

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume VIII

Issue 41

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 PROMISE

For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Galatians 3:18

There are certain things in this world that are exact opposites of each other and cannot be joined together. While both oil and water are liquids, they cannot be successfully mixed. Cats and dogs are not natural friends. Ice and fire will ultimately destroy each other. So it is with the principle of law and the principle of promise. These two concepts are as opposite as night and day and one must overturn the other. Yet the natural religious bent of men is to try to amalgamate the two as if they are simply two sides of the same issue.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Paul plainly states this in this statement and teaching which he made to the Galatians. "If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise." Though men are by nature in rebellion to GOD, yet they each one have the principle of law ingrained in them. While they do not fear GOD nor are they all certain that it is wrong to steal from another man, yet they all (without exception) believe that it is wrong for another man to steal from them. "*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.*" (Rom 2:14-15)

So men are naturally acquainted with the concept of legal obedience even though they, (by that same nature,) despise the LAWGIVER. They are naturally convinced that they can in some fashion both merit and/or forfeit GOD's blessings based on their adherence or non-compliance to these standards of right and wrong. Woe be to the man who should question this concept. Those who reject this view are in the decided minority and looked upon as being against law, by those who attribute their blessings to their religious faithfulness.

There is no scriptural evidence that Abraham was any different than the pagan peoples that he was associated with when the LORD appeared to HIM and gave him the promise of HIS blessing and an immense inheritance beyond his wildest dream. He was never given one condition to fulfill but the LORD announced HIS intention to bless him and commanded him to depart from the land of his father and to dwell in a land which the LORD gave HIM by promise. All of the blessings of GOD which were given to him were simply "Yea and Amen" apart from any action or obedience on the part of Abraham. Abraham's blessing was determined and applied solely by GOD and his actions of obedience were the result of his calling and the mercy of GOD alone..

Such is the case with all of the recipients of HIS blessing in all ages. Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD and built an ark according to the purpose of GOD. The LORD shut him in it and delivered him from the destruction around him. In what could he boast?

The religious world is full of those who are convinced that they can by their own efforts enter into the kingdom of GOD and then, while there, merit greater or lesser consideration on the part of the LORD by their own degrees of faithfulness and obedience. Some (quite inconsistently, I might add) on the other hand, tell us that it is, indeed, all of GOD's grace for a man to be given entrance into the kingdom, but once he is there, it is all up to him as to whether he gains or forfeits GOD's blessings. They all have this or that code by which each one should order his life but most often it is centered around the Mosaic Law in some fashion or other, whether in Sabbath keeping or a reverence for rites and duties of one type or other.

The early church at Galatia was beset by these Judaizers who (being typical of all man made religion) sought to add something of man's doing to that which was perfectly completed by CHRIST. Circumcision was given to Abraham as sign of GOD's promise just as the rainbow was given to Noah, yet these legalists turned it into a duty which must be performed by those who were heirs of the promise, even in the same fashion as the Pharisees viewed the Sabbath as though man was made for it rather than vice versa as the LORD said.

Paul's trumpet never sounded an uncertain sound on this issue (unlike Peter) and he clearly understood and taught that the promise supercedes all else, even the law of Moses which was given because of sin and was added at a later time than the giving of the promise which was first manifested in the condemnation of Satan in Genesis 3:15 and then established in HIS pledge to Abraham and all of his spiritual posterity. (see Gen.12:-4) In commenting on the superior nature of the promise Paul said, *"And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."* (Gal 3:17)

This "covenant of promise" was given to CHRIST and all of those who were hidden in HIM before the foundation of the world. *"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."* (Gal 3:16) Abraham's every blessing was given to him on the basis of being a son of GOD when he was yet wandering in Ur of the Chaldees. He was received not on the basis of his person or character but because he was in CHRIST according to the purpose of ALMIGHTY GOD.

And so it is even in the present time, those who are called out of darkness by HIS grace and caused to believe in CHRIST as the REDEEMER are born not by the will of the flesh but by GOD who determined to bless them in CHRIST from the beginning. The blessings promised to Abraham were not conditional upon his actions. Rather it was because he was given to CHRIST who had undertook his redemption and imputed HIS righteousness to him before Abraham ever drew breath insofar as the purpose of GOD was concerned.

In order to fulfill this promise which preceded the creation, CHRIST did take upon HIMSELF a body of flesh and blood and did taste death for "every man" which was given to HIM by promise while yet the sun had not given its first ray of light. In a real body HE did accomplish a real redemption in being made sin for us, justifying HIS own on the basis of the same law to which they were made subject and which they had without exception disobeyed.

CHRIST is the AUTHOR and the FINISHER of this promise by which all of the sons of GOD have ever been blessed. The AUTHOR in its design and the FINISHER in its accomplishment in time. *"But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. ----- And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."* (Heb 9:11-15)

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