

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

FIGHTINGS AND FEARS

For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

II Corinthians 7:5

In these days of "ease in Zion," it is difficult for us to imagine the physical and material hardships which Paul and many of the other apostles and early disciples endured in their calling and determination to declare the gospel of the glory of the blessed GOD. They enjoyed none of the comforts and devices which we take so much for granted, yet they pressed on "*rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*" (Act 5:41-42)

Paul was given such a zeal to preach the gospel, that he was consumed by it and cared not for his physical well being as he describes to these Corinthians, "*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*" (2Cor 4:8-11) "*But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;*" (2Cor 6:4-5) "*Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness*" (2Cor 11:24-27)

It would be extremely out of the ordinary in the present day for anyone of our acquaintance to be subjected to such hardships; yet it pleased the LORD to bring these faithful servants through the midst of these great trials to demonstrate, HIS power to preserve HIS people according to HIS purpose and to also deliver some up unto death itself in order to manifest HIS power over death as HE gave them the understanding that "*None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*" (Rom 14:7-9)

While we have not, yet, been called upon to endure these fiery trials, but, the day might come when we shall be. Our comfort in the midst of such a prospect is that HE shall be faithful to preserve HIS own now even as HE has done in times past. May we be given grace to have no fear of them which can kill the body, but that our fear might be only of HIM who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Our confidence is that HE shall cause all things to work together for our good, if we are indeed the called according to HIS purpose.

Though relatively few of the LORD's people will ever be brought into such dire straits as Paul describes, there are none of GOD's children who are not often faced with "fightings without" and

“fears within”. These trials might not be of the same outward magnitude as Paul’s struggles, yet the experience of them by each of those so tried are nonetheless as real as those of Paul.

Such is the “chastening” of GOD’s people. It is natural to consider that “chastening” is a measure which is taken by GOD to correct or punish a particular wrong committed by some of HIS children. There is no doubt that the LORD’s chastening is designed to correct the sons of GOD, but the LORD’s chastening of HIS own (who are sons and not bastards) has reference to HIS continual faithful “teaching” or “discipling” of those whom HE has loved from before the foundation of the world, rather than an occasional “trip to the woodshed” for some major transgression or act of disobedience. Those failings of GOD’s people are as much a part of their chastening as is the result of them. This is demonstrated in Peter’s denial.

In fact the word “discipline” comes from the same root word from which the word “disciple” comes. If a man is without instruction he cannot be the LORD’s, according to HIS promise, *“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; (i.e.; are manifested as such) And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)* It is the LORD’s purpose to give unto HIS children, HIS kingdom, and HE will surely “disciple” (i.e.; teach, instruct) them along the way which HE has marked out for them, to traverse, through this lowland of sin and sorrow.

HE will lead them in HIS steps and “chasten” them as sons, even as HE was “chastened” as the ONLY BEGOTTEN SON of GOD. *“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” (Heb 5:8-9) “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” (Heb 2:9-12)*

Thus we understand that the “*fightings without*” and the “fears within” which Paul was called upon to endure, were but the evidence that he was indeed a “disciple” of CHRIST. For every trial which is undergone by the elect of GOD serves to bring glory to GOD as a memorial to that greater suffering which CHRIST did undergo in HIS work of perfect redemption for them. *“For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” (1Pet 2:20-25)*

The “*fightings without*” are experienced as the sons of GOD are made to realize that this world is not their friend. They are most especially beset by those men of religion who would oppose the truth, since there is no shortage of those who will fight against sound doctrine while demonstrating a desire to exalt the free will of man. They also know themselves to be strangers and sojourners, as they are ridiculed because of their non-conformity to the value system of this world. *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2Tim 3:12)*

But it is the “*fears within*” that more readily beset these little children as their own innate corruption is revealed to them. Without this chastening, they should begin to be puffed up as though they could in some manner of their own will and power merit the blessings of GOD. *“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” (Gal 6:3)* Yet we are made to see the SOURCE of our blessing by the same chastening. *“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” (1John 3:20)* CHRIST is ALL! mam