

## Strength for the Journey

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Jesus knew that His apostles would face great hardship as His ambassadors to the world. On the night before His humiliation and death, He wanted to encourage them: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace." The peace Jesus offered, however, was not exactly what they might have wished. It would not come from the removal of their hardships, but from the strength to go through them. And He did not even say He would give them the strength; He simply said they should rejoice knowing of His strength: "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." While you and I are not apostles, I believe the Lord would say the same thing to us. Whatever may trouble us, our joy should come from knowing that He has overcome the source of that trouble and will one day crush the enemy completely (1 Corinthians 15:24-26; Revelation 21:4).

There is, of course, no better example of this mindset than Jesus Himself. As He prayed in Gethsemane, He prayed that He might not have to suffer the death of the cross, but His greater desire was that His Father's will would be done (Mark 14:35,36). Similarly, Paul prayed that his "thorn in the flesh" might be removed, but God's answer was, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul's response was admirable: "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

From the Lord's example, and also Paul's, we learn that our Father wants us to ask Him honestly for what we desire. But if He answers in terms of "endurance" more than "deliverance," we can accept His wisdom gratefully, knowing "there's a great day coming by and by" when our enemy will be overthrown and imprisoned forever, never again to afflict God's people. Let us, then, adjust our prayer life. May we pray less for "all these things" and more for "the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

"The purpose of Christianity is not to avoid difficulty, but to produce a character adequate to meet it when it comes. It does not make life easy; rather it tries to make us great enough for life" (James L. Christensen).

*Gary Henry — WordPoints.com + AreYouaChristian.com*