

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

THE SWORD AND TROWEL

They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

Nehemiah 4:17

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great nineteenth century preacher(1834-1892), was the founder and editor of a periodical called "The Sword and Trowel" until his death in 1892. He coined that name alluding to this account in the book of Nehemiah. As Nehemiah led the Jews in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, their enemies issued threats of destruction upon them and the work they were trying to accomplish. But the Jews made their plea to GOD to give them aid and turn the counsels of the wicked to nought, which HE did. Then as they went about to do the work, they held their instruments of warfare and defense in one hand, and their instruments for building the wall with the other..

As the children of GOD, we are to be both builders and fighters just as these Jews were in the days of Nehemiah, the prophet. Our ultimate help will not be found in the strength of our own hands but in the ONE who has called us to this work. Yet we are called to the task at hand and we must not shrink back from it. While the Jews cried unto the LORD and trusted HIM for their deliverance they were faithful to perform the undertaking that HE set before them. They had a clear understanding both of the work to be done and the deadly nature of their enemies. While we are quite certain that our salvation is not in any way dependent on our works, we are equally certain that true faith cannot be demonstrated without works. (see James 2:14-26; Titus 1:10)

One does not have to search very far to find men who are exhorting GOD's people to great activity. The predominant religious thought today is to keep people stirred up with much busy work (all, of course, in the name of the LORD; see Mat.7:21-23). It is almost as if some believe that the more they do the more spiritual they are. The flesh is convinced that it can earn favor with GOD by its deeds and faithfulness. Therefore all of the world's religions are interested in the works of men but GOD is interested in the heart worship of HIS people. (see John 4:24;Mat.15:8;I Sam.16:7) HE would have us draw close to HIM rather than be engaged in many activities, which while they may keep us busy(and satisfy our religious flesh), they produce nothing of lasting value.

By HIS grace HE has called us to be workers in HIS vineyard. Yet the labor that we are to be involved in does not always produce that which is readily apparent to the eye of the flesh. We labor for those things that perish not, the warm embrace of our SAVIOR's hand, the smile upon HIS face, and the warmth of HIS glory. (see John 6:27) To walk with HIM in the cool of the evening and to lay our head upon HIS shoulder in the darkness of the night are blessings which the religious man can only speculate about but cannot know by experience. We are busy seeking HIS face and laboring to worship at HIS footstool. *"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look*

not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. “ (2 Cor 4:16-18)

We seek the benefit of our brethren, desiring to build them up in the most holy faith, that they (as well as we) might come to the full measure of the stature of CHRIST. We put off the old man with its lusts and are renewed daily by HIS SPIRIT. We pray for the saints, for ourselves, and that the will of GOD will be done in the earth as it is decreed in heaven. We preach the word, in season and out, as we go into the world, that CHRIST might be lifted up, glorified in word and deed.

The world can have no part in such labor as this. In fact the religious flesh scoffs at the notion that such activity can be construed as the work to which we are called to do. Surely that which men are sent to do has a more tangible aspect to it. There has to be something for men to see and touch and be able to glory in as they point out their accomplishments to impress others.

We are also confronted in this work by numerous enemies. The old comic strip character, Pogo, pretty well nailed down who our chief enemy is when he said, “we have met the enemy and he is us”. Our fleshly nature (i.e.,the old man) wars against us constantly. He has wounded us many times and is a constant intimidator and aggravator. Even if we had no other enemies, our flesh is quite capable of destroying us if we were left to our own devices. The world is also the enemy of the saints, for it has no friendship with the people of GOD. But much of the power that the world has to destroy the sons of GOD is mitigated by the fact that HIS SPIRIT indwells us and empowers us to recognize its siren song and overcome it by the blood of the LAMB.

There are other enemies of GOD’s children. They are described in the scriptures as those who are “enemies” of the cross. (see Phil.3:18) They would corrupt the gospel, preaching that which Paul calls “another gospel”.(Gal.1;6-9) They would seek to toss the sons of GOD to and fro with ever shifting winds of doctrine that exalt the flesh and attempt to steal the glory of the LORD. They would bring the free sons of GOD into bondage to religious dogmas and practices, and rob them of their freedom by seeking to enslave them to the law of sin and death from which the LORD JESUS has forever set them free. (see Eph.4:14; II Tim.4:3;Gal.3:1-5,19-29;4:1-7)

Another enemy of the saints who would take great delight in our total destruction is Satan. He goes about seeking to destroy all of those who are the recipients of GOD’s grace. If one listens to some preachers today, they could become convinced that Satan is a rival to the LIVING GOD. We have respect for him as a worthy adversary whose strength exceeds our own, but we know that he is a defeated foe, who has no power at all except that which GOD allows him to have.

We are certain that he shall not triumph in any sense for HE who dwells in us is greater than him. He is GOD’s devil and like a dog on a leash can only go as far as our FATHER permits him to go. *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)*

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