

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 EARLY AND LATTER RAIN

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. James 5:7

We first read of the “early and latter rain” in the book of Deuteronomy, “*And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.*” (Deut 11:13-17)

The LORD promised to send the rains to water their newly planted crops (early) and then to finish their crops (latter) as they neared the time of harvest according to their obedience to the requirements of the law. This was a conditional blessing which was given to Israel under the covenant of law. Because of the weakness of their flesh they knew many times of famine when it rained not upon the earth. This rain was often withheld and their crops withered as their hearts grew cold and their disobedience was manifested.

Hosea also speaks of an early and latter rain. Yet the rain of which he speaks is not one of nature which falls from the clouds and would nourish a natural crop. Rather, he speaks (prophetically) of the outpouring of a “rain” which was not predicated upon the obedience of those to whom it was given. In fact this “rain” of which he speaks does not produce a blessing but is the very blessing itself. “*Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.*” (Hos 6:3)

The blessing of the LORD's people was given to them (in CHRIST) by a promise which preceded the giving of the law. The “law was added” in order to demonstrate to the children of promise the utter impossibility of their gaining any blessing from GOD on the basis of their own righteousness. (read Gal. 3:16-29) Paul says; “*For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.*” (Gal 3:18) He goes on to say that this promise was made to CHRIST who is the SEED of promise and that those who are hidden in HIM are the recipients of this manifest promise based upon the redemptive work which HE has performed for them as their SUBSTITUTE and elder BROTHER.

John tells us what this promise is. “*And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.*” (1John 2:25) “*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*”

(1John 5:11-12) Only those who are found in CHRIST are the recipients of this LIFE, and this life is manifested by the work of the SPIRIT in causing them to be born again and made new creatures. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." II Cor 5:17)

This promise of life to the sons of GOD has a two-fold manifestation which is analogous to the "early" and "latter" rain. The LORD JESUS startled Nicodemus by this statement, *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* (John 3:3) The literal meaning of what HE said, is "a man must be born from above". A man cannot inherit the kingdom of GOD by mere natural birth (i.e.; born of water) but must experience a supernatural work of the HOLY GHOST to give him "eternal life". This is the early rain which comes upon the sons of GOD at the planting of the SEED in them by the power of the HOLY GHOST.

The natural man cannot receive spiritual things. *"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."* (1Cor 15:50) *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* (1Cor 2:14) Therefore it is necessary that he be "made alive" in order to enter into this kingdom, which is not one of flesh and blood. *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."* (Eph 2:1)

Therefore we are quite certain that natural men cannot embrace the eternal truths of GOD nor enter into HIS righteousness by any power which they possess. This very truth overturns the religions of men which are all built upon the free will of men in some form or fashion. Apart from a supernatural work of GOD in a man by HIS free and sovereign grace, it is impossible that any man could possibly approach the throne of GOD. Yet those that are made alive in CHRIST have free access to that throne because of HIM who is their LIFE. (see Heb.4:14-16; Eph.3:11,12)

Though the born again sons of GOD do presently enjoy the life of CHRIST which is given to them, they have this treasure in an earthen vessel which is both mortal and corruptible, and consequently temporary. Therefore they are given the promise which can be likened to the "latter rain" which is the hope of the resurrection and the same life in a body which is spiritual and not susceptible to sin and consequently decay. Just as the Israelites of old planted their seeds and waited upon the LORD to water the ground and bring forth the full kernel in the ear, so do the sons of GOD wait with expectation upon that "latter rain" which causes that seed which is cast into the ground to bring forth fruit unto everlasting life. (see I Cor.15:35-38)

There are many today who teach that all men, in essence, have "eternal life" since it is quite common to hear men speak of man as having an "immortal soul" which cannot die. This concept cannot be found in the scriptures and its basis is at the root of Satan's very first lie to Eve, *"Ye shall not surely die."* The LORD gave this warning, *"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* (Mat 10:28) There is an everlasting destruction in the fiery pit of hell for those who are the enemies of CHRIST and not numbered among those HE has loved with an everlasting love.

The promise of everlasting life is given only to those who are made one with CHRIST in the present time and who groan in travail having, *"the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"* (Rom 8:23-24) So the sons of GOD do look for that "latter rain". They live in this hope, *"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."* (Titus 1:2) *"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom 5:20-21)

"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:2-3) *"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."* (John 10:28) mam