

# 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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## A DEADLY CANCER

*But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. James 3:14-15*

Every family in America has been or will be affected by the deadly disease known as cancer. Hospitals are full of people being treated for it in its various manifestations. Every one of us can name someone who is presently suffering with this awful illness. No one seems immune to its ravages. In many ways, it is a silent killer for it often comes upon men and women with little if any warning. It usually begins with a small spot or growth that often rapidly increases in size until (in many cases) it has brought its victim to the brink of death before they even realize its seriousness. Fortunately, we live in an age wherein the LORD has blessed men with great understanding and skill in dealing with this disease. Many survive cancer today because of these advances in treatments who would have perished quickly even twenty years ago. There are many things that we can do to change our lifestyle that can minimize our risk of contracting this awful malady, but because of its insidious nature we must all be aware that it can still strike us even when we least expect it.

During bible times, leprosy was a much feared and incurable disease (as far as men knew). Its effects could be likened to cancer as we see it in the present day. It had no bounds, affecting the rich as well as the poor, the learned and the unlearned, rulers as well as their subjects. Leprosy, like cancer is a devastating disease often leaving its victims scarred for life. Throughout the scriptures we see leprosy as being a type or illustration of sin. In fact all disease and sickness, being the result of our fallen state, is likened unto sin. (see Mat.9:5; Luke 5:23)

Sin in all of its forms is a deadly disease that ultimately destroys all of its victims unless they are delivered from it. As far as the law is concerned there is no differentiation as to degrees of sin. *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."* (James 2:10) Yet just as it is true that there are forms of cancer that are more deadly than others so also it is true that some sin is more destructive to the very soul of a man than others. Some sins are openly displayed and cause harm yet I submit to you that there are sins which men harbor in their hearts which if left unchecked will utterly destroy them. They may go about their every day lives as if nothing is wrong but all the while this wickedness eats at their vitals, sapping them of joy and strength and destroying their usefulness.

James describes such as "bitter envying and strife" which he says is "devilish". As the children of GOD we must be on our guard (watching and praying) that such a sinister spirit and attitude does not control us. Our old man (nature) would like nothing better than to mire us down in this pit which has very steep sides and is exceedingly difficult to climb out of when we have dwelt there very long. I think this malady can be seen manifesting itself in several ways.

**Unforgiveness.** There is probably no sin as destructive to spiritual life and growth as that of an unforgiving spirit. Our carnal nature makes it easy for us to "glory" in unforgiveness. We deceive ourselves when we think that we can justify such an attitude, regardless of the offense (real or

perceived). (see Mat.18:21-22) Often this spirit simmers just under the surface. We tell ourselves we have forgiven others of alleged wrongs committed against us yet we don't actively seek the benefit of those who have offended us. It is not just enough to put these things out of our minds we need to pray that GOD would bless the offenders. (see Mat.5:44) We have not conquered unforgiveness until we love mercy more than justice. Great sorrow and spiritual weakness constantly visit those who do not move on from past and present injustices.

**Envy or jealousy.** Anyone who is breathing and honest must confess to visiting this house from time to time. Yet we must not dwell here. This spirit often manifests itself among brethren who envy the blessing of the LORD upon another brother whether it be spiritual gifts or material wealth. *"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor 4:7)* GOD in his wisdom causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. He creates vessels unto honor and others to dishonor. We should rejoice in the blessings GOD pours out on our brethren, knowing that the same LORD is rich unto all that call upon HIS name. We have not conquered jealousy until we receive greater joy at the blessing of our brethren than we do at our own. The strength of any man is sapped who spends any amount of time lamenting the blessing of others.

**Contentiousness.** Disagreement does not have to gender strife but it often does when we allow "contending" to become "contentiousness". Paul's instruction concerning the churches meetings at Corinth, seems to allow that there would from time to time be differences of understandings and opinions. An open forum is healthy for the body. (1 Cor 14:26-33) Yet there is never to be a spirit of contentiousness allowed there. *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."* (Phil 2:3) Contention arises because of pride. (see Prov 13:10) *"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."* (1 Cor 8:1) GOD is able to cause his truth to be known. (see 1 Cor.11:19) Contentiousness may not always be expressed verbally but often by an uncooperative and critical spirit. We have not conquered the spirit of contentiousness until we are able to rejoice in the edification of the body whether others adopt our ideas or not.

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