

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

THE SIN OF SODOM

Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

Ezekiel 16:49

One of the ways in which men seek to excuse their own sin is by pointing out the relative awfulness of the sin of others. *"But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."* (2Cor 10:12) By discovering an activity in others which is far more heinous in "degree" (as they would define the "degrees" of sin) than any activity which they presently involve themselves in, they can somehow have a moment of self-righteous satisfaction in a consideration of their own avoidance of such an activity.

This practice arises from the belief that sin is better defined by particular actions of the flesh rather than the condition of the heart. The Pharisees were the poster children of such an attitude as they preened themselves in their own "looking glass" of righteousness and religion while beholding the wickedness of others. This is most clearly seen in the prayer of the Pharisee contrasted with that of the Publican. (see Luke 18:10-14; Rom. 7:9-25; Mat.7:1-5)

All sin (regardless of the so called "degree" of it) stems from the same source, a well which flows quite freely in the very heart of every man who is born of a woman. *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* (Rom 3:23) *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."* (Rom 3:10) When a man is given a true understanding of this fact, he will be humbled in the dust before a Holy GOD and abandon all hope of producing any sort of righteousness which might be considered acceptable in HIS sight.

Yet, until that occurs, the very nature of sin will cause him to go about to establish his own righteousness by viewing his "purity" relative to others. By doing so he denies the true standard of righteousness which is alone found in the absolute righteousness of JESUS CHRIST and does despise HIM who is of purer eyes than to look upon sin. As long as a man can take any sort of satisfaction in himself relative to the actions of others he can in no wise submit himself to the "righteousness of GOD" revealed in JESUS CHRIST. *"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."* (Rom 10:3)

It is very common to hear men refer to the "sin" of Sodom as being the activity of the flesh which has come to be known by its very name, i.e; Sodomy or as it is more often referred to in our politically correct society as the practice of homosexuality. One must make no mistake that this particular activity is indeed spoken of with the harshest of condemnation by the LORD. It can in no wise be considered an acceptable practice by any who would believe the Bible to be the WORD of GOD.

Quite often, religious men, will rise up in righteous indignation at such practices and intone that GOD will bring "judgment" on those who condone, practice, or approve of such. Yet the scripture

indicates that such practices are not the cause of GOD's judgment but are rather the result of it. *"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections."* (Rom 1:26)

What was the sin of Sodom? The sin of Sodom is the very sin of all men and the judgment of GOD upon that city (by giving them over to reprobate minds, removing HIS restraints and letting them fulfill their basest desires), merely reveals the certainty of the destruction of all of mankind apart from the mercy of GOD who has imputed the righteousness of CHRIST to that remnant which HE has determined to save.

Ezekiel clearly reveals that the sin of Sodom is the pride of man which causes him to disregard the plain commandment of GOD and to embrace the lusts of his flesh and delight himself in those things that are contrary to godliness and, ultimately, even nature itself. Even as the LORD upbraided the Pharisees, saying, *"And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you. But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."* (Luke 11:39-42)

Can any say he is not in this a Sodomite? Is not the "pride of life" at the root of all of man's sin, and is there any who by nature is not afflicted with this very disease? Is it not quite a common thing for men to consider some men "righteous" even when they are enabled to know themselves to be sinners of a sort? The very best of men are wicked by nature even as Isaiah reveals, *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities."* (Isa 64:6-7)

When men judge any man (most especially their own selves) worthy of favor in GOD's eyes by any means other than the substitutionary righteousness of JESUS CHRIST, they have spat in the face of HIM who is *"angry with the wicked every day"* (Ps.7:11). They do disregard the very work of JESUS CHRIST who came to demonstrate true righteousness by fulfilling the law in its jot and tittle and dwelling among men as the only man without sin. They also embrace the exact error of those Jews (and Gentiles alike) who say *"we will not have this MAN to rule over us."*

The only thing that keeps any man from outward debauchery and baseness of the foulest kind is the restraining work of the SPIRIT of GOD. The men of Sodom did indeed demonstrate such a condition wherein they were given over to their own flesh even as the scripture describes *"And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet."* (Rom 1:27)

"Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:4-5) O you who are righteous in your own eyes do you think that you are any less a sinner than those who dwelt in Sodom and received the just reward of their error. Do you look upon the wickedness of others and count your own to be less. *"I tell you-- except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."*

There is only ONE TRUE STANDARD of righteousness which has ever been set forth among men. HE is that ONE who was tempted in all points like as we are but was yet without sin. HE is that ONE who hung between heaven and earth as an offering for the sin of HIS people, imputing their sin to HIMSELF and HIS righteousness to them. Unless you stand in HIS righteousness you shall die in your sins. Oh you who know yourselves to be sinners of the worst sort, HE has demonstrated HIS purpose to save unworthy wretches and does even presently command them to come unto HIM that they might find rest unto their weary souls. *"As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"* (Eze 33:11) mam