

# 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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## CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE

*Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

*Romans 9:7-8*

As we study the scripture one thing that is made abundantly clear is that there is a contrast between the people in whom the LORD takes delight and those who are not so favored. There are those who are blessed with eternal life while others who are equally sinful, perish. We see it with Cain and Abel as the LORD received Abel's offering but rejected that of Cain. We see it as Noah and his immediate family were saved from the destruction of the flood while the rest of the world was destroyed. Then we see it when Abraham was blessed with faith while Lot went to Sodom. Ishmael was the son of the flesh while Isaac was the child of promise. Jacob was loved and Esau was hated. Those who believe that salvation is all of grace believe that the LORD is the one who causes this difference to occur whereas those who believe that salvation is of works or is a mixture of grace and works believe that it is man himself who causes this difference. The apostle Paul was never equivocal about this matter as he said, "*For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*" (1 Cor. 4:7).

Abraham was given a promise that in him all nations of the earth would be blessed. He was given two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. This prophecy was fulfilled in the offspring of both to a certain degree but only one of those sons was the heir of the promise. Just as Isaac is typical of those who are the elect sons of GOD, Ishmael is typical of those who live and die in this flesh without being made recipients of grace. We say that they are typical of these two groups of people because the true sons of GOD are chosen out of every tribe, nation, and tongue on the face of the earth (see Rev.5:9) and are in no way the physical offspring of either son (see Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:29). A man's natural birth has nothing to do with whether or not he is given an entrance into the kingdom of GOD. HE is truly no respecter of persons. (see Acts 10:34-35)

The Judaisers despise this truth and are constantly trying to make their heritage, along with lawkeeping and religious order to be that which insures a man's acceptance with GOD. The Infidels constantly accuse GOD of unrighteousness because HE alone exercises HIS sovereign right to show mercy to those HE desires to show mercy to and to harden those whom HE does not. (see Rom.9:14-21) The children of the promise however, are compelled to bow down and worship at HIS feet and say with their REDEEMER, "*Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.*" (Mat 11:26) They are overwhelmed with gratitude for HIS undeserved favor.

GOD told Hagar that HE intended to make Ishmael into a mighty nation, which HE did. Ishmael was blessed with many lands, children and flocks. He became a mighty man in the earth. In this, Ishmael is typical of the men of this world who confess that this world is their

home and they take great delight in the blessings and enjoyments which is afforded them in this fleshly realm. They are not much concerned with spiritual matters except in a passing way, finding much greater delight and enjoyment in those things which can be touched and handled. They are content to build bigger and better barns, to take their ease in the enjoyment of this world's goods. They are not bothered about worlds to come nor do their faults and failings give them much reason to mourn except insofar as it hampers their ability to enjoy the way of the flesh. They are easily satisfied with external religion (church attendance, tithing, etc.) and see no reason to overdo that, preferring to forsake the assembling of themselves together for the things they deem more important, such as recreational pursuits and quality time spent with family and friends. They are quite content to be entertained with some sort of amusement even when they do take time out of their busy schedules to be religious.

The children of the promise are often looked upon with pity by the sons of Ishmael. They shake their heads and can only wonder why anybody would actually take delight in the things of GOD. It is amazing to them that someone would actually read the bible and pray for some reason other than religious duty. They cannot grasp the delight that these heirs of grace take in the precious words and promises of the SAVIOR nor can they understand how one could desire to worship HIM quite apart from organized religious activities, even in private. Or why one would go about seeking to obey the LORD even when nobody is looking or will ever find out. The world sees these children of the promise as a "peculiar people", kind of fanatical and a little unbalanced.

There is a contrast between the sons of the promise and the sons of Ishmael in:

**The things that cause them heartache.** The sons of GOD truly mourn over their sin and the disobedience that is common to their flesh. They are constantly mindful of how far short of GOD's standard of righteousness that they come. (see Ps.51) As long as the sons of Ishmael have an abundance of this world's goods, a healthy body, and a prosperous family they are generally quite content and without much heartache. (see Luke 12:16-34)

**The things that bring them joy.** True joy for the heirs of the promise is to walk in HIS presence and blessings. To hear the good news of the gospel proclaimed is a glorious feast for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. To be reminded of the perfection of the LORD and the imputation of our sin to HIM and HIS righteousness to us, affords the true child of GOD a constant source of joy unspeakable and full of glory. To have HIM whisper words of peace in their ear is a joy beyond compare. (see Rev.3:20) If the sons of Ishmael are just told that they are going to escape the fires of hell they are quite joyful as long as their bellies are full and they have their earthly desires fulfilled. (see Ps.73:3-5)

**How they view the Law of GOD.** The sons of Ishmael most often view the law of GOD as a measuring stick by which they can tell how much better they are today than they were yesterday. They see it as a measurement of sanctification. The children of the promise, while they revere the law and bow to its holiness, are always quite discomforted by it since it is a constant revelation and reminder of the sin that doth so easily beset them. (see Rom.7:7)

**What they consider heaven to be.** The sons of Ishmael would gladly trade being in the presence of the LORD, for a full belly and the enjoyment of the flesh. The children of the promise, however, would rather suffer the pains of hell if that's what it took to be with the LORD. Job said, "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*" (Job 13:15) Wherever CHRIST is, is heaven for the heirs of the promise. Peter said, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*" (John 6:68) The children of the promise confess: "*Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*" (Heb 13:14-15)