

# 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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## THE EXCELLENT WAY

*Yet shew I unto you a more excellent way. I Corinthians 12:31*

Paul's first epistle (at least the first one which is recorded for us in the scriptures, see I Cor.5:9) to the Corinthians primarily addresses the carnal tendency of men (even true believers) to divide themselves up into sects and divisions. *"For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, --- that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1Cor 1:11-13)*

Such practices are not prescribed nor recommended in the scriptures and the principle of strife and division among those who are bought with the precious blood of CHRIST, is not taught by the SPIRIT of GOD. Yet due to the weakness and depravity of the sinful flesh of man such "*heresies*" (i.e.; sectarianism) do rear their head among the saints of GOD. Paul warned the Ephesian elders of this very tendency and even prophesied that such things would occur among their own number. Sadly, such personality driven divisions are often promoted under the guise of contending for the truth by those who delight in having preeminence among the saints and some are all too glad to be led into such by these pied pipers of self described "sound doctrine".

Paul even speaks of such divisions as "necessary" (see I Cor. 11:19) in order to contrast that sectarianism with the GODLY principles of the Kingdom of CHRIST which set forth the concepts of forbearance with one another and the esteeming of one another above ourselves *"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."* (Php 2:2-4)

Throughout this first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul continues to build upon this very theme. Thus the first chapter of it ends with these words, *"That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."* (1Cor 1:31) It is impossible that a man should have disregard to the brethren when HIS sole source of glorying is in the LORD, for then and only then does he know that he is nothing and that his knowledge is quite limited. *"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."* (1Cor 2:11)

In the third chapter he continues to take away any room for glorying in men. *"So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."* (1Cor 3:7) *"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."* (1Cor 4:20) Therefore let no man think more highly of himself and his calling than he ought to think. It is often true that some who would cause divisions among the saints do so as an excuse to promote their own "liberty" rather than acknowledging that "expediency" is much more important than "liberty" when it comes to seeking to build up the brethren in the most holy faith.

Thus, Paul set the example of denying himself many things that were his liberty to have or partake of, for the greater good of those whom he loved. He mentioned that while he had liberty

to lead about a wife or sister at the expense of those to whom he ministered, yet in order to remove any hindrances to his ministry he made no such charge. *“For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.” (1Cor 9:19)* He also pointed out that all things (meats and drinks, whether offered to idols or not) were lawful unto him and all believers, yet he would refrain from partaking of them at all if it caused his weaker brother to stumble in confusion. *“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.” (1Cor 8:13)*

In Chapter 10, Paul once again brings the focus of his message to the importance of unity among the saints of GOD. If we are united around a crucified CHRIST, what is the grounds of any sectarianism? *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” (1Cor 10:16-17)*

JESUS CHRIST and HIM crucified does unite the awakened sons of GOD; woe be unto him who would seek to overturn that unity. CHRIST is our SALVATION, HE is our RIGHTEOUSNESS, HE is our SANCTIFICATION. What GOD has joined together let not man put asunder. If any man would preach “another Jesus” than that ONE which PAUL preached, then he would seek to turn men aside from following HIM. Thus HE declared that he “determined” (i.e.; charted a sole and specific course) to know only one thing when he was among them, which is the very essence of the gospel, *“JESUS CHRIST and HIM crucified.”*

In chapter 11 he uses the illustration of marriage and the submission of the wife to the husband’s authority to show the symbiotic relationship of CHRIST and HIS church. HE loves HIS church and she is the object of HIS desire and that one which HE would redeem to manifest the glory of HIS grace. Is CHRIST divided in HIS purpose? Neither can she who is the one object of HIS affection be divided, with each member of HIS body going their own separate ways. Rather she is one to demonstrate the unity of the FATHER and the SON. All of the members of the body partake of that BREAD and WINE which is CHRIST, who loved us and gave HIMSELF for us. We can only take of that SUPPER properly when we have a proper regard for HIS body.

Then in chapter 12 he speaks of the various gifts which the LORD is pleased to give to HIS saints. The purpose of these gifts is not for the personal benefits of those to whom the gift is given but rather for the purpose of edifying the whole body. *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. (i.e.; the whole)” (1Cor 12:7)* All of the various parts of the body must perform their “necessary” function that the whole body may be edified. *“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” (1Cor 12:25-26)* We are members one of another.

If a man desires a gift, it is not a bad thing, but let a man desire that gift in order that he might be of benefit and help to the body. This is the introduction to what Paul describes as *“a more excellent way”*. While it is good to desire gifts to profit the body, there is one thing or “way” which exceeds even the greatest gift of oratory or edifying word which could be spoken by men. While men might find a place to glory in the flesh in such gifts, no place for the flesh to glory can be found in the demonstration of true brotherly love.

This true brotherly love (i.e.; charity or agape love) is the very denial and destruction of all that the flesh could ever produce. A man who demonstrates this love must of necessity deny himself. *“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.” (1Cor 13:4-5)* This “love” has only ever been truly demonstrated by ONE man born of a woman, the MAN CHRIST JESUS. *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)* *“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom 5:7-8)*

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