

# 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 DEPTHS

*Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.      Psa 42:7*

In one of Winslow Homer's most iconic paintings, *The Gulf Stream*, he depicts a lone and forlorn sailor lying on the deck of a small, dismasted and rudderless, sailboat. The stormy seas are very rough, and voracious sharks surround the boat on every side. One gets the feeling that at any moment the vessel could be capsized and swallowed up by the billowing waves which threaten it constantly. Off in the distance, the despairing seaman, spies a waterspout which only adds to the sense of the dire situation in which he finds himself. Yet there seems to be a sense of calm resignation in the sailor. If one were to select a painting which illustrates the angst of the Psalmist here in Psalm 42, he could not choose a better one.

David was a man who was much beset by many troubles in his life. He spent many days being hunted like a dog by Saul who meant to kill him, even though David was the most loyal of subjects and designed no ill to Saul. Saul hated him, simply because David was favored of the LORD.

David was also beset by many other problems, most of which were, brought on (humanly speaking) by his own doing such as his dalliance with Bathsheba, his lack of parental supervision and being a good example to his children, as well as his outright disobedience to the LORD, as when he numbered the people.

Thus he knew what it was to be exercised by the consequences of his sin, but more importantly; he knew what it was to be under the chastening hand of the LORD who ordered his every step and purposed to bring him through those trials as well as deliver him out of all of his troubles to magnify the glory of HIS grace. Just as Job's "friends" (miserable comforters and physicians of no value) constantly laid the cause of his problems at his own feet, so too does the sinful flesh of the born again child of GOD, seek to turn him away from resting in the hand of HIM who forms the light and creates the darkness. The moralists of the world always fail to see the hand of GOD in all things, preferring to give homage to their own free will and believing that both the blessings and the trials of this life are its result. David knew his sin was his own, yet he also knew that to be found in the hand of the LORD, regardless of the trial was yet a mercy. (see II Sam 24)

Job withstood these religious conditionalists and sought at every turn to speak only of that which the LORD had done, giving no place of glory to either his own sinful flesh or the working of Satan, even though Satan was the appointed emissary of the trials which the LORD saw fit to bring upon Job. "In *all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*" (Job 1:22) He rested in the right of the LORD to do with HIS own as HE saw fit and it was there that he found his greatest comfort. Even saying, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." (Job 13:15)

Religious men fall into two main categories, those whose chief desire is to sail upon calm seas that are soothed over with the platitudes of their religion and those who believe that their own sound doctrine and an adherence thereto precludes a troubled mind and heart.

Those who consider that they can overcome all obstacles and troubles by an exercise of their "faith" view those who are constantly beset by many woes as those who are lacking in this faith.

They believe that a man can pull himself up by the bootstraps of claiming the victory as though troubles are a mere figment of the imagination. They believe faith and positive thinking are synonymous and think that they can smile away any troubles that may confront them, relying on the ability of their free will to choose to be victorious and basking in their strength in avoiding troubles and gaining blessings by their acts of faith and obedience. A smiley face sermonette is quite sufficient for them and they are seldom beset by deep troubles of mind and soul.

Then there are those who rely upon the soundness of their doctrine which they believe precludes being concerned and troubled about their sin, its resultant woe, or the exercise of faith which is wrought in the sons of GOD by the working and power of the HOLY GHOST. They believe that a most somber approach to doctrine is the very basis and evidence that the LORD has performed a work of grace in a man. Some even adopt various tests of doctrinal accuracy by which they believe they are able to determine who is and is not a believer. It usually rests upon whether or not someone agrees with their viewpoint.

The sons of GOD are ordained unto various trials, troubles, and problems which serve the main purpose of driving them to their knees to call upon the LORD for deliverance. They see their sin ever before them, sometimes more clearly than at others, yet never presuming themselves to be without sin as John says in I John chapter one. At the same time as their sin does ever present itself in their eyes with its hideous grin and constant foul breathings of condemnation, the SPIRIT of GOD is ever at work to deliver them from total despair (see I Cor 10:13) by reminding them of the promises of GOD to preserve them, even to the very end. Yea when they can read their title clear from time to time; they even rejoice to consider that all condemnation is taken from them by HIM who is their DELIVERER and CHAMPION. But they are ever convinced that this work is of the LORD and not themselves, neither by their faith or their doctrine.

In Winslow Homer's painting one can see in the far distance, on the horizon, the outline of a large sailing ship which is out of the view of the sailor whose eyes are focused upon the approaching waterspout. The troubles which beset the sons of GOD are quite real and the feelings of despair are not imagined, nor might I add not intended. Just as the winds were boisterous and the ship was nigh unto sinking when the LORD lay asleep in the vessel. Fear in the face of these difficulties is the very emotion which the LORD uses to remind the sons of GOD, that it is *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."* (Zec 4:6) While the Psalmist describes the depths of HIS own despair, yet he knows that the purpose of it is unto his good and he finds solace in it, though his eyes sometimes focus upon that trouble.

Now while we believe the troubles which beset David are here recorded as well as his emotions, yet these words are in reality that which the LORD JESUS CHRIST would use to describe HIS own emotions and the feelings of HIS troubles as HE was afflicted, stricken and smitten in our behalf as HE was made sin for us, and bore our sorrows and took our griefs. HE was indeed a MAN of SORROWS and acquainted with grief.

Whereas we are called upon to suffer, even as HE did, yet our suffering has no darkness attached to it, even though we may be temporarily beset by it. Yet HE actually entered into the anteroom of hell as HE sweat great drops of blood for us in Gethsemane, and then into that cold and dark place where there is no light, when the heavens became dark and HE cried, *"My GOD, my GOD, why hast THOU forsaken me."* Not one of the redeemed sons of GOD has or shall ever enter into such a place, for HE has swallowed it up and destroyed its power to condemn.

Only HE who knew no sin could actually go into such a place and come forth triumphant. *"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. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."* (Heb 12:2-6) mam