

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

A CITY WITHOUT WALLS

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.
Proverbs 25:28

While we are quite certain that we serve a GOD who is absolutely sovereign; we are equally certain that we are totally responsible for our actions. The will and purpose of ALMIGHTY GOD cannot and will not be thwarted; yet at the same time men must give an account of their thoughts as well as their activities. While we must confess that we are full of sin from head to foot, yet we cannot use this confession to excuse our sinful ways. In fact, the very realization of this state we find ourselves in should be all the reason we need to step up our diligence in confronting our sinful nature. GOD never intended that HIS people should be the "servants of sin"(see Rom.6:16,17) We are rather described in the scriptures as "overcomers" and those who triumph and live in victory. (see Rom.12:21, I Jn.2:13)

Our spirit is the very seat and heart of all that animates and motivates us. Solomon said, "*as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.*" (Prov.23:7) and also "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*" (Prov.4:23) The LORD JESUS said that the things which a man takes into his body could not defile him but "*that which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man, for from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: and these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*" (Mark 7:20-23). So we have within us a ravaging beast that desires to rule us and gain complete control over us. Quite a fearful thought were it not that the LORD has also given us the ability through the gift of HIS SPIRIT to break that dominion and live an abundant life which knows the taste of victory over that iron grip.(see Rom.7:24) Though we are not yet what we should be or shall be, yet by the grace of GOD we are certainly not what we once were. We who once were "*dead in trespasses and sins*" are now seated "*in heavenly places in CHRIST JESUS*" created in HIM "*unto good works, which GOD hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*"(see Eph.2:1-10)

The "spirit" which Solomon said should be ruled is primarily the seat of our emotions and appetites. One only has to look at the nearest buffet line and those who frequent them to see the results of failing to curb the appetite. But overeating is not primarily what Solomon had in mind. This is just a very practical example which illustrates the necessity of man to set a watch on his desire to feed all of his appetites. The emotions also must be ruled or they too will rule us. "*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey*" (Rom.6:16).

Of all the emotions, the one that scripture speaks most about is anger. Anger in itself is not a bad thing. The LORD JESUS CHRIST became angry when HE saw the money changers in the temple. But anger is a very strong emotion that certainly must be ruled over or it will take over control us. The man who does not rule his spirit of anger is destined to be destroyed by it. "*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*" (Prov.16:32) Following closely to anger is the spirit of judgementalism. We are taught in GOD'S word that "he that is spiritual judgeth all things".(I Cor. 2:15) Yet the LORD himself warned

us to *"Judge not, that ye be not judged"* (Mt. 7:1) Simply put we are to be judges without "passing judgement" on others. This does not mean we are to approve of everything that others do or that we adopt the notion that there is no such thing as right and wrong. But we must fight against the emotion of self-righteousness that coupled with anger can lead us to speak condemnation on them while we excuse the same thing in ourselves.(see Mt.7:1-5) We ought more to be associated with the spirit of forgiveness than condemnation.(see Luke 6:37)

Another emotion that if left unchecked can control us is that of sadness and despair. Sadness is a natural emotion that is very normal in certain circumstances. There are times when sadness is appropriate. Yet as natural as having a sad countenance is from time to time; we must be on guard to rule over that spirit of sadness which is self-serving (i.e. self pity) and will ultimately lead us to despair. Paul said, *"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed"* (II Cor. 4:8,9) Things may not always go just like we want them to, but we always have the promise of God that *"all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to HIS purpose."* (Rom.8:28) Just as dangerous as sadness that leads to despair, is the emotion of happiness that becomes an obsession. Some people are convinced that by acting happy all the time they can find true happiness. They stop at nothing to "cheer others up". They go about with a perpetual smile as though such a thing as true sadness does not exist. Still others are convinced that their happiness is the most important quest on earth regardless of the consequences to others. Paul said *"Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved"* (I Cor.10:33) Our happiness ought always find its greatest expression in ministering to the well being of others.

The appetites of our spirit that must be ruled over are many. The scripture plainly sets forth the main ones, with the most emphasis placed on the "lust of the flesh We have certain needs as human beings which are meant to be met in moderation. We have already discussed the appetite for food and drink which is often abused. Mankind's sexual nature is the very foundation of the procreation of our species. Yet it is the lack of control over this appetite, that can destroy the very species it was meant to expand. *"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."* (James 1:15) The "lust of the eyes" may often be motivated by the lust of the flesh (see Mt.5:28) but it is also manifested in the desire to gain earthly possessions. There are no limitations placed on the amount of money, houses, or lands one may rightfully possess but we do know that *"the love of money(i.e. gain) is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."* (I Tim.6:10). The "pride of life"(i.e.ego) is a good force in some ways but left unchecked can cause great sorrow. (see Ill Jn.1:9) *"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant"* (Mt.23:11)

As a city whose wall of protection is broken down so is the man (or woman) who fails to seek control over his(or her) emotions and appetites. Rather than being an exhibit of strength to the glory of the LORD, for the world to marvel at; they become that which is a laughingstock and a shame to the kingdom of GOD. *"The king's favor is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame."* (Prov.13:18)

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