

# 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 SUFFERING OF THE SAINTS

*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

*Philippians 1:29-30*

We hear a lot of preaching today about the subject of the many "blessings" which the saints are entitled to. One could almost become convinced that the most lucrative position from which to enjoy this world's goods would be to be known as a "christian". Untold riches are promised to those who will tithe, give, and sow seed faith (translated "money") into various ministries which shamelessly produce their own prosperity by the plundering of the pockets of the gullible. These brazen charlatans shall continue their charade until they are consumed by HIM who shall come *"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:"* (2Thess. 1:8)

We are quite certain that many blessings are indeed promised to the sons of GOD but they are not made up of the kind of treasures which thieves can steal nor moths or rust can corrupt. In fact one of their greatest blessings would not be considered a blessing at all by those whose thoughts are focused on mammon and filthy lucre. Paul said that it is "given" unto the saints of GOD in CHRIST's behalf not simply just to believe in HIM but to suffer for HIS sake.

The flesh will do just about anything to avoid pain or suffering of any kind, yet this is exactly what the LORD has ordained to bring into the lives of those HE loves the most. Those who are strangers to the spiritual nature of the kingdom of GOD will surely disagree and gasp at such a thought, but the LORD has clearly revealed in HIS word HIS intention to bring trials, struggles, and discomfort into HIS children's lives that their weakness might be revealed in order that HIS strength could be "perfected" or manifested as it is applied to them as they are stripped of all hope in anything of this world. (see II Cor.12:9; Heb.11:34)

The LORD JESUS CHRIST has gone before us and demonstrated very plainly the calling of HIS many sons to glory through HIS own suffering in our behalf. *"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,"* (Heb 2:10-11). One of the greatest mysteries in all of the world is set forth by the writer of Hebrews here and also when he said, *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;"* (Heb 5:8-9)

Now it is plainly revealed (as we sit in adoring wonder) that HE shrank not from suffering "in our behalf" in order that HE might not only teach us that through HIS suffering alone that we are deemed righteous by the FATHER because of the imputation of HIS righteousness to our account, but that HE might show us by example the steps that we are called to follow. *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:"* (1Pe 2:21) as the sons of GOD. This is what Paul referred to when he said, *"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe*

on him, but also to suffer for his sake;” If HE, as the perfect SON of GOD, underwent suffering in our behalf, can you and I expect that we should be called to anything less than to suffer in HIS, or on account of the fact that we are identified with HIM whom the world hated? (see John 7:7; 15:9)

HE has “suffered to redeem us” and has in and by HIS suffering completely fulfilled the law and forever removed any condemnation that might ever be brought against those for whom HE underwent these trials. The suffering that we are called to has nothing at all to do with our redemption, nor can it in anyway add anything to that which has been performed for us by CHRIST. Our suffering is but the heritage of the sons of GOD who are set at odds with this world and its pernicious ways because of what CHRIST has done for us, and we can in no wise escape it just as Ishmael was at odds with Isaac because darkness and light can have no fellowship. *“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.” (Gal 4:28-29)*

So it is clear that as Paul said; *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2Tim. 3:12)* This is not an option which a child of GOD can select at random, but is the very career that we are called to as the sons of GOD. It cannot be escaped but is endemic to being the sons of light in the midst of a dark world which despises the way of CHRIST. This “suffering” takes on several forms:

**Actual physical persecution which brings bodily harm.** Paul delineated his life spent in such suffering (see II Cor.11:23-30). Many of the early disciples and countless thousands of other believers in all ages have endured great affliction of this type and even death. Not all are called to bear this particular type of suffering but those who do are even as Peter and John who *“departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” (Act 5:41)*

**Ridicule and scorn for the gospel’s sake.** Paul said that we are the savor of death in those that perish. (see II Cor.2:16) The world despises the preaching of the gospel of grace which is foolishness to them. They hate those who are associated with it because they despise CHRIST. This is most especially true among the religious men of the world, many of whom profess a token belief in CHRIST but actually despise the gospel of free grace preferring to add to it some measure of human endeavor and effort for which they are convinced men will be rewarded for, if not in this life, surely in the one to come. There are very few who will confess that even the obedience of the sons of GOD is the product of HIS grace. *“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” (Rom 11:6)*

**The natural result of sin in these mortal bodies.** When Adam sinned and passed this disobedience to his posterity, it included the sufferings of these bodies now susceptible to all sorts of corruption and disease; most notably death. While it has pleased the LORD to deliver HIS sons from the judicial curse associated with sin and the condemnation thereof, yet it has not pleased HIM to presently deliver them from the weakness of this corruptible flesh in which they are left to suffer. They suffer not as those who have no hope but they are nonetheless still housed in bodies that decay and fall prey to all manner of disease according to HIS sovereign purpose. The day of the resurrection will mark the complete deliverance of the sons of GOD from even this lingering result of sin as the last enemy is destroyed. Though its absolute power was broken in the behalf of the elect in the day of CHRIST’s resurrection yet HE shall finally destroy this “last enemy” at HIS return for HIS purchased possession. (see I Cor.15:26-58)

**The actual sin of the sons of GOD.** Paul said *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:24)* There is no greater suffering for the sons of GOD than the life and death struggle in which they are locked with their flesh once they are born again by HIS SPIRIT. Ishmael despises Isaac and darkness strives against the light..