

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

REJOICE, PRAY, AND GIVE THANKS

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. I Thessalonians 5:16-18

The LORD is ever faithful to teach HIS children and lead them in paths of righteousness. *"Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."* (Heb 12:26-27) The sinful flesh of the sons of GOD will often seek to turn them aside from those things which are eternal by presenting to them some bauble or seeming thing of value, which is nonetheless, temporal and passing away as a dream in the night.

Often, when those things (in which men have confidence) vanish, they begin to fret and complain and express fears and doubts of one type or another. In this they demonstrate a misplaced confidence or hope. This can be seen, most clearly, in the present time as many of those who profess to be the followers of CHRIST, act as though this world is their home and that their good fortunes or blessings can be brought to pass, or be taken away by the governments of this world. The Almighty GOD who rules in the heavens and the Earth, is that ONE who *"changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings."* (Dan 2:20-21) *"to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men."* (Dan 4:17)

What folly is *"wrought in Israel"* when the sons of GOD put their confidence in the princes and rulers of these earthly realms. We are blessed to live in the nation in which we do, but we must not lose sight that upon the best day of any natural government, it is still presided over by wicked men, and in most cases, as Nebuchanezzar reported, *"the basest of men"*. How foolish to spend our time worrying about who occupies those necessary places. As we read in the *Psalter*, *"Put no confidence in princes, nor for help on man depend; He shall die, to dust returning, and his purposes shall end."* (Ps.146, paraphrased)

Paul instructs us, *"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."* (1Tim 2:1-3) The LORD alone will cause all that these earthly magistrates do, to work together for good to all of HIS children, whether or not we agree with whatever policy or agenda they might have. As the sons of LIGHT, we dwell in that LIGHT, and are not overtaken by darkness regardless of the darkness that swirls around us. Let the potsherd of the earth strive with the potsherd of the earth, or as the LORD told HIS disciples, *"Let the dead bury their dead."*

It seems that many are lamenting the "changing of the guard", as if this somehow thwarts the purpose of GOD, rather than fulfilling it. I am sure that the Apostles often lamented various trials that befell them as a result of the rulers under which they lived, yet they spoke no evil towards those whom the LORD raised up into these places, and they did not expect that it was these

“powers” which would render unto them some blessing. *“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” (Acts 16:25)*

The very place where the LORD was pleased to put Paul and Silas was among the darkest of dives, yet HE was pleased to meet with them there and put a song in their heart, and praise upon their lips. *“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.” (Mat 5:14)* HE alone is our LIGHT. We look for light no where else, in this world of sin and sorrow. HE has ordained that we be the emissaries of HIS LIGHT, not by activism, but by worship.

Thus, we read Paul’s specific instructions, to the Colossians, of that activity which is fitting for the sons of GOD, who are in this world, but not of it. *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (1Pet 2:9)* Paul exhorts the Colossians in three very closely related activities, which are the lifeblood of the saints, *“But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.” (Psa 22:3)*

“Rejoice evermore!” Why should the saints be discouraged? Has not our SAVIOR and KING triumphed openly over all principalities and powers? Can the powers of darkness prevail against the children of LIGHT? *“Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven.” (Luke 6:23)* HE has gone to prepare for us a place, that where HE is we shall be. *“Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” (Luke 10:20)* What HE has inscribed, no man can alter. *“What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.” (Php 1:18)* There is no greater place of rejoicing in this world than in the sending and hearing of the Gospel of CHRIST’s redemption.

“Pray without ceasing.” James describes the prayer of a “righteous man”, *“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” (Jas 5:16)* True prayer is both “effectual” and “fervent”. It is “effectual” because it is always according to the will of GOD. A man may “pray thus with himself”, when he prays contrary to that will or seeks to consume his request, upon his own lust. Yet HE has promised, *“if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.” (1John 5:14)*

True prayer is “fervent”. Fervent prayer is unceasing prayer. Some think that they are heard because of their “much speaking”. *“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” (Mat 6:7)* Fervency has more to do with singleness of purpose than it does with zeal or passion. The LORD heard the desire of the Canaanite woman whose daughter was vexed with a devil, even though HE, at first, appeared to disdain her request. Yet by the power of the SPIRIT which worked in her mightily she persisted, knowing that HE alone was her DELIVERER. *“No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62)* *“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” (Luke 18:1)* *“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?” (Luke 18:7)*

“In everything give thanks.” Man, by nature, is an unthankful creature. By this we do not mean that he does not take pleasure in events which produce the results with which he is pleased. Even unbelievers often speak of being blessed and expressing “thanks” in a measure, such as what we see around the holiday called “Thanksgiving”. Yet this natural expression of enjoyment of the “good things” (as men define them) which befall men falls quite short of being truly thankful in the manner in which Paul describes. This type of “thanksgiving” is that which is produced by the SPIRIT of GOD in the sons of GOD and does not exist in men by nature.

We see this type of thanksgiving, expressed in an attitude, more so than in word such as is exhibited in the life of Joseph. If anyone had reason to hold a grudge against his brethren, it would be Joseph, sold into slavery by his own kin. Yet he was thankful for these events. *“But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” (Gen 50:20)* We see it in the apostles, *“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” (Acts 5:41)* Their “thanks” was expressed in their gladness to do the will of GOD.

In “everything” we are to give thanks, for we are given to understand that HE works all things together for good to those who are the called according to HIS purpose. Our SAVIOR’s joy was found in the unfolding of HIS FATHER’s will. This is to give thanks in everything. *“For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (1Thes 5:18)*

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