

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume VI

Issue 37

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

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

THE GREATEST STATE

For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

Philippians 4:11

A very good friend of mine has visited almost every state in the Union. This is quite an accomplishment that few can boast of unless they are presidential politicians. Every state in the union has something that makes it unique. Florida has its oranges, Georgia its peaches, Louisiana its crawfish, South Carolina its Palmettos, and the list goes on. Whether it's the hills and mountains of Kentucky, the booming surf of California, or the flat plains of Kansas each state has something different to offer those who visit.

Paul speaks of visiting many "states" as well. *"Are they ministers of Christ? I (speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 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."* (2 Cor 11:23-27) He knew well the many states of suffering and deprivation which he was called to undergo for the cause of CHRIST. But he also had visited the states of euphoria, plenty, and joy which the world cannot know. *"It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities."* (2 Cor 12:1-5)

Having visited all of these "states" at one time or another he confessed that the LORD had taught him a great lesson which would cause him to rejoice and be glad regardless of which state he might find himself in. *"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* (Phi 4:12-13). This is the same "state" he speaks to Timothy of when he says that in contrast to those who hunger and thirst after this worlds riches, *"But godliness with contentment is great gain."* (1Tim. 6:6)

Relatively few of the LORD's children are called upon to undergo the same level of trials that the apostle Paul was called to endure and just as few are called to enjoy the heights of joy to which he was lifted. But all of GOD's children are being taught the same lesson that he said he had learned. *"in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."* This is not an understanding that men are born with but they must be taught it to greater or lesser degrees as the LORD sees fit.

It is part of our human nature to grumble, fret, worry, and complain about the various states we find ourselves in. It seems that we are born with the expectation that all of our hopes plans and dreams should come true. Everything is always supposed to work out. When we get in the car in the morning we just assume that it should crank, it should never run out of gas, or have a flat tire, especially when we are already running late for an important meeting. But GOD does not view things as we do and HE has often determined that the car should have a dead battery, or run out of gas, or have a flat tire, especially when we are already running late for an important meeting.

HE is presently working in HIS people and is daily conforming them to the image and likeness of CHRIST, *"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."* (1Pe 2:22-23)

This is extremely taxing to those HE is pleased to *"exercise by chastening"*. (see Heb.12:11). Most people think that the "chastening" spoken of in the scriptures that is applied to the sons of GOD is the result of disobedience or some retaliation by the LORD on them for some wickedness which has arisen in them and then they conversely feel that any blessings they enjoy are the result of some obedience they have performed. This is the exact viewpoint that Job's illustrious friends had as they raked him over the coals to the point that Job was moved to call them *"miserable comforters"* (see Job 16:2) and *"physicians of no value"*. (see Job 13:4)

No chastening is at the present time (or when we are undergoing it) an enjoyable thing but the benefit of it is seen once the "chastening" has had its perfect work and the fruits of it are made plain to see. The chastening which the LORD is pleased to apply to HIS freeborn sons is not some foretaste of HIS vengeance but is HIS perfect design to teach us valuable lessons through our own murmurings and disobedience as HE sends HIS HOLY SPIRIT to convince us of our sin.

Contentment in whatever "state" we are in must be learned. It is not natural to us. Even as the scripture says, *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."* (Heb 5:8) This means that it was necessary for HIM to go through the same temptations as we (yet without sin) in order that HE might experience our humanity. This is almost too glorious to contemplate but we do understand that because of this HE is able to be touched with the feelings of our infirmities. But even as HE "learned" (or experienced) obedience so it is that we shall learn contentment.

Paul is not speaking to the Philippians as a young man but penned these words after many years of ministry and sacrifice. It is almost impossible to expect that a young man should understand contentment because it is so "natural" for young men to overestimate their ability to control the events in their lives. The converse of this can only be learned by the faithful chastening of the LORD. This is why Paul told Timothy not to set apart a young man to the office of Elder (Bishop). *"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."* (1Tim 3:6) The office of elder is not to be occupied by someone because they are simply knowledgeable of doctrine but they must have been "exercised" by the LORD to "learn" lessons which cannot be gained from books or even from a mere study of the scripture. The scripture must be applied to the lives of those whom GOD would raise up for such a work.

There is nothing more disconcerting (if not downright aggravating) to those who have yet to "learn" contentment than those who by the grace of GOD can confess with Paul that they have "learned" it. They are often accused of being lazy, unmotivated, unconcerned, and unrealistic. Not to mention having their heads in the clouds or the classic, too heavenly minded to be any earthly good. Martha was busy preparing a meal for her guests (as she was given grace to do) but she began to fret that Mary was not giving her aid. The LORD said, *"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."* (Luk 10:41-42)

www.gracechapelobrien.net <http://wayfarerblog.blogspot.com/> mam