

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

ASSEMBLE YOURSELVES

They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Jeremiah 6:14

One of the most blessed privileges of the children of GOD is to be able to meet together with our brothers and sisters in CHRIST. Quite often, we hear the religious, talking about the duty they have, to "go to church", as if they were satisfying some obligation. As the sons of GOD we don't look on our meeting together as though we are fulfilling some quota of service or meeting the demands of a taskmaster. What could be more delightful than gathering together with those of like precious faith to praise our Blessed REDEEMER, to learn HIS word, and be encouraged and built up in the most holy faith (see Jude 1:20). Only those whose heart is a stranger to grace could confuse this great privilege and see it as a chore.

One thing that I have learned over the years is that the things that we value most are the things which occupy our thoughts and our time. We set our priorities in life based on those values. When we value the endeavors of the flesh more than those of the SPIRIT, then we choose to walk after the dictates of the flesh. *"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"* (Romans 6:16) GOD's children are not under any obligation to "go to" any meetings, but we do have a responsibility to our brethren. Our text says for us to consider our brothers and sisters in CHRIST, so that we may encourage them to walk in faith, hope, and love. Most of the time our flesh tells us to consider ourselves and what we want rather than what is best for our brethren. The assembling of ourselves gives us the opportunity to minister to the needs of our brothers and sisters. (see Eph.4:16) When we neglect it or value the desires of our flesh more than that responsibility, then we miss that opportunity and we do a disservice to them. Rather than giving occasion to our flesh (see Eph.5:13) we are to mortify its deeds (see Rom.8:13 and Col.3:5) and pursue the higher calling (see Phil.3:13,14) that we have been given. We should have the wellbeing of our brethren in mind at all times even when our flesh tells us otherwise. What are some of the tactics and excuses which the flesh uses to bring us into captivity by neglecting the assembly of ourselves together?

Our bodies are too old, sick, or tired to assemble. There is no controversy that our flesh is weak; the LORD said it was. (see Jn.15:5;Mt.26:41) We are not denying that sometimes infirmity is so severe as to keep us bedridden. Sometimes we must be led about by others. But very often our flesh will try to control us by exaggerating our condition in our own minds. I have known many who are too tired/sick to assemble but able to perform many other endeavors. When a sickness is not unto death there is no better place for the sick to be than gathered together with those who are praying for the sick. When we become so old that we do not know who or where we are, then perhaps age is a viable excuse. Sleep is a necessity but the overindulgence of it can destroy us. (see Prov.24:33; Rom.13:11-14) How often have we seen the same people, who had to sleep late and thereby neglect the assembly, able to rise at any hour to go fishing, hunting, shopping, etc.

We have other important things to attend to. What can be more important than ministering to our brethren? Getting our priorities in order is a necessity for all of GOD's people. *"Set your affection on things above, not on things of the Earth."* (Col.3:2)

We have to spend "quality time" with our families. One of the great blessings which GOD has bestowed on us is that of having children. *"Children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is HIS reward."* (Psalms 127:3) Oftentimes the flesh will tell us to neglect the assembly in order to indulge our children (parties, sleep, swimming, etc) for their benefit, when in reality we are teaching them important lessons about our priorities which will surely not *"provoke them to love and good works"* (see text) thereby negating that supposed benefit.

We could go on with other examples but hopefully these will give us an idea of what a formidable foe our flesh is. Our exhortations to one another should be steadfast and continual especially as we see "the day approaching". Now whether we understand the writer to mean the "day of our LORD's return" or the fact that we all are facing the day of our approaching death, we must realize our need to step up our endeavors to help our brethren. The challenges facing us all are quite large and we need each other to encourage and help us to meet them in the SPIRIT of CHRIST. There is already a great deception (see Mt.24:4-24) gone forth which will only increase as time goes on. Brethren, pray one for the other, and don't neglect the main opportunity you have to encourage and help your brothers and sisters in the way.

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." Romans (13:11-12)

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