

The background of the cover is a landscape photograph. The sky is filled with soft, golden light from a low sun, creating a gradient from pale yellow to a deep, dusky purple. Wispy clouds are scattered across the sky, catching the light. In the foreground and middle ground, the silhouettes of mountain ranges are visible, their peaks and ridges dark against the bright sky. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Prayers in
Preparation
for the
Near Future

M. Basilea Schlink

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Prayers
in Preparation
for the Near Future

M. Basilea Schlink

Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary
Darmstadt, Germany

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Excerpts from the book: **Strong in the Time of Testing**

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How Can We Prepare?

“Watch and pray” (Matthew 26:41).

Jesus, in His great love for His disciples, sought to prepare them for the coming time of testing. In three predictions of His sufferings He indicated that the hour of His crucifixion was approaching. We know how the disciples reacted. It was as if they had not heard what their Lord and Master had said. Do we today hear His words about the end-time sufferings, which will entail a worldwide persecution of Christians (see, for instance, Matthew 24:9; John 15:20)? Do we see the signs of “creeping persecution” in Western society?

If only we would realize how imminent the hour of trial is and not shut our eyes to the facts! Nonbelievers, the people of this world, are wiser than believers, as Jesus observes (see Luke 16:8). They are quick to grasp the implications of the world situation. Jesus’ warning not to act like the people in Noah’s time is addressed primarily to us Christians: “They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” when destruction overtook them (Matthew 24:37-39).

Jesus wants to help us before it is too late. This He can do only if we realistically face up to

the threat of a widespread persecution of Christians and a major world disaster.

“Watch and pray!” said Jesus to His disciples in Gethsemane, and the Bible tells us that Jesus Himself “prayed more earnestly” (Luke 22:44). In the hour of affliction only those will be strong who pray much now, following the admonition of Holy Scripture: “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers ... be made” (1 Timothy 2:1 NAS). Prayer should now be our first priority. The best part of our time should go to prayer – even at the expense of sleep, personal interests and hobbies.

Our commitment to endure suffering is something we can bring to God only in our prayers, for only in prayer can we completely surrender our will to Him in the assurance that He will not let us be tempted beyond our strength. Such an act of commitment can also be written down – if the Spirit so leads – for praying again and again. If we have struggled through to the point where we can say, “Your will be done,” our hearts will be immersed in peace. Dedication to the will of God, as He leads us into the time of persecution, will make us strong in the hour of trial.

Inseparably linked with the prayer of dedication is a trusting spirit, for what we experience

will be according to our faith. And in whom are we placing our trust? – The almighty God who made heaven and earth. Our help will come most assuredly from Him, even in the hardest moments. We believe in Jesus, the mighty Victor and Helper, to whom the wind and waves, yes, all things are subject. If it is difficult for us to pray, then we may find it helpful to repeat a verse like this as a starter:

*I believe and will not waver.
I will trust in You, my Father,
For You always send me help.*

By affirming our faith, we will make it grow. With our trust strengthened through prayer, we will be able to endure the ordeals of persecution and have the courage to confess our allegiance to Jesus. We will continue to witness to Him regardless of the consequences and be faithful to Him to the very end.

Today God is waiting for our prayer of faith. He has promised to answer prayer, and His name is Yes and Amen. In our prayer times today we receive what we need for tomorrow – a trusting spirit and the courage to endure suffering and to stand up for our faith.

Acceptance of suffering and the prayer of faith go hand in hand with the struggle against sin. Those who now resist sin with the utmost determination as they battle in faith and prayer will be strong in the hour of trial, for then sin will not cling to them. Sin entangles and weakens us. It makes us fail and despair in times of testing. We may even be capable of denying Jesus, betraying our fellow Christians and falling away from God. However, those who now fight out every issue in prayer and who overcome by the blood of the Lamb will then be strong in the Lord.

Prayer changes everything. But who is it who prays much? – Only those who regard themselves as weak and sinful, for they turn to Jesus, sensing their great need of Him. And Jesus promised to come to the poor in spirit, the penitent sinners. He will enter their hearts and live there.

Approaching the Time of Testing

When persecution comes upon us, it is essential that Jesus Christ lives in us as our great love and that we carry Him in our hearts. If I love someone, I can suffer for him. Through a life of prayer we give Jesus more and more room within us. Whatever fills our hearts in the time of distress will dominate us. If it is Jesus, then He – and not the adversity and misery – will have power over us. But if earthly things, our family, career, prestige, well-being, personal security and self engross us, then we will not have the strength to endure affliction. Only in Jesus Christ do we find the strength that enables us to overcome in suffering. It is imperative that He lives in us.

Of the believers sent to prison or labor camp for Jesus' sake, those whose hearts were filled with many earthly things proved to be weak. They found it hard to bear any loss. Their hearts craved for everything that they no longer had and they fell into despair when forced to live under distressing conditions. Thus Jesus was unable to break through with His comfort, peace and joy.

In contrast, believers whose hearts were filled with Jesus and free from slavery to earthly

things and desires were able to endure cross-examination and various forms of torture, for Jesus lived in them and no one could rob them of Him. Jesus was their first and foremost love. And this “first” love, this exclusive love for Jesus, gives a person the strength to suffer. If this love for Jesus fills us, we can sing with all our hearts in the midst of suffering:

*Why should cross and trial grieve me?
Christ is near with His cheer;
Never will He leave me.
Who can rob me of the heaven
That God's Son for me won
When His life was given?*

Paul Gerhardt

Those who are aflame with love for Jesus will experience the truth of His promise: “If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him” (John 14:23). If our Lord and Savior lives in our hearts, this means we are indwelt by the One who has all power in heaven and on earth, and we are strong in Him. It means we are indwelt by the One who is eternal love, and in His love we are secure and all our fears are expelled. He is the

One whose power is manifested in our weakness (see 2 Corinthians 12:9), enabling us to overcome and persevere. Not even the greatest sufferings can drown the joy He gives us, for He is everlasting joy. As the crown of heaven, He makes heaven's glory and joy come down when we are in deep suffering.

So let us pray for this first love, this ardent, bridal love for Jesus. Then we will experience during persecution the truth of the scripture: "For love is as strong as death ... Love flashes like fire, the brightest kind of flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can rivers drown it" (Song of Solomon 8:6-7 NLT).

Faith for Now and Later

Lord Jesus,
I believe You are with me, helping me.
And in the time of great affliction
You will strengthen me.

In my suffering
I immerse myself in Your suffering and my will
in Yours, which is pure goodness. And in all my
fear and agony I take refuge in Your wounds.

As I turn my eyes upon You, Lord Jesus,
I am comforted. O Man of Sorrows, my heart
clings to You. You are with me,
and when You touch my soul, I am strengthened.

Lord Jesus, I trust in You.
You are my shield
and Your angels are watching over me.
And I know that my Father is carrying me through.

Lord Jesus, I thank You.
Heaven beckons and the crown shines brightly.
Soon my suffering will be over.
And so I will persevere, for Your blood is my
strength; it makes the weak strong.

Lord Jesus, I am suffering with You and for You,
and that brings glory. Amen.

Prayer of Trust

My Lord Jesus,
I thank You for the assurance
that You will manifest Yourself to me
in my plight
as the One who subdues
the wind and waves of destruction.

Even now I give praise
that no matter how great
the forces of terror and destruction are,
Your power to help is greater still,
for Your might and strength are unequalled.

I firmly believe that if my fear on the day of
terror is great and threatens to consume me,
Your peace and comfort, which surround me,
will be even greater.

In the face of destruction
I will keep my eyes on You,
for You are coming to demonstrate Your power
and help, and to manifest Your love to me.

I believe that the overwhelming sense
of Your presence will change everything,
transforming hell into heaven
in the time of distress.

I trust in Your heavenly hosts
and their aid.

I believe that You send Your angels
to minister to those who are to obtain salvation,
and especially to those undergoing
affliction and persecution.

O Holy Spirit,
I believe that as my Counselor
You will give me guidance
in the coming time of chaos and confusion
when no one else can advise me.
I firmly believe You will prompt me
to make the right decisions
and help me to make the right moves.

Loving Father,
I thank You for the comforting assurance
that with Your almighty hand covering me
I will suffer no harm
in the time of persecution.

I trust in Your love.
You will care for me
in every frightening experience,
for You are my Father.
When the way grows dark,
You will take me, Your child,
by the hand and bring me through. Amen.

Prayer for "First Love"

My Lord Jesus,

The day is coming when I may have to tread a path that You have trodden before me – a path where I am exposed to hatred, subjected to imprisonment, trials, beatings, and physical and mental torture. And so I have a special request, which I bring daily before You in this time of preparation:

Give me the first love, that ardent love for You, Lord Jesus, which will be greater than the suffering.

My Lord Jesus,

I need the love for You that the early Christians had. Otherwise I will not be able to endure the coming sufferings – sufferings such as the world has never seen before. Give me this love, I pray, which is stronger than any hardship, even stronger than death. Give me this love, which no fire can consume, so that I will not deny You under the pressure of persecution, but remain faithful to You to the end.

Above all, give me repentance for all the times when my love for You was lukewarm and half-hearted and when I did not love You first and fore-

most, with all my strength and with full devotion, as You have bidden us. Give me the brokenness of heart out of which love for You is born.

I renounce every false tie, everything hindering, loosening or severing my relationship of love with You: enslavement to self, a false attachment to my family or a particular person, bondage to my job, to prestige or possessions. I renounce every lifestyle and behavior pattern contrary to God's commandments and grievous and dishonoring to You. Give me the determination to break with all this and to claim Your redemption, so that love for You will have room in my heart. From now on I want to live for You instead of for myself and my wishes and desires. From now on I am willing to suffer for You.

My Lord Jesus, O Lamb of God, fill my heart with love for You, so that I will follow You into affliction and death as Your little lamb, suffering out of love and in thanksgiving for Your agonizing suffering and bitter death. I believe You will give me this strong and ardent love by the power of Your blood.

Amen.

Prayer for the Right Kind of Fear

Lord Jesus,
Put the right kind of fear into my heart. Grant that I may no longer fear suffering, for You say, “Fear not! I am with you.” But You also say, “Fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

So take away my wrong kind of fear and fill me instead with a loving confidence in You and Your help, which You have firmly promised me and which will therefore never fail me.

Let me fear sin, which delivers me into Satan’s hands and can bring me the sufferings of hell in eternity. Prepare me now by giving me light about my sins, so that I can confess them before it is too late, obtain forgiveness through Your precious blood and turn from my old ways in repentance, thus making Satan lose his claim on me.

Let me grieve over my sins, and give me a humble, contrite heart, so that I may partake of Your grace, upon which I am totally dependent in the time of affliction, and so may enter the heavenly glory afterwards. I believe that You will help me to overcome sin and fear by the power of Your redemption, which is imparted to penitent sinners. Grant that in the midst of hard-

ship and disgrace, affliction and death, I may glorify You with my life. Amen.

Grace to Bear Our Cross

Lord Jesus,
When I think of Your great suffering as You bore the cross to Calvary and endured the crucifixion, I believe that You have won the victory over my reluctance to bear my cross. I believe that You will give me the dedication to endure the coming affliction.

Out of thanksgiving and love for You, who bore the cross for me to Calvary in immeasurable pain, I will say from now on:

I want my cross. It comes from Your hands, and so I will accept it. Lay the cross on me.

I want my cross, from which streams of blessing flow. It is laden with gold. And it is never too heavy, for it comes from Your loving heart and You have weighed it first to see whether I can bear it.

I want my cross, which transforms me into Your image. It is precious and dear to me. It helps prepare me to inherit the heavenly glory.

I want my cross. I want to carry it and follow You, O Cross-Bearer, Lord Jesus. I will accompany You on Your path and trust that in the face of Your sufferings my own grow small and insignificant.

When in pain and suffering, I want to thank You for counting me worthy to bear the cross and suffering for Your sake, Lord Jesus Christ. I want to suffer for You, who died to save me. I owe You my life, my all. I want to thank You for the privilege of entering into the fellowship of Your sufferings and of living in expectation of the resurrection, the heavenly glory.

Help me to do as Your Word says, “Rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings.” One day above I will rejoice at Your side for all eternity.
Amen.

Dedication of the Will

My Father,
During this time of preparation help me to practice submitting my will to Yours, dedicating myself to it, so that in the time of affliction I can completely rest in Your will. I believe that Your will is pure goodness and that all the

paths You lead me on, including paths of suffering in the time of persecution, are according to Your plan of love. The final outcome will not be suffering but great joy at Your throne for all eternity.

My Father,

I worship You for everything You have ordained for my life and for the lives of my dear ones, even if Your leadings seem hard now and however bitter they may be in the coming times. Take my will and my life. Do with me as You please, whether Your will brings me joy or suffering, life or death. I surrender myself unreservedly to You in implicit faith that everything You do is good—not only for me but for my dear ones as well. You always have our best interests at heart.

Amen.

Gethsemane Prayer

Lord Jesus,

I pray, make me Your little lamb by the time persecution begins, dedicated to God's will and humbly following You, however and wherever You lead me, even if it means prison, labor camp or death.

I want to go with You, O Lamb of God, my Lord and Savior, who wore chains for my sake. In everyday life I want to keep looking to You, remembering how You quietly and humbly allowed the guards to bind and arrest You, O Ruler of the world. And as I do so, prepare me, so that I might be a testimony before the visible and invisible world.

Help me to practice now by willingly enduring all that is hard for me, so that I may enter an ever deeper union with You. When my hour comes, Lord Jesus, give me the strength to say, “Here I am!” and let me radiate Your humility, love and peace. And having bound myself to You, let me be faithful to You unto death – to Your glory.

Amen.

Petitions for the Hour of Trial

Lord Jesus Christ, I come to You in the assurance that You answer prayer, as You promised.

Give me the strength to suffer and persevere to the end.

Help me to believe that You will be with me, giving me a foretaste of heaven.

Grant that in my distress I may see You
as the Man of Sorrows in Your suffering—
and let this be a source of strength for me.

Give me the faith
that Your help will never fail me
but will come in my plight.

Let me cling to the assurance
that nothing can separate me from You.

Let Your peace fill my heart,
and Your love enfold me.

Grant that I may now love You
with a strong and tender love,
so that this love will give me
the strength to suffer and even die for You.

Give me the courage to witness,
and set me free from all fear of others.

Help me both now and later
in the time of great affliction
to say “Yes, Father” ever anew.

Give me the grace to lose my life
for love of You.

Help me to make the small sacrifices
of everyday life
and the far greater sacrifices
that will later be required of me.

Grant that I may be a witness for You
in the acute sufferings
that the time of persecution will bring.

Help me to rejoice amid fear and distress
at the thought that soon I will be
with You forever in the heavenly glory.

Amen.

Prayer for the Persecuted

Leader:

Lord, You said: “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you.” We call upon you for ... (insert accordingly).

All:

Deliver them from their distress; loosen their chains; send them Your angels.

Leader:

Lord, You said: “The Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

All:

We trust You and believe that You will keep Your promise and put Your words into their mouths.

Leader:

Lord, You said, “Fear not, for I am with you.”

All:

We pray that the sense of Your presence will make hardships easy for them to bear, and the bitter sweet.

Leader:

Lord, You said, “Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you ... on my account ... Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy.”

All:

Give them joy in their hearts at the privilege of suffering for You.

Leader:

Lord, You said: “You shall be my witnesses.”

All:

Give them strength to be real witnesses to You before their oppressors, so that they can help win many souls for You.

Leader:

Lord, You said: “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you.”

All:

Let these words come true for them in the darkest hours of distress and inner conflict.

Leader:

Lord, You said: "Your Father knows what you need."

All:

Our Father, we believe that You will care for their physical needs as their Father and satisfy their souls with Your presence.

Amen.





Send Your angels to them today / To pro-



tect and guide them, we pray. / Yes, today



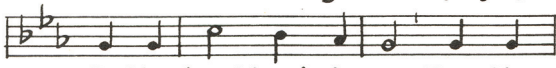
let heaven come down / And the comfort



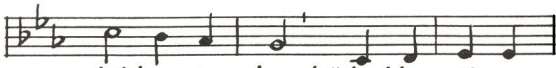
of heaven abound. / Lord, we know that You



hear / When we bring You our prayer, /



for Your heart breaks to see / That Your



children are grieved. / You Yourself once



suffered so; / Thus Your comfort You



will bestow, / O e - ter - nal Love!

Prayer of Readiness

My Lord Jesus,
I believe that the immeasurable
greatness of the power of God,
which He manifested in You
when He raised You from the dead,
will also be effective in me
when I am weak in body, soul or spirit.

Lord Jesus, I cannot expect anything of myself,
but I look to You for everything.
You will not fail me.
You are close by me, ever ready to help.

Lord Jesus, give me what I lack:
fearlessness and courage to witness,
strength to suffer and an ardent love. I believe
in Your promise and am counting on it.

Lord Jesus, help me to fix my eyes
on the goal above.
Soon the suffering will be over
and transformed into glory
when I am at Your side for all eternity.

For love of You, Lord Jesus, and in thanks-
giving for Your redemption I offer You my life.
May it bring You joy and comfort.

Here I am, my Lord Jesus,
I am ready to enter suffering for You,
trusting in the power of Your blood shed for me.
Amen.

Prayer for the Time of Testing

Lord Jesus,
Be my sole possession today in joy and suffering, so that in the time of testing You will be my deepest consolation and foremost love, inspiring me to follow You wherever You go.

Grant that I may never leave You. Let me always choose You and never the easy way out, even in hardship and adversity.

In the hour of trial let this love be alive in my heart, so that I may comfort You, glorify Your name and make it known to many.

I believe that in Your love You will never abandon me and that in my hour of greatest need my prayers will be answered. Your faithfulness is my shield and refuge.

Amen.
Mother Martyria

Prayer for Faithfulness

Jesus, You make me strong,
courageous and steadfast,
all afire with love for You,
wholly dedicated and firm,
unyielding as rock with one single aim:
I want Jesus, only Jesus!
I am ready to suffer for You.
I will not seek relief or ease,
nor try to understand You.
All I want, dear Lord,
is by faith to embrace You
and to love You even in the night
of trials and suffering.

Amen.
Mother Martyria

Prayer of Thanks

Loving Father,
Thank You for the assurance that in the time
of distress You will manifest Yourself as a true
Father. I trust You and believe that while we
sow tears in the vale of sorrows and persecu-
tion, You will refresh us and then let us reap joy
eternally in heaven. You always let the sun shine

upon Your children after the rain and give them laughter after their tears. You comfort and cheer them with Your love and in heaven above endow them with glory for ever.

Praise be to Your fatherly heart, full of tender love for us! You create tremendous glory and joy out of suffering if we bear it patiently with a trusting heart, steadfastness and humility—for love of You.

Loving Father, in times of utmost darkness and agony I want to remember that what we suffer at this present time will come to an end and that You have prepared for us a life of glory in Your city above.

Thank You that everything on this earth is transient—even the hardest moments and periods—whereas the good seeds sown then will grow and bring forth fruit, which I will reap with joy in eternity.

I thank You that in Your love You have so ordained it that earthly suffering is short-lived, whereas the glory of heaven will last for ever and ever.

Amen.



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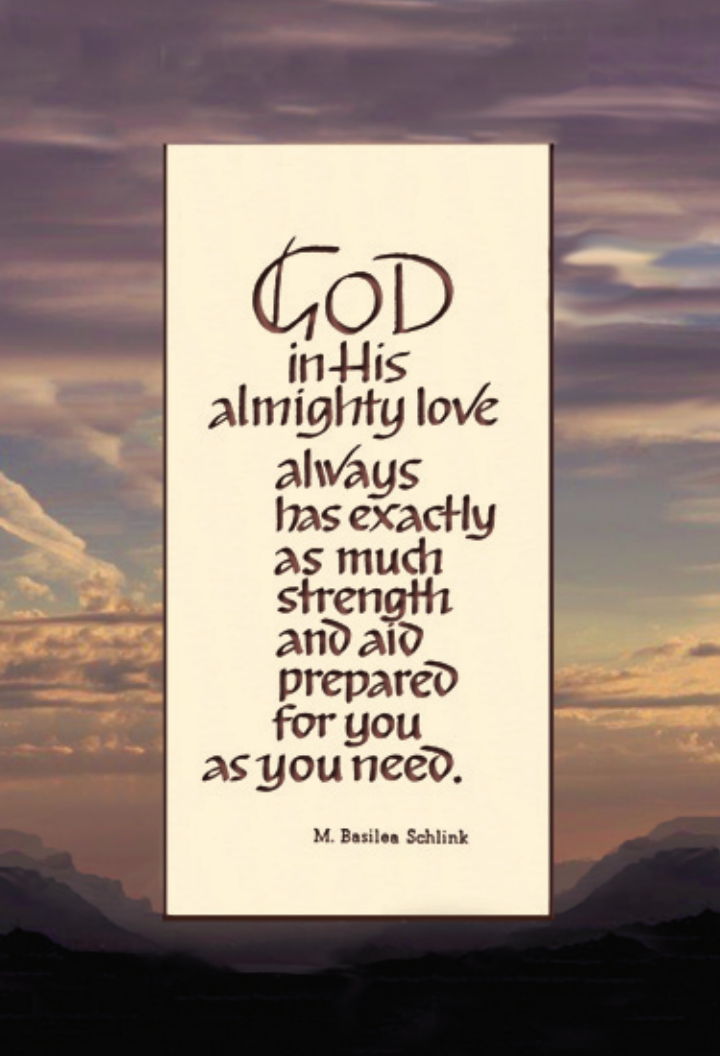
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