

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

THE IMPOSSIBLE TASK

When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live. *Ezekiel 33:13-16*

We have often heard preachers tell people that "GOD gives every man a chance to be saved." They often mean well, but in their clouded mind they misunderstand completely the plight that men are in by nature. If it were true that salvation was "by chance", then the reality of the matter is that no man on earth would ever be saved. The scriptures are quite plain in setting forth the fact that salvation is by the design and according to the purpose of GOD to show mercy to whom HE will shew mercy. Apart from that mercy no one could be saved.

There can be no such thing as a man meriting the "mercy" of GOD by any activity or act of his will, or else "mercy" would not be "mercy" but rather the payment of a debt. Grace is exhibited in the purpose of GOD to show mercy to whom HE will. Mercy is the bestowal of favor upon those who not only do not deserve HIS favor but in reality deserve destruction.

The LORD has created man exactly as HE saw fit, and HE is in no wise surprised by the actions of men. HE told Adam what was going to happen to him, before it ever took place. "*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*" (Gen 2:16-17) The LORD gave the man a command and the man did exactly as the LORD said he would, no ifs were involved. The consequence of his action was the sentence of death, which he passed on to all of his posterity, just as the LORD said.

Though Adam acted according to his nature, he can in no wise accuse GOD for his disobedience to the plain command of HIS CREATOR. "*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*" (Jas 1:13-15)

Many have said that the LORD put man on "probation" to see what he would do. Yet the LORD created HIM, knowing what he would do. Some have even suggested that there was the "possibility" that Adam might have obeyed the LORD and thereby saved the human race from the death which he brought upon them. There is nothing in the scriptures that would indicate any sort of "probation". This is simply a philosophical argument meant to make it seem that men are able to choose good and eschew evil, to walk in obedience and to shun disobedience. The scriptures say, "*There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they*

have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.”(Rom 3:10-18)

Some have opined that GOD would be unjust in HIS condemnation of men if they don't have a self-determining “free will”. In the first place the potsherd of the earth should never even contemplate some situation wherein they could accuse GOD of injustice, even hypothetically. *“He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” (Deut 32:4)* Nebuchadnezzar learned this the hard way, *“none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan 4:35)* Paul understood this clearly, *“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (Rom 9:20)* No doubt he had read the book of Isaiah, *“Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?” (Isa 45:9)*

In the second place, man does willingly act according to his sinful nature and, because of that nature, cannot choose the things of GOD. *“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” (Psa 76:10)* Were it not true that the LORD in HIS mercy does restrain the wickedness of men, they would soon destroy themselves and all around them. Paul touches on this very truth when he says, *“For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.”(Rom 6:20)* By nature men are not in anywise restrained by any power which is inherent in themselves. The LORD said it best in HIS answer to the Pharisees, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” (John 8:34)* So it is quite clear that men do not possess a “self-determining” free will since they are slaves to sin by nature and will act according to that nature. *“It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed.” (Lam 3:22)*

When the LORD gave the coded Law to Moses, HE made it plain that this Law was conditional. If a man kept the Law, he would live and if he broke the law he would perish. The Jews erred in thinking that a partial keeping of it, (even as the multitude of men do still) would suffice to gain the blessings set forth in the Law. This error rests upon three other errors. One is a disregard of the fact, that GOD will by no means clear the guilty. The other is a disregard of the fact that *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”(Jas 2:10)* The third is that they do not believe that the Law is powerless to enable a man to keep it. Thus, they go about to establish their own righteousness by their supposed adherence to it. It is then understandable that men would read this passage in Ezekiel and breathe a sigh of relief. For in the darkness of their natural minds they think they are able to keep the Law.

Yet this is an impossible task. Not because the Law is not Holy, but precisely because it is. The Law was never given in order that men might gain “LIFE” by it, but rather to reveal the sin that doth so easily beset us all. *“Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” (Gal 3:21-22)*

The problem that men have and the solution to that problem is set forth by Paul, *“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.” (Rom 8:3)* The need of a sinner is not a code which promises life “if” he will keep it in its jot and tittle. Rather the need of a sinner is to have ONE who will perfectly keep that Law in HIS behalf and impute that righteousness unto HIM. Yet that is not enough even then, for he has already broken the law and must either pay the penalty of a broken law or else have ONE who will (and can) pay the penalty for him. This is an impossible task which no mere man in the flesh can perform for himself or another, due to his corrupt nature.

Yet there is ONE who is without sin of HIS own, who has willingly taken upon HIMSELF the wickedness of those sinners, whom HE has loved from the beginning. HE has fully paid the price, demanded by the law, and removed the condemnation due to them by bearing it HIMSELF. *“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” (Luke 18:27)* CHRIST has undertaken an “impossible” task and has accomplished the eternal redemption of those who flee to HIM for refuge. *“It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins--- we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Heb 10:4-10)* mam