

TRIED AND TRUE
How Joy in Suffering Produces
Confident Hope in God

Romans Series
PBC 2025

Texts: Romans 5:1-11 (Rom. 8:18-25; James 1:2-8; 1 Peter 1:18-25; 4:12-19; Matthew 7:13-14; Acts 14:19-22).

As we continue our journey through this section of Romans, we encounter one of the most challenging gospel-related passages to understand and apply, especially considering all the blessings and benefits we've discovered are ours when we turn from our sins to follow Jesus. The text I am referencing is found in Romans 5:3, where Paul makes this surprising statement about true believers – *“We rejoice in our sufferings (plural).”*

To truly understand and apply this statement as believers, we must clarify what Paul means and why the Holy Spirit inspired him to include it in this list of things that should bring us great joy. We need to understand why suffering is included in this list.

- 1. Presented in a beautiful context: astonishing, bountiful blessings that became ours when God justified us (Rom. 4:1 - 5:11)**
- 2. Obtained by a solitary, simple requirement – obedient faith. (5:1)**
- 3. Resulting in a troubling question – “Do I have that kind of faith?”**

Put differently: Do you trust God, or have you just believed in God?
Is my faith genuine? I have believed the truths of the gospel; I have affirmed the core doctrines of the Christian faith; and I am trying to live by them – but am I truly trusting the Jesus I say I believe in?

And to find the answer to that question, I want us to ask Paul, ***“How does a believer know their faith is real? How can I be sure I have peace with God? That I have access to the throne of Grace? That I have been granted permanent standing in the kingdom of grace? How can I be confident in this life about the glorious future God has promised me in the life to come?”***

And Paul’s answer would be this: **“You can be confident in these things by evaluating your response to suffering.”**

I. The Surprising Statement – we rejoice in our sufferings (5:3a)

*Not only that, but we rejoice in our **sufferings***

A. What does it mean to Rejoice?

B. When are we to Rejoice?

Here are some examples:

1. Life hurts! (Ecclesiastes 8:14-15).
2. Sin hurts! (Prov 13:15).
3. Relationships hurt! (1 Thess 5:15; cf Rom 12:17; 1 Pet 3:9).
4. Ministry hurts! (2 Cor 12:15-19)
5. The Gospel hurts! (1 Pet 4:12-19).

II. The Scriptural Confirmation (Jesus, Paul, James, Peter)

Jesus and all three of the major NT writers affirm the reality of ongoing suffering, affliction, and persecution in their lives and in the lives of their followers.

A. Jesus: Matthew 5:10-12; 7:13-14

- **Matthew 5:10-12** *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.”¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

- **Matthew 7:13-14** *“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is **hard*** that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (*note the term “hard” is the word Paul uses for suffering in Rom 5:3)*

B. Paul: Acts 14:21-22

- **Acts 14:21-22** *When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*

C. Peter: 1 Peter 4:12-14

- **1 Peter 4:12-14** *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*

D. James: James 1:2-4; 12

- **James 1:2-4, 12** *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. . . . ¹² Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*

Clearly, the Scripture affirms that believers will experience the same kind of pain and suffering common to unbelievers around them. Additionally, Jesus and the apostles plainly tell us that we will face the same kind of suffering for our faith that they did.

If we are honest, this is not a surprise to us. The surprise is in Paul’s statement (and the confirmation of that statement in the lives of believers) – that Christians respond to such suffering with unbridled, unrestrained joy. And we want to know why and how they respond this way. And Paul gives us a hint – it rests with something they know and are firmly convinced about (5:3b). ***They frame how they feel about suffering based on something they know about suffering.***

III. The Spiritual Fruit Suffering Produces (5:3-4)

knowing that suffering **produces** endurance,⁴ and endurance **produces** character, and character **produces** hope,

- What do we **know** about suffering that should **produce** the kind of exuberant joy in our hearts that Paul describes here?
- Paul tells us that suffering “produces” (κατεργάζεται) certain qualities in us. When suffering shows up in our lives, God goes to work and **uses suffering** to produce three indispensable qualities in us.

A. Strong Endurance that Perseveres Under Pressure

B. Proven Character that Passes the Test

C. Firm Confidence that won't prove Empty or Vain

And all of this answers the first of two major doubts: How do I know that my faith is real? How do I know that when I most need it to work, my faith will deliver me? ***But there is a second question that this text answers – How do I know God will be faithful to His promise to deliver me?***

IV. The Strong Confidence Suffering Affords to Strengthen Hope (5:5)

and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Suffering doesn't just cause us to question our love and faithfulness to God; it causes us to question God's love and faithfulness toward us. How does God assure us of His love and faithfulness in light of the reality of suffering? “How do we know God really loves us?”

A. Experientially, by means of the Spirit's work

because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

B. Objectively, by the facts of the Gospel (5:6-10)

- The unusual proof of God's love for us is seen in what Christ did through the Gospel (5:6-8)
- The ultimate proof of God's love is seen in what Christ will do for us because of the Gospel (5:9-10).

C. Relationally, by means of intimate fellowship with God (5:11)

- You learn the theological reality of God's love in Scripture. You see the love of God objectively in the Gospel. But you experience it for yourself in profound and undeniable ways in suffering!
- There is a profoundly personal ministry that God Himself performs for His children when they suffer for their faith – He Himself restores, confirms, strengthens, and establishes them in grace. (1 Pet 5:10).

Conclusion:

- Peter tells us that when we endure suffering joyfully the way Paul describes in our text, it is a “gracious thing” in God's sight. **1 Pet 2:19** *“For this is a gracious thing when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly . . . If, when you do good and suffer for it, you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.”*
 - So, what can I do this morning to change my perspective and align myself with Paul and the Holy Spirit regarding suffering in my life?
1. Am I enduring suffering, or am I tempted to turn away from God?
 2. Am I suffering graciously in ways that please God, or am I enduring sinfully in ways that violate the commands God has given me?
 3. Am I trusting God's goodness, relying on His wisdom, and experiencing His love through the Holy Spirit – or have I grieved the Spirit in word or deed?
 4. Am I trusting the faithful Creator and continuing to do good, or am I relying on my own understanding (1 Peter 4:19)?