

I Peter 5:10 - And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

During the Passover meal on the night of His betrayal, Jesus broke bread with His disciples, nourishing their bodies even as He was about to be sacrificed. In the same breath, He conferred on them His Kingdom - but admonished them to rule like one who serves. Jesus singled Peter out with these words: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Luke 22:31-32

It is the fruit of Peter's sifting that we see in I Peter 5:10 - And the God of all grace...after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. The one who assured Jesus that he would never forsake Him denied Him three times. But Jesus had given Peter a promise, a prayer that his faith would not fail; that he would return and strengthen his brothers. He would be restored by God and fully established in his calling.

Many of us are being tested right now in ways we may never have anticipated. I was flabbergasted four months ago when diagnosed with an unusual recurrence of endometrial cancer after twenty-six years of health. Yet by the grace of God, I sensed that He had a much stronger purpose in this than simply healing my physical body.

When I returned radiantly healthy to the surgeon's office three weeks following my operation, a nurse incredulously remarked, "It's like it never happened!" But the Holy Spirit has taken me around the world in 80 days and shown me great and unsearchable things I did not know. He has not only restored me, but given me a more profound knowledge of His compassion, His love, His very presence living in me.

Our Spiritual Care team never anticipated that our beloved Chapel Emmanuel, this sacred gathering place, would be decimated by floods. Yet we have God's word in Isaiah 59:19 that when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord raises up a standard against him. We have that standard in the cross of Christ, that promise of full restoration because He Himself canceled the charges against us and pledged to work all that has come against us for good when we love Him and are called to His purpose.

We have God's word, His promise, that our suffering produces perseverance, which in turn shapes our character and results in the kind of

hope that does not disappoint us because it is founded on the love of God that He has poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Today, as we are gathered in this newly-refurbished Chapel Emmanuel - God with us - let us give thanks to God as He Himself restores us and makes us strong, firm and steadfast.

Come to Him, all you who are weary and burdened, and He will give you rest. Put your trust in the One who will never leave or forsake you, the God of hope who is able to fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him.