

Strength for Sufferings

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Satan will see that “. . . all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Peter wrote some words designed to produce courage in the face of persecution: “And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall Himself perfect, establish, strengthen you” (1 Pet. 5:10). These words are still appropriate for us and they will help us when we are assailed by evil forces.

First, we are reminded that our God is a gracious God who will not ignore us or abandon us. We need to remember that God has promised, “. . . I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee.” So that with good courage we say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?” (Heb. 13:56) Also, we are to remember that God has called us (through the Gospel, 2 The. 2:14) to receive His eternal glory, an additional assurance in itself that He will not forsake us. Our calling of God was "in Christ." Only those who have answered the Gospel call of God in obedience are "in Christ" (having been baptized into Him, Gal. 3:27) and only those "in Christ" will receive the glory.

What will our gracious God do for us in light of our sufferings for His sake? He will make us "perfect," a word meaning to put all parts right with one another, to equip, or adjust. He will also "establish" us (i.e., make us firm as a foundation). Additionally, God will "strengthen" us or impart to us the spiritual strength we need. These were not promised as miraculous grants even in the age of miracles. Rather, He has provided the armament and weaponry by which we may "stand against the wiles of the devil," but we must "put it on" and "take it up" to succeed (Eph. 6:10-18).

These elements of strength are promised after we have suffered "a little while." The term used here simply means "a little" and may refer to either time or extent, or both. The assurance is that we will not have suffered much until God will supply the strength we need for whatever may come, including perhaps more extensive and prolonged trials. How tragic it is to see a brother or sister, like the plant that springs up in the rocky soil, wither away and desert the cause when "tribulation or persecution arise because of the Word" (Mat. 13:20-21).

Brethren, let us remember that our God holds out eternal glory for His children who are willing to suffer a little while for His sake. Let us call upon the strengths He provides and determine to be faithful to the very end.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, June 22, 1989, of which I was editor.]

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