

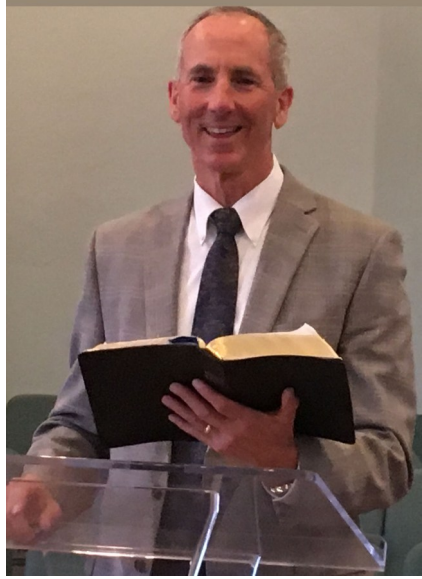
Lessons from Romans Book 2
Truth in Sequence
Justification by Faith



Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Foreword

There is nothing to compare with the series of truths laid out one after another as those found in the Book of Romans, thus the title for this series—*Truth in Sequence*. Book One introduced us to the Gospel of Christ and justification by faith. In this booklet we are in transition. For we are in-between the justification established in Romans 3-4 and the sanctification described in Chapters 6-8.



So then, how should we look at Romans Chapter 5? Let me suggest that we consider it to be a great treatise on the depth and breadth of our justification in Christ, before moving on to the life we are to live as Christians progressively transformed to the image and likeness of Christ.

We need these truths of transition, for the stronger the spiritual foundation, the more certain will be the quality of spiritual life we build upon it!

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Redig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "K" and "R".

Kevin Redig

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1982 edition).

Vistoso Community Church
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Introduction

I start with *justified by faith* to remind you of what we covered in Book One. First, I would draw your attention to two Scriptures:

... I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes ...

Romans 1:16

... even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.

Romans 3:22

I trust we have developed an introductory understanding of the Gospel and an even more thorough understanding of how rebellious sinners, like you and me, can have confidence that we are justified by faith before the Holy God Who owns the universe and all that is in it. Not surprisingly, this is not something that we could ever hope to achieve on our own. It is, rather, the work of God on our behalf, and something freely given to all who will receive it by faith. As we continue our journey through the Book of Romans, I want to move ahead into Chapter 5, which is a wonderful chapter of consolidation—truth further developed and applied!

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:1-2

We cannot move forward to the spirituality developed in Chapters 6-8 until we are firmly established on the foundation of *justification by faith* established in Chapters 3-5. As you can see, our peace with God, our standing in grace, and our confidence in future glory are all the result of having first been justified before our holy God!

The Role of Justification

So let me start by reminding you of the role of justification in God's plan of salvation. To be justified as the result of faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ is to be declared righteous. It is a factual statement regarding the legal standing before God of all believers. It is important to note that the actual behavior of believers is a different matter altogether. Our behavior most certainly should match our standing, and God has provided the means for that to happen, but apart from growing into the truths of Romans 6-8 there is no hope that it will ever occur.

Permanent Position. The difference between our *permanent* position in Christ, and our *variable* experience in time, is a principle that is often hard for Christians to grasp. But, once we do, it allows us to focus on those aspects of the Christian Life that belong to us, while trusting God to do what He has promised. Take the believers who belonged to the church in Corinth. Much of I Corinthians is Paul attempting to straighten out one problem after another in that church. Yet, in the second verse of the book, Paul writes:

To the Church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy ... I Corinthians 1:2

You see, this group of carnal Christians was positionally sanctified in Christ (justified as well), and yet they were called to become ever more sanctified (holy) in their behavior. As another example, Abraham was said to be justified by faith in Genesis 15,



but his behavior was anything but righteous as Genesis continues. It wasn't until Chapter 22 that we find Abraham's behavior actually matching his righteous position.

Settled Matter. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, then your justified standing in Christ is a settled matter. We can see that in the grammar of Romans 5:1:

... since we have been justified through faith ...

The verb translated *have been justified* is in the aorist tense which speaks of action completed in the past. If you have believed at any time in the past, whether five minutes or five years ago, then your justification is a settled matter. Of course, some area of sin in your life might cause you to wonder if it is possible to lose your justified position in Christ. God has addressed that as well:

It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns?

Romans 8:33-34

We have the solemn declaration of the supreme judge of the universe. Is it okay to put our trust in Him? Of course! In fact, He is the only One in Whom you should trust!

By Faith Alone. What about the cost of such a wonderful standing—being clothed with the very righteousness of Christ? Surely we have to do something to earn such a wonderful standing? What saith the Word of God?

... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:23-24

Our justification is ours by faith alone in Christ alone (Romans 3:22). The lost have nothing to contribute. Justification is freely given from the hand of our gracious God. As soon as you start talking about a gift freely given, by faith alone, there will be those who will attack you

for believing in *cheap grace*. This attack is complete gibberish, and I hope you will never fall for it! This charge is wrong on two counts. First, it is not cheap to us, it is absolutely free! Read Romans 3:23-24 again to verify. Second, what Christ accomplished on the cross was not cheaply obtained; it cost Him everything. We can take no credit because the Lord Jesus gets all the glory. So, at least mentally, send on their way all those who try to have you add anything to God's grace!

God's Perfect Plan

God's plan of salvation will always come under attack—count on it. When it does, or when you find yourself doubting, let me remind you of one, often overlooked, meaning of the resurrection:

**Jesus ... was delivered up because of our offenses,
and was raised because of our justification.**

Romans 4:25

This makes it clear that the Father was satisfied with the work of His Son. So then, why do we question its adequacy? Consider this bit of personal application:

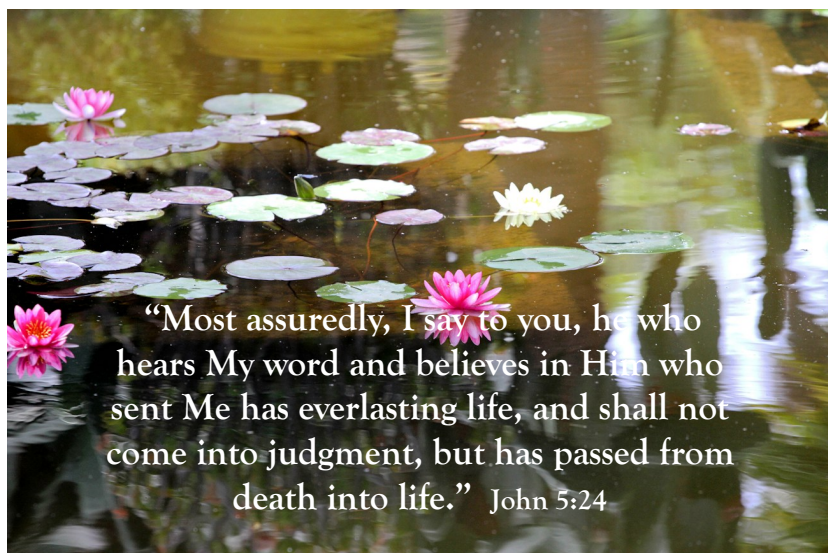
If ever I am tempted to doubt my salvation, and eternal position in Christ, guiltless, righteous, forgiven, saved, joined to Him and maintained by Him, I need only look away from myself, and see Christ at the right hand of God. Then I know that the wonderful things which God declared concerning those upon whom He has wrought this work are indeed true and that they can never be repudiated. For a born-again believer to fall away, history must go into reverse action, like a motion picture film run backwards, until Christ goes back to earth, back into the tomb, never to come out. Then and only then could I finally doubt my salvation.

Barnhouse

There is so much theological confusion that can be resolved as the result of a proper understanding of justification:

- Those who worry about losing their salvation simply do not understand the clear Biblical teaching on the believer's *position* in Christ: alive in Him, raised up with Him, and seated with Him in the heavenlies. We are justified and sanctified! (Ephesians 2:4-6, I Corinthians 1:30)
- Also missing the clear Biblical teaching are those who do not think it is possible to truly know whether or not you are justified and therefore saved for all eternity. Romans 5:1-2 tell us that we have been justified, so that we have peace and are standing in grace! Why do we doubt the Word of God? Because we give more weight to the musings of the mind of man than the clear declarations of the Word of God:

... so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:21

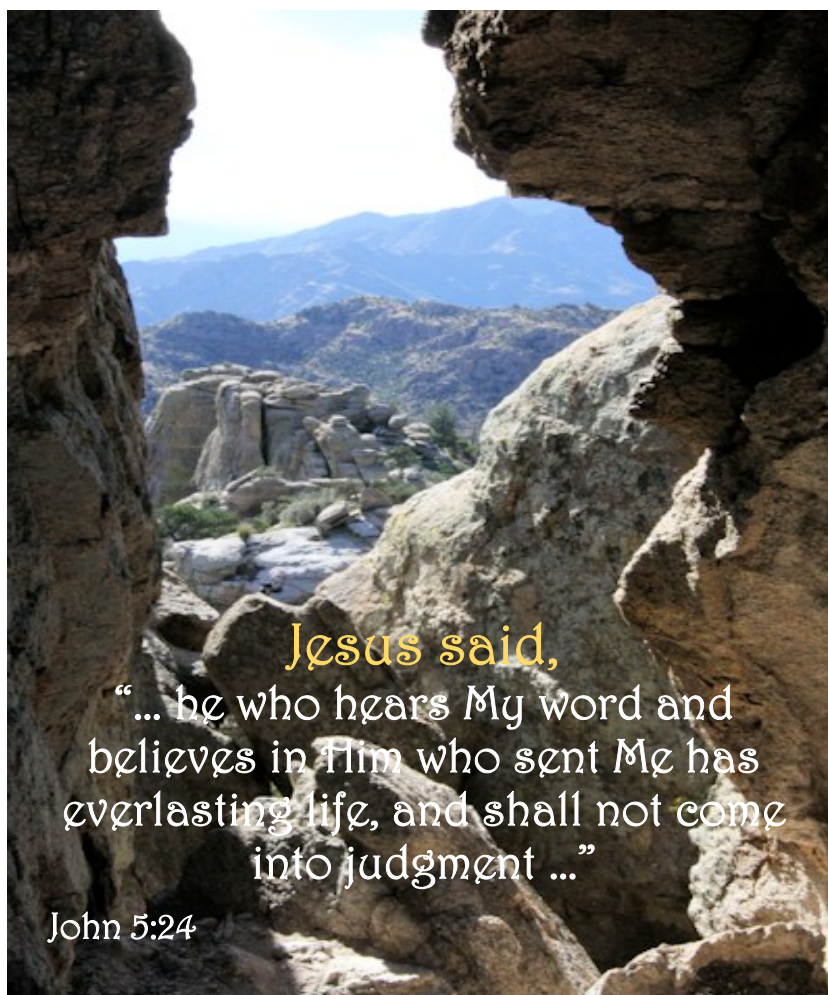


“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” John 5:24

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life ... I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

I John 5:11-13

There you have it, the receipt of God's righteousness not only leads to our justified standing before the Father but also to eternal life. And, all this is through Jesus Christ our Lord!



Because We Are Justified, We Have Peace with God!

Having reviewed justification, it is time to dig into the content of Romans 5:1-2:

... since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God ... Romans 5:1

What does it mean that we have *peace with God*? It is a wonderful and necessary result of our justification!

Understanding Peace with God

The Greek word translated *peace* has the usual meanings: absence of war or strife and a certain harmony and tranquility in one's environment. As a lost person, it wasn't that way!

Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. Ephesians 2:3

The wrath referred to in this verse is God's wrath. But, once justified before God, we are out from under His wrath, and will never again come under His judicial condemnation. (Romans 5:9). Thus, we have peace. One theologian describes it this way:

According to a conception distinctly peculiar to Christianity, the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is ... Thayer

What makes this peace so special is that it is not like the peace between two warring nations that decide a peace treaty is in their best interests. This is peace between an all-powerful sovereign and a rebellious subject! Further, the rebel has no future hope apart from a peace to which they have no claim and no means to broker!

A Good Reason for Salvation

Is peace with the Sovereign Creator-God of the universe a good reason to get saved? It is a very good reason because:

It is appointed unto man once to die, and then judgment ...

Hebrews 9:27

When our physical life ends, our soul life continues. Further, we enter this life as rebels and, if that is not remedied before we step out of this life, we will have physically died in a state of rebellion. Then what lies ahead is eternity in a place prepared for the chief rebel and his subjects—that would be the Lake of Fire!

So many seek to counter this by asking, "*How could a loving God do such a thing?*" Instead of asking that question, we should be acknowledging that a system that allows criminals to go free could never be just. A holy God can only condemn rebels and send them out of His presence! Praise God that He found a way to change our rebel status!



We are clothed in HIS righteousness!

... so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people, and He will appear a second time ... to bring salvation ...

Hebrews 9:28

This salvation is only for those who have been clothed with the righteousness He provides through faith in Christ. Naturally, there is only condemnation ahead for those who persist in their rebellion! So yes, obtaining peace with the judge of all things is a very good reason to get saved! Who would leave such a gracious offer *on the table* as if there were a better alternative?

The Bonus—Relationship

To have peace with God is descriptive of one who has been estranged and is now reconciled. Where there was enmity, there is now relationship!

He came and preached peace to you who were far away ...

Ephesians 2:17

For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things ... by making peace through His blood shed on the cross.

Colossians 1:19-20

We were far away—but no longer! It is Jesus Who has done the work of reconciliation through His death on the cross! For just as there is nothing we can do to save ourselves, there is nothing we can do to cause a holy God to be reconciled with sinners such as we were.

Do you want to know the extent of the reconciliation wrought by Christ? You can remember it in the simple phrase: *from rebel to the right hand!* For as rebels we were as those spiritually dead and in Satan's domain. But, when we put our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, we were made alive in Christ, raised up with Him, and are now seated in Him at the Father's right hand. Now, that's a reconciliation to treasure!

Understand the Distinction

Let me leave you with a finer point regarding the peace that is ours. As we experience the ups and downs of the Christian Life, we must understand that having a permanent *peace with God* is not the same thing as having the *peace of God*. Having believed and become a child of God, our family status is unalterable! So, too, is our peace with God since it also rests on our unalterable standing of justification.

However, there are a hundred and one things that can impact our sense of peace. For example, should we sin, we will not have the *peace of God* until we confess our sin. So, how do we handle anxious thoughts, fears, sin, and the like? Confession of sin, prayer, and Bible study all have a place.

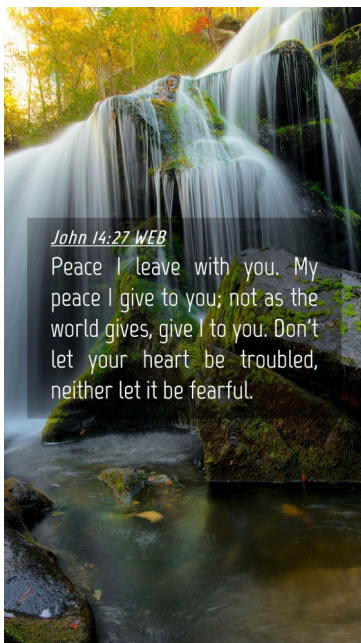
I have found the following two passages of Scripture to be very helpful. Note carefully how they speak of either the peace *of God* or being in a status of *felt* peace. Neither of these speaks to our status of reconciliation with God but, rather, our present condition.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.

Isaiah 26:3



John 14:27 WEB

Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, give I to you. Don't let your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful.

Standing in Grace

As we continue to break Romans 5:1-2 into manageable pieces, we move from *peace with God* to *standing in grace*:

... we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. Romans 5:2a

The justified child of God is standing in grace. What exactly does that mean and what about application? Good questions! Let's work at providing a reasonable answer.

Understanding Standing in Grace

The first thing I want to do is to correct our thinking and give us an image to remember! Far too often Christians picture standing in grace to be something like standing under a shower head that drips on some kind of a regular basis.



Instead, the image that we should bring to mind is much closer to a fire-hydrant running wide open. We tend to be like the Exodus generation. After leaving Egypt, they spent time griping and complaining about how God wasn't taking care of them when all the while they were eating manna that fell from heaven every day and drinking water out of a rock!



Perhaps you are thinking, "Nice graphics, but they seem to be a bit of an exaggeration!" Actually, I think I have understated the case! If we allow Scripture to speak on this matter, you and I should stand back in amazement

at God's gracious intent for His children. Let's start here:

From the fullness of His grace, we have all received one blessing after (in exchange for) **another.**

John 1:16

The above passage plainly tells us that we have received blessing from the source of God's grace. But if we look more closely, there are two things to note:

1. The blessing that comes to us is said to be: *one after another.*
2. That small preposition translated *after*, can mean *in exchange for*, which I believe is the intent within the context.

This simple verse is establishing a wonderful expectation for the Christian Life. It is telling us that God is going to send a blessing our way, and then He is going to exchange it for another one, and then another one ... and on and on it will go until He calls us home to be with Him. It is like waves rolling in on the beach—one rolls in and then right behind it comes another and another behind that ... What is the source of all of this blessing for the child of God? The source is the FULLNESS OF HIS GRACE!



Perhaps you are thinking, "This has not been my experience!" There are many things which can break this pattern: Sin in the life, looking for blessing in the world rather than from the hand of God, or like the Israelites in the desert—simply not recognizing the grace of God. But as you can see, these are problems on man's side and not God's!

What is God's intent? It is to provide one spiritual blessing after another, as we walk in dependent trust upon Him. Mark it down in your soul, and remember grace in exchange for grace! And, if this is not enough, consider the following:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Ephesians 1:3

What does this verse tell every child of God is theirs? We are promised every spiritual blessing—nothing less and there is nothing more! But note, this is found in one and only one place—in Christ. I mention that because we are not going to find these blessings in the world, our bank accounts, or our employer. They are found only in Christ. So, there is no sense looking for them anywhere, but in Him!

I want you to let the above verse soak in. Realize the immensity and undeserved nature of having *every spiritual blessing* already on reserve for you at the moment you placed your faith in Christ. That is grace! Further, I want you to realize how little most Christians appreciate this. We typically start out very grateful that our sins have been forgiven but, before you know it, we are so caught up with trying to meet the demands of the Christian Life in our own strength that we get bogged down and discouraged. Trying to do it on our own is to completely overlook the wealth that is on reserve for us! *Every spiritual blessing* is on reserve—waiting to be brought into our lives by faith!

Perhaps you are thinking, "*I don't see the word grace in Ephesians 1:3.*" To begin with, you should realize that since you did nothing to earn or deserve such blessing, that its source must be the grace of God. Furthermore, if we look at the following verses, we will find a partial list of some of the blessings that are ours. Things like:

a holy and blameless standing in Christ, adoption as sons, redemption from Satan's dominion, and complete forgiveness. Then we arrive at Ephesians 1, Verse 6:

... to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:6

There you have it! The spiritual blessings just mentioned magnify and put on display the grace of God—every single one of them. Furthermore, the root word of *accepted* is the Greek word for grace. Rather than the term translated *acceptance*, the idea is perhaps better communicated as *highly favored*. You see, it is God's plan that by means of His grace, we would be *highly favored in the Beloved* who is none other than Jesus Christ. Do you see the consistent pattern? Grace has provided every blessing—in Christ!



JOHN 1:16 WEB

*From his fullness
we all received
grace upon grace.*

Our Stand in Grace

The Christian's *stand in grace* has tremendous ramifications beginning with our understanding of our acceptance by God. First, every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, consciously or otherwise, will work out for themselves an answer to the following two questions:

1. Am I accepted by God?
2. Upon what basis am I accepted?

Our natural inclination is to answer these questions by reasoning from man to God. By that I mean that, if we

think our Christian life is going well, then we are accepted. Thus, our acceptance with God is based upon the quality of our Christian walk—in short, our acceptance is based upon how we perform or what we produce!

In contrast, the Scriptures reason from God to man. You and I will never have the stability that comes from having peace with God and standing in His grace until we understand this and apply it by faith! Let me show you that our acceptance does not depend upon our performance, but upon the finished work of our Savior and the Father's acceptance of that work. Here is a short sampling of how God views the saved sinner:

- *... having been justified by faith we have peace with God ...* (Romans 5:1)
- *He made us highly favored in the Beloved.* (Ephesians 1:6)
- *... if God is for us, who can be against us?* (Romans 8:31)
- *For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.* (Hebrews 10:14)
- *... we are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms ...* (Ephesians 2:6)

In short, God has so identified us with His Son, that when He sees us, He sees His Son. On that basis no believer should ever question whether or not he or she is accepted by God.

Let's specifically answer the second question: What is the basis upon which the Scriptures declare our acceptance? The answers to this can be broken down into two broad categories or options:

Option #1: I am accepted dependent upon my level of devotion, which in turn determines the extent of God's blessing.

Even if it is not explicitly stated this way, Option 1 is the view most commonly held by most Christians. But consider the second broad category:

Option #2: I am accepted on the basis of my righteous standing in Christ (justification) and therefore I am fully blessed in the heavenlies.

Without question, this option should naturally lead to devotion—but sadly, does not always do so!

Now let me shock you: There is no correct understanding of Biblical Christianity, unless you reject Option #1 and accept, by faith, Option #2. To preach that the Christian is blessed only to the extent of his or her devotion is to preach law and not grace! On the contrary, the Scriptures teach that the born-again Christian begins the Christian Life with every spiritual blessing in Christ from its very inception! (Ephesians 1:3) We have all these blessings because we are standing in grace as the result of our being clothed with the very righteousness of Christ.

Devotion is most certainly meant to follow such a wonderful standing in Christ, but will not do so apart from what we are going to learn in Romans Chapters 6-8, and will never do so if the Christian life is pursued as if it were to be lived by law and not grace!

So, does God accept the believer in Christ? Absolutely and eternally! Upon what basis? Not upon the basis of works performed, but upon the Christian's unalterable justified status in Jesus Christ. No wonder we have peace with God and we are clearly standing in grace!

As you can see, many Christians do not adequately value their *standing in grace* as the result of their justified status in Christ.

Improving our Grace Quotient (GQ)

So, before moving on, let me see if I can further improve our GQ, and, by that, I mean our *Grace Quotient!* If IQ is a measure of human intelligence, then allow me to define our GQ as a measure of our orientation to the grace of God!

A Working Definition. Let's begin by establishing a working definition of grace. After looking at every single Old and New Testament usage of the word *grace*, I offer the following working definition:

Grace is a term descriptive of the truth that God has an abundant provision for our every changing need—apart from our earning or deserving it!

Let me give you a quick example. When we sin as a Christian, what do we deserve? Punishment! What does



the grace of God provide? Grace provides a means to be restored to fellowship by means of confession, which is in turn based on the sufficiency of Christ's work on the cross. Let's take it a bit further: Once we are back in fellowship what do we deserve? Probation! What do we get instead? We received the filling of the Spirit so that we can avoid future sin! Everything about the plan of God is grounded in grace. For God is committed to meeting every spiritual need we will ever have with His grace.

Being Sure. Perhaps you are wondering, *How can I be sure God really intends to be gracious to me?*

Let me show you this is exactly the heart of God—whether in the Old Testament or the New. There are many more Scriptures, but these two should answer the question.

Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; He rises to show you compassion. Isaiah 30:18

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Romans 8:31-32

What does the Lord long to do? He longs to be gracious to His children. Not only that, while we should be bowing at His feet, He is rising to show compassion to us! What a God we love!

Yet, there is more. If God didn't withhold His Son and instead sent His Son to die in our place as an act of unmerited favor, then will not both the Father and the Son continue in grace to provide everything we need? That is exactly what our passage from Romans 8 expects us to understand!

You and I are going to look to God to provide our needs from one of two perspectives! We are either going to:

1. Treat the Christian Life like a treadmill workout, whereby we try to churn out enough good works to receive what we need from God.
2. Trust God to provide grace in exchange for grace, like waves rolling up on a beach.



Only one of these approaches to the Christian Life understands our great God as He really is. I'll tell you this, there are few things sadder than a Christian who fails to turn to a sovereign, omnipotent, loving God Who longs to be gracious! God is literally tapping His foot waiting to be gracious to those who will turn to Him in faith.

Will the world help us like this? Absolutely not! It is possible to have every spiritual blessing in Christ and to be highly favored in the Beloved, and yet live below the poverty level, spiritually speaking. Perish the thought! That's why we need to improve our understanding of God's grace.

God's Purpose. Does the grace of God have a purpose or desired outcome? Naturally, and we can see a glimpse of it in the following verse:

For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn of many brothers. Romans 8:29

God's goal for each of us is the *likeness of His Son*. Can we bring about this transformation in our own strength or by our own will? If you think so, come back once you have failed miserably, and then you will be ready to acknowledge that this is a work of God. If it is going to happen, He is going to have to do it!

And, if God does it, of course, the glory is His—as it should be. Are we deserving of this? I don't see how we could be. Then it is the grace of God that is going to conform us to what should be our heart's desire!

God's Way. We must not allow ourselves to forget that God's ways are not man's ways!

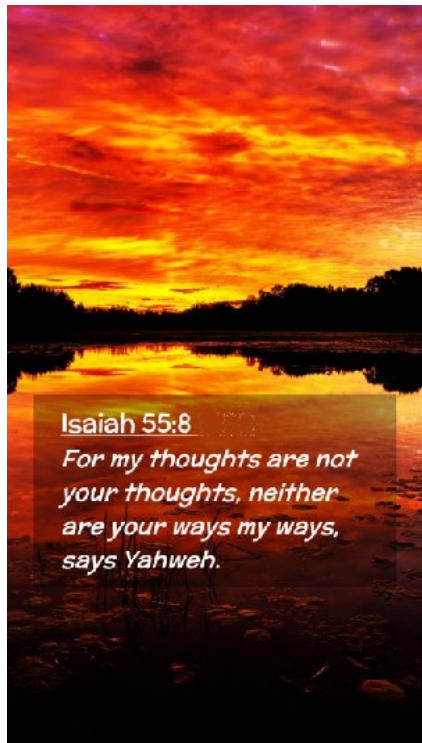
"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55:8-9

The ways of man as exemplified by the workplace are certainly not gracious. But, as Christians, we are not dealing with the rules of the workplace. Instead, we are dealing with God's ways as revealed to us in His Word:

But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

Psalms 86:15



Isaiah 55:8

*For my thoughts are not
your thoughts, neither
are your ways my ways,
says Yahweh.*

Grace Rather Than Works. Now there are always those who will attack the idea of thinking in terms of grace rather than works. They want us to put our *noses to the grindstone* and force out the right kind of Christian Life by our own effort. They don't like the idea of trusting God to do what only He can do. They will claim, "You can't just let go and let God!"

Now, let me be very clear, I am not in any way saying that we don't have responsibilities as part of the Christian Life. We most certainly do. It is ours to choose to spend time in God's Word, gather with other believers to worship, fellowship, and sit under teaching. It is so that we might:

... grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ...

II Peter 3:18

We need the truth of God's Word in our souls. We also need an understanding of how He deals with us, which is in grace. But, if we try to do in our own strength what He has promised in grace to provide, we are going to be wasting our time and energies.

It is, of course, ours to grow into a dependent walk of faith. But, let me be as clear as I can be: If, as children of God, we are not looking to Him for His grace, then we are not fighting the good fight of faith! How can I make such a claim and connect together our walk of faith and the grace of God? I can make that connection, because Scripture does!

Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace ...

Romans 4:16

Do you see? A walk of faith is perfectly compatible with grace, for we are no longer trusting in ourselves but the faithfulness of our God to provide all that He has said He will provide. Further, faithfulness on our part is of itself a fruit of the Spirit—which is something that only He can

provide. We can exercise faith in the moment, but only the Spirit of God can enable us to persevere in the faith through time. The Holy Spirit is God's grace provision to live the Christian Life—and there is no Christian Life that will ever be acceptable to God apart from appropriating what He in grace provides!

Why This Study? Why do I feel the need to champion the grace of God? It is essential that we understand that if we are not rightly oriented to God's grace, then we are most likely living by law. By that I mean that without grace, we are living by some sort of system that we think fosters a righteous life. Yet:

For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:17

Should we be seeking that which came through Moses, in preference to that which came through Christ? Of course not! Even more problematic:

You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. Galatians 5:4

Did you catch that to fall away from grace (and into some form of legalism) is to be alienated from Christ? Because the two go hand-in-hand, let's stick with grace!

A Word of Caution. As you come to understand grace, let me caution you in the strongest possible terms, you cannot manipulate the grace of God. The flesh will try, but disaster awaits! Perhaps you are wondering, what does it mean to *manipulate the grace of God*? It means we think we can sin as we please and simply confess it to avoid consequences. It means we think we can enjoy daily manna, while living in disobedience. Thinking we can abuse the grace of God in this way is one way to either be taken to the *divine woodshed*, or live our lives in a spiritual wilderness of our own making.

Make no mistake about it, the grace that God is so desirous to bestow teaches us something:

For the grace of God that brings salvation ... teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the Blessed Hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ ...

Titus 2:11-13

Does that look like something that is meant to be manipulated to satisfy the desires of the flesh? Not a chance! You see, God has a plan:

... that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:7

That can only happen as we appropriate His grace to meet our need of an upright walk as we seek to do His will.



Titus 2:11-12

For the grace of God that brings salvation...teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions ...

Confident of Glory!

We have one more portion of Romans 5:1-2 to consider, as highlighted below:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:1-2

The Greek word translated *hope* speaks of a confident expectation regarding the future. In other words, because we have been justified by faith—and have learned to anticipate God's gracious provision—we should most certainly have a confident expectation of future glory!

Now, perhaps you are wondering, to whose glory is this referring? Well, we should certainly be expecting to be in the presence of God's glory, but let me show you something else about which we should be confident.

- In Isaiah 48:11, God says, "*I will not yield My glory to another.*" In context, this verse refers to idolatry. God is making it very clear that He will not tolerate the glory that belongs to Him being given to idols. In other words, He is not going to share His glory with any supposed competitor—for He has none!

- Now, let me show you a series of related verses:

... the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead ... sown in dishonor... raised in glory ...

I Corinthians 15:42-43

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

Romans 8:18

I could provide many more references, but these are enough to document the glory that is part and parcel of the future for every child of God. But, how do we reconcile this with God's statement that He will not share His glory? It is straightforward: God will not share His glory with a competitor, but He is more than willing to do so with one who has been justified by faith and is standing in His grace! You ask, "Are you sure?" Absolutely! Consider Jesus' high priestly prayer just prior to the crucifixion:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message ... I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one.

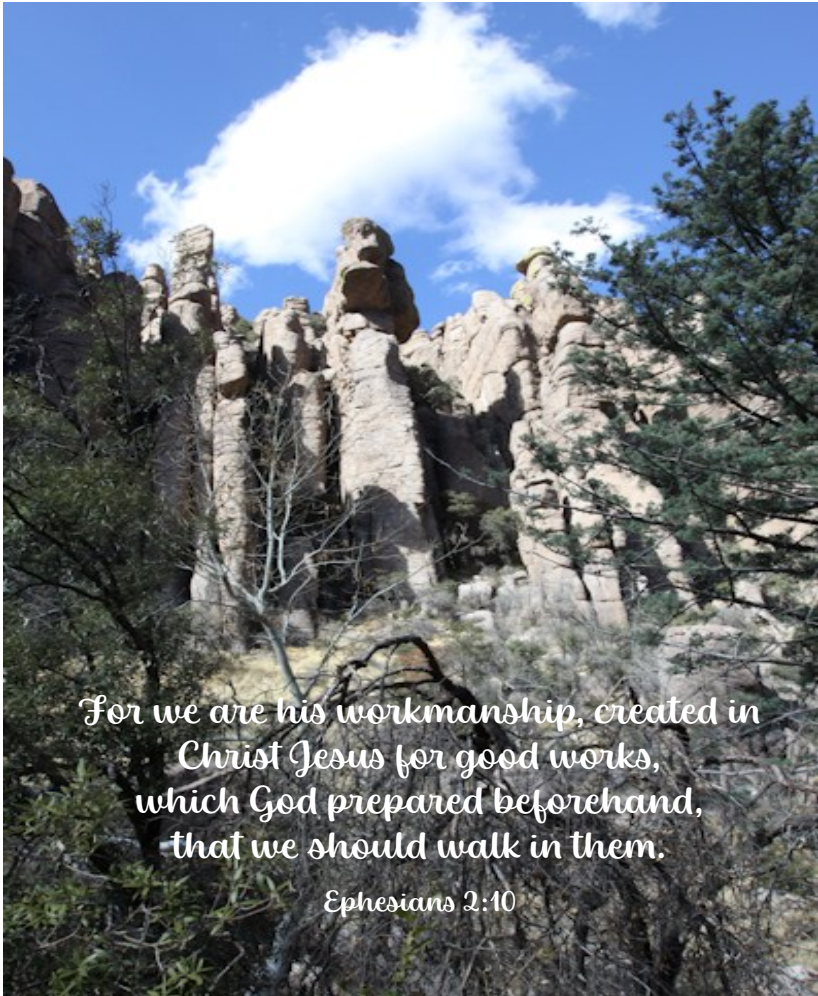
John 17:20-26

If you have not stepped back in amazement, read the verse again, and begin to rejoice in the expectation of sharing in the glory of God for all eternity! Peace with God, standing in grace, and a hope of glory!

As wonderful as our justified status before God happens to be, there is even more to it than we imagined! Take very careful note of what we have seen in all of Chapters 3-5 of Romans. Does it seem to be about what we are supposed to be doing, or about what God has done?



There are those who want us to focus on our commitment, surrender, and adherence to a system of some kind. But, when I turn to the pages of Scripture, I see what Jesus has done and wants to do through me! Furthermore, I have realized I have one claim to fame at this point in my life, and that is that I know Jesus and am in Him. Far be it from me to talk about anything that involves me. I want to talk about who Jesus is, what He has done, and what He is desirous of doing in and through each one of us!



*For we are his workmanship, created in
Christ Jesus for good works,
which God prepared beforehand,
that we should walk in them.*

Ephesians 2:10

“Not only so, but...”

Our next portion of text is going to take us in a new direction.

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.

Romans 5:3-5

Understanding the Verses

To make sense out of these three verses, we must begin with a bit of grammar.

- The Greek conjunction found in the phrase *not only so* is used to introduce a contrast. It is telling us that something different lies ahead. We had the great news of Romans 5:1-2, but now we are going to face a bit of a challenge.
- Then the conjunction translated *but* could also be translated *notwithstanding* and is being used to tell us that, despite the contrast, Verses 1-5 go together, they are a *package deal*!

Now, why do I think it is important for us to know that? In Verses 1-2 we have the great news of peace with God, standing in grace, and the expectation of glory. Now, in Verses 3-5, we are going to find the call to rejoice in our suffering! The world would typically respond, “You have got to be kidding me!” As Christians, we are to learn that, along with the blessings of our justified standing, comes God’s program of building our character.

Not to worry, He has poured out His Spirit into our hearts as a manifestation of His love for each of us!

Grasping the Big Picture

Allow me to help you grasp the *big picture* by taking you to a passage in the Old Testament:

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us ...

Deuteronomy 29:29

As the Book of Deuteronomy comes to a close, the Mosaic Law has been reinforced with the people in dramatic fashion as they prepare to enter the Promised Land. In Chapter 29, Moses is giving some reminders and words of caution to the people. In context, the words of Deuteronomy 29:29 are clearly given to the nation of Israel—the Church is nowhere to be found. But, how about the message itself, does it apply to us—today?

God is saying that He has kept some things to Himself. Only He knows certain things! But at the same time, He has chosen to provide revelation to us. Furthermore, in our day, that revelation takes the form of the completed canon of Scripture! *These things* belong to the people of God, and let me suggest that for that reason they should be precious to them! In short, the Bible is not an exhaustive collection of what God knows, but what it does contain is ours—and for our guidance and benefit!

Now, what does that have to do with Romans 5 and the passage of Scripture we are studying? We are about to take up a very difficult subject—the suffering that comes our way as part of this life. As I raise the issue of suffering, I am not talking about the things we bring upon ourselves—we'll call that *deserved* suffering. Instead, I am speaking of that which is undeserved and often seems inexplicable: Why do some get a debilitating illness in the prime of life, why does a spouse die too soon, why does a child suffer from a rare ailment?

We could add many more to this list. We find the same kind of thing in the Bible! Why did Job suffer as he did—losing his children, health, and wealth? I have already given you the answer:

... the deep things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us ...

Job never knew! We only know the backstory regarding Job because God has revealed it to us in His Word for our benefit!

When you and I face undeserved suffering, we want to know why! The more extreme the suffering, the more we feel the need to know. Part of the answer is that there are some things that simply can't be known this side of glory. At the same time, there are things we can always count on—that which God has revealed to us. One simple place to start:

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His mercy endures forever ... Psalm 136

This phrase is repeated 26 times in Psalm 136! Let me suggest that this is something that God reveals, and it is meant to belong to us—no matter the suffering.



Returning to Romans

That brings us right back to our passage in Romans:

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.

Romans 5:3-5

So here we are, a justified believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and, inexplicably, some suffering comes our way. We may never know why, but is there anything God has revealed to us? Yes there is! We are to *rejoice in our sufferings!* Why would we ever do such a thing? Because God has a purpose in the suffering—He can use it for good!

Now I know full well that we are going to have a hard time with this concept. That is, in part, because we have been contaminated with the false teaching of the *prosperity gospel*, which says something is wrong if you don't receive only that which is good from the hand of God, where good is what we define it to be! Does the Bible support or refute such a message?

"Yet man is born for trouble as surely as sparks fly upward."

Job 5:7

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation ..."

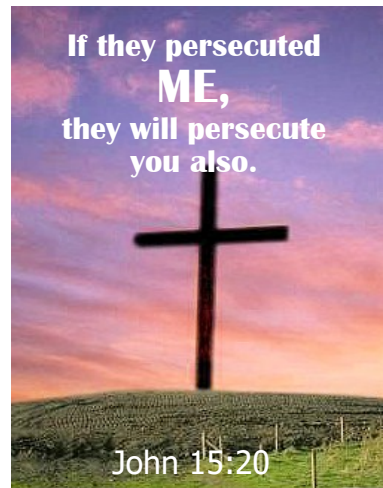
John 16:33

"If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also."

John 15:20

It appears to me that the Bible teaches that in this fallen world we should expect: trouble, tribulation, and persecution! So much for the false claim of only blessing.

To be sure, the Scripture is not teaching that suffering is, in and of itself good. Nor does it teach that God directly sends all of the tribulation that comes our way. We live in a fallen world, and that is more than enough explanation for most of our suffering. What the Scriptures *do* teach is that, because God is sovereign, omnipotent, and omniscient, He can use it for good when suffering does come our way in this sin-cursed world.



And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

We have another example of how God uses suffering for good right here in Romans 5:3-5:

... we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope ...

As a Christian, perseverance, character, and confidence are all things we need, and must certainly be considered a good outcome! No wonder Paul exhorts us to *rejoice in our sufferings*. And, don't miss the connection back to Verse 2. Paul wants us to rejoice in our sufferings in the same way he wants us to rejoice in the glory to come.

That is an attitude we are going to have to mature into! And, that leads to a *Point of Application*:

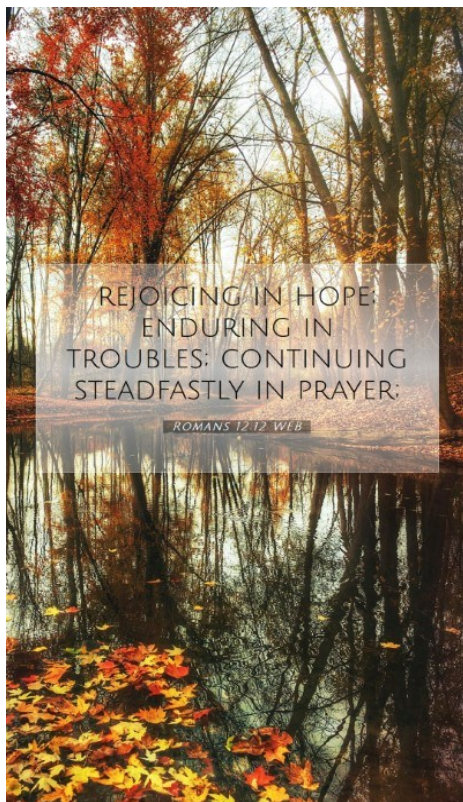
One sign of developing spiritual maturity is that in which we rejoice! For at some point, there is meant to be a shift from what God gives us, to what He is doing in us!

Understanding Sufferings

Let's pause for a moment to consider the word translated *sufferings* (also commonly translated *tribulations*). Its background nicely illustrates the concept we are discussing:

- Our English word *tribulation* comes from a Latin word for a sledge that was hauled over grain so that its weight would separate the grain from the chaff. As a metaphor, the trials of this life are like that which runs us over and crushes.
- The Greek word used in our Bibles means to apply pressure or squeeze. Its most common usage was agricultural referring to grapes or olives. Again, as a metaphor, the sufferings of this life tend to squeeze us hard!

Why are crushing events going to befall every Christian? Why do things squeeze us until we are not sure if we can hang on? The first reason is that we live in a fallen world that is in rebellion against its Creator. Living in this fallen world is reason enough to explain why Christians come down with disease, have accidents, and so on.



But, there is another aspect to consider:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:11

If Satan wasn't able to hold onto us as his subjects because we placed our faith in Christ, then the next thing he is going to do is to *squeeze* us by means of tribulation in an effort to get us to turn from a walk of faith. How are we to respond? Trust God to use the squeezing for good and thereby glory in our sufferings! This is the oh-so-important lesson we can learn from Romans 5:1-5! Let me state it as further *Points of Application*:

- When circumstances threaten to crush or squeeze our walk-of-faith, what can we know for sure?
 - * That we have peace with God, are standing in His grace, and that glory is coming!
 - * This is the mindset of a spiritual people who are firmly anchored in the heavenlies!
- Our response to tribulation is a test we must all pass. We boast about God's blessings, but have we learned to boast of how God has turned the tribulations of this world for good? That's how capable is our God!

There are many in our fellowship who are undergoing some very difficult trials. Some will become bitter or turn away because they feel they can no longer trust God. Others will have a period of struggling in order to come to a place of dependent faith but, when they do, they end up having a mighty witness to others of the faithfulness of our God in using all things for good. I am greatly encouraged as I understand the message of Scripture, and see its promises fleshed out in the lives of the saints who will live in accordance with it!

Suffering Produces Perseverance

Let's get back to the text of Romans 5:3-5:

... suffering produces perseverance ...

You see, we are not interested in suffering and tribulation for their own sake, but for what God can produce through them. First up is the character quality of perseverance.

The Greek word translated perseverance has the connotation of *to remain under a heavy load*. A trial is the load, and steadfastly trusting God while under pressure is what it means to persevere. How often we respond to the Lord, "*Yes, Lord, I want to honor You, trust You, and obey.*" Well, if that is the case, then we had better be prepared for tribulation to come our way. Because there is no honoring the Lord, trusting Him, and obeying Him apart from doing so when doing it becomes difficult!

The Need for Perseverance

Let me give you two quick reasons why perseverance is so essential for a Christian who desires to mature in the faith.

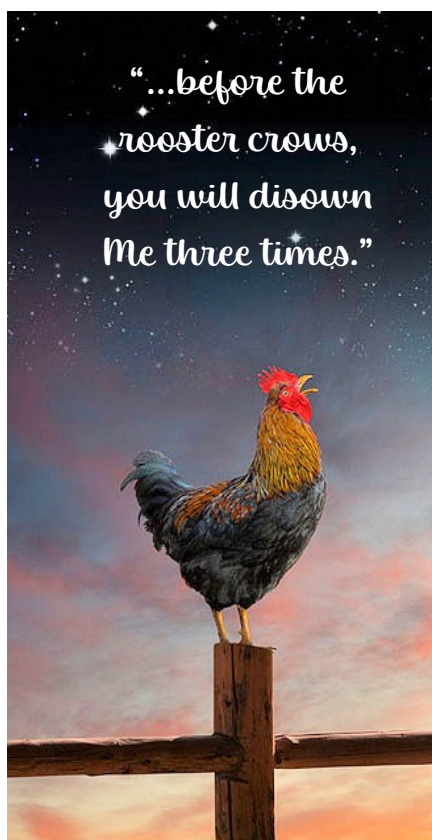
1. There is no refining of our faith apart from learning to persevere in trial.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed ...

I Peter 1:6-8

Peter starts by acknowledging that we naturally rejoice in the inheritance that is on reserve for every child of God in heaven. But in the meantime, here's our subject: the suffering that comes from trials. Peter goes on to tell us how God uses those trials. In the same way that the crushing of ore and fire of the crucible refines gold, so too the trials of this life refine our faith! Further, refined faith is going to receive commendation from our Lord and Savior Himself. That's using trials for good!

2. Perhaps you are thinking you can be faithful apart from trials. Peter thought so too!



*"...before the
rooster crows,
you will disown
Me three times."*

**Peter replied, "Even if
all fall away on account
of You, I never will."**

Matthew 26:33

Following this testimony of faith, did Jesus commission Peter to ministry? On the contrary, He in essence told him that his faith needed to be refined!

**... Jesus answered,
"this very night, before
the rooster crows, you
will disown Me three
times."**

Matthew 26:34

And what I find interesting here is that the trial that came to Peter was really pretty small. A

few questions by servants and by-standers, was all it took for Peter's faith to crumble. You see, he was trusting in commitment that came from the source of self—and that was an impurity that needed to be refined by trial. The Lord knew just how little it would take.

What was Peter's real failing? It wasn't that he didn't have faith or commitment! It was his failure to persevere in those things. There is a common false teaching in the church that should a Christian fail to persevere in the faith, it is proof that he or she was never saved to begin with. Let's see how our Lord handles Peter's failure.

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Luke 22:31-32



Peter (Simon) had been trusting in his own strength, and not the Lord's. That bit of dross needed to go, and a simple trial did it. Notice the Lord Jesus says absolutely nothing about Peter's need to get saved! Rather, Jesus is praying for him that the trial won't cause him to walk away from the faith, but instead, having confessed his sin, Peter would return to God's calling upon his life. Did you know that Jesus prays for you and me as well?

... But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ the Righteous One.

I John 2:1

Jesus as our High Priest is able to save to the uttermost, for He always lives to intercede on our behalf. (Hebrews 7:25)

And, once the impurities in Peter's faith have been removed, we see Jesus commissioning Peter to ministry—not the bold, self-assertive Peter, but the humbled and broken Peter.

"... Simon son of John, do you truly love Me more than these?...Feed my sheep." John 21:15

Now, to the point of our study in Romans, did this trial and the deep suffering it caused him (Luke 22:62 tells us that Peter wept bitterly after his failure) develop perseverance? Did it give Peter the ability to stand in the faith under further trial? The Book of Acts answers that question convincingly. We see Peter preaching boldly on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), declaring to those who are trying to silence his preaching of Christ that he must obey God rather than men (Acts 4), and continuing to do so all the way to a martyr's death. We should be asking God to allow the trials in our lives to be that effective.

A Point of Application

Consider two *Points of Application*:

1. The believer's response to trial isn't a test of one's salvation. It is a test of spiritual maturity. (The test of salvation is whether or not one has believed in His name—I John 5:13.) To claim otherwise is to place your theology over the clear teaching and character sketches contained in the Word of God!
2. We can apply this to ourselves and whatever area of ministry to which the Lord has called us. It is not those who boldly declare their commitment that the Lord uses; rather, it is those who are broken and humble in heart and who tremble at His Word. (Isaiah 57:15, 66:2) How do we get to this point? Trials humble us, teach us to turn to the One in Whom is all strength, to depend upon Him through every trial. So, we learn to rejoice in any trial that develops our ability to persevere in the faith!

And Perseverance, Character

We continue our work in Romans 5:3-5 by moving from suffering's development of perseverance, to perseverance's development of character.

... suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

The word translated *character* is another very nuanced Greek word. In the King James translation, the word is never translated character. Instead, it is most commonly translated *proof* or *experience*. Character remains a good translation, but I trust you will see that the idea is to be a tested or proven character. I even prefer *battle-tested-character*! Let me reinforce this by considering that which the Holy Spirit desires to produce in our lives:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness ...

Galatians 5:22-23

Let me be clear, you are not any of these qualities, until you are that quality under pressure! You are not loving, until you love the unlovely. You do not have the joy of the Lord, until the world gives you reason to sorrow. You do not have peace, until you have peace in the midst of turmoil. You do not have patience, until circumstances that would anger the unspiritual is met with endurance!

I trust you are beginning to see the sequence: God desires that the character of His Son be developed in us, but it is only going to be proven-character as we consistently manifest it (that's perseverance) in the face of trial! This is how character works. We are what we truly are when the pressure is on!



Character Leads to Hope

We have arrived at the outcome of the sequence Paul has given us in Romans 5:3-5: suffering produces perseverance, perseverance leads to proven character, and character results in a confident expectation!

What happened to the word *hope*? The Greek word translated *hope* means that in which we are confident and therefore that which we expect to occur! I want this to be very clear, because the hope of the Christian is not the wishy-washy hope of the world, it is the confident expectation of one who has his or her eyes upon the Word of God behind which stands our Savior—the Living Word!

Let me summarize with a *Point of Application*:

When you face every trial by simply trusting God, not only will you develop your character, but seeing God's deliverance over and over again will give you great confidence.



We would all love to be confident Christians, but now we know what it takes—trials and tribulations. This is not always pleasant, but it is the way we develop. I can show you that very simply in the life of Paul. He knew suffering! In II Corinthians 11 he describes his experiences of being in prison, flogged, shipwrecked, and suffering privation. He tells us:

... We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life.

II Corinthians 1:8

We might ask, how could God let this happen to this great apostle of the early church? Why didn't God protect and keep Paul from all of this? He tells us a few verses later:

But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. ... On Him we have set our hope ...

II Corinthians 1:10

Do you see it? The great trials Paul faced, forced him to rely on God rather than self, and now God alone is his confidence! A confidence centered solely in God above will never disappoint! How can I be so sure? Because:

... hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 5:5

I can assure you of this: Any object other than our Savior and His promises to us will be sure to disappoint! There will come a time when all that is left is to weep bitterly as Peter did when he heard the rooster crow.

But, this will not be the case should our hope—and by now you know that means our confidence—be in the Lord Jesus!

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through Him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.

II Corinthians 1:20



We'll pick up here in the next booklet with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into our hearts.



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