

Growing In The Hope And Grace of Jesus Christ

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04/05/2015

The Text of Today's Message: Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only this, but we also rejoice in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

I wanted to give you a reference to a similar or parallel passage in 1 Peter 1:5-11 regarding Growing in our Faith and Life of Faith in Christ. Peter is encouraging his readers to Grow in Christ, not just stay at the foot of the Cross ... but move forward in our Relationship with God and Grow in Maturity in Christ.:

⁵But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue, to virtue, knowledge, ⁶to knowledge, self-control, to self-control, perseverance, to perseverance, godliness, ⁷to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love (AGAPE). ⁸For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our LORD Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ.

So, Peter is on the same page with the Apostle Paul, with Growing in Christ, and adding to our Faith in Christ, our initial Faith in Christ and grow in our maturity in Christ.

In Romans 5:1-5 ... Paul lists the following for us to Grow in ... :

and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only this, but we also rejoice in our TRIBULATIONS, knowing that tribulation brings about PERSEVERANCE; ⁴and perseverance, PROVEN CHARACTER; and proven character, HOPE

We are highlighting the Words or Concepts we kind of read over quickly last week, and focused on the Fuel of our Living: HOPE in Jesus Christ. Our Hope in Jesus Christ, Our Hope in God, the Hope of God (that HOPE which God Provides) and the HOPE

we possess and use Because God is in our LIVES, the HOPE Because of God ... that HOPE is the Fuel for the Fire in our LIVES that gives us the Ability to Glory or Rejoice in our Tribulations (or in our sufferings), which then produces Perseverance ... which then produces Proven Character ... and Proven Character produces more Hope in our Lives, which does not disappoint ... because God love has been Poured OUT into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who lives in us (if we are truly born-again in Christ, God's Holy Spirit dwells in us).

Rejoicing in the Hope of the Glory of God is the BASE Fuel for our "FAITH ENGINE" that allows us to move forward in the Faith, in Trusting in the Living God, in a Living Faith, and Living and Dynamic Relationship with God. It is a Settled HOPE, an Expectation and Anticipation that Looks forward to God fulfilling all of His Promises Toward us. That is the Fuel of the Fires that allows us to go forward Rejoicing and Growing in Christ, regardless of our circumstances of life we are in and may face. Sounds good on paper, theoretically, doesn't it ... but does it pass the LIFE Test ... in real life? Is God that Powerful in my life, in your life to PROVE this OUT in real life?

1. **Rejoicing or Exulting in Tribulation** ... suffering, beatings, the challenges of life that seek to undermine your resolve to move forward. It seems as if God, people and life are all punishing you and out to get you. Tribulation points to: a cause of great trouble, suffering, distress, heartache, grief, sorrow, pain, anguish, and great travail.

Tribulation causes troubles, problems, great difficulties, hardship, tragedy, anxiety, adversity, trauma, affliction, setback, hassle, and great loss.

No human, since Adam and Eve's sin that brought all humans into such tragedy have been exempt from Tribulations. . . including our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ. We have all been touched by Affliction and Tribulation in some, way, shape or form.

Many question why a Loving God would allow such things ...

Many question the very existence of God because of life's tragedies ...

But the Real, Born Again, Christian, the Real Jesus Lover, who is fully Surrendered unto God ... REJOICES in his/her Tribulations of LIFE ...

The Genuine Authenticity of his or her Faith in Christ is being Tested, Proven in the Fire ... and he or she is Rejoicing in Christ in the Midst of those Challenges of LIFE ... because HE/SHE has a Genuine HOPE in God in Christ. Genuine, not fake ... that HOPE from God, that Hope in God ... again, is the very ANCHOR to the Soul, the Steadfast Anchor that holds that person in place in his/her walk with God while facing the Storms of LIFE ... Rejoicing in God while experiencing the tribulations of LIFE is similar to laughing the face of your enemies who seek to defeat you.

→ You are victorious... "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"
Phil. 4:13

→ You are more than a conquer thru Christ Jesus (Romans 8:37)

→ Greater is HE who in you, than he who is in the World (1 John 4:4)

Because we have such great Promises, and such Hope we can stand firm and move forward and be victorious in the midst of our tribulations... we can have an attitude (a choice) of Rejoicing ... because we aren't looking at our Problems, but we are Looking into the Face of Christ ... Looking forward to His Promises being fulfilled in us...

2. **Perseverance ... Endurance ... staying power ...** plowing through and never giving up ... when all that this old world is throwing at you ... all of those things are **designed** to get you to **give up, give in, shut up**, curl up into the fetal position, crawl up into a hole, and fade away. Or we can give up, give in, and join in with them (if you can't beat'em join'em). Those are the Goals of the Tribulations we face ... but as we endure, in full surrender to Christ, looking at Christ, looking to Christ for strength, for direction, for wisdom, He said He will supply us what we need for those times in our lives. It becomes a habit to TRUST Him no matter what. That Habit, that Training, becomes our new friend, we want to Persevere, because we want Jesus, we want His Approval ... we have come to a place in our lives in which we see what is truly important ... and that truly important thing is Living ONLY for Jesus Christ our LORD, Master, KING, God, and Savior. We live to Please Him, and Him Alone, according to His Written Word, the Holy Bible. We have Purpose in LIFE, a Mission in LIFE, and that is Please Jesus Christ, and to Live to Bring HIM Glory. I am no longer living for myself, my goals, pleasing myself, pleasing and living for my family, my "fill in the blank" ... 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: **¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; ¹⁵and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.**

Did we hear this? No Longer live for ourselves BUT for HIM ...

You see, if I am living for Christ, and I have the HOPE He give me ... and can Persevere and Endure through anything ... even if it kills me ... because I have a HOME with Christ forever. I have a Destiny with Christ forever.

He is MY LIFE ... HE is the REASON for my LIVING. Living to Love Him, Living to Please Him, Living to Know Him, Living to Make Him to Known to the Lost ... He is my reason for Living. Is He yours? If NOT ... you will NOT Endure, You will NOT Persevere ... you will not Rejoice while Persevering, while Enduring through our Tribulations ... If Jesus is not your ONLY Reason for living, the Main, First Priority for Living ... your LIFE Choices will Show it Openly.

3 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **⁴WHEN CHRIST, WHO IS OUR LIFE, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.** (Colossians 3:1-4) Notice how it says "Christ, who is our LIFE" ... is He your life, then you will Persevere ... **you will Rejoice while Persevering. Attitude !!!**

Galatians 6:9 says: **“Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”** The Tribulations, Temptations, the Trials of LIFE that Satan, Fallen Humans, and just a fallen world throws at you are designed to get you to LOSE HEART, Give up, Give in, Shut Up, and go away. God wants you to Hang in there... and Be Strong and Courageous in Christ and keep the Spiritual Eyes of our Hearts Focused on HIM and Not on our circumstances. Exercise your Faith Muscles and Obey God, even when you don't feel like it, endure, Persevere and Win...

One Day we will be in Heaven before the Judgment Seat of Christ and He will give out Rewards for our Faithfulness in Him.

Faithfulness in Following and Obeying Him when everything around us is yelling for us to Quit, but we kept moving forward in Him, Trusting in Him, Resting In Him, Relying upon Him ... never ever giving up ... Rejoicing in our Tribulation and Rejoicing and Persevering through them. Remember God is on the Other Side encouraging us to keep moving forward ... waiting to catch us as we make it across the finish line.

- 3. Proven Character** ... when we make it through the Tribulations, Trials, and Challenges of LIFE with Perseverance and Faithful Endurance we are changed. If we stayed steadfast in our faith, trusting and relying upon God, not compromising, but Obeying God when everyone around us is giving in, giving up, and running away ... that kind of Perseverance in Christ will always produce Proven Character. Some translations do not put that adjective “Proven” in front of the word Character... but that is what it means. It is Character, proven through the TESTS of the Fire ... you've made it across the finish line and you are changed by God for the better, because you stuck with God and did it. The Accomplishment of Following God may not win you any earthly rewards or Awards ... they may not even be noticed by any humans around you... but God notices. God is paying attention. God is intricately involved in your sanctification, and God uses life's tribulations to change all of us. He is allowing those things, orchestrating them ... so that we can run the race with integrity and perseverance and win legitimately, without cheating or gaming the system. Proven Character has at its root, INTEGRITY and FAITHFULNESS and LOYALTY. Goodness can also be added to the understanding of what Proven Character means. A person with Proven Character does not actually need to prove anything to any one. He or she has already been through the fire and come out the other side. That person's Maturity Level of Personal Character exudes the reality of “Proven Character”. We've all met folks like this, such as a Marine who has been to Battle fields, several times, in several deployments and has lead his men into battle. He has battle scars, but his whole life is changed. He can handle almost anything in life, with a smile and with hope, because he has faced the challenges and life and has learned some very important life lessons he now employs within his marriage, family, and work. That kind of

Proven Character is the Goal that God wants us to have. It is a cooperative operation of change. The transformation only comes with us fully engaging with God, personally, in the midst of the storms of life, God helping us to endure and persevere ... and when we cross another finish line, successfully, it is the Process of us getting there that has matured us, that has changed us. God uses those things in our lives to Transform us, by His Spirit as we cooperate with Him in the Process. Unless we cooperate with Him, in fact we never do cross those finish lines, but have to start over again.

How many times have seem to face the same kinds of things over and over again ... and then for some reason we no longer face those things in life any more? It is simply a sign of God working in our lives, helping us across the finish line, finally. Once that occurs, that means we learned something and it wasn't just head knowledge, we were changed, we matured, we were transformed, even a little bit. We grew. God is every championing us, encouraging us, eager for us to WIN. He does not want us to lose, but to win.

“If God is for us, who is against us?” (Romans 8:31)

4. **HOPE → we've come full circle** ... in this who process of growth ... I gain more HOPE. God is showing us a Cycle or a Circle of HOPE ... I begin with HOPE and End Up with HOPE, more HOPE ...

As we go through LIFE ... we gain more HOPE ... more Maturity in Christ ...

- **AND** -

→ We will face more Tribulations, Trials, and Temptations ...

→ We will then need to use the FUEL of HOPE to Persevere and Endure through those Tribulations...

→ As we Persevere thru those Tribulation we will gain More Proven Character

→ Which give us More Hope in God ... I will see clearer and look more with assurance unto Christ and His Return... and the Cycle begins again until Christ comes or He takes me home.

5. **God is doing all of this to Grow us Up ... to Mature us in Christ.**
It is all for our good. He wants us to be Strong in Him and more in LOVE with Him.