

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

ONE THING IS NEEDFUL

*But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part,
which shall not be taken away from her.* Luke 10:42

Those who are born again by the SPIRIT of GOD are inclined by that same SPIRIT to serve the LORD in whom they are caused to believe. While each is given the measure of faith which pleases the LORD, (see Rom.12:3) they do all share the same basic desire to be found as obedient children. Having said that, it is also true that they are not clones of each other. Some are given grace to express their devotion in more manifestly open ways than others. Some are “weaker brethren” than others, being more susceptible to superstitions and traditions of religion. (see I Cor.12:22-24; Rom.15:1) Some are more childlike and thus more easily led astray by false doctrine. (see Eph.4:14)

Thus, it is necessary for the brethren (especially in a local assembly) to be mindful of their own weaknesses and to watch out for those who need encouragement and instruction. (i.e., we are our brother’s keeper) In this fashion Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be especially mindful that those who are more prone to superstition, are not encouraged in their weakness by the unwise use of the liberty which is granted to all of GOD’s children. “*But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*” (1Cor 8:9)

While exhortation (from the scriptures) is a proper and needful exercise for the brethren to use in ministering to one another, it is needful that we are careful not to proscribe to one another, our own convictions in a fashion which would hinder them rather than serve for their edification. “*Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.*” (Rom 14:1-3) “*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*” (Eph 5:8-11) “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*” (Gal 5:22-26)

Neither are we to encourage one another in those things which would bring reproach upon the cause of CHRIST. “*Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.*” (2Tim 2:22-23) Due to our heritage in Adam, we are each one prone to pursue the lusts of the flesh. The scripture identifies some of these lusts, quite plainly, from which we must flee. 1. The love of money, (i.e.; selfish gain) which is “*the root of all evil.*” (see I Tim.6:10) 2. Fornication, (i.e.; sexual uncleanness of any type) which is a sin against the body. (see I Cor.6:18) 3. Idolatry. (i.e.; anything which would not give CHRIST all glory, especially in a “religious” activity) “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*” (1John 5:2) Idolatry is the sum of those lusts from which we are to flee.

Paul describes the antidote to this idolatry. “*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to*

know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” (1Cor 2:1-2) “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal 6:14) “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” (Php 3:8-9)

All idolatry cannot be characterized as some gross sin or departure from the faith, but can also include many lawful and good activities which we deem to be of such importance that we lose sight of the very basis upon which our FAITH rests and then takes precedence over that pursuit.

We see this illustrated in the LORD’s encounter with Martha. Now I imagine Martha to be a very industrious and devoted lover of hospitality. In these noble pursuits we can find no fault, the scripture commends such traits. *“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. ---She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.” (Pro 31:10-15)* Luke recounts these characteristics in Dorcas, *“Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.” (Acts 9:36)* The women to whom she had ministered showed off the garments which she had made. Those widows which were to be included in that number which received financial support from the church were to be, *“Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.” (1Tim 5:10)*

These attributes are not easily discovered in this day of hustle and bustle yet they remain most honorable pursuits and can hardly be spoken against by any but fools. We most certainly would be judicious in voicing any criticism of Martha. Yet the LORD rebuked her, not for going about the duties for which she was suited and gifted, but for becoming annoyed at Mary for pursuing an even more important activity.

Rather than rejoicing in her gifts of showing hospitality and going about them with a cheerful heart, she became *“cumbered”* (i.e.; burdened) with her serving as she looked at her sister with disdain. We must confess that we have often felt the same way when it has seemed to us that others were not doing their “fair share” or as we might think, “took advantage of us”. Yet how foolish such a notion is, which our flesh would feed upon. Do we not read of that type of “giving” which is pleasing in the LORD’s sight. *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” (2Cor 9:7) “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” (1Cor 10:31)* Let us never compare ourselves among ourselves but rather seek to use the gifts that GOD has given us unto HIS glory and the benefit of our brethren whom the LORD has placed us in fellowship with, esteeming them above ourselves.

Sadly Martha, at least in a fleeting moment, made an idol out of a good work. She lost sight of the most important of all pursuits which the children of GOD are to undertake. That is sitting at the feet of CHRIST and learning of HIM, hanging upon HIS every word, and rejoicing in HIS fellowship.

1 O for a closer walk with God, A calm and heavenly frame;

A light to shine upon the road That leads me to the Lamb.

2 Where is the blessedness I knew When first I saw the Lord?

Where is the soul-refreshing view Of Jesus and his word?

3 What peaceful hours I then enjoyed, How sweet their memory still!

But now I find an aching void The world can never fill.

4 Return, O holy Dove! return, Sweet messenger of rest!

I hate the sins that made thee mourn, And drove thee from my breast.

5 The dearest idol I have known, Whate’er that idol be;

Help me to tear it from thy throne, And worship only thee.

6 So shall my walk be close with God, Calm and serene my frame;

So purer light shall mark the road That leads me to the Lamb. (by W.Cowper, #958, Gadsby’s Hymns)

Have you cast off your idols in pursuit of that one thing which is needful? CHRIST is ALL! mam