

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

SOJOURNERS AND STRANGERS

And they removed from Alush, and encamped at Rephidim, where was no water for the people to drink. And they departed from Rephidim, and pitched in the wilderness of Sinai.

Numbers 33:14-15

The 33rd chapter of Numbers is one of those chapters in the scriptures which is often overlooked or scanned through quickly. Just like the chapters that I call the "begats". (see I Chron.1-6) But all of the scriptures are given to us for a reason and none of them are without significance. As here, there are many great lessons to be learned. (see Rom.15:4) So rather than ignore this passage we can learn from the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years.

The nation of Israel, in many cases, is used in the scriptures as a type and foreshadow of the true people of GOD that have belonged to the LORD from eternity past. Sometimes by comparison (see Deut.32:8-14) and sometimes by contrast (see Heb.3:16-19). This chapter (33) chronicles the meanderings of the Israelites on their journey from captivity in Egypt to their freedom in the promised land of Canaan. By my count they pitched their tents 41 different times in 41 different places, as they moved about once a year. That was hardly the way to "put down roots". But it was not GOD's intention that they should "put down roots" for HE had prepared for them a land flowing with milk and honey and the land of their sojourn was not their home. HE did not intend that they should have there a permanent dwelling. Their passage through the wilderness was for the purpose of teaching them (and us) many lessons, and to prepare and purify them (by causing the deaths of the unbelieving) for entrance into that promised land.

As the elect and predestinated sons of GOD, we too are strangers in the land in which we now dwell. *"For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."* (Heb 13:14) The true sons of GOD have always testified that they are not satisfied with such things as this world has to offer but are looking for a place of uninterrupted fellowship with their FATHER. *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country."* (Heb 11:13-14) Abraham *"looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD."* (Heb 11:10) Though we are men of flesh and blood, yet because our nature has been changed by the SPIRIT of GOD, our desires and delights have changed as well. The allure of this world, which once gripped us in a trancelike hold, is tarnished in our eyes since we have been born again. And though our old man cries out from time to time for the leeks and onions of Egypt, yet in our heart and soul, we cry out for the LIVING GOD. *"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the SAVIOR, the LORD JESUS CHRIST."* (Phil 3:20) The way of the flesh, which once was our chief desire can no longer satisfy us. We can identify with those Israelites in the passage before us who *"encamped at Rephidim, where was no water for the people to drink."* When a man, by the grace of GOD has tasted that "LIVING WATER" (see John 4:13-14), then he can never more be satisfied to drink from the wells which quench the thirst of the natural men of this world.

The true sons of GOD are strangers in the earth because they have been:

Given the gift of faith. *"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."* (2 Cor 4:16-18) Our confidence and hope are not in those things which can be seen and felt in the flesh, but our hope is in the ONE who is eternal, the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Transformed by the SPIRIT. *"Therefore if any man be in CHRIST, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* (2 Cor 5:17) The work of GOD is to fit HIS children for glory. The beginning of that work is the new birth. We who were strangers to GOD now have the spirit of a son crying "Abba FATHER" (see Gal.4:6) The culmination of that work is the resurrection of our bodies to an immortal state. *"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, but thanks be to GOD, which giveth us the victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST."* (1 Cor 15:51,57)

Passed from death unto life. *"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."* (Rom. 6:11-12) *"How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* (Rom.6:2) Sin is the cause of death in the world, we have been delivered from its curse and called to life. *"For the law of the Spirit of life in CHRIST Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."* (Rom. 8:2) We are those who have the expectation of everlasting life in the future because we have been given eternal life in the present, not simply in the promise but in the actual fact. (see John 5:24; I John 3:14)

Indwelt by the HOLY GHOST. *"Howbeit when HE, the SPIRIT of truth, is come, HE will guide you into all truth: for HE shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever HE shall hear, that shall HE speak: and HE will shew you things to come. HE shall glorify me: for HE shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the FATHER hath are mine: therefore said I, that HE shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."* (John 16:13-15) We have received a great privilege in being made the sons of GOD. The world has hated our FATHER and HE has given to us the keys of the kingdom. (see Mat.16:19) *"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."* (1 John 3:13) Not only do we confess that this world is not our home, but this world confesses that they are not our brethren.

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