

50. The Book of Romans 5:3-4

Paul's Epistle to the Romans
A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(5-1-24)

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In our study in Romans, we are currently in the second major section of the book—a section that runs from 3:21-5:21. This section is dealing with the most important doctrine in the Christian faith—the doctrine of 'Justification' (salvation).

We are currently in Chapter 5 where Paul presents two categories that pertain to our justification—

'The Blessings of our Justification'; 'The Basis for our Justification.'

The Blessings of Our Justification—5:1-11

Now, Paul wants you to know that once you've received Jesus as your Savior and have entered into Him by faith—there are many blessings that become yours by virtue of your relationship with Him.

He then goes on to list 8 things in the first 11 verses of Chapter 5 that are ours when we have Jesus and have been justified by faith:

Romans 5:1–2 (NKJV)

¹ Therefore, having been **JUSTIFIED BY FAITH**, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have **access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**

1. **Peace with God**-verse 1
2. **Access by Faith into this Grace**-verse 2a
3. **Standing with God**-verse 2a
4. **Rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God**—verse 2b
5. **We Glory in Tribulations**—verses 3-4

Romans 5:3–4 (NKJV)

³ And not only *that*, but we also **glory [boast in] in tribulations [suffering]**, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Each of the words in these verses are critically important to our Christian walk—but the most important word is the word "**knowing**".

"**Knowing**" is important because knowledge is the secret to everything else in these verses.

The only reason that Christians *can* rejoice in suffering is because of what we *know* about suffering from God's Word.

We have all heard the argument used by atheists concerning suffering in the world who use it as the basis to either reject the existence of God altogether, or to conclude that if there is a God, He is *not* all-loving or all-powerful—or both. They maintain that pain is an evil that a good and loving God would never tolerate in the lives of those He supposedly made in His image and that a world free of pain and suffering would be the best world for humanity.

One author put it well—

“God allows pain to bring about the greater good. Every athlete, especially an Olympic athlete, goes through incredible pain and suffering in training. Why? For the joy of victory! If victory wasn't greater than the suffering it takes to get there, no one would ever endure it. So, every athlete endures pain to bring about the greater good.

But secondly, for the people who can't understand why, even if man messed up this world, God doesn't just 'fix it' and make it problem free again. They are harboring under a faulty assumption—that the absence of all suffering would be the greatest good for mankind. Or to put it another way, they feel a God of love would never, or could never use suffering or pain for our good.

Is it possible that God could use suffering and tragedy to teach us important lessons that help us grow as believers while drawing us to God in a way that nothing else would?

Can God use for good what Satan intended for evil? The answer of course is YES!

The ultimate example of this truth He has already shown us. God has already demonstrated how the very worst thing that has ever happened in the history of the world ended up resulting in the very best thing that has ever happened in the history of the world—the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.”

Still, the problem of suffering is a real one and not easy to answer—let's look for a few minutes at God's purposes in suffering.

1) **Corrective Suffering**

This is probably the most common form of suffering for a Christian—suffering that is meant to get us back onto the right path, the path of obedience to God when we have strayed from it. An example that we could use to illustrate this would be disciplining (chastening) of our children when they have disobeyed.

Hebrews 12:5–7 (NKJV)

⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: *“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶ For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”* ⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

Whenever suffering comes into our lives the first thing we should always do is to ask our Heavenly Father if He is disciplining us for sin.

And if so, we need to confess our sin and get right with Him so that chastening can be removed, and blessing restored.

2) **Suffering For The Glory Of God**

A second important reason for suffering in the lives of some Christians is God's glory.

John 9:1–4 (NKJV)

¹ Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him...”

John 11:1–5 (NKJV)

¹ Now a certain *man* was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was *that* Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. ³ Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” ⁴ When Jesus heard *that*, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus...

This is a concept that is difficult for many Christians to understand—but especially unbelievers. It becomes easier to understand when we realize that God is more concerned with our eternal good than with our temporal comfort.

3) **Suffering that Prepares us for Ministry**

The Bible tells us that God uses suffering to equip and prepare us for ministry to a hurting world—

James Montgomery Boice—

“I imagine that for every believer who is suffering with a particular form of cancer there is also a non-believer in exactly the same condition and that the Christian praises and worships God in spite of his afflictions while the unbeliever curses God and bitterly resents his fate. God is showing that the purpose of life lies in a right relationship to Him and not in pleasant circumstances. For every Christian who loses a son or daughter there is a non-Christian who experiences the same thing. For every Christian who loses a job there is a non-Christian in like circumstances. This is the explanation of life’s struggles, in my opinion. It is the ultimate reason for the drama of history.”

If God didn’t allow His children to experience suffering, we would not be able to relate to unbelievers going through suffering—nor could they relate to us:

2 Corinthians 1:3–5 (NKJV)

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

4) **Constructive Suffering**

This refers to the kind of suffering in life that God allows to grow us in our faith and conform us more and more into the image of Jesus.

One of the biggest problems with 21st century American Christianity is that—too many Christians are consumed with the ‘*here and now*’ and are not focusing on the life to come. That’s why they have a hard time dealing with trials properly—it’s because they want God to bless them immediately and not someday when Jesus comes at the Rapture with their rewards.

Paul tells us that God uses suffering on earth to give us the best eternity in heaven possible—and in fact how that keeping our eyes on the eternal rewards will help us in dealing with temporal sufferings—

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (NLT)

¹⁷ For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! ¹⁸ So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

Only those with their eyes on eternity can see suffering from this perspective.

Evangelist Billy Graham illustrated this by a story from the Great Depression—

"A friend of his had lost his job, all his wealth, his wife and his house. But he was a believer in Jesus Christ, and he hung tight to his faith even though he could see no purpose in what was happening and was naturally oppressed by his circumstances.

One day in the midst of his depression he was wandering through the city and stopped to watch masons doing stonework on a huge church. One was chiseling a triangular piece of stone. "What are you doing with that?" he asked.

The workman stopped and pointed to a tiny opening near the top of a nearly completed spire. "See that little opening up there near the top of the spire?" he said. "Well, I'm shaping this down here so that it will fit in up there."

Graham's friend said that tears filled his eyes as he walked away, for it seemed to him that God had spoken to say that He was shaping him for heaven through his earthly ordeal."

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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