

Galatians 4:28 (KJV)

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

We are the new Israel. We are the inheritors of the Kingdom. We are the ones who are the beneficiaries of the New Covenant that God promised to Abraham so many years ago.

Galatians 3:16 (KJV) *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

We are the children of promise, the promise that from Abraham would come Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ who would save us from our sins and eternal death.

You and I are the ones who have inherited this promise that God made so many years ago.

We are now pretty well half way through Lent. We are now well into our individual and congregational observances of the Lenten season. The question is, “How are we progressing in our attempts of getting to know God better?”

Have we gotten ourselves into a routine of “doing” or have we found ourselves just “being” with God?

Paul is making somewhat the same point in today’s Epistle. He is comparing the “doing” of the Law with the “being” of faith in Jesus. He is comparing the failure of attempting eternal salvation through the observance of an externally applied set of rules and regulations with the promise of eternal life in Jesus.

He uses Hagar the bondswoman and her child, Ishmael, as a parable of the Old Covenant, given to Moses on the Mountain, the covenant that has been replaced by the sacrifice of

Jesus on the Cross. Paul says that we cannot save ourselves; we cannot save ourselves by “doing.”

If we are so caught up in meticulously observing our fasts and our practice of abstinence, saying the proper prayers for the day and the hour, reading our Lenten devotional without fail and giving proper due to our almsgiving, if we are doing all these things without them making a change in our lives with God, then we are no better off than when we started.

If we have not changed inwardly in our relationship with God, then we have been wasting our time.

We might as well have just ignored any Lenten observance at all.

God spoke these words through Hosea many years ago *Hosea 6:6 (KJV)*

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

Our fasting and abstinence, our prayers, our almsgiving are means to an end; a better knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. All these things that we do are good but they are not the goal that we should have. All these things that we do are ways to God not the final product.

All of us here have a way to go on our individual and collective journeys with God and each of us is unique in our progress and in our particular paths. But we all have a common element in all of this; we all have to have the Grace of God to accomplish the trip.

Who we are with God is more important, far more important, than what we are “doing.” As Hosea said God desires our mercy towards others and the knowledge of Him far more than all the rituals that we can possibly conceive to honor Him.

God is awesome in his power and sometimes it is hard for us to comprehend that all what he wants us to do is just to love Him and to take the love that He give us and share it with everyone that we meet and everyone that we know, especially among ourselves.

It is not the Law, the Ten Commandments, that are going to save us. Oh! Following them will make us better people, far better people, but it will not save us from eternal damnation.

We have to know Jesus Christ.

We have to know Jesus Christ as our Lord and our Savior.

We have to know Him in our hearts, not in our heads.

Listen to these words of our Lord carefully if you think knowing Jesus in your hearts is not important.

***Luke 13:25-27 (KJV)**When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: ²⁶Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. ²⁷But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*

As Sally Fields says in that Boniva commercial, “I just have this one life and this one body,” let us all remember that we have just this one life to get it right with God.

Let’s us not mess it up.

Amen.

