

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

CAPTIVITY AND FREEDOM

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.
Romans 8:2

The natural man (i.e.; one who is not born again) is convinced that he is free yet he is truly a captive. The spiritual man (i.e.; the one who is quickened and born again) can see his captivity clearly yet he is truly free. This is a paradox which makes no sense to any who have no understanding of the work of the SPIRIT in the sons of men. The man who has no spiritual illumination either of the scriptures or of his own corrupt nature is convinced that he possesses a "free will" which enables him to embrace the things of GOD or reject them according to whichever whim may strike him.

The truth is that man is a captive to his own desire and can choose nothing which he does not possess a love for. Men love the way of sin and will not choose to follow the way of GOD unless the LORD in sovereign mercy sees fit to change their desire and enable them to. *"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."* (Rom 3:11) Most of today's "free-will" preachers (the woods is full of them) seem to have forgotten this fact as they try to plead and cajole men into walking in paths of righteousness. They conveniently ignore what the LORD said to the Pharisees, *"Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word."* (John 8:43)

Bob Dylan wrote a song entitled "You Gotta Serve Somebody" in which he stated that all men will be captives unto a principle of sin or one of righteousness. Paul told the Romans, *"For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness."* (Rom.6:20) The natural man is free to walk in his own self destructive path and apart from the intervention of GOD's grace his feet "shall slide in due time" (see Deut.32:5) and he will be utterly destroyed. He thinks this pathway that he is on is one of great freedom but he shall one day be brought to see the utter folly of that which he has sought out with every fiber of his being.

GOD has not seen fit to totally remove HIS restraints on the wickedness of men (yet) so it is not unusual to find many moral and upright men in the earth, yea even some mixed with "religion" of one sort or another. The religious moralist becomes confused on this matter and identifies his moral and upright behavior as "righteous" because he assumes that he must possess the ability to please GOD by his good deeds. Others may just desire to serve his fellow man. (see Rom.1:25; Mat.7:21-23) Both avenues find many supporters and those who go about "doing good" find great support and encouragement in most of the "preaching" and psychological training that goes on from today's pulpits and bookshelves.

The only "righteousness" which is acceptable in the courts of heaven is one which has no mixture of error nor is it in any way less than perfect. *"Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."* (Psa 24:3-4) This is the "righteousness" which can only be supplied by HIM who is *"our righteousness"*. The man who

is outside of CHRIST is totally without an acceptable "righteousness" regardless of his morality, religion, or good deeds. On the other hand, the man who is standing in the imputed righteousness of JESUS CHRIST cannot be brought into condemnation by anything.

This is the glorious liberty of the sons of GOD and is the basis upon which all of their hopes and expectations are built. It is to these free born sons that the LORD is pleased to send HIS SPIRIT to guide them into all truth. (see John 16:13) HE is pleased to not only establish them forever in the courts of heaven as righteous in JESUS CHRIST but HE is pleased to manifest their sonship in this world by the gift of HIS SPIRIT who works in them both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure. Whereas they were once free from the principle of righteousness, when they walked in darkness, now HE has brought them into captivity to it. Paul said that though we still walk in the flesh, yet we do not operate on the principle of the flesh as we did when we were without CHRIST. The word of GOD has come to us in power, "*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*" (2Cor 10:5)

We are still men of flesh and blood and sin is a constant foe yet there is a principle which has been implanted in our minds that we cannot escape. "*For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*" (Rom 8:5) Sin may be present in the children of GOD but it cannot reign over them, they can no longer fully embrace it. "*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" (Rom 6:11) It is the knowledge of CHRIST's righteousness that enables the son's of GOD to never again be in bondage to sin. "*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*" (Rom 7:25)

The reigning power of sin can only be manifested in those who are slaves and subjects of it, i.e.; those who are free from righteousness. The sons of GOD have been given the precious promises of GOD, and it is impossible that they should ever be under sin's dominion, "*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*" (Rom 8:33-34)

There are some who would like to entangle the free born sons of GOD with the chains of the principle of sin and death (under which they have always lived until they were freed by the quickening power of the SPIRIT) which has its manifestation in the principle of law. Everytime one of GOD's children tries to operate under this principle the fire and smoke of Sinai clouds their vision of CHRIST who is the "*end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*" (Rom 10:4) and makes them to feel the lash of the law to remind them that they have there no permanent dwelling nor can they find any comfort therein.

*Does conscience lay a guilty charge, And Moses much condemn,
And bring in bills exceeding large? Let Jesus answer them.
He paid thy ransom with his hand, And every score did quit;
And Moses never can demand Two payments of one debt.
Now justice smiles on mercy sweet, And looks well reconciled;
Joined hand in hand, they go to meet And kiss a weeping child.
But ask the Lord for his receipt, To show the payment good,
Delivered from the mercy-seat, And sprinkled with his blood.
The law thy feet will not enlarge, Nor give thy conscience rest,
Till thou canst find a full discharge Locked up within thy breast.
The sight of this will melt thy heart, And make thy eyes run o'er.
A happy, pardoned child thou art, And heaven is at thy door.*

#101, Gadsby's Hymns; John Berridge, (1716-1793)

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