

# Suffering & Persecution

Enduring trials for Christ with hope, holiness, and a clear view of God's sovereignty and reward

## Promised Persecution

### **John 15:18-20**

[18] If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. [19] If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. [20] Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also.

### **2 Timothy 3:12**

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

### **Matthew 5:10-12**

[10] Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. [12] Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Jesus was startlingly clear about what His followers should expect: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19). Christ's choice of us creates the world's opposition; belonging to Him means no longer belonging to the world.

This isn't pessimism; it's reality. The world system—opposed to God, driven by pride, lust, and greed—hated Jesus and will hate those who follow Him. The cross precedes the crown. The church through the centuries has always carried both baptismal water and martyr's blood; persecution is not an interruption of normal Christianity

but part of its texture.

He continued, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). If they persecuted the Master, they'll persecute His servants. Our experience will mirror His; union with Christ brings us into His sufferings before it ushers us into His glory.

Paul makes this universal: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Notice "all"—not some, not most, but all who live godly will experience persecution. This might be social rejection, job discrimination, family conflict, legal penalties, or physical violence, depending on time and place. But some form of opposition is guaranteed for faithful Christians. Preparing our hearts and our congregations for this reality is part of sober discipleship.

Yet Jesus pronounces blessing on the persecuted: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12). To be hated with Christ is better than to be applauded without Him.

Notice the conditions: persecution must be "for righteousness' sake" and "for my sake," not for our own foolishness or genuine wrongdoing. When we suffer unjustly for Christ, we're blessed. We're in the company of the prophets. We have great reward awaiting in heaven. This gives ballast to the soul when slander and opposition come.

Understanding that persecution is promised helps us not be shocked when it comes. Peter wrote, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Peter 4:12). It's not strange; it's normal Christian experience. The Lord reigns over even the hatred of the world, and He will use it to purify His church and display His sufficiency.

# Purpose in Suffering

## **Romans 5:3-5**

[3] And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; [4] And patience, experience; and experience, hope: [5] And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

## **James 1:2-4**

[2] My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; [3] Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. [4] But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

## **1 Peter 1:6-7**

[6] Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: [7] 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 honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

God doesn't waste suffering. Even persecution and trials serve redemptive purposes in the believer's life. Romans 5:3-5 reveals the progression: "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Tribulation is the Spirit's gymnasium where endurance is forged and hope is refined.

Tribulation produces patience (endurance, perseverance). Endurance produces experience (proven character). Character produces hope (confident expectation of God's promises). And this hope doesn't disappoint because it's rooted in God's love, confirmed by the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Perseverance is not stoic grit but Spirit-enabled reliance that deepens assurance.

Suffering is a character-building process. We don't automatically become patient, proven, and hopeful; these qualities develop through hardship. Like muscles that grow through resistance training, our faith grows strong through testing. The Father prunes fruitful branches so they bear more fruit (John 15:2); pruning cuts, but it is loving and purposeful.

James echoes this: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:2-4). Joy is an act of faith in God's purposes, not denial of pain. Trials become servants that carry us toward maturity when we submit to their sanctifying work.

First Peter 1:6-7 adds another purpose: "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 honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." God determines when trials are "need be," and He values refined faith more than we value comfort.

Suffering tests and proves faith. Gold is refined by fire—impurities are burned away, leaving pure gold. Similarly, trials burn away false faith, superficial commitment, and hidden sin, leaving genuine, proven faith. This tested faith is "much more precious than gold" and will result in praise, honor, and glory when Christ appears. Purified faith now will become public praise then.

Suffering also makes us more like Christ (Romans 8:17), equips us to comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4), humbles us (2 Corinthians 12:7), and keeps us dependent on God rather than self-sufficient. Hebrews 12 reminds us that hardship is fatherly discipline, evidence of our adoption. It is never pleasant, but it is always purposeful in God's hands, who works all things for the good of conforming us to His Son.

## Rejoicing in Persecution

### **Acts 5:40-42**

[40] And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. [41] And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. [42] And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

### **1 Peter 4:13-14**

[13] But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. [14] If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

### **Philippians 1:29**

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

The apostles' response to persecution is shocking: "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:40-42). Their joy was not bravado but Spirit-wrought delight that the Lord had honored them with identification to His reproach.

After being beaten, they rejoiced! Not rejoicing despite persecution, but because of it. They were "counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Suffering for Christ was an honor, a privilege, proof of their authentic discipleship. Joy became fuel for perseverance; joy sent them back into the temple to keep preaching.

Peter instructs, "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1 Peter 4:13-14). Shared suffering now yields shared glory then; reproach now brings the Spirit of glory now.

We're actually sharing in Christ's sufferings. When we suffer for Him, we're experiencing what He experienced. We're united with Him in a profound way. And this present participation in His sufferings guarantees future participation in His glory. The joy when His glory is revealed will be proportionate to the suffering we've endured for Him now. Suffering binds us to Christ; glory will unbind us from all sorrow.

Being reproached for Christ's name brings God's Spirit to rest on us in special measure. There's a unique sense of God's presence and blessing when we suffer for Him. Missionaries and persecuted believers throughout history testify to

experiencing God's nearness and peace in the midst of severe trials. The Spirit supplies joy that circumstances cannot extinguish.

Philippians 1:29 presents suffering as a gift: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." It's given—granted as a privilege, a grace-gift. Not only do we have the privilege of believing in Christ; we have the privilege of suffering for Him. Faith and suffering are both gifts, and both connect us to the crucified and risen Lord.

This perspective transforms persecution from something to be avoided at all costs to something that can be embraced as part of following Christ. We don't seek suffering, but when it comes, we can face it with joy, knowing it's purposeful, temporary, and leading to greater glory. Joy in persecution is not denial of pain but delight in being counted His.

## Perseverance Through Suffering

### **Hebrews 10:32-39**

[32] But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; [33] Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. [34] For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. [35] Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. [36] For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. [37] For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. [38] Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. [39] But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

### **Revelation 2:10**

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

### **Matthew 24:13**

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Endurance is critical. Many start following Christ enthusiastically, but when persecution comes, they fall away. Jesus warned in the parable of the sower that some seed falls on stony ground—people receive the word with joy, but "when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Mark 4:17). Persecution reveals whether our faith is genuine; shallow roots wither in heat.

Hebrews 10:32-36 encourages perseverance: "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions... Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." Past grace fuels present endurance; remembering yesterday's help strengthens today's resolve.

The Hebrew Christians had endured severe persecution before. The writer urges them not to throw away their confidence now. They need endurance to complete God's will and receive the promise. Verses 38-39 quote Habakkuk: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Perseverance is the pathway faith walks; drawing back reveals unbelief.

Jesus encourages persecuted believers in Smyrna: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Affliction is real but bounded; Christ's promise is sure and surpassing.

Don't fear the suffering. It's coming, but it's limited ("ten days"—symbolic of complete but limited duration). The call is to be faithful "unto death"—either until death or to the point of death. The reward is the crown of life. We are kept by God's power through faith (1 Peter 1:5), and that keeping works through means: Word, sacrament, prayer, mutual exhortation (Hebrews 3:13), and sober watchfulness.

Matthew 24:13 promises, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be

saved." Endurance to the end characterizes genuine saving faith. This doesn't mean we earn salvation by enduring; rather, endurance proves our salvation is real and displays God's preserving grace. The perseverance of the saints rests on the preservation of God, yet summons us to diligent, communal perseverance.

## Responding Rightly to Persecution

### **Matthew 5:44**

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

### **Romans 12:14**

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

### **Romans 12:19-21**

[19] Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. [20] Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. [21] Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

### **1 Peter 3:9**

Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

How we respond to persecution matters enormously. Our natural response to being attacked is to attack back, but Christ calls us to a radically different response shaped by the gospel we proclaim.

Jesus commanded, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). Four specific actions: love, bless, do good, pray. All are active, positive responses to enemies and persecutors, mirroring the kindness God showed us when we were His enemies.

This isn't natural; it's supernatural. Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to genuinely love those who hurt us. But this Christ-like response is powerful witness. When

enemies see us bless rather than curse, pray rather than retaliate, they see something that can't be explained by human nature alone. Non-retaliation preaches the cross.

Romans 12:14 echoes Jesus: "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not." To bless means to speak well of, to pray for their good. We're not to curse—wish evil, speak ill, seek revenge. The tongue becomes an instrument of grace rather than retaliation.

Romans 12:19-21 continues: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." We do not surrender justice; we surrender personal vengeance to the Lord while pursuing active mercy.

We don't take personal revenge. We leave vengeance to God—He'll settle accounts justly. Meanwhile, we actively do good to our enemies. "Heaping coals of fire" likely means bringing shame or conviction through unexpected kindness, possibly leading to repentance. Goodness disarms hostility and leaves room for God's wrath or mercy.

The principle: don't be overcome by evil (don't let their evil turn us evil, don't let hatred poison us), but overcome evil with good (respond to evil with good, and good defeats evil). Overcoming evil with good is cruciform living.

First Peter 3:9 instructs, "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." We're called to this. It's not optional for those who want to be extra holy; it's standard Christian ethics. And blessing others positions us to receive blessing. Personal non-retaliation does not negate the proper role of civil magistrates (Romans 13) or church discipline; it restrains our hearts from bitterness.

This doesn't mean we don't pursue justice through proper channels, don't protect the innocent, or don't speak truth. But personally, we don't seek revenge, harbor bitterness, or return evil for evil. We trust God, do good, and leave the outcome to Him, praying that persecutors might become brothers through the gospel.

# Eternal Perspective

## **Romans 8:18**

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

## **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

[16] For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. [17] For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; [18] While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

## **Revelation 21:4**

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Suffering is bearable when we see it in light of eternity. Paul declares, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). Glory is so weighty that present pain, however sharp, cannot tip the scale against it.

Paul had suffered extraordinarily—beatings, stonings, shipwrecks, imprisonment, hunger, cold, constant danger (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). Yet he calculated that all his sufferings combined weren't worthy of comparison to the coming glory. The glory so vastly outweighs the suffering that the suffering becomes negligible by comparison. Saints who suffer most deeply often speak most sweetly of heaven.

Second Corinthians 4:16-18 expands this perspective: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Affliction is called "light" and "momentary" only in comparison to an "eternal weight of glory."

This suffering is working for us—producing—"a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The glory is not just future consolation for present pain; it's the actual product of the suffering. Somehow, mysteriously, present suffering contributes to eternal glory. God uses the furnace to forge joy.

The key is perspective: "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." Visible things are temporal; invisible things are eternal. If we focus only on present circumstances—visible pain, difficulty, loss—we'll despair. But when we focus on invisible, eternal realities—God's presence, promises, purposes, and the coming glory—we can endure. We are pilgrims seeking a city whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11), and we here have no continuing city (Hebrews 13:14).

Revelation 21:4 gives the ultimate promise: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." The hand that was pierced will personally wipe away the last tear.

All suffering is temporary. Death, sorrow, crying, pain—all will cease. God Himself will wipe away every tear. The suffering we endure now will one day be a distant memory, swallowed up in eternal joy. This eternal perspective doesn't minimize present pain, but it contextualizes it. We can endure momentary, light affliction because we know eternal, weighty glory awaits and that resurrection life will reverse and redeem all present losses.

## Christ's Example in Suffering

### **1 Peter 2:21-23**

[21] For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: [22] Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: [23] Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

### **Hebrews 12:2-3**

[2] 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. [3] For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

### **Philippians 2:5-8**

[5] Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: [6] Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: [7] But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: [8] And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Our supreme example in suffering is Jesus Christ Himself. Peter writes, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Christ's atoning suffering also shapes our ethic; substitution and example walk together.

Christ's suffering wasn't accidental or unfortunate; it was purposeful and redemptive. And it serves as our pattern. How did He suffer? "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" (1 Peter 2:22-23). Innocence endured injustice without sinning in response.

First, He was sinless—He suffered innocently, not as punishment for wrongdoing. Second, when reviled (verbally abused), He didn't revile back. Third, when suffering physical abuse, He didn't threaten revenge. Fourth, He committed Himself to God who judges righteously—He trusted God to settle accounts justly. Faith entrusts vindication to the Judge; unbelief seizes self-vengeance.

This is our pattern. When we suffer unjustly, we don't return abuse, threaten revenge, or take matters into our own hands. We trust God's just judgment. He who once bore injustice will one day judge all injustice; we can leave the gavel in His hand.

Hebrews 12:2-3 urges us to look to Jesus: "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." Joy set before Him fueled endurance beneath the cross and contempt for its shame. Exaltation followed humiliation.

When we're weary and tempted to faint, we should consider Jesus. He endured far worse contradiction from sinners. If He persevered, we can too. His example strengthens us, and His intercession sustains us; He is a sympathetic High Priest who has been tempted in all points yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Philippians 2:5-8 shows Christ's attitude: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The eternal Son embraced servanthood and shame for our salvation.

From divine glory to human humiliation to criminal's death—the Son of God descended in willing obedience. If He humbled Himself and suffered for us, we can surely humble ourselves and suffer for Him. Christ doesn't ask us to endure anything He hasn't endured Himself. He's been there, knows our pain, and provides grace to endure, and He will one day vindicate His own.

## Hope and Reward

### **2 Timothy 4:7-8**

[7] I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

### **1 Peter 5:10**

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

## **James 1:12**

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

## **Revelation 7:14-17**

[14] And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [15] Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. [16] They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. [17] For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Scripture repeatedly promises rewards for faithful endurance through suffering. Paul, at the end of his life, testified: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). The righteous Judge will publicly vindicate those who clung to Him in reproach.

After a lifetime of suffering for Christ, Paul looked forward to his reward—the crown of righteousness. This crown awaits not only him but all who love Christ's appearing, all who persevere to the end. Loving His appearing now fuels endurance under His apparent absence.

Peter encourages suffering believers: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10). The suffering is temporary ("a while"), but God's response is comprehensive—He perfects, establishes, strengthens, and settles us. Present suffering leads to future stability and maturity; the God of all grace finishes what He starts.

James pronounces blessing: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12). Enduring trial leads to receiving the crown of life—eternal reward for temporal faithfulness. The One who was crowned with thorns now

crowns His saints with life.

Revelation 7:14-17 gives a glorious vision of martyrs in heaven: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." The Lamb who was slain becomes their Shepherd forever.

Those who came through great tribulation are before God's throne, serving Him eternally. All their needs are met. All their pain is past. God personally wipes away every tear. The Lamb who was slain feeds and leads them. This is the end of every faithful endurance—not oblivion, but fellowship.

These promises enable us to endure. Present suffering, however intense, is temporary. Eternal glory, however incomprehensible, is certain. The One who calls us to suffer is the One who will reward, restore, and rejoice with us forever. This hope doesn't make suffering pleasant, but it makes it purposeful and bearable. We can endure, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58) and that our light and momentary afflictions are preparing us for an eternal weight of glory.

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