

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 SUFFERING OF CHRIST

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Isaiah 53:10

With all the attention and excitement swirling around Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion of the CHRIST", it is difficult not to be at least curious about its content. The movie depicts the final twelve hours leading up to the LORD's death and is a moving and emotion packed drama showing in gory detail the director's concept of the physical ordeal HE was put through in that period of time. No one in the scripture records the bloody specifics of this suffering with the stark realism that this film depicts in its gruesome detail. Some have objected to its bloody and brutal portrayal as if to say that it exaggerates what our LORD endured. While I am no fan of violence and gore, and do not think that something should be done just for shock value, I imagine that the reality of HIS physical suffering even exceeded what mister Gibson has portrayed. For sure HIS physical pain exceeded that of any man before or since because the scripture says "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb 4:15) The scripture says "*HIS visage was so marred more than any man, and HIS form more than the sons of men.*" (Isaiah 52:14) The bible also says that we would turn our heads rather than look at HIM. (see Isa.50:6; 53:2-5; Ps.22:7; Matt.26:67; 27:29-30) There is no way to comprehend the magnitude of the physical torment HE endured for us. If nothing else mister Gibson has given us a glimpse with our eyes of flesh, at least some of what HE went through, for that we are thankful to him for his effort.

Now it is not my intention to be a movie reviewer or film critic and give my opinion as to its artistic merit nor even to debate the accuracy of this movie as far as its adherence to scripture is concerned. It is only a cinematic production, not some new revelation which we stand in awe of. While it may be an accurate depiction of the physical trauma HE was exposed to in that period of time, one thing that I am certain of is that this film does not depict the true suffering of our LORD, for while HE indeed suffered excruciating and unimaginable pain and agony in the tearing of HIS flesh and the marring of HIS visage(i.e., HIS physical appearance), HIS suffering was much greater and more intense than even this. There is no form or experience of sorrow or pain that HE is not personally acquainted with for HE bore "our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isa.53:4) HE was truly "*a MAN of sorrows*" (Isa. 53:3) as he suffered more than any man.

He endured the mental anguish of being a man of faith among the faithless. HIS disciples constantly fell short of believing as HE did. (see Matt.17:17; John 20:26)

He endured the mental anguish of being rejected by HIS own flesh and blood. "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" (Matt 23:37) (see John 1:11; 3:19)

He endured the mental anguish of being constantly misunderstood. His disciples seldom grasped the spiritual nature of HIS kingdom. (see Luke 24:25; Acts 1:6;) They thought it could be established by the work of the flesh (see Luke 9:54-56; Matt.16:21-23) Is it not intriguing that HIS followers continue in this same error even in the present time.

He endured the disappointment of being let down by HIS friends in the hour of HIS greatest need. While HE prayed and agonized, HIS disciples slept, and even when awakened returned to their slumber. *"Could ye not watch with me for one hour?"* (Matt.26:40)

He endured the heartbreak of being betrayed by one near to HIM and denied in public by one of HIS closest friends. Judas betrayed HIM with a kiss. Peter denied HIM with an oath.

He endured the spiritual agony of becoming sin for us. Being an obedient SON, the main thing that HE desired in the earth was to do HIS FATHER's will. Yet the only way that HE could do HIS FATHER's will was to become sin and thereby be displeasing in HIS FATHER's sight. This was the dilemma that HE faced when HE prayed "O my FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." (Matt 26:39) Many have assumed that HE desired to be delivered from the physical suffering of the crucifixion. Much weaker men than HE have faced death with bravery and it is an insult to HIS manhood to accuse HIM of such. He had no fear of death nor of the torment that awaited HIS flesh (see John 12:27-28) but the agony of having the filth and degradation of sin placed upon HIM, making HIM an outcast from the ONE HE loved more anything in the world was a misery HE could hardly bear and to HIM a fate worse than death.

He endured the anguish and shame of being declared an outlaw and an outcast in the sight of HIS FATHER. *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Matt 27:46) Have ever any more poignant and painful words ever been spoken? Yet HE *"endured the cross, despising the shame"* (Heb.12:2) for us. *"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God."* (Heb 10:12) "O the love that drew salvation's plan, O the grace that brought it down to man, O the mighty gulf that GOD did span, at Calvary."

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