

## ***Pastor Writes***

'God upholds those who suffer for his sake.' Today we also celebrate the communion of churches in India, CSI, Marthoma, and CNI. Today is also marked as 'Remembrance Sunday' giving thanks for all our defence personnel and particularly those who have laid down their lives for the sake of our Country. In the reading from Luke's gospel, Jesus talks about the events that will take place before the final coming of Christ. The disciples will first of all hear of wars and uprising. They are not to be alarmed with these events. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There is a breakdown of civil order and there is a tremendous sense of terror or emotional distress. When these events take place the disciples are not to be disturbed or surprised by such world events.

The Church also will have its share of trouble before the coming of Christ. Jesus warns the disciples that they will be seized and persecuted. They will be handed over to the synagogues and put in prison and brought before kings and governors because of their witness to Jesus. They will end up in a variety of hostile settings with the opportunity to defend their confession. The book of Acts notes of such persecution of the early church which did not abate after the churches first generation. Persecution will bring the disciples before the political rulers, kings and governors. Here they will be flogged for the sake of Jesus where they bore testimony to Jesus.

When they face persecutions they are to make up their minds about not to worry beforehand how to defend themselves. Jesus reassures them that he would give them words and wisdom that none of their adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. Jesus offers a promise of provision in the midst of persecution; the ability to speak, effectively in the face of opposition. Opponents will be left silent by their replies just as Jesus left his opponents silent. Moreover this work is a work of the Holy Spirit to enable them to answer boldly.

Jesus then tells his disciples that they will be betrayed by their parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, and friends. They will put some of them to death. Jesus himself experienced this kind of betrayal when one of the twelve betrayed him. Jesus does not promise physical victory and some of them will face martyrdom. Many early Churches leaders were put to death for their faith like Stephen, James the brother of John, Paul and Peter who was crucified upside down.

In other words Jesus is saying that there will be division and rejection by their family members. To confess Christ might mean to be hated by our own family and friends and we must be ready to face the family's hostile reaction because of being a follower of Christ. Jesus is cautioning his disciples that everyone will hate them because of being a follower of Jesus. Jesus intensifies the picture that the disciples will be the object of intense rejection because of their confession of Christ. However, Jesus shows that despite the hatred and the potential death, final destruction is impossible for the disciples. Jesus reassures them that not one of the hairs of their head will perish. Divine protection and presence are promised for the disciple.

In other words there will be no ultimate destruction for disciples. While he may lose his life physically he is granted eternal life. God upholds those who suffer for his sake. Jesus then tells his disciples that they should stand firm till the end and they will receive eternal life. Jesus concluded the discussion by noting that endurance leads to salvation. The Christian virtue *hupomone* indicates endurance and perseverance. Jesus is saying that the disciples cling to faith in the midst of persecution. Faith and perseverance results In gaining eternal life. Saving faith does not renounce Jesus even in the face of persecution.

As we worked through this passage we are reassured that God upholds all those who suffer for his sake. So as we face the end times and await the coming of Christ may we be ready for persecution and rejection and may we stand firm till the end so that we receive eternal life.

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