

# 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 AGONY

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*Hebrews 12:1-2*

Paul mentions a race into which the sons of GOD are entered in this passage and in another one. *"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."* (1Cor 9:24) In this particular passage (1 Cor.) the Greek word translated race is "stadion" which is the root word for our English word "stadium". He is here, reminding his hearers that we are pressing to the mark in a public display and should run or endeavor towards this mark with all that is in us even as those in a carnal race run to the finish line knowing that they must win in order to gain the prize. He goes on to say that they are to strive for the victory not as those who are just in training or shadow boxing (see v.26) but as those who realize that they are in a life and death struggle. (see v. 27)

The Greek word, however, which is translated "race" in our text in Hebrews is the Greek word "agon" from which we get our English word "agony". So his meaning is slightly different here, which is supported by the context of what he is writing to the Hebrews. Here he admonishes his hearers to run with patience whereas before in Corinthians he exhorted them to run with great intensity.

What he is pointing out to them is that the elect of GOD are appointed unto great trials and struggles in this world. As he did at Antioch, *"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."* (Act 14:22) This is even the same thing that the LORD taught HIS disciples when HE said, *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)

The natural religionists of our day preach a message which promises great ease and blessing to those who will obey the LORD and walk in some prescribed formula for blessing. Yet the LORD plainly taught, *"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."* (Mat 10:34) *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."* (Matt 16:24) We are not promised a life of ease nor a release from troubles, rather we are appointed unto these very trials for our benefit and GOD's blessing is plainly seen in the midst of those trials. *"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire,*

*might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:” (1Pe 1:6-7)  
“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” (2Cor 4:17)*

Those who have been born again by the SPIRIT of GOD are now entered into an agonizing conflict with their own sinful flesh which Paul describes as *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” (Gal 5:17)*

They were free from this conflict when they were yet dead in trespasses and sins but when they were awakened and given eternal life that flesh which always dictated their every move without opposition is now stirred up to war against that principle of righteousness which is synonymous with the presence of GOD’s SPIRIT which indwells them.

These “new creatures”, which they have become, now receive the things of the SPIRIT (see I Cor. 2:14) and thus this continual agony ensues, as Paul describes it, *“I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:21-24)*

Now we would be totally overwhelmed in this condition and in despair if we were not also given a hope in our blessed DELIVERER as Paul goes on to say in v.25. *“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” (Rom 7:25)* Thus his exhortation here in Hebrews 12 is to run this race (agony and conflict) that we are appointed to; patiently and deliberately, looking unto our LORD JESUS CHRIST who has already run the same race for us, and has triumphed over our sin in our behalf so that we need have no fear of failing or falling into condemnation.

**HE was tempted in all points like as we are yet HE committed no sin.**

**When HE was reviled HE opened not HIS mouth.**

**HE endured the ignominy and shame of the cross.**

He bore all of these things because HE focused not on the agony that was involved but rather the fulfillment of HIS FATHER’s purpose as the scripture says *“for the joy that was set before HIM.”* This is the exact thing that Isaiah speaks about when he says, *“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. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isa 53:10-12)*

Now brethren if we have such a great HIGH PRIEST who has entered in once in to the Holy of Holies in our behalf, fully satisfying the law’s jot and tittle, how can we not rest in HIM who is our MEDIATOR and SIN BEARER? *“But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” (1Pe 2:19-25)*

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