

# 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 FORMER AND THE LATTER RAIN

*Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.*

*Joel 2:23*

The promises of GOD to the children of Israel, under the Mosaic law, were all conditional upon their obedience to that Holy Law which the LORD delivered to Moses in clouds of smoke and fire upon Mount Sinai. We see this manifested in HIS admonition to them, "*And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.*" (Deut 11:13-15)

This demonstrates the unbending nature of that Law and also serves to cause men to tremble before it, and to cry out, "*LORD save or we perish*" when the impossibility of natural obedience to the precepts of GOD, is realized. Only those who are ignorant of their own sinful condition could ever take delight in or expect the possibility of gaining any sort of lasting blessing which arises or is dependent upon their own obedience to the commandments of GOD.

The prophet Jeremiah delivers unto the children of Israel the manifestation of the fruits of their own attempts and ability to be obedient unto the way of GOD and to be found as pure worshippers of HIM. "*Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.*" (Jer 3:2-3) There is no soundness in man regardless of his pedigree.

Clearly, this demonstrates the weakness of sinful flesh, and manifests the innate wickedness of men which can in no wise be corrected by conditional promises or warnings against sin. Natural Israel was continually under the judgment of GOD because of their disobedience and never earned one blessing by an adherence to the precepts of GOD. All of their blessings (even as those of true Israel), accrued to them through the covenant grace of a merciful FATHER.

The workmongers, preachers of duty faith, and promoters of the keeping of a "moral law", either have not known or never experienced the depths of the depravity of the human heart and the natural enmity which men by nature have against the law of GOD. Those who would make the blessings of GOD to the sons of GOD to be dependent upon their conditional obedience have missed the glorious truth of the Gospel which declares that the promises of GOD are yea and amen. The blessings of GOD's elect depend upon one condition, and that is the willingness of CHRIST to impute HIS righteousness to them and to call them HIS heirs and joint-heirs.

In light of this fact Paul plainly declares, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit*

*of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Rom 8:1-4)*

The “former rain” was that which was given at the time of planting. Anyone who has done any gardening or farming knows that apart from adequate moisture a seed will not germinate nor can the plant grow up out of the soil in which it is placed. We are exhorted to rejoice *“for he hath given you the former rain moderately”*.

The LORD is the AUTHOR of eternal salvation for those whom HE has loved with an everlasting love. HE is the BEGINNING of that salvation and HE sends that “former rain” to cause the “seed” which HE has planted to both sprout and grow according to the dictates of HIS eternal purpose and the demonstration of HIS sovereign love and mercy.

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word which is translated here as *“moderately”* appears over 150 times in the Old Testament and is translated as *“righteousness”* 128 times. We understand that the RIGHTEOUSNESS which is imputed to the sons of GOD, took place from before the foundation of the world. Yet those elect sons as they are born in Adam could have no knowledge or enjoyment of that fact until such times as the “FORMER RAIN” did fall upon that “seed” causing it to be made alive and sprout up, even as we see described in Acts, *“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)*

It is proper to note that the “seed” which springs up unto RIGHTEOUSNESS is one which is ordained to be righteous. Even as a grain of corn is predestined to sprout up as a corn plant. A thistle or briar seed cannot become a corn plant anymore than a goat can become a sheep or the leopard can change its spots. This is the doing of the LORD who sends the *“former rain”* at the time which seems good unto HIM and is granted according to the measure which HE ordains. This is HIS field, HIS seed, HIS planting, and HIS “rain”.

The “latter rain” is that which is given at the maturing of the crop. Those whom the LORD loves, HE loves to the end. (see John 13:1) *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:” (Php 1:6)* Many times a crop appears to be lush and green but when the “latter rains” do not come no fruit is borne, regardless of the expectations or the seeming verdancy of the plants.

Many walked with the LORD for a season during HIS ministry. Some followed HIM for the loaves and fishes, some desired to see miracles, and some were just carried along with the crowd. Yet the time came when many turned aside and walked no more with HIM. They grew weary, were offended by what HE said, or else simply became disinterested because the root of the matter was not in them.

It is not uncommon to see many spring up with great joy, but as we learn in the parable of the sower, some have no root and soon wither. Some are choked by the cares of this world, but there are some who bear fruit unto life everlasting. These are those to whom the promise is given and evidenced by the giving of the “latter rain” which produces such fruit according to the good pleasure of HIS will. Even as we see this fruit borne in the apostle Peter as many of the disciples turned aside and the LORD asked the twelve, *“Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” (John 6:67-69)*

Peter did not cause the “latter rain” to fall but he gave evidence that he was indeed of that “seed” which was ordained unto eternal life, as the RAIN nurtured him and kept him even unto the harvest. *“Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.” (Zec 10:1)* *“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.” (Jas 5:7)*