

Rejoice In The Sufferings!?

Pastor James Richards

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We hope for things in this world. But ultimately, our hope is in eternal life through Jesus Christ. That we have been justified by his death on the cross, declared not guilty, and have access into this faith in which we stand. We have the hope of the glory of God. We have peace with you.

We thank you for that. But, Lord, we realize we live in this world and still under the curse of in. And we experience that in different ways. I pray this morning that as we look at this passage, how we can rejoice in our sufferings, that God, you'd be speaking to our heart and help us to be overcomers no matter what we face. That you would be glorified through our life.

And so, Lord, we lift up Cheryl as she's going through this cancer, and thank you for her faith. We pray that you'd be working in her body, that you would extend her life. We know we're all going to die one time or another. But we ask, Lord, for extended time, that she might be with us. She might be able to continue to minister.

She might be able to continue to be a testimony of your grace in her work in the church and the community where she's involved. So just ask your blessing in that. Now, Lord, we pray as Jesus taught us to pray. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallow be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. You may be

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seated.

For you that have been attending church, I just finished the books of first and second Peter. We were in them for 18 months. And wonderful message from the Lord for you and I, especially as we live in this world, where sometimes we experience sufferings. And then the hope in second Peter of Christ coming back and everything being worth it. And my plan was to start first Thessalonians today.

But I'm putting that off a week, because three things kind of converged in my life this week that made me want to preach on this passage in Romans, chapter five. And the first was, every night I read a passage out of Martin Lloyd Jones. He's got books on Genesis, Romans, Ephesians 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, quite a few. And he was considered the greatest expository preacher of the last century, pastor in London. And one of the things he said, one of the problems that you and I have as Christians is we don't preach to ourself.

We preach to others, don't we? But we often don't preach to ourself. We don't remind ourself of what the word of God says. And I thought, yeah, that's true, but how much better to have him preach to me? So I read one of his sermons every night, and I've gone through, for example, in Romans.

He's got ten books, three to 400 pages each, on just the book of Romans. So that was one thing that converged. The second thing, it just happened in our adult Sunday school class this morning that we're in Romans five, the very sermon that I was reading in my daily nightly devotions. And then we got news, Cheryl got news that a cancer that we thought would be treatable, at least medically, it isn't others, some hormone treatment, and tried to extend things. And because of that, I thought, God is leading me to preach on this passage to deal with the fact that there are sufferings in this life and anyone here that's never suffered, because if you haven't, you can come up and preach the message.

All right. Okay. In one way or another, we all suffer in this life. In fact, we're told in the scriptures that if you're going to live a life for Christ, you will suffer, you will have

persecution in your life. And so I want to look at this.

So go to chapter five, verse one. Read along. And the first thing we notice in this passage is the therefore. And I've been emphasizing that one of the things that really marks a Christian that is growing is therefore based on what he has told us. Therefore, something is going to come out of that.

It should impact our life in some way. And you and I need to be in the scriptures and seeing the truth of God, and then figuring out, how does that apply to my life? And so this therefore is pointing back. What's the therefore? Therefore?

And it goes back to verse 24 and 25, where Paul has summed up his teaching on justification, and he said, it will be counted or credited or imputed to us who believe in him, who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. The fact that Jesus Christ died for yours and my sins, he paid our penalty on the cross. And as a result of that, we have justification by faith. Justification, we mentioned, is a legal term, a forensic term that means you have been declared not guilty. If you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you are no longer guilty.

Christ took your sins on himself and paid the penalty and now you're not guilty in sight. You still have to deal with your sins. You've been freed from the penalty of sin, but now you work the rest of your life to deal with the pollution of sin. And we all do. That's called sanctification.

But he goes on, as a result of what Christ has done, he gives four blessings that are ours. And you could also call it four proofs that you really have been justified. And my aim today is to look at the fourth one. But I'll just mention the first three. It says, first of all, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And whether someone wants to admit it or not, everyone in this world was at war with God. They didn't want him to be in control of their life. They wanted to be in control of their life. I'm going to do it my way, not God's way. And all of us fall into that category.

And without Jesus Christ paying for our sins, we were at war with him. We were his enemies. Now, as a result of our faith, we have peace with God. Notice it's peace with God. There is a peace of God that sometimes we don't experience because we don't understand the promises.

But if you're a believer, you are at peace with him. And that's an amazing thing. The second blessing, it says in verse two, through him we've also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And because of Christ's justification, we can go into the very presence of God at all times. He is always there for you and I.

He wants us to come into his presence. He wants to hear our requests, he wants to hear our needs. He loves to hear our praise and he invites us to come in. Christ opened the way the curtain was torn into and we access into the holy of holies to come into God's presence. An amazing blessing, but also a proof that you belong to him, that you want to spend time with God in your devotions, in your prayer life, in your fellowship, in your thoughts.

On the freeway 405, traffic backed up and everybody's cursing, but you're praising the Lord. You have access into him. The third blessing, it says, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And hope is an amazing thing. When you lose hope, it's over, it's done.

I can't go on. And sooner or later in this world, if you don't know Jesus Christ, you will lose hope. You will come to the end of yourself. But in Christ we have hope of not only seeing his glory someday, but experiencing his glory even now, and even sharing in his glory. The Bible says three wonderful blessings that we could spend a lot of time on.

But I wanted to focus on the fourth because of what we're going through. And I say we. Gerald's the one with cancer. There's others in our body that are experiencing sickness, but we experience that together. If one suffers, we all suffer.

We care, and so what do we do with suffering? That's the fourth blessing, verse three. And he says, not only that, wonderful blessings. Great, wonderful, but not only that.

But we rejoice in our sufferings.

And we meet. Go. That can't be right. How can anyone rejoice in sufferings? Some translations, tribulation, but it says we do.

And I think this is where we just take a collective. Nobody likes suffering. We do everything possible to try to get away from suffering in some way. How can we rejoice in that? How is that a blessing?

In what way does it prove our faith if we're actually rejoicing in the midst of our suffering? So I think it's an important thing for you and I to look at. So let's look at it in a little more detail. It says not only that, but we, Paul could have said I. And we said, yeah, sure you do, Paul.

You're the great apostle. Of course you can rejoice in your sufferings. You suffered more than any of us can ever imagine. You're that super saint. No, he doesn't say that.

He says we. It's meant for every christian, every believer, everyone who has a relationship with Jesus Christ. If they find themselves in the midst of suffering in some way, that they can somehow rejoice. That's a promise. A blessing for every one of us applies to each one of us.

Second word we notice there it says rejoice and we rejoice. The root word for that is the boast, and some translations call it glory. But the idea is the word of boasting. How can we boast of going through suffering? And he's going to answer that question.

But we need to look at what he means here. I think Jesus reveals what this means in Luke chapter 15. We won't go there. We won't read it. But you may remember that there were three parables in Luke chapter 15.

1st was the parable of the lost sheep. Remember, he had 100 sheep. One was lost, he left the 99, and he went out and found the one. The other was the parable of the lost coin, and the lady swept her house and she searched here and there, and she finally found the coin. And the third was the parable about the lost son, the prodigal son who

went off into a far country, wasted everything he had, and found himself in the pig pen.

In each one of those situations, they rejoiced in the parable of the lost sheep. When he found that lost sheep, he called his neighbors and his friends, and he says, come and rejoice with me. I have found my lost sheep. When the lady found the coin, she called her neighbors, come in, come and rejoice with me. I found my lost coin.

And of course, when the father son came back, it says he celebrated. Why? How could they rejoice in that? In all three cases, something was lost, something bad happened. But then when they were found, something good happened.

They went from sad to glad, because I found what was lost. In the same way, we can believe that if we go through suffering, rejoicing in God, in the midst of that, that, yes, something is lost, suffering is real, and we lose something in that. But we can find something in the midst of that, and that's why we can rejoice. Saw an example of that this last week in the war. Israel and Hamas, and of course, the hostages that were taken out of Israel, and around 200 hostages, they were able to rescue two hostages this last week, and there was great rejoicing.

Even though there's still over a hundred that are in captivity, they could rejoice. At least two were saved in the same way. When we deal with people that are lost in sin and they come to Christ, we don't go, well, there's another one. Got my bible here, marked down a little mark. No, we rejoice because of a soul that was lost is now found.

And that's the idea. Yes, something bad happened, but something good can come out of that. A third word we want to look at is the word in. That's a little word. Now, not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings.

And that's an important word here. We don't rejoice because we're suffering. Oh, look at me, I'm suffering. Isn't that great? No, we don't rejoice because we're suffering because suffering is not a good thing.

Suffering is painful, it's grievous, and it's not something we take pleasure in. And we shouldn't take pleasure in suffering in the sense that, oh, boy, I'm suffering. I remember reading love, acceptance, and forgiveness by a pastor named Jerry Cook, very prominent pastor out of the Foursquare religion. And in that book, he shared an experience he had. He got heart disease.

He had a heart attack on the golf course on a Saturday. They rushed him into the hospital, and they did emergency surgery, and he was recuperating in the hospital on Monday. It turns out one of the janitors went to his church, and so he decided to sneak into his room, into the ICU, crawled into his room, and said, pastor Jerry, Pastor Jerry, what is God teaching you through this? And Pastor Jerry responded, it hurts. Like, okay.

He did learn something. He was a type A personality, a pusher. Let's get things done. And he became a type B personality who had a lot of care for people. Out of that, God brought something good out of that.

But we don't suffer for the sake of suffering. Also, it doesn't say we rejoice in the midst of suffering, like, oh, I'm suffering. I can handle it. Stoic. I'm tough.

I can handle it. Don't worry. I'll get through this. No, it says, we suffer in the midst of it. We rejoice in the midst of the suffering, because there is something we know, and it's something only the Christian can know.

He says not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings knowing. Knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. And so he's saying that when we go through something, and we all do, and suffering includes a lot of things. Primarily, it's talking about persecution for those who are taking a stand for Christ with their lives.

And we see that through the centuries and around the world. If you really take a stand for Christ, you will probably suffer in some way. It could be outright persecution. It could be martyrdom. We're seeing that in the world today, in many places of the

world.

It could be that you lose a promotion. It could be that people exclude you from their company. We could go on and on what persecution would be like, suffering tribulation. But it also, secondarily, it refers to the things we suffer in Christ. And we live in a world that we still have an enemy, Satan.

We still struggle with sin. We're still waiting for the promise of Christ coming back to restore all things. And while we wait, there is suffering. How many had a wonderful night's sleep last night? If you did, raise your hand, that's great.

What happened to the rest of you?

Sometimes it's not so wonderful, is it? Okay. In a sense, it's suffering that's just part of life. Sometimes we do everything we can to reach out to someone. We love them and, oh, you're wonderful, and I'm glad I have a relationship.

And they just stay away, stay away, stay away. I don't want anything to do with you. And there's a form of suffering, rejection there, isn't there? But it also includes sickness.

I don't think any of us have escaped sickness in this world in one way or another. And thank God. He brings healing mainly through the natural healing he's put in our bodies, sometimes through help, the medical profession, sometimes through prayer. And God is the one who heals all our diseases. But the fact is, sometimes we experience that.

My first wife died of cancer and she had a tremendous amount of faith and she loved the Lord with all of her heart. And my second wife had cancer and she loved the Lord and had a tremendous amount of faith. One was taken and one lived. I don't know why. I know God is omniscient, omnipresent, powerful, and he could have, but he didn't.

And I've experienced that over 45 years of ministry. People had a tremendous amount of faith and some were healed and some were not. And we can't make heads or tails

out of that. All we know is we live in a world where there is suffering and we need to recognize that if we go through it in a way that glorifies God, we can rejoice in the midst of that. I'm not telling you you need to go out and suffer, okay?

I'm not telling you if you're suffering, just grin and bear it, okay? I'm just telling you that something good can come out of that, whether he heals you or whether he does not heal you. So what is it we can know when we're going through suffering? Why can we rejoice in our suffering? So he says four things basically here.

Back in verse two, he said, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Hope is a wonderful thing, an amazing thing. And while we have, when we hold on to hope, then we're able to keep moving forward. Yeah, it's tough, and I'm really having a hard time right now. I don't know how I'm good, but I'm hoping that things are going to get better.

And as long as we hold on to that hope, we have some encouragement to keep going when we lose hope. And I've seen this with many people, especially the end of life, and they diagnosed with something and they've lost all hope. And I've seen people that just gave up. That's it. No sense trying.

It's over. But we have hope. But it's the hope of the glory of God. Our hope is eternal life and seeing Jesus Christ not just for all eternity, but even here in this world. And so he says that hope then leads to endurance.

In the King James, it says patience. And of course, if you're going through a struggle of any kind, you have to have patience, don't you? And again, going back to 405, if you lose patience on the freeway, what happens? Usually not something good, right. And road rage or high blood pressure or whatever it may be, you've got to be patient.

It's the idea that when we go through that, that it produces something. It's going to produce something in me and in you. If you are rejoicing in the Lord in the midst of whatever trial you're going through. Paul said, over in two corinthians, chapter four, verse 17, he says, this light, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. We can't even begin to compare the glory that waits

us when we put our hope in Jesus Christ versus the things that we experience in this life.

And so what patience or endurance is doing, which I label, that's strength in action. It's keep going no matter how difficult it is. And in the midst of that, what do we do? We depend on the Lord. We start praying more.

We start looking into his word for his promises. We start receiving the help that he wants to give us. And many people can testify that it was through suffering that I really came to a place where I desired Christ more in my life. Many people can say that as an amen because it drove them through their knees, and they realized, I don't have the resources to handle this on my own. And they went to God.

And God does not disappoint. So hope through suffering produces endurance. And it says in verse four, and endurance produces character produces character. Character is who you are, not just in the good times. Oh, boy.

It's wonderful. I'm wonderful. You're wonderful. Everything's wonderful. No.

Character is what happens when you're going through hard times, when the pressure and going back to that word suffering, that word flips us. It meant pressure, and it was a word that was used for the minting of coins. And they would take that blank coin and then they would press that. They would stamp it with an image and that's what made it valuable in the same way that pressure comes on every one of us that are christians, because it produces something valuable in our life when we give glory to God and rejoice in him. And so character is being strong.

No matter what you're going through. No matter what you're going through, it's being strong in the difficulties of life. And the only way to develop character is through hardship when things are going easy. Oh, I don't have to worry. I can handle this.

We don't find out what we can handle until we go through something difficult in our life. And so character is building your life on the rock, Jesus Christ and his word, and depending on it, instead of depending on ourself or our circumstances, and it produces

in our life. And then last it says, character produces hope. We started with hope, and now we end with hope. And what this means is as we go through these things, this endurance and this developing character is our hope in Christ grows.

We're more focused on him and the blessings that he has in our life, and we're trusting him more than we were at the start. I attended a service down in Cottage Grove, Oregon, I'm going to say, 55 years ago, met a guy through work who invited me to come by when we were traveling through. And we did, and we went to his church. And I remember the guy, he only had one arm, the other arm had been amputated. And he gave a message on romans five that day, and he talked about this hope and perseverance and character and hope.

And he said, it's like a spiral. It just keeps going, and we keep growing as we go through that. And as you grow and you get closer and closer to God. And again, that's been my experience with people I have known that have gone through really difficult circumstances that were trusting the Lord. They got to know him better and experience his love more and experience more and more hope of eternal life.

Hope is not a wishy washy thing. Oh, I hope so. It'd sure be nice. Hope in the Bible is a certainty that God is working everything out for your good. You're convinced of it, even though it doesn't look like it at the moment.

You are convinced that he is working it out. And it's a determined conviction that God is changing me from glory to glory. I don't know if you recognize this or not in your own life, but I sure recognize with my kids, it was hard to change them. They came into this life with their character and with their personality. And sometimes it was wonderful.

Woo wee. I'm a great parent. And sometimes, oh, man, how did I end up with this kid? Where'd he come from?

And you're trying to change them. And it's not easy.

Guess what? It takes suffering sometimes to change, doesn't it? But God is changing, you and I from glory to glory through the things that we're experiencing. So when we rejoice in suffering, we can say with Paul, hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit has been given to us.

And no matter what we go through, we depend on the love of God for us. And there's no end to that love. And yes, it may not work out the way we would want it to work out, but we can trust that in his love, he is working things out, not just for his own glory, but for our own glory. When I shared this message with my wife, Saunder, because she had gone through cancer herself. And not only that, her husband had been attacked and was in a coma that he would later die from in the hospital.

So she was dealing with that, working, raising a 14 year old daughter, dealing with a husband in a coma. And four months into that, she got cancer and a fairly severe cancer. And the treatment at that time was not pleasant at all. And yet, she said, I wouldn't have given up that time for anything. It caused me to really seek the Lord with all of my heart.

I started to see God's miracles and operation, things that he provided for me during that time, things that happened that only he could have done, and she'd go on and on. But mainly out of that, she knows that her relationship with the Lord deepened. It got more stronger. And I see that in her life every day as she spends time seeking the Lord in her life, I can honestly didn't make her perfect.

She's perfect for me. And it won't make any of us perfect until Christ comes back. But we will be growing and we will be changing, and that's the promise that we have, and we can rejoice as a result of that. And so here's the end of this. If you've been justified through the blood of Jesus Christ, if you have really put your faith in Christ, you've repented of your sin and your self righteousness and going your own way and put your trust in Jesus Christ, you can be sure that these blessings are for you.

And that God is working in it for your good and is preparing for you a blessing that will last for all of eternity. A weight of glory that is far beyond anything that you could have experienced in this life. And so I say, rejoice. And again I say rejoice. Let's pray.

Father, we do rejoice. Most of all, we rejoice in our savior Jesus Christ, that he loved us so much that he came into this world for the purpose of dying in our place, of taking our sins upon himself, of bringing us to you, making peace with you, letting us come into your presence at any time, assuring us of the glory that waits us as we worship him and serve him. But, Lord, not only that, we even rejoice in our sufferings. We don't enjoy suffering. We should do everything possible to stay out of suffering.

But, Lord, when it comes, help us to believe that you're working for our good. We can pray and ask you to change the circumstances you often do, or grateful. But if you don't, we still worship you. Lord, you are worthy. In Christ's name, amen.