

Joy, Even Through Suffering (Part 2) – Romans 5:1-5

Following on from last Sunday, we continue looking at this passage. This is following the earlier chapters. Looking at the gospel, the good news of what Jesus has done, we can know joy even in the storm and suffering. Not joy because there is suffering, but joy because of what God has done and continues to do even through suffering.

Paul now continues this train of thought and looks at the 'here and now'. With the truth discussed in Chapters 1-4, therefore we have abundant life available for us. Paul highlights four particular things linked to this abundant life.

- Peace with God
- Joy even in suffering
- Hope that will not fail
- Love that comes directly from God

These things are fixed, certain results; a consequence of our faith in Christ. These things are available to us now. Not ideals to strive for. These have been given to us, that we may know peace, joy hope and love.

1) Endurance Produces Character.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:21-28

Paul is a great example of endurance and character following times of suffering. The word we translate as 'character' can also be translated 'testedness'. When you've been through trials, gone through testing, it is important to focus on God.

It can be tempting to lose focus, to take the easy way out or just get distracted. However, we need to hold onto God through these times and turn to Him to focus us, shape our thoughts and guide us. How can we turn to God? Read the Bible; pray; worship; hear the word of God.

Q. What challenges have you faced that have caused you to change? How has this helped you become more Christ-like?

Q. How do you draw close to God in times of suffering? What disciplines (reading the Bible, prayer etc.) can you put in place to help focus your eyes on Jesus?

2) Character Produces Hope.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Looking towards what is coming, the future that is ahead, Paul could compare the suffering he experienced (remember chapter 11) as light and momentary. Paul could see what was coming, by drawing close to God, and he could have hope for the eternal.

Knowing that we can get through tough times, beating the seemingly impossible, leads to hope. We are ever changing, growing more like Christ. To come through hardships and still be worshipping results in great hope, because it shows that there is a true work of God in your heart. We can know the truth in the Bible, and know the future that is promised by the Word of God.

Q. How has your life changed since putting your faith in Jesus? How has your response to suffering been affected?

Q. How does God's faithfulness in times of trial give hope for the future? How does our eternal future give hope during present times of suffering?

3) Love Directly from God.

God has poured (continually pouring) His love. This is a precious gift for every believer. This isn't just head knowledge, knowing what the Bible says, but we have experienced the love of God poured out from God. We know this hope, because the Holy Spirit is with us. Not only do our lives bear witness. Not only does our endurance bear witness. The Holy Spirit—God Himself—bears witness and is a guarantee of what has been promised. Moments when we experience God's love, that is the Spirit of God working in us.

Suffering in and of itself is not something to be desired. As Christians we do not want to seek out suffering, but we are able to trust God during the tough times. We are able to enjoy peace, joy, hope and love during times of trial solely because God has loved us.

Q. How has God's love, during times of hope and endurance, helped in times of trial and suffering?

Q. How can we focus on God's view of us during times of suffering? How can we know God's love when things are tough?

We have a God who loves us, is sovereign and all-powerful. When trials come we can know that God will use the suffering in our lives to bring future glory. We can know joy in suffering because we know our God is at work in all things to produce character, endurance, hope and love.