

# 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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## THE CONCLUSION OF HOPE

*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*  
*I Peter 1:8-9*

Conventional wisdom is that men have a soul. This mindset begins with the belief that this world is our home and then, based upon our choices, our soul will live on somewhere. This mindset reverberates in the message that we must apply ourselves to the ultimate enjoyment of this world's goods while we have the opportunity. One of the beer companies used to advertise their product with this motto. "You only go around once in life so you need to grab all the gusto you can." Supposedly, their particular beverage was an integral part of this quest.

In our society, a whole industry has arisen around the enjoyment of the "golden years" which are supposedly entered into once a man has "retired", having amassed a nest egg which will allow him to enjoy this world as long as he can, in comfort and the pursuit of his earthly dreams. This "industry" continually plays upon the fears of men that they might run short of this world's goods and not be able to do what they want to do. So in this scenario a man's life consists of working hard and saving his money in order to be able to spend his retirement years in ease and comfort. His earthly body is the temple which must be satisfied, to which is attached a soul which he may or may not be concerned about but probably should be to some extent.

The scriptures present quite a different picture of man than this. Men do not have a "soul", rather they are a "soul" which is currently residing in a temporary house of clay, which is our present body. "*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*" (Gen 2:7) The LORD reiterated this fact when HE said, "*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*" (Mat 10:28)

Coupled with the conventional wisdom of man "having" a soul is the notion that this "soul" is somehow an eternal entity which must live on somewhere. There is not one shred of evidence in the scripture for such an idea even though the vast majority of "so called" Bible scholars routinely accept the notion as fact and generally those who question it are deemed "heretics". GOD alone is eternal and is the sole INHABITER of eternity. (see Isa.57:15; 46:10) Men are finite creatures in every respect, by nature; having a beginning and an end as so ordered by the LORD.

When Adam was created he was placed in the garden with access to the TREE of LIFE but once sin had entered his heart he was barred from it, having died. (see Gen.3:22-24) The only way in which a man may live forever is that he be given the gift of eternal life. This is a gift which he has no ability to obtain, but is given to those whom the LORD has chosen. These favored ones are distinguished from those who perish, by the fact, that included in this gift of eternal life is the gift of faith. "*And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*" (Acts 13:48) "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*" (John 10:27-28)

The writer of Hebrews defines faith in this fashion, *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* (Heb 11:1) The purpose of the gift of faith is to comfort and sustain those to whom it is given until they are brought to the ultimate enjoyment of the things for which they were created to obtain. Sin has darkened this world and it is impossible that natural corruptible flesh and blood should ever inherit the kingdom of GOD. However, it is not only possible but, rather, certain that those who were created expressly for that kingdom shall occupy it as "heirs and joint-heirs with CHRIST". (see Rom.8:14-17).

Many of those to whom these promises were given (in the Old Testament) have died, not having yet received them or even seen them in a clear light. (see Heb.11:13) Still others, in that era since CHRIST has been revealed, though having seen HIM, nonetheless see through a glass darkly and have not yet attained unto that for which they were redeemed. (see Phil.3:8-14, I Cor.13:10-13). Many of these now sleep as well. Yet all of those who are privileged to be the objects of HIS everlasting love and eternal redemption have been or are being fitted for their final home (Solomon calls it a "long home" see Ecc.12:5) by the operation of the SPIRIT in them. They are given faith in the ONE who gives them faith, and do confess that they are strangers and pilgrims in this world. *"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit."* (Eph 2:19-22)

According to the Apostle Paul speaking to the Romans, when once a man has seen or embraced that for which he hopes, hope is no longer needed. (see 8:24) Though hope is that which is sweet, the realization of that for which he has hoped for is even sweeter. According to Paul in this passage, he says that we hope for that which we wait for, and that which the sons of GOD are waiting for is the "redemption of our body".

Now we are certain that JESUS CHRIST has *"obtained eternal redemption"* for HIS elect by the giving of HIMSELF as a SIN-OFFERING and SUBSTITUTE for HIS own. Therein HE has taken their sins by imputation, becoming sin for them, and giving them HIS righteousness by the same act of imputation. HE has stood as a condemned sinner in their place that they might stand with HIM fully clothed in HIS righteousness as the heirs and joint heirs of HIS kingdom, free from the law to which they were bound. There is but one event which has yet to occur, for which the creature groans and travails until it is manifested in its fullness. This is the resurrection of that body for which CHRIST shed HIS precious blood and suffered to redeem.

Shall HE not claim and possess that which is HIS? Now we are certain that HE has purchased the "body", corporately speaking, of all the saints, Jew and Gentile alike but we do not think this is the "body" to which Paul is referring. Rather it is the body which we occupy which is corrupt and subject unto death itself. Paul lamented this "body of death" asking *"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* and then answering his own question with this glorious statement of faith and hope, *"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom 7:24-25)

We would be of all men most miserable if we were to be raised from the dead in this mortal, corruptible body and had to dwell in it through the ages to come. That resurrection which we long for is not one like unto that of Lazarus natural body which was reanimated and brought out from the grave only to age and die again at some future time. Rather that body which we long to be raised in is one which is most surely ours but is a "spiritual, incorruptible body". The scripture likens the death of the natural body to that of a "lifeless" seed being planted in the ground and a new life is brought forth even as that seed sprouts. One does not plant a grain of wheat and expect to reap a harvest of corn, likewise only that which is sown in hope can and shall be raised in newness of life in the day when the LORD comes to judge the quick and the dead. *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ---Wherefore comfort one another with these words."* (see (1Th 4:14-18) mam