

Romans 5:3–5  
Rejoice in Suffering  
March 15, 2020

If I had to choose a favorite passage of Scripture, Romans 5:3–5 would probably be it. If you've ever been to my office, you will see this passage up on my wall. Some might think this strange. I more often hear people say their favorite verses are passages like [Jeremiah 29:11](#), “[11 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'](#)” Or perhaps [Philippians 4:13](#), “[I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me](#)” (ESV). Sometimes I get a funny look from people who hear me say this is my favorite passage.

And while you can see Romans 5:3–5 up on my wall, you can't see the trials that God used to bring me to a place of loving this passage. But suffering is not unique to me. I have suffered. You have suffered. Everyone you know has suffered. And many are suffering this very moment. Suffering is the great equalizer. No matter who you are, you can relate to someone else who has suffered because you yourself have suffered. Suffering shows no partiality. It spares neither the rich or the poor, the wise or the foolish, young or old. Suffering ties us all together.

We all know this. Have you ever seen a picture showing someone suffering? All it takes is a look. You don't need to see tears or understand the situation. It could be someone from a completely different background in a different culture with a different language. You can see suffering in a moment because we have all suffered.

The suffering I experienced that made this passage come alive to me started 19 years ago. I grew up an avid tennis player, playing competitive junior tennis until the age of 16. After my sophomore tennis season, I started having back pain. The pain became worse and worse until within a few months I couldn't even play tennis anymore. This began one of the most difficult seasons of my life. For the next 5 years I saw doctor after doctor. My junior and senior year of high school I couldn't even go to a full day of school and I had to push around a chair with me from class to class because I couldn't sit in the chairs at school. I had to do the same thing during my seminary education 14 years later.

I lost tennis, my physical health, my social life, and my friends. About the only thing that remained was my immediate family, who was incredibly supportive through the whole process. But more than that, the Lord was with me.

For 5 years we tried everything you can think of. Perhaps the best way to summarize the process is to say that at the end of that time, we sent my records to Johns Hopkins and Mayo Clinic, two of the most prestigious hospitals in the country. Johns Hopkins said they didn't know what was wrong, and Mayo said don't bother coming because we had done everything they would do.

And so to make a very long story short, for the last 19 years I have been in constant, chronic back pain. It never goes away, and it never gets better. Sometimes it gets worse. I know what it's like to be in relentless pain.

Don't get me wrong, I would say I have suffered little compared to many I know. But in God's gracious providence, He has called me to a constant pain. Presuming He never takes it away, which He could in an instant, I have a lifetime of pain ahead of me. God used Romans 5:3–5 in ways I could not imagine, and as I studied this passage, the Holy Spirit did something within my heart. What I knew in my head, He applied to my heart. I think it was very much what

verse 5 talks about—the love of God being poured into my heart. It was one of those light bulb moments. I finally got it. In the midst of my suffering, which was so real to me now, I started to understand the purpose of pain and the value of suffering.

I am not who I should be, but I would never be the person I am today without this trial. And I wouldn't trade it for anything. I don't like pain any more than you do, but if I could go back, knowing what I know now, I would not ask God for anything different.

And this passage was key in my understanding of this. I am not unique. Christian upon Christian who has gone before me can attest to the very same thing. Perhaps even you can attest to the very same thing right now. Maybe the joy that comes through tribulations is something you have also experienced. Or maybe you're in a trial right now and you're barely hanging on. In 19 years of pain, I have had some dark days. There are days these verses are really in focus for me, and there are days I lose my focus. But the truths of this passage can change your entire outlook on suffering.

Honestly, I don't normally spend a lot of time talking about my situation. But I tell you all of this so you can know that as we talk about suffering, I am speaking to those who have suffered, as one who has suffered. My hope is that the Lord would give me the ability to communicate some of the glories of this passage.

You have probably heard it said you have either just come out of a trial, are in one right now, or are about enter into one. Such is the nature of life in a fallen world.

Just a week and a half ago when we were down at Shepherds' conference, I saw a friend from Spain I went to seminary with and worked with at the seminary. We gave each other a hug and moved on. His wife had just gone through cancer, but after 6 months of treatment was cancer free. The doctors were amazed, and that dear family proclaimed the goodness of God to all they could. That afternoon, it was announced that he was back on a plane to Spain because his wife was experiencing some serious health problems and they didn't know what the outcome would be. It turns out that she got an infection, and because her immune system was weakened from the cancer treatment, she fell into a coma and died. My friend wasn't able to make it back to Spain before she passed. They have four kids. Suffering is real. And Christians are not exempt from that suffering.

And isn't it amazing that in God's providence, I would be preaching on this topic in light of current world events. A disease that is causing worldwide fear and panic, and people are suffering. How do we respond? What does God's Word have to say about suffering? What makes suffering as a Christian distinct from the way the world suffers? What is God's purpose in suffering? This passage is a gold mine of truth from God designed to answer these very questions. I want to do everything I can to help you be prepared with the great promises of God in this passage.

Suffering provides unique opportunities for the light of God to shine in the midst of darkness. Will Christians suffer? Will perhaps some of God's children die from this virus? Yes.

But will we suffer like the world? Will we fear like the world? No. No we will not. Because we have a sovereign savior who loves us and gave Himself for us. For us to live is Christ and to die is gain! We do not grieve as the world grieves. And the world needs to see that we are different. Especially in the midst of suffering.

But before we dive into this text, I want to point out that we as Christians follow a suffering savior. Jesus took on human flesh, and in doing so, he took on human suffering. [Isaiah 53:3–4](#) says, “He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of *sorrows* and *acquainted with grief*; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely our *griefs He Himself bore*, and our *sorrows He carried*; yet we ourselves esteemed Him *stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted*.”

Jesus experienced pain. Jesus experienced betrayal. Jesus experienced the death of a loved one. Jesus wept. [2 Corinthians 8:9](#) says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became *poor*, so that you through His *poverty might become rich*.” Our savior became poor for us. He humbled himself. God became man. He knows our weakness because He took it on Himself. He knows our frailty because He took it on Himself. He knows our suffering because He bore it for us.

And so we read this amazing truth in [Hebrews 4:14–16](#). “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest *who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses*, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Our savior knows. Our savior cares. Our savior sympathizes with our weaknesses. So as we look at what God says about suffering, we must remember that our God has suffered.

So let’s look at our passage. We’ll read verses 1–5 for context.

[Romans 5:1–5](#), “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and 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.”

It is very important for us to understand that our passage on suffering follows verses 1–2. And of course, we are jumping right into chapter 5, so there are 4 chapters before this of context. On the plus side, chapter 5 begins with the word “therefore” and provides a summary of what Paul has been teaching in the previous chapters. Paul is defending the gospel in Romans and he has been arguing that the good news of the gospel is that those who place their faith in Jesus are justified because of His substitutionary death on the cross. They are made right with God and are no longer His enemies. They have peace with God. What sweeter words are there in all the world? “We have peace with God!”

How does this happen? How does God take rebellious sinners who are not righteous, do no good, do not seek God, and do not fear God, and justify them? Make them righteous? How does He take those who are *totally unable* to save themselves—look at verse 6 of chapter 5, “[For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly](#).” How does He take those who are *sinners*—look at verse 8, “[But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us](#).” How does He take those who are His *enemies*—look at verse 10, “[For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life](#).”

How does God take one who is totally unable, a sinner, and an enemy of God and make them righteous and at peace with Him? Verse 2 tells us. It's grace. It's all of grace! It's unmerited favor. We don't deserve it. But God in His grace saves us. Justifies us. And how does verse 2 end? He gives us a hope in the glory of God. What a gift! The glory of God is no source for joy for those who are not in Christ. But for those who have been justified by faith through Jesus, they rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. They rejoice in seeing Him, being in His presence, knowing Him, and spending eternity at His right hand where there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

Why is that important? It is important because as we come to verse 3, Paul is talking about believers. He's talking about Christians. He's talking about those who are justified by the propitious blood of Jesus. "We" rejoice in suffering. Who is "we"? Christians! God's children. Those who are at peace with God.

And the very real question is, "If I am a child of God and at peace with Him because of what Christ has done, why do I suffer? The answer? Romans 5:3-5.

**Here God gives four intended results of suffering so that we might rejoice in the midst of them.**

- 1) Suffering is designed to produce **perseverance**
- 2) Suffering is designed to produce **proven character**
- 3) Suffering is designed to produce **hope**
- 4) Suffering is designed to **assure us of God's love**

Let's first look at this word **tribulations**, or **sufferings** What is it? The word means *pressure*, and is used metaphorically to refer to suffering, tribulation, or distress. It is anything we experience that squeezes us in a difficult way. This word was used to describe the process of squeezing grapes into juice to make wine or squeezing olives to make oil. It takes a lot of pressure to get olives to release their oil. That is why it is called a wine press or an olive press, or even a printing press. Have you ever seen a model of the original printing press? It was a massive machine that squeezed the letters with ink on them and the paper to make an imprint on the paper. It took a lot of force.

In a fallen world, it takes pressure to make us into something we are not.

Think of suffering or tribulation as the pressure required to imprint Christ's image on you. This is God's purpose for your life. [Romans 8:29](#) says, "[For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.](#)" We are not yet conformed to the image of Christ as we ought to be, and suffering is designed to imprint Christ on us more and more. So I say again, in a fallen world, it takes pressure to make us into something we are not. And this is why we rejoice in suffering. We're not called to rejoice in suffering for suffering sake. We're called to rejoice in suffering for what it produces in us.

Another question we should ask is what kind of suffering are we talking about? Well let me tell you what kind of suffering we're NOT talking about. Because of what we just talked about in verses 1-2, that through faith in Jesus Christ we have peace with God and we stand

in grace, we know that our suffering is not a result of the wrath of God. God is no longer our enemy but our friend. God is no longer opposed to us but on our side. [Romans 8:1 says there is NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus](#). No matter what difficulty you face, you are never experiencing the wrath of God. He has promised to only work for the good of His children.

What we are talking about is anything that is a test of your faith. And in that respect, it could be anything. It could be physical suffering. It would certainly include suffering for the sake of Christ. It includes family difficulties, job difficulties, financial difficulties, difficulties from natural disasters, difficulties from disease, from the sin of others, and even suffering as a result of our own sin. God intends to use all suffering to shape us into the people we are called to be, into the image of His Son. So that's what suffering is. Now let's look at what suffering is designed to produce.

### I. Suffering is designed to produce perseverance – vs 3

The first reason we rejoice in suffering is because it is designed to produce perseverance. You may have the word endurance, which is a good synonym. This word means to “remain under.” It has the idea of patient endurance, or the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty.

One dictionary says it “*refers to that quality of character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial.*” I think that is a helpful explanation. Let me read that again, it “*refers to that quality of character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial.*” We know what perseverance is. Perseverance is not giving up even when it's tough!

Here are some practical examples of endurance. As I mentioned earlier, back in my athletic days, I used to do a little **weightlifting**. And I always hated it! I was a tennis player, and I just wanted to be on the court. I mean think about a gym...You pay someone else help you make your life really hard! Why? Why would anyone in their right mind do this? It's because of the outcome. If you want to be a person who endures longer than you do now, you've got to work out. This is how you become stronger. You can't just lift something, complain it's too heavy and give up. You'll never get stronger. The same is true spiritually.

Or think of an **endurance runner**. Have you ever tried to run a marathon? If you haven't, do you think you could just sign up and run about 26 miles? No, first you have to learn to run one mile, then when you can endure that, you work on two, and so on. You may be able to run the 100 yard dash, but what God is trying to work in you is endurance. It's not just about how you start, but how you finish!

No matter how well you run during the race, if you don't finish, you don't receive the prize. Listen to how Paul thought about this in [1 Corinthians 9:24–27](#), “[Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.](#)” We need to persevere until the end, not just run for a while and then be disqualified.

James says it like this in [James 1:2–4](#), “*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance* [that’s the same word translated perseverance in our passage]. *4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*”

*God intends to use the suffering you face in this life to make you the kind of person that will endure under the pressure.* The Christian race is a marathon not a sprint, and the only way you are going to make it is if you learn to endure.

Therefore, rejoice in your sufferings! Not because it is fun to feel the pressure and affliction of this life, but because God is using it to make you persevere. When you are in the midst of suffering do you ever feel tempted to give up? Of course you do! We all do. Where can we turn for encouragement? Well we can look to others who have suffered. We can read biblical examples of people like Paul and Joseph who suffered and responded the way God wants us to. But our ultimate example is our savior Jesus.

We talked about this at the beginning. Jesus is our sympathetic high priest because He suffered as well. Turn with me to [Hebrews 12:1–2](#). “*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance* [same word as Romans 5:3] *the race that is set before us, [how do we do this? Verse 2 says,] 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured* [again, this is the same word] *the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*”

Christ suffered more than any of us will ever suffer. And He endured. Not because He loved suffering. But because of the result of it, because of the *joy set before Him* He endured the cross. We too have a joy set before us. If you turn back to Romans 5, verse 2 says we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And that joy is coming again in verses 4 and 5.

So let us look to Christ and be encouraged. We will not make it to the finish line unless we learn to endure. And suffering is the tool in God’s hand to teach us endurance. So let us rejoice in our sufferings, trusting that God is working perseverance in our lives through it. Don’t give up! Don’t give in! Don’t throw in the towel. Whether it’s 19 years or 80 years, it is worth it! Remember that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us. Let suffering produce endurance.

Now we turn to verse four to seek the next intended result of suffering.

## **II. Suffering is designed to produce proven character**

We use the word “character” a lot. When we say that person has a good character what do we mean? It means a person has proven themselves to be of a certain quality. And that is what this word means, proven character, or approved. We could say the person has proof of genuineness. It is character that comes at the end of the process of trial. Precious metals are purified by burning off the impurities. At the end of the process, you have gold that is genuine, or of proven character. It has stood the test of the fire, through endurance, and has come out on the other end refined. You cannot really have proven character without endurance. No one really knows what’s in a chunk of gold until it has been through the fire.

Peter talks about this proven character in [1 Peter 1:7](#), “*So that the proof* [this is the same word as Romans 3:4] *of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even*

though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

God uses suffering in our lives to produce in us proven character, or tested genuineness. This is where we can really miss out on God’s purpose for suffering if we don’t have the proper view of suffering. If you want to be a person of proven character, there is only one path to get there, and that is through suffering.

One area of suffering that is particularly important in this process is what Jesus refers to John 15:2, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.” At the first house we lived in here in California, the street was lined with magnolia trees, and my neighbor had an enormous one in her front yard. But it was never pruned. One day a massive section of the tree broke off and fell to the ground. What was interesting is that it wasn’t a particularly windy day. There was no extreme storm, it just couldn’t stand up in under the weight anymore. Without pruning a branch, it cannot endure, even on a mild day. Pruning hurts, but it is for our good.

Pruning is like discipline. Hebrew 12:6 says, “For those whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives.” God disciplines us because He loves us and wants us to bear more fruit. He prunes us so we will have proven character. He wants our faith to show tested genuineness. You’re not who you should be yet. And neither am I! I know this because we are still here. If God was done with us, we would be with Him.

I hope you know that discipline is not just for bad behavior. Who is the coach hardest on? It is usually the best player. Job was upright and blameless and didn’t sin in all he did, but was he who he needed to be? Not by a long shot. He had a lot to learn about God. And so you do you and I. Paul was a godly man, but God used suffering in 2 Corinthians 12 to keep him humble. Suffering is designed to transform us into what we are not. It creates proven character. And as we see this character developed in us, we are encouraged that God is using suffering for this end. So suffering is designed to produce perseverance and proven character.

### III. Suffering is designed to produce hope

What is hope? “Hope” – *hope is a confident expectation in the future promises of God. It is confident expectation that what God has promised, He will perform.* It is not wishful thinking. It is founded on the eternal Word of God.

When we suffer and let it have it’s God intended purpose of producing endurance and proven character, it results in hope. In this way, suffering actually serves to increase our hope in God, not diminish it. God uses suffering to help us focus on the right things. He uses it to purify us so that we let go of all the lesser hopes this world has to offer and we make Him our supreme hope.

Suffering teaches us to not hope in this world or ourselves. But hope in God. Suffering strips us of the desire for the things of this life and replaces it with a desire for the things of heaven. In 2 Corinthians 4:17–18 Paul says, “For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” You can see that present affliction is preparation for the glory that awaits us. This is the same glory Paul said we rejoice in Romans 5 verse 2. How

do you view suffering? Do you view it as light and momentary? Does it feel light and momentary? I doubt that it does. It most likely feels heavy and never-ending. It is only when we compare our suffering to the eternal weight of glory that we see suffering in its proper light. Suffering produces perseverance, proven character, hope, and assures us of God's love, so that one day, we will experience an eternal weight of glory. It sets our eyes on the things that are eternal. The things that matter most.

And again in [Romans 8:16–18](#) Paul says, “[The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.](#)” Suffering with Christ is tied to being glorified with Him. Future glory and present suffering are very closely related.

Don't miss out on what God intends for your suffering. He wants you to endure. He wants to build proven character into you. And He wants you to hope in eternity. He uses your suffering to help you rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

When we suffer we begin to hope for something else. When we lose people we love, we hope for a place where that won't happen. When our bodies break down we hope for a place where that won't happen. When we lose our earthly possessions, we learn to hope in a place where thieves cannot break in and steal and moth and rust do not destroy. When we lose the hopes of this world, we begin to hope only in God. It can be painful to die to lesser hopes. Jesus said if anyone would follow Him, he must take up his cross daily. Taking up your cross means dying. We must die to ourselves. One of the ways we do that is through suffering. It purifies our hope and puts it in God.

Currently, there are many across the globe who are suffering, both from recent events and scores of other situations. And we need to remember that suffering also provides us the opportunity to share the great hope we have in Jesus to others. Have you ever experienced someone who is closed to the gospel when their life is going the way they want it to, and all of a sudden, difficult circumstances soften their heart?

Suffering can be used by God to open people to up consider the important things of life rather being drowned in entertainment and comfort. When you meet people who are living in fear and they ask you if you are scared, now is the time to share the great hope we have in Christ. Because suffering, and even death, cannot change that we have an unshakable hope. We have a peace that passes all understanding. We don't have a spirit of fear but a spirit of adoption as sons and daughter of the Most High God. His Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are His children.

As we read earlier in [1 Corinthians 9](#), we have an imperishable reward waiting for us. [1 Peter 1:3–4](#) says, “[Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.](#)” This living hope, this inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, will never fade, and secure in heaven where no one can destroy it.

This hope is what the world is supposed to see in us. [1 Peter 3:15](#) says, “[But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks](#)



you to give an account *for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.*" Now is the time for God's people to share the hope that is in them! Are you ready? Are you living in such a way that people will notice and ask?

Suffering is designed to produce perseverance, proven character, hope, and finally...

#### IV. Suffering is designed to assure us of God's love

Verse 5 is a precious verse to those who are suffering. *"5 and 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."* Through suffering, God teaches us to endure, creates in us proven character, purifies our hope in Him, and then to top it off, God gives us the Holy Spirit who pours out His love for us in our hearts.

The Holy Spirit does this to make sure that our hope does not disappoint us. This means that our hope will never put us to shame. You need not worry that your hope in the glory of God will ever disappoint you. God will make good on every promise He has made. When you are in the midst of suffering, and everything feels like God has abandoned you, like it's not worth it, and you begin to wonder if God is really working in your suffering, remember that this hope will never disappoint. When you have lived a million years in eternity, the glory that will be revealed to you for all eternity, will make the suffering of this life feel like a "light momentary affliction." You will never be let down by the hope that comes as a result of suffering.

God does this by giving us the Holy Spirit. In the midst of suffering the Holy Spirit has a unique ministry. It is to pour out the love of God in our hearts. When are you most likely to doubt God's love for you? Is it not in the midst of suffering? Paul says that God's love *has been* poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. This is a past act that has continuing results.

How has God's love been poured into our hearts by the Spirit? I think this is both an objective reality and an experiential reality the Spirit applies to our lives.

It is objective because it is based on passages like this. God has revealed how He loves us in His Word. The Bible teaches us about God and ourselves and we gain objective knowledge of how He loves us. The Spirit applies the Word to our lives so that we have grounds to know God loves us. You need never doubt God's love for His children. Nothing can separate us from the love of God as Paul says in [Romans 8:39](#).

But this is also a real experience. It is easy to be afraid of the word experience with the abuses that go along with it, but Christianity should be a real experience. If all of this is theoretical to you and you have never come to experience any of these truths, it is simply wishful thinking. If you are a Christian, you have tasted of this in some way. God has been near to you through His Spirit. You have experienced His love. It has been poured out. And it is poured out in the midst of intense suffering.

I can personally say that in my dark days, the Spirit did this for me in ways I had not previously experienced. I'm not saying you have to have a warm fuzzy feeling inside, but it has to be real to you. This is part of the Spirit's ministry and He will do it for you.

Jesus prayed an amazing prayer in [John 17:26](#), *"And I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and*

*I in them.*” How does this amazing reality happen? How can the love that exists between the Father and the Son be in us? This happens through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in us. And it happens particularly through suffering.

Don’t miss out on the opportunity to have your faith strengthened as God pours out His love for you through the Holy Spirit in your suffering. Remember the sweet words of [Hebrews 12:6](#), that the Lord disciplines those He loves. He loves you. He has designed this suffering for your good. You may not be able to see what that good is right now. But the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God. And God loves His children. He loves them perfectly. He loves them completely. He loves them without error. He loves them with full knowledge. He loves His children.

God has promised that He is no longer your enemy. He is on your side, and He is using everything, including your suffering, for your good. Just a few chapters later Paul says in [Romans 8:28](#). “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” All things work together for good. *All* things. And when you are tempted to think that can’t be true in your life because of the suffering you are facing. Just think of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

There was no darker day than the day the perfect Son of God died in the place of sinners and suffered the wrath of God on behalf of His people. There has been no greater suffering. There never will be. Did God use that for good? For our good? Yes! A thousand times yes! The greatest good we could ever experience came out of the greatest suffering.

Suffering is not your enemy. It is the tool in the hand of a loving God to bring about your greatest good—Christlikeness.

You will find that it is often those who have suffered the most who love God the most and sense His love more. If you are familiar with Joni Erickson Tada, you may understand what I am talking about. A woman who has been a quadriplegic for over 50 years, had cancer twice, and dealt with more suffering that I can imagine. But O, how she loves Jesus. And while she would be the first to admit she has dark days too, she knows the love of God in a unique way.

Those who have suffered often have the deepest love for God, the most Christlike character, and the highest hope in God.

Don’t you want to be like that? Don’t you want to learn to say with Charles Spurgeon, *I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages.*” Don’t you want to experience the sweet fellowship that comes through suffering? Don’t you want to endure so you can hear from your Savior, “[Well done my good and faithful servant.](#)” Don’t you want to reflect the character of Jesus more in your life so that you might bring Him more glory? Don’t you want to have a rock-solid hope in the promises of God, with a deep assurance that God loves you? Don’t you want to display to a watching world that we have an unshakable hope in our God. I want that. Don’t you?

I hope this passage gives you a new outlook on your suffering. Or if you have heard this before, I hope that you are encouraged again to trust in the wonderful purposes of God in our suffering.

It won't be like this forever? You know that right? One day, one day every tear will be wiped away and all the pain, all the sorrow, all the suffering will be the dim backdrop of the glory that will be revealed to us for all eternity. No longer will we need the pressure that comes from suffering to make us more like Christ.

Because “We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2). So press on. And may God use the sufferings of this life to make you persevere, to build in you proven character, to produce in you unshakable hope, and pour out His love in your heart through the Holy Spirit who has been given to you this day...and every day.