

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 REMAINING REST

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

Hebrews 4:9

The creation account which we see in Genesis is concluded when the LORD; after six days of work, rested from it. Now I don't imagine that this means HE took a nap or pulled out a recliner and propped HIS feet up. Rather this is an indication that HE had completely finished what HE purposed to do in that creation and was thoroughly satisfied with what HE had made. *"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."* (Gen 2:1-2)

There were no loose ends to be tied up, mistakes to be corrected, nor any improvements which needed to be made. *"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."* (Gen 1:31) The author (who I believe was the apostle Paul) of the epistle to the Hebrews reminds his readers of this fact when he wrote, *"For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works."* (Heb 4:4)

Now Paul's purpose in bringing up this matter of GOD, "resting", on the seventh day is not to reinforce the Jewish custom of observing the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, but rather to emphasize the completed nature of that which GOD has done. In doing so, he exhorts them to flee from their own "works" of righteousness in which they might find a place of reliance and to "rest" in that which CHRIST had performed. HE did not "rest" upon the seventh day in order to give us an example of setting aside one day out of seven, but rather to demonstrate to us that all that is needed by the sons of GOD, is performed and perfected by HIM.

The Jews as a natural race, were highly favored by GOD; selected to be the representatives of GOD's chosen people. *"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."* (Rom 3:1-2) GOD did not send HIS prophets to the heathen nations or commit HIS word into the ears of another race, but rather HE singled out the nation of Israel in this fashion.

Many of those who held tightly to their heritage assumed that they had some eternal standing with GOD, simply on the basis of being born as a descendant of Jacob (Israel), taking great pride in this pedigree and relying upon the works of the law given to Moses as an evidence of their righteous standing with the Eternal GOD. The Pharisees are the poster children of this thinking as they went about to establish their "own righteousness" (see Rom.10:3) while completely eschewing the only RIGHTEOUSNESS which GOD has approved.

In order to demonstrate that they *"are not all Israel which are of Israel"*, Paul points out to these Hebrew Christians, that, many who were of the natural seed of Jacob fell in the wilderness because they believed not the promise of GOD. *"The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."* (Heb 4:2) To reinforce that truth, he quotes from Psalm 95 in Hebrews 4:3. *"Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a*

people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.” (Psa 95:10-11)

The message is that since they rejected the promise of GOD by unbelief, no one who claims to be a follower of CHRIST, who trusts in his own righteousness rather than completely resting upon that which CHRIST has performed, cannot and does not enter into the rest which CHRIST has procured. The wanderers in the wilderness perished outside of the land of promise, because of unbelief, and in the same fashion that man who has confidence or reliance in anything other than the RIGHTEOUSNESS of JESUS CHRIST, will surely perish also.

We see an interesting phrase in v.3; *“although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” (Heb 4:3)* Paul has reference here to the fact that all of the things which GOD has performed, are according to HIS eternal purpose, but are unfolded in time, before us, for our benefit. Even as HE rested from HIS work on the seventh day, not because HE was tired, but because HE would demonstrate to us that HE was satisfied with that finished work.

Just as nothing could be added to or taken from HIS creative work by puny men, neither can anything be added or taken away from that which CHRIST has performed in the behalf of those who are included in HIS eternal purpose of redemption.

The natural man looks upon the natural creation as the crowning work of GOD yet those whose eyes are opened to behold the totality and finality of the work of CHRIST in redemption, understand that this carnal creation only exists to set a stage upon which that glorious redemption can be manifested in the eyes of all creation unto the glory of HIM who created all things for that purpose. *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” (Eph 2:4-7)*

JESUS CHRIST is the REST of HIS people. The work is finished. The labor is done. HE has obtained eternal redemption for every one of those sons for whom HE has laid down HIS life and shed HIS precious blood. The natural man (especially those who love religion) finds some benefit in sacrifice and obedience unto carnal commandments. We see this demonstrated by those who demand that GOD’s people must observe one day in seven, as a holy day unto the LORD, teaching that CHRIST only satisfied part of the law, leaving other portions of it to be bound upon the conscience as duties that must be fulfilled.

If a man for conscience sake lays aside his weekly labors upon a particular day of the week, while still resting in the finished work of CHRIST, then I would find no objection to such a practice. Even as Paul said, *“One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” (Rom 14:5)* But if that same person should teach others that there is some sort of requirement to do so, to those who have been set free from the law of sin and death, then they are in error and have no clear view of CHRIST’s fulfillment of every jot and tittle of the law.

The LORD (who was a keeper of Moses law), upbraided the Pharisees because in their zeal to be “keepers of the law” they missed the purpose of the law, (concerning the Sabbath) which was not to be regarded as a duty, but rather as a benefit. *“And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.” (Mark 2:27-28)*

So when we read that there “remaineth a rest” (which literally means a “Sabbath keeping”) for the people of GOD, we know that this “rest” is not found in the performance of “duty-works” or the observance of days, times, seasons, or meats and drinks, but rather in the finished work of the REDEEMER of sinners. *“For he that is entered into HIS rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from HIS. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” (Heb 4:10-11) “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Heb 10:14)*