth (i.e. works against) against the Spirit"* (Gal.5:17) *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."*(Rom.7:18). So we must prepare for battle with the proper understanding that we are still sinners. (see I Jn. 1:8)

We must individually be our own harshest critic. Those who are satisfied with the level of their personal holiness before ALMIGHTY GOD do not have the proper standard of holiness before their eyes. *"Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I AM holy"* (I Pet. 1:16) Those who believe that their prayer life is what it should be do not know what true prayer really is. *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* (Jas.5:16) One of the LORD'S disciples said unto him, *"LORD teach us to pray."* (Lk. 11:1) Those who are convinced that they know and understand all things concerning the word of GOD do not understand that the world, much less a book cannot completely contain the WOE of GOD. JESUS said; *"I am the AAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE no man cometh unto the FATHER but by me."* (Jn. 14:6) Men by their own wisdom cannot grasp the things of GOD for they are spiritually discerned. (see II Cor.2:14)

Having recognized who our foe is we must also be aware of his strength. *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* (Jer. 17:9) Our flesh will always overcome us if we do not continually strike at its very root. Paul said *"if ye, through the SPIRIT, do mortify (i.e. put to death) the deeds of the body, ye shall live."*(Rom.8:13) Sometimes we become enamored with the liberty which we have in CHRIST (see Rom.8:1) and we allow our flesh to pervert it, and turn it into a license whereby it can dominate us. Paul knew the strength of his flesh when he said, *"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others. I myself should be a castaway."* (I Cor.9L27) We must be very

diligent to set a watch over our heart, our lips and our bodies. Our flesh loves to have dominion over us. *"Therefore let us no sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."* (I Th.5:6) Not only must a successful general rightly identify his enemy and his enemy's strength. He must also accurately identify the source and magnitude of his own strength. This is an absolute necessity for the people of GOD in our struggle with the flesh. If we seek to overcome the flesh in the power of the flesh, then we shall fail miserably. That which is of the flesh will fail, *"For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."* (Rom. 7:18) GOD'S people are not weak; but they must come to a realization that their strength is not of themselves but of Christ. *"I can do all thing through CHRIST which strengtheth me."*(Phil.4:13) *"There hath no temptation (or trial) taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* (I Cor. 10:13) *"Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy GOD; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."* (Isa.41:10) HE is our strength in the time of struggle. Without HIM we are doomed to fail. With Him we are destined to triumph.

Finally: not even the best of generals, who knows who his enemy is, knows his enemies strength, and understands the source of his own power can win a war and triumph over his foe if he does not enter the battle and fight. *"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."* (Rom. 13:12-14) Paul admonished Timothy to *"fight the good fight of faith"* (I Tim. 6:12) and then wrote his own epitaph when he said *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course"* (II Tim. 4:7) Can we honestly say the same?

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