

# 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*

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## FELLOWCITIZENS

*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.*

*Ephesians 2:19*

The LORD called Abraham out of the land of pagan darkness, first from Ur of the Chaldees and then from Haran, into Canaan (the land of promise). It was here that the LORD told him that HE would make of him a great nation and would multiply his seed in the earth and cause all nations of the earth to be blessed through him (see Gen. chap. 12)

The scripture describes his "calling" as a work of GOD which was not left to chance but was definite and effectual. The LORD did not simply foresee and wait for Abraham's cooperation, but rather moved Abraham to do exactly as HE determined. *"So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him."* (Gen 12:4) This is an exact illustration of the testimony of the LORD, which the prophet Isaiah records, *"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."* (Isa 46:9-11)

Who could possibly argue against the fact that the LORD singled out Abraham from all other men in the earth at the time, to receive this great blessing which HE purposed to bring to pass? Or who could say that the LORD did not exhibit a special regard unto Abraham and his posterity according to HIS determined purpose? And who could contend that Abraham received this blessing on the basis of his seeking after it or that it was conditioned upon his performance?

Abraham is considered to be the "father" of that people which came to be known as the "people of GOD." Yet not all of Abraham's posterity was included among that "people". *"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called."* (Rom 9:6-7) Yet not even all of the sons of Isaac are included in this promise, for Esau, was rejected according to the LORD's purpose. *"I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."* (Mal 1:2-3)

Thus the LORD sets forth HIS sovereign right to do with HIS own as HE pleases even as Paul says, *"Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."* (Rom 9:14-16) *"Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"* (Rom 9:20-21)

So it is quite evident in the scriptures that the LORD chose a nation, and set them apart from all other nations upon the earth. HE gave HIS law to the house of Israel and told them through Moses of the basis of HIS choice of them. *"For thou art an holy (i.e.; set apart) people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above*

*all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people. But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” (Deu 7:6-8)*

So as we look at the Old Testament, it is quite clear that the LORD had an elect people in the earth, and that this nation or people were the Israelites, or the descendants of Jacob after the flesh. They were a privileged people because unto them the LORD gave the Law and the Prophets, which were given to no other nation or people in the earth. This was not only recognized by them, but also by the other nations of the earth in varying degrees.

Those who cannot see the unfolding of the mystery of the Gospel in the New Testament are still of the opinion that this nation made up of the carnal descendants of Jacob still occupy this same place of great privilege. Yet it seems quite evident, according to that which was revealed to the Apostle Paul, that they were but a type and foreshadow of that people (which have always been the true people of GOD) which are now revealed in the New Testament as that Elect Bride which was chosen in CHRIST from before the foundation of the world.

Thus their standing as “the people of GOD” was but a temporary station, (as a carnal illustration of that people who are enabled to worship HIM in SPIRIT and TRUTH) until such time as the LORD was pleased to display the full manifestation of the Spiritual nature of HIS Kingdom and the inhabitants thereof. The Old Testament thus serves to point to the coming of CHRIST, wherein HE has now set forth that purpose which HE had for the nation of Israel, in order to gather in those which are HIS “*holy nation*” from out of every tribe, kindred, and tongue: (see Rom.11:25) rather than as a declaration of HIS choice of the carnal nation of Israel as HIS elect people.

Paul continually dealt with those Jews who could not let go of their supposed superior status as the carnal descendants of Jacob. Though many of them embraced the tenets of the gospel in varying degrees, others of them continued to demand circumcision and adherence to Moses’ law from those Gentiles who sought refuge in CHRIST. No doubt this attitude was infectious and even some of the Apostles were, from time to time, carried away with the sectarianism of these Judaizers. (see Gal.2:1-16) Therefore it is not surprising that some of the Gentiles were intimidated by these legalists and perhaps believed some of their erroneous teaching which in essence made the Gentiles to be as “second class” citizens in the kingdom of GOD.

Paul would not entertain such a notion even for an instant. Even though, early on, he had Timothy to be circumcised, (see Acts 16:1-3) in order to avoid needless conflict and to be all things to all men (see I Cor.9:2); when once this had become an issue which the Judaizers demanded, he refused to allow Titus to be circumcised in order to appease them, lest they should think it proper, and their own position correct. (see Gal.2:1-5)

It is against this backdrop that this jewel which Paul delivers to the Ephesians shines. Most of these Ephesian believers were Greeks, but no doubt they were subjected in times past to the sectarian nature of the Jews which was not greatly diminished by these Judaizers which infected just about all of the early churches to some degree. Even now they have their emissaries; though clad in Gentile garments, nonetheless demanding adherence to Moses’ law as the rule of life, and an exalted view of Israel as “the chosen people of GOD”.

Paul destroys these notions in his writings to the Galatians and the Ephesians and puts the cherry on top of the whipped cream, when he said to the Gentiles (and any Jews who would listen), “*Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints*.”(Eph 2:19) The basis upon which this truth stands is that CHRIST has destroyed any partitions or divisions by HIS work in the behalf of HIS elect bride, “*by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby*.”(Eph 2:16). Thus HE has broken down the “*middle wall of partition*” between Jew and Gentile. “*For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father*.” (Eph 2:18)

This word which is translated as “*fellowcitizens*” in the KJV, literally means, “natives of the same town”. The inhabitants of Zion (i.e.; the Kingdom of GOD) were appointed to be the citizens of this CITY, before the world was formed. Thus the only divisions that there have ever been between them are those which have existed in the minds of each one. CHRIST came that they might have LIFE and have it more abundantly. HE has sent forth the Gospel “*to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*.” (Isa 61:1) “*We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God*.” (2Cor 5:20)