

The Loving Purpose of God for Suffering
Romans 5:3-5
March 19, 2020

Review

Theme of Romans: The gospel of God (1:16-17)

1:18-3:20 The universality of sin and condemnation (the universal need for the gospel)

3:21-4:25 The gospel (good news) as the righteousness of God by faith

Chs 5-8 The gospel and the sure hope it gives

5:1-11 Blessed results of justification

Paraphrase of 5:1-2:

Since we as Christians have been justified by faith, we have, as a result, peace with God. All our enmity toward God has been dealt with at the cross, and God has removed His wrath from us. We have received a relationship of peace with God, through union with our Lord Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection (5:1).

When we were justified, we also received, through Christ, access into the presence of God, who has given us grace and will continue to do so, grace in which we stand secure before Him (5:2a).

As those who have been justified, we rejoice in hope of seeing the glory of God and being conformed to His glorious character (5:2b).

How we can rejoice in suffering because of God's purpose to strengthen our hope (3-4)

Question: What are some ways you have suffered as a believer?

Back in verse 2, the apostle stated, “we **rejoice** in hope of the glory of God.”

- Rejoicing in what God has promised to do for us in **the future**

3 “Not only that, we rejoice in our sufferings”

- Rejoicing in what God is doing in our lives in **the present**

The Christian is to expect to suffer

- **John 16:33** “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”
- **Acts 14:22** “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

The apostle Paul says this from the trenches of Christian ministry

Romans 8:35 anticipates Christian suffering will include persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword

Rejoicing in our sufferings does not mean...

1. Rejoicing in spite of our sufferings
2. Rejoicing in the midst of our sufferings

Compare 5:11 “we also rejoice in God”

Rejoicing in our sufferings means:

1. Rejoicing on account of our sufferings
2. Thanking God for our sufferings

Rejoicing in suffering is seen throughout the NT

- **Matt. 5:10–12** “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **Rejoice and be glad**, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”
- **2 Cor. 12:9–10** But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will **boast all the more gladly** of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
- **James 1:2–4** Count it all **joy**, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
- **1 Pet. 4:12–14** Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But **rejoice** insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

The **unbeliever** cannot rejoice in his sufferings

3 “...knowing that...”

1. Introduces three interconnected reasons why believers rejoice in their sufferings
2. These reasons concern God’s loving purpose for our sufferings
3. As we know these truths, and, in faith, apply them in our mind to our trials, we see our sufferings in a whole new light and can rejoice in them

Reason #1 for rejoicing in our sufferings

3 "...suffering produces endurance,"

Suffering that comes from the hand of a loving Heavenly Father, as it is used by Him in our lives

"endurance"

1. NASB "perseverance"
2. Steadfastness
3. Endurance in living for the Lord

Suffering is a testing of our professed faith

1. **James 1:3** "for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness [same Gk word]."
2. The difference between a true child of God and one who is just a professed child of God is often seen in the effect that suffering has on him
3. **Matt. 13:20–21** "As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away."

How does our Heavenly Father work through suffering to produce endurance in us?

1. He humbles us through suffering
2. He turns us more fully to Him through suffering
3. The result is Spirit-wrought endurance

Reason #2 for rejoicing in our sufferings

4a "and endurance produces character,"

As our Heavenly Father produces endurance in us, He in turn produces "character" in us

"character"

1. NASB "proven character"
2. Closely related to:
 - **Jas 1:3** "the **testing** of your faith"
 - **1 Pet 1:7** "the **tested genuineness** of your faith...even though **tested** by fire"
3. Speaks of something that results from testing

As we live for the Lord with endurance through suffering, our Heavenly Father refines our character, giving proof that we are His children and our faith is real.

- **8:29** “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...”

Suffering is part of God’s method of perfecting us and preparing us for “the hope of the glory of God” (5:2)

1. We need this
2. Our Heavenly Father is doing this for our good
3. Good earthly parents discipline their children because they love them; how much more our Heavenly Father!

Reason #3 for rejoicing in our sufferings

4b “and character produces hope,”

Strengthens the hope of verse 2b that results from justification, making us even more certain of it

As we are tested by suffering, and see how our Heavenly Father is at work conforming us to the image of His Son

God has already assured us through the gospel that Christ was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification, that we have been justified, and that we will be glorified. And now God is working through our sufferings to give us proof.

The certainty of our hope (5) NEXT WEEK

Conclusion

Rejoicing in your sufferings is not about telling yourself that suffering is pleasant

- **Heb. 12:11** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

It is about rejoicing that your Heavenly Father has ordained something that He will use to...

1. Draw you closer to Him
2. Strengthen you
3. Conform you
4. Increase your hope

Suffering reveals where your hope lies

Question: How have you seen these verses fulfilled in your life?