

SERMON STUDY SUMMARY

Romans Part 11: Rejoicing in the Hard Times

INTRODUCTION

A Barna national survey question was: “If you could ask God only one question, and you knew He would give you an answer, what would you ask?” The top response was: ‘Why is there pain and suffering in the world?’ We know that there are four major causes for suffering: (1) Our broken world; (2) our enemy, Satan; (3) other people; and (4) ourselves.

How are we to ‘glory in our sufferings’, as we are taught in Romans 5:3-5? We should be confident that, as we trust God and follow Him, He will use our hardships to accomplish good in our lives and the lives of others (Romans 8:28). We know that our God is in control, that He is a good God and has a loving and good purpose for allowing trials and tribulations in our lives. In every storm we face, although it may make no sense at that time, we can be positive that one day, when we see our lives from God’s perspective we will understand fully and praise God for His goodness and love for us.

First, suffering produces perseverance (Romans 5:3). God uses suffering and hardship to teach us to handle pressure, to never give up and to keep focused on the important things of life. We learn to trust God in every circumstance, realizing that we can do nothing without Him. God did not intend our world to suffer, and Paul does not say that we are to rejoice *for* our suffering; instead, he says we are to rejoice *in* our suffering because we know that it will produce something good from God.

Second, perseverance produces character (Romans 5:4). God’s purpose for our lives is to make us Christ-like – so that Jesus’ life and character is reflected through us to others. Jesus wants to live His life of power and reveal His character through us, but He won’t do this until we surrender our lives to His control (James 4:6). At times God allows hardships to come our way, bringing us to a place of brokenness. As we submit to God, trusting Him to bring good through our suffering, our lives will increasingly begin to reflect the character and life of Jesus.

Third, character produces hope. We can face trials with hope because we know that God’s motive for allowing us to suffer is love, not anger. Suffering and hardship will, depending on how we respond to it, either produce something good and positive in our lives or it will produce anger, bitterness and despair. How will you choose to respond to suffering?

If God loved us so much that He died for us when we were His enemies, now that we are part of His family through faith in Christ, we can be absolutely confident and rejoice in the knowledge that He will use our sufferings and hardships to work for our ultimate good and His glory.

SERMON STUDY GUIDE

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. Who do you take after in your temperament, skills and abilities: your mother or your father? Explain.
2. How has a difficult situation in your life brought about good?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Romans 5:3-5

3. How should a Christian look upon suffering and stress? What is the role of hope in suffering?

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

4. How does God show His love for us through our hardships? How does he use our hardships to express compassion to others in their suffering?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. How much of God's peace and hope needs to begin with a *feeling* and how much must begin with head knowledge and conscious claiming of peace and hope?
6. As we deal with the current state of world affairs, how do we find and express real assurance of love and hope?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:
Consider a past or present hardship that you have endured or are enduring. How can you see the truths of verses Romans 5:3-5 being worked out in your life?

THE WORD (NIV)

Romans 5:3-5

3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.