

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 RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Colossians 2:8

The enemies of the LORD's people seldom if ever come against them with a full frontal assault. They much prefer to act in stealth and subtlety. Seducing rather than overpowering. So it is that Paul's warnings to the sons of GOD are generally such that he would exhort them to beware of the crafty and those that lie in wait to deceive. (see Eph.4:14)

Those that would seek to wound and weaken the men and women of GOD often do so very quietly, generally appealing to human reason and natural logic rather than the sincere milk of the word. The LORD said that deceptions would abound, so much so that if it were possible that even the very elect of GOD would be deceived. In order for someone to be deceived they have to be comfortable with the deceiver.

This is seen in the Garden of Eden when the serpent beguiled Eve by being very subtle and charming. (see Gen. 3:1,13) Had he appeared to her as some hideous or wicked creature she would surely have been repulsed. So Satan is as crafty as ever and Paul says, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." (2 Cor 11:14) He goes about as roaring lion seeking whom he may devour but he never appears unto men as a roaring lion but as the voice of reason and earthly wisdom.

While Satan is indeed a dangerous foe and is constantly trying to ensnare the sons of GOD, he is not our only enemy. In fact he is not necessarily our most dangerous enemy. As Pogo in the comic strip said, "we have met the enemy and he is us". Our flesh is the most pervasive enemy that we face for it is enamored with the wisdom and vanity of this world and, apart from the restraining influence of the HOLY GHOST, will embrace and delight in the wisdom of this world, wherein it finds great satisfaction.

The warning that Paul gives is a very real one. There are many of those who profess to be the followers of CHRIST who have embraced the "rudiments" of the world. This is the exact error of the Judaizers who set about to teach the continuing necessity of fleshly circumcision and the keeping of Jewish feasts and holy days. The natural religion of men has its very foundation in the "rudiments of the world" and has an almost overwhelming power over the natural man.

The Greek word which is translated "rudiments" here and in verse 20 is also translated as "principles" in Hebrews 5:12, and "elements" in Galatians 4:3,9, and II Peter 3:10,12. It literally means the basic parts of a structure. We learned in school that there are elements (which cannot be divided into other atoms) which are the basic building blocks of all matter in the universe (a bit of presumption). I believe it is now thought that the number of these elements is 106, yet back in the olden days when I went to school we learned that there were only 103. So much for "science falsely so called".

Paul says that there are basic concepts which are common in the world and form the foundation of all of mans natural thoughts. We must beware lest we be spoiled or overturned by them. As Solomon said *"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* (Prov 16:25) We don't have to learn them since we are already indoctrinated and comfortable with them making them extremely dangerous.

He describes them when he says , "philosophy, vain deceit, and the tradition of men".

Philosophy. There are many different philosophies which are found among men. Some think that their philosophies are "spiritual" since they seek to rise above the mundane or base desires of men such as that taught by Plato. Other philosophies such as the Bacchanalians exult in the baseness of men and encourage the indulgence of the flesh. Still others such as the Stoics (it is interesting that the word Stoic comes from the same Greek word translated rudiment) believe that great gain is to be had by overcoming the emotions of the flesh and adopting a strict life style. The Epicureans thought that the highest good comes through self control and high moral standards.

There are hundreds of "philosophies" that are found in all societies around the world and they all have some appeal to various groups of individuals, but they all share a common theme. One is just as good as the other. They were developed by the natural thinking of men and regardless of what benefits they may have they fall short of being founded in JESUS CHRIST who is the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE. Anything more than CHRIST is too much and anything less than CHRIST is not enough. Be not spoiled (destroyed) thereby. *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."* (John 4:24)

Vain deceit. Man in his natural state is subject unto vanity. In fact Solomon said "all is vanity" which literally means "empty". Man is totally devoid of any true spirituality. Yet until the SPIRIT of GOD convinces him of that, he shares the common belief that he has it within his power to earn favor with GOD by his own actions. He believes that GOD is impressed with morality and charity. Because he is vain, and places an intrinsic value and worth to himself, it is impossible for him to come to grips with his own utter separation from GOD which has no remedy that can be found in his own effort or freewill. He may confess that he should be punished for his wrong doing but he cannot conceive of being a worthless maggot in the sight of GOD. HE thinks it only fair that GOD should give him a chance to correct his errors and make amends in some fashion and he holds out hope that all will be better one day.

This is the very depths of deception which all of those who have been awakened by the SPIRIT of GOD have been delivered from. They know themselves to be unworthy of the least of HIS mercies and despair of doing one thing that could make themselves acceptable in HIS sight even as the Publican prayed, *"GOD be merciful to me a sinner."*

Tradition of men. This is primarily having to do with the religion which men walk in. The man who relies upon his religion is the one who is convinced that there is a "religion" or "religions" with which GOD is pleased. Some think that the one they belong to is the "only one" and they are willing to shed the blood of others (figuratively or really) to defend it. Some point to their longevity, others to their accuracy. If a man takes great pride in his tradition then he likely is enamored with religion rather than CHRIST.

The man who has CHRIST alone as the object of his affections can say with the apostle Paul, *"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death"* (Phil 3:7-10)

The rudiments of the world are all around us. We are steeped in them and our flesh delights in anything that can be seen with the eye. The spiritual man says, *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Gal 6:14)