

TRIBULATIONS—THE “FACTORY” THAT PRODUCES HOPE

INTRODUCTION: Over the last few weeks, we’ve been looking at attitudes we should have in the new year—and all year long! Attitude #1 is that we should have a ***hunger to hear God***. We are constantly being bombarded with **voices** to listen to and since we cannot possibly listen to **them all**, we have to make choices as to **who** we will listen to, **how long**, and **when**. The attitude of the Psalmist recorded in Psalm 85:8 was “I will hear what **God the Lord will speak...**” Why? Because “He will **speak peace** unto His people...”

So how are we doing? Are we listening to **what God says** to bring peace—or are we seeking peace elsewhere? We need to listen to what God says, don’t we?

Last week we looked at the attitude of **hope**. God’s people are to hope **in God**—not Congress or the Constitution; not family...or friends; not politicians...or prophets...or Presidents. **Ps 42:5** reminds us of **disappointments** in life—but also of the **remedy**: “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? **hope thou in God**: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.”

So how do we **generate** hope when we are feeling hopeless—or at least **discouraged and disappointed**? Can we **just** “decide” to have hope? Can we “hope” enough for “hope” that we become **hopeful**—or is there more to it than that? Let’s turn again to Romans 15:13 where we have, I believe, the **formula** for hope.

God fills us with joy and peace—which leads to an abundance of hope—as a result of us **doing** something. What is it that God wants us to **do**? “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace **in believing...**” God wants us to **believe** on His Word. He wants us to **take His Word** into our hearts and minds and **believe** it. And as we **take in** God’s Word, God the Holy Spirit uses God’s Word to **assure** us...and **convince** us...and **enable** us to **apply** His Word to our hearts and our situation. It is not a natural thing that we do—it is a **supernatural** thing that God does! But we have a part—we must **feed** on God’s Word and **believe** what He says!

So we have the **formula** for hope—which is in essence a formula for faith. Take your Bibles now and turn to Romans 5:1-5. We have here what I’m calling the “Factory of Hope.” Last week the **formula** for how hope is produced; today the **factory** for the production of hope.

Although we are going to be focusing our attention on verses 3-5, I don’t want to entirely ignore verses 1-2. We have in these 2 verses... **1. The Declared Relationship between God and believers**

How do we have a relationship with God? How can sinners—rebels against God—be forgiven by God and have peace with Him? We need to be **justified** by faith!

To be **justified** means to be declared righteous—to be considered by God “just as if I’d never sinned.” What an amazing act of grace and kindness God extends to us!

--We come to God in **repentance**—we agree with Him that we are sinful and cannot save ourselves—and that we need **Him** to forgive us to have any hope of heaven

--But we also come in **faith**, believing that Jesus’ death for us **satisfied what God required** for **our** sin.

--And when we come to God in faith and receive Jesus as our Savior, God counts **our sin** as being paid for by Jesus—and **Jesus’ perfectness** is counted as being on us!

--Justified **by faith**—not works; peace with God **through our Lord Jesus Christ**—not works! Can it be plainer?

Much more can be said but let’s consider next...**2. The Desired Response to Tribulation—Rejoice!**

What is God’s desired response to tribulation? **Glory** in it—which means to **rejoice**!

A. Declared by Paul: Verse 3 “And not only so, but we glory in **tribulations** also...”

“Tribulations” here means affliction, distress, oppressions, persecution. It carries the idea of being “pressed” or pressured. “Trials” would also be a good word. What are we to do in “tribulations?”

Glory—as mentioned earlier—means rejoice. It comes from the Greek word that means to **boast in, exult in, joy, or rejoice in**. What is really interesting is that the word “rejoice” in verse 2 is translated from the same word that “glory” is translated from here in verse 3.

In other words, the **attitude** that we have toward the **future glories of heaven**—extreme joy—is the **same attitude** we should have **toward trials** in our life! Not only do we see that in the word being the same, look at how Paul “ties together” verses 2 and 3.

--“And not only so” —don’t **just** rejoice and be jubilant about the glories of **heaven**—be joyful **also** in tribulations! Stated another way, the same **way you rejoice** in what awaits you in heaven is the way you **should rejoice** about your current trials here on earth!

But **instead** of “All God’s people said, **Amen**; All God’s people said, O my...Paul is out of his mind!” Like Festus saying to Paul, “Paul, thou art **beside thyself**; much learning doth make thee mad”—meaning “insane!”

But Paul was **not** insane when he said we are to rejoice in tribulations, was he? He was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and was saying exactly what **God told Him to say**. And let’s not forget that Paul was saying something **that Jesus had said!**

B. Declared by Jesus

Mt 5:11-12 “**Blessed are ye**, when men shall **revile you**, and **persecute you**, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹² **Rejoice, and be exceeding glad**: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

C. Declared by others

James 1:2 “My brethren, **count it all joy** when ye fall into divers temptations;”

I Pet 4:13-14a “**But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings**; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If ye be **reproached** for the name of Christ, **happy are ye**;”

Rejoicing in tribulations is certainly not something **we want to do**, but it is something that Paul...and Jesus...and James...and Peter all tell us we **should** do. But how—and **why**? What **good** do tribulations do?

What do they accomplish? Paul lists for us next ... **3. The Designed Results of Tribulations**

Verse 3 again: “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation **worketh**...”

The word “worketh” here means “to work fully, to accomplish, to finish.” In other words, tribulations accomplish something—there **are** results! Something **does** happen!

Before we look at **what** the results are, let’s not miss the **confidence** Paul had in this fact: “**knowing** that tribulation worketh...” There was no guessing...or hoping...or wondering. Paul **knew** that tribulations were going to accomplish something in the life of the believer if they had the right attitude toward their trials.

Result #1? Tribulation will accomplish... A. Patience

Paul says it here and James makes a similar statement. **James 1:3** “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh **patience**.” It is interesting that James even uses the word “knowing!”

So what is **patience**? Similar to what I mentioned in passing last week, “patience” here is slightly different than what we think of when we hear the word. It **doesn’t** mean what you are when you go to the **doctor** 😊...or staying calm when someone is late...or not getting angry when your children are “acting up.”

Instead, it has to do with **endurance** and steadfastness.

Heb 12:1 offers some insight: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us **run with patience** the race that is set before us,” The idea is not **plodding along patiently** in a race; nor is it **patiently waiting** your chance to **pass** another runner. The idea has to do with **endurance**...perseverance...a “stick-to-it-ness” ... a refusal to quit.

Here’s a question: What do **you do** when trouble comes? **Where do you turn** when things look bleak? **Who do you look to** when you are overwhelmed and “at your wits end?” We know who we **should look to**—but do

we **look to God** the way we should? God wants us to have the “stubborn” faith of Job that cried out, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...” (Job 13:15).

It takes perseverance to **hang on** during these times, but perseverance is **produced** during these times as well. That is not the only thing produced, though. Tribulation accomplishes perseverance; perseverance produces...

B. Experience

So what is meant by **experience**? “Experience” is one of those words that you **know** what it means, but it is hard to put into words. Here’s a **dictionary definition** that fits the context: “something personally encountered, undergone, or lived through.”

When we go **through** a trial—and develop perseverance because of **that** trial—we now have something to “fall back” on when we go through **another** trial. Having “experienced” the **faithfulness... and goodness... and help ... and strength of God** to get through a **former** trial will motivate us to persevere through a **future** trial. And this motivation to persevere through **future** trials based on seeing God’s faithfulness in **past** trials is the third result: C. Hope

What is hope? Hope is a **confident** expectation that all will be well because we are in God’s hands and God is in control! It is not a hope that everything **might** turn out okay—it is a **confidence** that everything **will** turn out okay. “Hope maketh not ashamed” means hope does not **disappoint**. Our confidence in God will not bring us shame or disappointment because God **cannot** fail.

How is hope produced? In the “factory” of trials and tribulations; in this cycle of tribulations leading to perseverance...and perseverance leading to proven character...and proven character leading to a confident expectation that God will deliver **how**—and **when**—He sees fit.

Let’s consider Abraham for a moment. At **75** years of age, God promised that from him would come a great **nation**. **Ten** years went by and still no child, so Sarah suggested Abraham have a child with her servant Hagar. Ishmael is born when **Abraham is 86** but **13 years later**—when Abraham is **99**—God tells him that **Sarah** is going to have a child in her old age. Abraham laughed when he heard this news because Sarah was almost 90!

For twenty-five years Abraham and Sarah waited for God to give them this promised child. Talk about a trial that produced perseverance! But God assured Abraham that Sarah would indeed bear a son—and she did!

But the testing and trials of Abraham were not over. Many of you know what happened next, right? God asked Abraham to do the unthinkable. **Gen 22:2** “And He [God] said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, **whom thou lovest**, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and **offer him there for a burnt offering** upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

Did Abraham obey God? Gen 22:3 says that Abraham got up early and went to the place where God told him. How old was Isaac? We don’t know because we aren’t told. We do know this, though—he was old enough to **carry a load of wood up a mountain**! What happened next? They went up the mountain, then Abraham tied up Isaac...laid him on the wood... and raised the knife to kill his own son! How could he **do** such a thing?

His faith in God had grown so much through the cycle of trials leading to perseverance...and perseverance leading to experience...and experience leading to a confident expectation, that he believed that if God wanted him to **actually kill** Isaac, that God would bring Isaac back to life! How do we know that is what Abraham was thinking? Because **Heb 11:19** tells us: “Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead...”

Paul reminds us that we can have that same kind of confident expectation, regardless of what God **asks us to do—or puts us through**—because of... **4. The Driving Reason to Rejoice in Tribulations**

What drives us—or at least should drive us—to rejoice in tribulations?

Notice v 5 “And hope maketh not ashamed....” True hope—the confidence that God is in control and all will be well—will never makes us ashamed; it will never disappoint us. If our confidence is in God, we will never have a “Oh no; God failed me moment.” So we should rejoice in tribulations because...

A. God cannot fail

Important for us to remember, though, that sometimes God doesn’t do what **we think** He should do or what **we want Him** to do. Trials and troubles don’t always end the way we would like them to—at least humanly speaking! Think about Stephen in Acts 7. Remember what happened to him?

He was pummeled to death with stones!

Does that mean God **stopped** loving him? No; it meant God’s work for him on earth was done! Did suffering stop him from enjoying the blessings of heaven? No; they brought about his entrance **into** Heaven! One **commentator wrote**: “I am here (1) by God’s appointment, (2) in His keeping, (3) under His training, and (4) for His time. Thus, faith, rather than being insecure because of trials, actually uses suffering to strengthen our hope in God’s future glory.”

Can we rejoice in trials? Yes; if we keep in mind who is **behind** them—and that they are “but for a moment.” **II Cor 4:17-18** “For our **light affliction**, which is **but for a moment**, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

We have a second motivation to rejoice in trials and we find that in the next phrase of v 5 “...because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts...” B. God loves us

Commentators disagree somewhat if “the love of God” refers to **our love to Him**—or **His love to us**. The context—especially verses 6-8—seem to suggest that it is **His love to us**. Although our love for Him can motivate us, I believe here it is referring to us being persuaded of **His love** for us! His love **for us** is shed abroad—it is poured out—into our hearts to assure us that God loves us.

To be loved by another person can be a great motivator—but to be loved by God should be the **supreme** motivation! So I ask: --Are you certain of God’s love—or do you doubt it?

--Do you meditate on it—or disregard it?

How do you **know** you are loved? That’s a whole **sermon** in itself—if not a **series of sermons**—but we will keep it to the reminders we have here in our text.

--**Who** we are **loved by**. V 8 “But God...” The Almighty, All-Knowing, Eternal God loves you and me!

--**Who He loves**. V 6 says the **ungodly**; v 8 says **sinner**s. God did not wait for us to clean ourselves up before loving us—He loves us as self-loving, self-serving, ungodly, hell-deserving sinners!

--**How** He proved His love. End of v 8 “Christ died for us.” God left heaven to die for me and you! Spurgeon was asked what motivated him. Four words: Christ died for me!

--**How long** will He love. For ever and ever and ever.

Lastly, we have... **5. The Divine Resource for Rejoicing in Tribulations**

--How do we have a hope in God that all will be well—even if it means we lose our life while serving Christ?

--How are we certain that God loves us—even though we can’t see Him...or touch Him...or hear His voice in our physical ear?

End of v 5 “by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” The Holy Ghost—who is the Holy Spirit, the 3rd person of the Trinity as mentioned last week—comes **inside of us** when we are born again. He indwells us and is the One who makes us a new creation in Christ.

All true believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. We know that from **Romans 8:9** “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”

Simply put, if you don’t have the Holy Spirit, you don’t belong to God—you are not His child! If you are a child of God, though, the Holy Spirit will assure you of that in your heart.

Rom 8:16 “The Spirit itself [Himself] beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:”

In other words, we have the certainty from God that we are His child—and that He loves us. That is one of the many things that the indwelling Holy Spirit does.

Do you have the Holy Spirit in your heart?

If you can sin—and it doesn’t bother you—you should question w/or not you are saved.

If you have no desire for the things of God—you should question w/or not you are saved.

If you have no assurance in your heart that you are loved by God—you should question whether or not you are saved.

Can we rejoice in trials? We can if recognize that trials are God’s “factory” for producing perseverance...and experience ...and a confident expectation that heaven will be worth it. We can because we know God cannot fail. And we can because God loves us—and assures us of that love by giving us the Holy Spirit to dwell inside of us.

So what does God want us to do in light of what we have heard from His Word today?

1. First, are you justified? Has God declared you righteous, “just as if you’d” never sinned? If not, you need to trust Jesus as your Savior!

2. What is your attitude toward trials? Do you look at them as an evidence that God loves you and wants to grow you, or do you murmur against Him when they come?

Focus on His love—and the fact that He cannot fail—and that heaven will be more than worth it!