

# 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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## PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

*But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. Matthew 5:39*

This is one of what we refer to as “goat passages” in the scripture. The reason we call them that is because every time we read them somebody starts “but-ting”. “But” surely, the LORD didn’t mean exactly what HE said. “But” we can’t follow that instruction. I know the LORD said to turn the other cheek “but” there are circumstances when that is just impossible. It is difficult for even redeemed men to submit themselves totally to the instruction of the the LORD. The old man despises the message that the LORD JESUS gave us and loves the “law principle” of an eye for an eye when dealing with his fellow man. To literally follow the LORD’s teaching involves much mortification of the flesh and a clear vision of the underlying lesson that HE taught us by HIS words and HIS example. Nothing flies more in the face of human reason than the statement “resist not evil” (i.e.; against you by your neighbor). (see James 4:7) Human nature teaches us to inflict harm on others who inflict harm on us. We love justice in such situations. Payback time is always sweet to the flesh. Yet the LORD said we should deny all of that natural reason and fleshly inclination and “turn the other cheek”.

Since the very beginning, man has tried to place the blame for his sin and fault on someone else. (see Gen.3:11,12) The LORD JESUS in this passage from the sermon on the mount is forever dispelling the notion that we can blame anybody else for the things that we do. If a man ever had just cause to hit somebody in the mouth it would be immediately after he was hit in the mouth by that person; wouldn’t it? Yet the LORD said “turn the other cheek.” When we’re in a bad mood we can easily find someone else’s error that put us there, can’t we? If things don’t go as we planned, someone else can take the blame very easily in our own mind. If our husband or our wife doesn’t act exactly like we think they should or does something we don’t like, our flesh says we have a right to be angry. But do we?

There is only one person in all the earth over whom we are to exercise complete control. Each morning when we look in the mirror, we see that person. If we become angry with our spouse or neighbor, even though their actions may be provocative, we are totally accountable for how we respond to that provocation. It is incorrect to make the statement, “well she (or he) made me mad”, so she’s (or he’s) responsible for my acting the way I did. Are we robots who can be turned about by others or are we not admonished to exercise self control, regardless of the situation? I hear the goats even as I speak. The word of GOD is living and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword.

The primary goal of our natural (i.e.; old) man is to seek his own happiness. Because of this the error arises in the thinking of men that this is also the primary goal of the LORD in working with HIS children. Now there is abundant scripture to indicate the great benevolence that the LORD is determined to show to HIS own and HE has indeed set forth the truth that “all things

work together for our good". However the chief purpose of the LORD in dealing with HIS children is to see us conformed to the image of HIS SON. In fact we are predestined unto that very result. (see Rom.8:29) Our "happiness" (in this world) is secondary to that purpose and is a result of that work performed in us by HIS SPIRIT. HE has indeed designed that we should ultimately be "happy" but not until HE has achieved in us HIS perfect work.

Satan thought he would bring heartache upon Job in order to destroy him. Little did he know that GOD had ordained his very orchestrations in order to bring Job to a place HE wanted him to be. Job was a "righteous man" (of a sort) but he was not a perfect man. It was the LORD's intention to bring him to a place of fully understanding who he was before GOD and who GOD was before him. The LORD accomplished that very purpose; ultimately bringing Job to a place of repentance and worship. (see Job 42:1-6)

In the course of that journey the LORD brought men into Job's life who were by Job's own description, "miserable comforters and physicians of no value". In some ways they added to Job's grief as they sought to "straighten him out". But through this buffeting the LORD was working to humble Job's heart. I am convinced that the LORD brings people (sometimes husbands or wives) into our lives who sometimes vex us and cause us "unhappiness" for the same purpose of bringing us into conformity to CHRIST. We often find ourselves fighting against those persons when in reality the LORD has designed our confrontations with them for our benefit. If a man (or woman) smites us (this may be verbal) we are not to rise up in anger (even though it is justified according to the flesh) but are to submit ourselves to them. The LORD designs to work in us humility rather than vengeance. This really aggravates our flesh because vengeance is much more satisfying and yet is the source of much of our discontentment.

We must forever abandon the idea that it is the fault of others that "causes" us to act and react as we do. All men, especially GOD's children, are personally accountable for every action and reaction that they have. We can make every excuse we want to but the bottom line is we are accountable for our actions regardless of the actions of others. We cannot disregard the teaching of CHRIST because it is not convenient nor can we justify ourselves for actions and attitudes that are not in keeping with the example HE has set for us. We must bid vengeance adieu for it belongs to the LORD. *"He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat."* (Prov 28:25) *"Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"* (1 Cor 6:7)

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