

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

PROVISION FOR THE FLESH

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:14

The Bible is a book of contrasts. The righteousness of CHRIST is contrary to the self-righteousness of men. The way of the flesh is at odds with that of the SPIRIT. Religious worship is contrasted with true worship; which is in SPIRIT and TRUTH. Self love is not compatible with that love which esteems the other better than themselves. Yet nowhere is a greater contrast seen than in the two births which the LORD told Nicodemus about. *“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* (John 3:5-6)

A failure to see this contrast between a birth of water (i.e.; that which is natural or of the earth) and that which is of the SPIRIT (i.e.; that which is from heaven) is to fail to understand the extent and nature of the work of GOD in those who are ordained unto eternal life and it is to confuse that which is of the earth with that which is heavenly and ultimately to miss the Kingdom of GOD.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh. It will never be anything else but that corruptible flesh in which a man is born and will one day die. This flesh is unchanged by the new birth and will continue to strive and war against the SPIRIT (see Gal.5:17)(which indwells the new born sons of GOD) until the grave swallows it up.

Yet we read in the scripture that the new born sons of GOD are made *“new creatures”*. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (or creation): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* (2Cor 5:17) To paraphrase this scripture we might say that those who are “in CHRIST” are not the same “creation” that they were by natural birth alone. They are inexorably changed. Yet that which is flesh is still flesh. This new creation has to do; not with the muscles and sinews of the body, but rather with the mind and/or the spirit of man. Flesh and blood (i.e., that which is corruptible) cannot inherit the kingdom of GOD.

Whereas those who are born again once walked according to the *“spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience”*, they are now *“renewed in the spirit of their mind”* (see Eph.4:23). Their existence without this work of the SPIRIT of GOD in them is called the *“old man”*, or that which they were, the creature that they are now is called the *“new man”* which is created (not in corruptible flesh) but *“after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”* (Eph 4:24) These two creations are not compatible to say the least and it is the source of each one's power which causes the constant conflict in the believer's life, which Paul describes. *“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.”* (Rom 7:15)

Paul explains the nature and reason for this conflict to the Galatians, *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”* (Gal 5:17) Even as Ishmael (the child of Abraham's flesh, persecuted Isaac, (the child of GOD's promise) so too does this corruptible flesh in which

we are born and do presently abide in, war against the SPIRIT of our mind which is made conformable to the image of CHRIST. The man who is without this conflict is devoid of the SPIRIT of CHRIST.

Paul confessed, *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."* (Rom 7:18) Self righteous men think themselves to be righteous and rejoice in the "progress" that they make in achieving holiness, (as they would define it). Some call this idea "progressive sanctification". The only thing that is "progressive" about those who have been redeemed by the blood of the LAMB is that they are "progressing" towards the tomb and the glorious deliverance from it which they hope to enjoy in the day of the resurrection. *"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."* (Rom 7:24-25)

We are not ignorant of Satan's devices (see II Cor.2:11) nor of the deceitfulness of the flesh. He delights to stir up the flesh and constantly seeks an occasion therein to bring reproach to the testimony of the children of GOD and wound their conscience. (see I Tim.5:14) The flesh itself would seek opportunity to indulge itself without regard to the consequences. Our flesh is not a friend to the workings of our mind which is renewed daily in CHRIST, and would seek by subterfuge, deception, and outright force to overtake us and bring us to shame and ruin. This is exactly why Paul said, *"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."* (1Cor 9:27)

The sons of GOD dwell in perfect liberty, nothing can bring them into condemnation or cause them to be rejected by the FATHER. This is a glorious position and standing which is a great and lasting comfort to the children of GOD, yet their flesh would seek to use this liberty as an occasion to bring reproach upon them by an inexpedient and unwise use of it. Therefore Paul exhorts us to be careful how we use the liberty we have and not to let our good be evil spoken of. He instructs the Corinthians in the proper use of this liberty, *"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."* (Gal 5:13) *"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not."* (1Cor 10:23)

The scriptures are replete with many exhortations and instructions to the children of GOD to confront that flesh which constantly wars against the "law of their mind". (see Rom.7:23) *"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."* (Rom 8:13) *"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."* (Col 3:5) The counsel of the flesh is to do nothing, to combat the wickedness which is systemic in each one of us. Roll with the flow, don't rock the boat. If it feels good do it. The flesh will make a mockery of grace and will make excuses for its own excesses and is not above using scripture to make wickedness seem insignificant and certainly allowable under the circumstances.

This is why Paul says *"make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."* (Rom. 13:14) It is impossible that men in their own power should ever subdue the flesh, yet we are admonished by the SPIRIT of GOD to war against it in the practical matter of limiting its "opportunities" to exercise its power over us. Joseph is a good example of a man who made no "provision for the flesh" when he fled from Pharaoh's wife's advances. (see Gen.39:12) The flesh is an unrelenting foe and will take every opportunity that is presented to it to cause us to stumble.

Some of the "provisions" that are often made for the flesh to fulfill its lusts are: entertaining religious pride in boasting of doctrinal knowledge or supposed spiritual power; speaking evilly and critically of brethren in considering their faults as greater than our own and thereby esteeming ourselves above the brethren; indulging ourselves in self pity and dwelling upon our own weaknesses; defining Christian liberty as a license to indulge the flesh rather than as an opportunity to serve one another; any activity or thought process that would give glory to any one or thing other than JESUS CHRIST the RIGHTEOUS.

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