

***THE BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION, PT. 2***  
***ROMANS 5:3-5***

Four years ago, [Ryan Boomershine](#), a principle of a Christian school in Nashville, wrote this account:

Last Wednesday, the third day of this year, I was working at my desk at school when Christie called me on my cell. She said a jumble of things [in my mind] but also something close to, “some men just came into our house...they put a gun to Karsten’s head....and put him in the closet.” She was also able to confirm that at least one item was missing and they had attempted to take the TV. I was her first call, so I ran to the car, raced home and talked to 911 the whole way there. I beat the police, and as I entered home, Karsten obviously had a jumbled dread of emotions on his face.

Karsten is our oldest. He is 10, and he was enjoying his last morning of Christmas break by playing with Legos on the living room floor when a knock came to the door. Christie was heading up the stairs to tend to the running water (a tub being filled for [our daughter’s] bath), and she told him he could answer it. We live in a busy house with many guests and neighbors at our door throughout the week; sometimes even when I come home, I knock and wait at the front door. When the door was opened, a man with a gun presented himself and asked Karsten who was home. There were two masked and gloved men with him. Karsten told him that his mom was upstairs. He covered Karsten’s mouth, put the gun to his temple and marched him about 12-15 paces to a closet and deposited him inside. For 3-5 minutes, the three men (ages 17-20) went through the downstairs of our home trying to disconnect the TV, taking our iPod, and turning the radio on the docking station to a rap station.



Karsten’s heart was pounding in the closet. He couldn’t hear the intruders, but he expressed very high concern that they would head upstairs where his siblings (ages 9, 7, 4, 3) and mama were. His emotions were racing. He described that time, not as primarily fearful for himself, but a strong sense of “I can’t believe this is happening here, happening to us.”

The men left with a slam of the door and raced to the car where a waiting 15-year old was in the rear seat of their car. The gunman drove away and out of our subdivision.

That story is probably among the greatest kinds of nightmares for any parent. It’s the kind of story that tempts many to say, “With all the troubles in this world — in *my* world — how can anyone say that life is good, or that God is good?” You have trouble, don’t you? You suffer. As believers, we all suffer in some way; we haven’t (yet) been imprisoned for our faith, but we’ve suffered for our faith.

I looked through one of my files on suffering this week and found articles like this:

- ✓ An 11-year-old boy gave John Piper a note after Piper spoke in his church: “If God promises to meet all our needs, why are we hungry?”
- ✓ In 1665 the bubonic plague broke out in London, ultimately taking the lives of almost 70,000 people; and the church at the center of the outbreak was pastored by Thomas Vincent, taking the lives of many of his people, including seven people in the house in which he lived.

- ✓ There was the story of Joni Eareckson Tada, who has now suffered 50 years as a quadriplegic.
- ✓ And the story of Guido de Brès, the author of the Belgic Confession (a good Protestant statement of faith) who was imprisoned and died for writing that confession.

There are enough stories of suffering and persecution that it might be tempting for a believer to say, “Life is not as good as it seemed that Christ promised for us. It’s hard — unreasonably hard.” And in reading passages like Romans 5:1-2 and Paul’s recitation of the blessings of justification, the Roman readers might have been tempted to tell Paul, “That’s okay for you, but we are suffering here in Rome; you don’t know what our lives are like...” It seems that in verses 3-5, Paul anticipates just such a response and makes a most unusual statement about the blessings of justification, connecting our sufferings to God’s blessings.

In these three verses Paul emphasizes that:

BECAUSE THE BELIEVER IS JUSTIFIED, HE HAS THE GRACE TO EXULT IN HIS TROUBLES.

Here are four reasons to exult (rejoice) in our troubles and suffering — and these reasons are all provisions of God for us through the troubles and trials; they are four products of the trials when we respond to the trials in godly ways:

1. Exult in Trouble Because Trouble Produces PERSEVERANCE (v. 3)
2. Exult in Trouble Because Perseverance Produces CHARACTER (v. 4a)
3. Exult in Trouble Because Character Produces HOPE (v. 4b-5a)
4. Exult in Trouble Because You Have the LOVE of God (v. 5b)

It is tempting to think that suffering and troubles are always “bad” or “wrong.” They are not. And this passage demonstrates why suffering is not “bad.”

## 1. Exult in Trouble Because Trouble Produces PERSEVERANCE (v. 3)

- In verses 1-2, Paul began reciting some of the blessings that come to the believer through justification: We have peace with God (v. 1); we have grace for living (v. 2a); and we have the hope of glory (v. 2b).
- And in verse 2 he is emphatic and triumphant as he writes, **and we exult in the hope of the glory of God**. We noted last week that the word **exult** has the sense of “boasting” or “bragging.” As believers, we take pride in the confident expectation (**hope**) that we have for the eternal future. And that is a natural kind of response for the believer: we are confident of what the Lord is giving us and will give us and we point to Him as the Giver of this great gift.
- And then Paul connects the idea of exulting (bragging) to something completely unexpected: **but** (strong contrast) **we also exult in our tribulations**.
  - ✓ This is an astounding statement. It’s astounding because it is contrary to everything we think about trials and suffering and persecution.
  - ✓ And think about this for a moment: it’s astounding because “future glorification is prized precisely because afflictions are left behind.” [Schreiner] We are willing to brag about Heaven and the presence of God not only for what we get but also for what we lose. And then Paul has the boldness to say that one of the things we’re looking forward to losing is a reason for boasting.
- How can Paul say this?
  - ✓ Paul can say this because boasting in trials is the consistent theme of Scripture.
    - The word **tribulations** (pl.) refers to pressures, hardships, and sufferings. They are distresses that come from sources outside of us. Sometimes it is used to refer to the unique distresses that believers face because they are followers of Christ, but it can also be broader than that, since there is a sense in which all difficulties are “on behalf of Christ” since every kind of trial emanates from the fall of man (Gen. 3). Without the fall there would be no illness, no sin, no unjust suffering as the result of sin, and certainly no persecution. Paul is not specific about what he means in this passage, but I’m inclined to think he is thinking broadly about suffering.
    - Whatever the extent of the suffering Paul specifically has in mind in this verse, the rest of the NT affirms the reality of suffering and pressures for the believer:
      - ... Tribulation and trouble can be expected (Jn. 16:21, 33; 1 Thess. 1:6; Acts 11:19; Acts 14:22)
      - ... God has sovereignly ordained suffering (1 Thess. 3:3)
      - ... God provides comfort and encouragement in our troubles (1 Thess. 3:7)
      - ... All of creation suffers, but no suffering can compare to the Glory to come (2 Cor. 4:17; Rom. 8:18-30)
    - When we set our hearts on the world and its false promises, we will not be able to exult in tribulations; but when we think biblically of tribulation and the world, we *can* exult in them.

- ✓ Paul can say this because boasting in our trials is a way of boasting in God.
  - When we boast in our trials we are boasting in our weakness, and to boast in our weakness is like saying, “I agree that I cannot endure this or do this, but God working in me and through me *is* sufficient,” which is Paul’s illustration from his own life (**2 Cor. 12:7-10**).
  - Without the tribulation and suffering, Paul would have only known what he could do and not what God could do. Only with the tribulation did he learn the extent of God’s gracious strength.
  - It is interesting to note that Paul is particularly fond of this word **exult**. It is used 37x in the NT and Paul uses it 35x, and 31x in Romans and Corinthians. And 20x in 2 Corinthians and 17x in 2 Corinthians 10-12. So in this section where Paul defends his apostleship to the Corinthians, the thing he points to the most is his weakness, because his weakness exalts the nature of God.
  - Friends, when we boast in our trials, we boast in the God who is sovereignly behind (designing) the trials and in the God who is strengthening us in the trials.
- ✓ Paul can say this because he is not saying we boast **about** our tribulations, but that we are boasting **in our tribulations**. That is, we don’t find pleasure or joy or exultation in the circumstances themselves, but while we are in the trouble, we can find reason to exult and find joy (both in God and in what God is doing in us as we are in the tribulation). Cf. also **1 Thess. 5:18**.
- ✓ Paul can say this because boasting in trials is a means to **perseverance**.
  - Notice that Paul says we exult in our tribulations, **knowing that...** Because we know something about God and His Word, it transforms the way we think about troubles.
  - [Aside: this is one more verse that reminds us that the key to a sanctified life is to have a renewed mind. We don’t need our circumstances to change; but we do need to change the way we think in our minds about our circumstances, about God, and about sin & righteousness.]
  - What we are particularly to know and think about is that tribulation produces **perseverance**.
  - This same root word for perseverance is used in James 1:3-4 — it refers to spiritual fortitude; it has the sense of bearing up and holding up even while under a crushingly heavy load. It’s “stick-to-it-iveness” when there is a great trial. The little Energizer bunny that just “keeps on going” is cute, but he is facing no resistance. The one who perseveres is the one who “keeps on going” even when facing severe opposition.
  - The persevering person is brave and steadfast. And think carefully about this, my friends. *How* does someone cultivate perseverance? No marathoner ever cultivated it by sitting on the couch. No Olympic weight lifter ever developed perseverance by staying home from the gym. And spiritual endurance is not learned by reading a book or listening to a sermon. Persevering strength and endurance are only the result of tribulation. If you want to be spiritually strong, you are going to have to go through the trial. John Stott has rightly said, “We could not learn endurance without suffering, because without suffering there would be nothing to endure.”
- How can Paul say, “we exult in our tribulations?” Because tribulation is the only means to perseverance. Remove the tribulation and you remove the ability to grow strong.

There is a second reason to exult in our tribulations —

## 2. Exult in Trouble Because Perseverance Produces **CHARACTER** (v. 4a)

- Not only do tribulations produce perseverance, but Paul says that perseverance produces **character**.
  - ✓ The word **proven character** refers to an approval that is given as the result of a trial. (In secular literature it was used in reference to proving the legitimacy of coins when placed under fire.)
  - ✓ So the character of the Macedonians was proven when they suffered severely and still they were generous in their giving (2 Cor. 8:2) and Timothy proved his effectiveness and ability and zeal in ministry as he served alongside Paul (Phil. 2:22). This kind of proof happens through the cleansing fires of tribulation and trouble (1 Pt. 1:7).
- How does perseverance produce character?
  - ✓ When someone endures one trial after another, or when someone endures a trial that is relentless and persistent, it is like a piece of metal being put under a flame and all the impurities drop away. And as the impurities are removed, then only what is genuine is left. And that's what tribulations do for us — they remove the dross and extraneous and ungodliness from our lives.
  - ✓ Two of my favorite t-shirts I've seen at the YMCA are: "Sweat is fat crying," and "Pain is weakness leaving the body." Both those shirts affirm the realities that 1) we need to change, and 2) to change physically there will be hardship involving sweat and pain (that are the result of a trial). And that's the point that Paul is making here spiritually — trials are an opportunity for boasting because it removes the impurities of our spiritual lives. How does that happen?
  - ✓ When someone consistently endures the trials of suffering with godly responses, it demonstrates the reality of the faith they are claiming. And isn't that why we were so captivated by Rita Langston over the past couple of years? We saw her continued suffering, and we saw her grow spiritually stronger and saw her weaknesses removed. Was she perfect? No. But was the character of her faith being demonstrated? Yes.

There is a third reason to exult in our tribulations —

## 3. Exult in Trouble Because Character Produces **HOPE** (v. 4b-5a)

- Remember that biblically speaking, **hope** is a confidence in God's work that is certain and sure (12:12; 2 Cor. 1:10; Gal. 5:5).
- When Paul speaks of **hope** that is the result of proven character, he means that as we go through trials and endure and prove the genuine character of our faith, that our hope will become more confident.
- We are not more confident because we are trusting ourselves; we are more confident because we see we really have been changed by God and we really have been saved. Our justification is not an illusion.

- We experience the promise that God will complete what He begins in us (Phil. 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:8). And as we are progressively being matured here on earth we grow ever-more confident that we are among those who He will take into Glory and finish their salvation there.
- And notice that Paul also says in v. 5 that this hope **does not disappoint**. He means it is not shameful. No one who follows God will ever experience the shame of following a false god. Hope in God never ends up differently than promised. Hope in God's promises always yields the anticipated outcome. Wishes and dreams often end up differently than desired. But that is never true of God's promises and our hope in Him. He will not disappoint. Cf. 9:33; 10:11; 2 Tim. 1:12. This is also an OT concept (Ps. 22:5; 25:3; 119:116; Is 28:16).
- And with this sentence, Paul has finished where he began — in verse 2 he says, “we exult in hope of the glory of God,” and now we exult in our tribulations because they produce hope. And that makes the point that exulting in tribulations is not different than exulting in the glory of God. We exult in our tribulations because they lead us to think of how God will ultimately transform them and perfect us in glory (cf. 8:18, 29-30; 1 Cor. 15:19).
- Does God actually produce hope in us through trials? Listen to the journal entry of Henry Martyn. He was a missionary to India and Arabia in the early 1800s. When he left England in 1806 he left behind his fiancée Lydia Greenfell whom he would never see again. He would die at age 31. Two months after arriving in Calcutta, one of the missionaries there preached against him and his theology, “calling his teaching inconsistent, extravagant, and absurd. He accused him of seeking only to ‘gratify self-sufficiency, pride and uncharitableness.’” [Piper, 5/4/86] Yet over the next six years, Martyn would translate the NT into Hindustani, Persian, and Arabic. How could he do that?

In the multitude of my troubled thoughts I still saw that there is a strong consolation in the hope set before us. Let men do their worst, let me be torn to pieces, and my dear Lydia torn from me; or let me labour for fifty years amidst scorn, and never seeing one soul converted; still it shall not be worse for my soul in eternity, nor worse for it in time. Though the heathen rage and the English people imagine a vain thing, the Lord Jesus, who controls all events, is my friend, my master, my God, my all.

- The tribulations of Martyn's experience produced endurance, proven character, and hope in God. This is what God does ultimately with all His people. Your trials are not for your destruction; they are for your maturation and perfection.

How is it that hope is not disappointing and how do trials ultimately produce hope? Here is the final reason for our exultation in our tribulations and troubles —

#### 4. Exult in Trouble Because You Have the LOVE of God (v. 5b)

- Hope is not shameful because *the love of God has been poured out...*
  - ✓ The word **poured out** means it has been supplied freely; it is a term that speaks to the lavishness of what God has done. He has been abundant in the pouring out of his love. His love is not dribbled out, drop-by-drop. It's poured out and poured out and poured out some more. Paul also doesn't say it is "given." That would be true, for it is a gift, but it is an astoundingly lavish gift, so Paul uses the word "poured." He has been profuse in the giving of His love.
  - ✓ And notice that this is the love of God — this is not our love for Him, but His love for us. He pours out His love, not just "on us," but also "within us" — **within our hearts**.
  - ✓ It is amazing that in this book that is saturated with the doctrine of God and the truth of the gospel, this is the first time the noun "love" is used (the verb won't appear until 8:28). Perhaps that is so Paul can tie three important themes together — faith (5:1), hope (5:2, 4) and love (5:5). And as he says elsewhere of this trinity of characteristics, the greatest of these is — love (1 Cor. 13:13).
  - ✓ People without Christ are without hope (Eph. 2:12). There are people who are holding onto a deceptive hope (Acts 16:19). But when a man is justified by faith, there is a convergence of hope and love on his faith — he believes in faith and he is secure in his hope in Christ and lavished with the love of God. He is anchored in God and Christ and the love of the Triune God for him.
- Where does this love come from? It comes from the Holy Spirit — **through the Holy Spirit**.
  - ✓ That is, the Holy Spirit is the means through which we receive the love of God in us. And that points to the fact that when we are justified, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). And when we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, we are indwelt by Him and through Him we experience the security and lavishness of God's love.
  - ✓ And Paul emphasizes the fact that the Holy Spirit is the means of receiving God's love when he says the Spirit **was given to us**. We did not achieve God's love or the Spirit on our own. He was a gift and He brought us the additional gift of God's love.
  - ✓ Now think about what that means. In chapters 1-3 Paul emphasized that we were worthy of God's wrath (3:9ff). But instead of the wrath of God, we have received the love of God. Instead of receiving the outpouring of God's infinite wrath against us for our sin, through justification we receive the outpouring of God's love through the person of the indwelling Spirit of God.
  - ✓ And friend, Paul says that is particularly experienced through the hope we have that comes as a result of our trials. In our trials, the Spirit of God makes us to know the love of God. The love of God was poured out on you in your justification, and that love is present in you now in your trial, and you can now that love in particular ways in your trial that you may not know otherwise.
- I don't know anyone that says, "I love my trials and want more..." But I know a great many people who say, "I have experienced such grace and growth and love in my tribulations and I am deeply thankful..."

- Listen to the words of Tim Keller as he puts this passage together:

Here is Paul's amazing assertion. When he shows that suffering starts a chain reaction that leads to hope (which is one of the fruits of justification), he is saying that the benefits of justification are not only not diminished by suffering, they are enlarged by it. In other words, if you face suffering with a clear grasp of justification by grace alone, your joy in that grace will deepen. On the other hand, if you face suffering with a mindset of justification by works, the suffering will break you, not make you.

Consider how suffering affects people who are seeking salvation by works. Self-justifiers are always insecure at a deep level because they know they aren't living up to their standards but they cannot admit it. So when suffering hits, they immediately feel they are being punished for their sins. They cannot take confidence in God's love (v 5). Since their belief that God loves them was inadequately based, suffering shatters them. Suffering drives them away from God, rather than toward him. It is when we suffer that we discover what we are really trusting and hoping in: ourselves, or God. [Keller, *Romans 1-7 For You*, Kindle Locations 1533-1541.]

- Friend, if you have been justified — declared righteous by God through your faith in Christ — then you have this love and you have this hope that cannot be removed even by the greatest trials. Give thanks for what God has given you and how He has blessed you through justification.
- And friend, if you have not been justified — if you are not trusting in Christ and if you are not a Christian, then you don't have hope and you don't have love from God. But in fact, it's much worse than that — you have the opposite of everything we've talked about this morning: you are hopeless (you have nothing good in the future) and you are under the wrath of God (instead of the love of God). But that can change if you believe in Christ — **1:16-17** is the hope of all men who believe. You can become one who is loved by God if you simply believe.

**CONCLUSION:** At the beginning of this message I told the story of the Boomershine family in Nashville. This is how Ryan (the father) finished that account, and this is what justification does in our trials:

We live in this corner of the world where we can live softly with high birth rates, heated blankets, electronic amenities, soft-serve yogurt on every corner.... We live in a part of the world where crime still shocks us and calls us to the realities of a fragile and desperate world. I don't deserve five healthy kids.

They are a grace. I don't deserve the Gospel love I'm shown each day either, but we have a good God with a perfect Son who made a perfect atonement for my trouble. He solved and healed my woes. And now I can't look on these other things as my own....

Unapologetically, this trauma has been good for our family. It's not that we wish it on others, are glad it happened or want it to happen again. But it allows all of us to see God's steady, close protection and care of this family. One day, every knee will bow and every tongue will declare His Lordship; and the excess and bounty will drip from our mouths and saturate our sight. May He preserve us to better declare His story to others. [["What Thieves Cannot Break Through and Steal."](#)]

**BENEDICTION:** 1 Thess. 5:23-24