

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

LIVING IN PEACE

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Romans 12:18

The fleshly religious nature of man is always trying to find loopholes and limitations upon the plain commandments which the LORD gives HIS people. The rich young ruler came to the LORD JESUS, with good credentials, a good testimony, and a genuine desire to perform some acceptable religious act in order to secure for himself eternal life. He went away sorrowing however because he was not willing to go as far as the LORD instructed him to go. His willingness to do much fell short of being that which the LORD required. (see Luke 18:18-22)

Peter desired the LORD to give a definite quantity (limitation) of the number of times he was required to forgive someone who trespassed against him. [Maybe Peter was fed up with someone] (see Mat.18:21,22) HE gave Peter an answer which was much more complex than he expected and must have caused great consternation in Peter's mind. Basically the LORD told Peter there is to be no limitation on our forgiveness of others, for after all there is no limit on the LORD's forgiveness to us. (see Mark 11:25,26; Psalm 103:12)

The only monetary gift (which we have record of) which the LORD ever took notice of was that of the widow who cast into the treasury all that she had. What a contrast to the emphasis of the modern "tithe" preachers. HE said if a man sues you at the law to take away your coat give him your overcoat as well. If someone demands that you go with them a mile, go with them two. If a man smites you on one cheek turn to him the other one. Does anyone really think that the LORD meant only one time, or is not the lesson HE was teaching, that HE expects us to be continually forgiving and forbearing without setting parameters and boundaries of how far we should go in brotherly love? When one can discover the limit of the LORD's mercy to us then he can discover the limits of our mercy and kindness to our fellow man. (see Eph. 4:32; Col.3:13; James 2:13)

The most difficult task for a man is set forth in the LORD's summary of the law of the new covenant, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. --- Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" (Matt 22:37,39) Religious men delight in the concept of a law which is spelled out in the letter because they can derive some satisfaction in having fulfilled its jots and tittles. But when faced with the far reaching demands which are revealed in the new covenant they begin to make excuses and look for ways to excuse their behavior which obviously falls short of the perfection of that which the LORD set forth. Under "law" a man might feel somewhat satisfied with his obedience in not having slept with his neighbors wife or murdered someone. But under the new covenant, in light of the LORD's explanation of the "intent" of the law, that same man is slain in his conscience for having looked upon a woman with lust in his heart or destroyed a mans reputation with idle talk and gossip, or had hatred in his heart towards someone who mistreated him. (see Rom.7:7,8)

So Paul, here, tells us to live peacefully with other men "as much as lieth in you"(i.e.; to the absolute extent to which you can go). Once again the flesh looks at this with the attitude that Paul is saying try your best and then forget them and move on. But I believe that the reality of what

Paul is saying is that we should never give up trying to live in peace and harmony with our brethren but should strive to love and esteem them above ourselves at all times. If it becomes “not possible” to live with them in peace, let it be because they choose discord and will not live peaceably with us and not because we grow weary in well doing. The only person that you or I have any control over is our self. We cannot make someone love us nor can we constrain someone to dwell in peace with us. But we can seek peace and pursue it continually regardless of the other persons actions. (see Rom.12:21: I Peter 3:9; Ps.34:14)

Seek peace when personalities clash. If we all thought and acted alike then harmony would not be difficult. But the reality is that all of us are individuals and we all have idiosyncrasies that cause friction with others. The LORD has intended that there be diversity in the church for the strengthening of the body. Because some may seem to us, unlovable, even more love is required to maintain harmony and peace. (see I Cor.12:24; Phil.2:3)

Seek peace when we feel that we have been mistreated or neglected. Self pity is the true enemy of peace. As long as we are centered on our own “needs” we cannot devote ourselves to seeking to fulfill the needs of others. (see Gal.6:2,5; Rom.15:1)

Seek peace when we are convinced that others are undeserving of our favor. When we honestly survey our own unworthiness of the LORD’s mercy, how can we withhold mercy to our brethren on that account. (see Gal. 6:9,10; Romans 12:21)

Seek peace when others fail to live up to our expectations. There are few things that cause more discord among brethren (and in marriages) than when others fail to perform like we think they should. Don’t assume others are bound to act for your benefit and according to your desire at all times. When our expectations are centered in seeking the benefit of others then we cannot be disappointed except by our own failure. (see Luke 17:10; Mat.6:3)

Seek peace when others are determined to have discord. Sometimes in spite of all we do to live peaceably, some will reject us. The LORD said, *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” (Matt 5:44)*

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