

Confidence in the Midst of Trials (Romans 5:3-5)

I am going to continue on the subject of encountering God in the midst of trials. Last week, we looked at Psalm 23:5 where the Lord said to David, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” If David would feast on the table instead of being preoccupied with his enemies, he would have the anointing of the Lord flowing in his life. So often the Lord spreads the table, and we look at the enemy instead of feasting at the table.

I am going to continue on the same theme. I am going to look at Romans 5, one of the classic passages in the Bible where Paul the apostle breaks down what I call “the divine logic” behind a trial or tribulation—why and how a tribulation causes us to benefit in the grace of God.

GOD HAS CALLED US TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN HIM IN TRIALS

Let’s start first in Romans 8:28: “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” This is one of the grand truths in the Word of God. It says in Romans 8:28 that “we know that all things work together for good for those who love God and to those who are called according to His purpose.” It goes on in the next verse to indicate that the purpose is to be conformed to the image of Jesus. That is the purpose in context to this passage. Well Paul says, “We know that all things” (Rom. 8:28). This is a foundational fact that everything works together for good if we respond to the Lord, and if we commit ourselves to His grand purpose to be conformed to the image of Christ. The Lord promises that He will overrule everything bad that has happened and has come against you, even the things that we are responsible for, which we have repented of. The Lord says, “I will overrule them. I will cause them to work together for your benefit if you will fully give yourself to Me.” Paul says we know this, “that all things work together.” Now, the Devil does not want us to know this. The Devil challenges this point every day of our life; the Devil comes in and challenges this because if we become confident under Jesus’ leadership, everything works together for the good, and then our spirit becomes vibrant and alive.

The Devil does not want us confident in this. This is one of the passages that you want to declare to the Devil. We stare at the Devil and say, “It is written God causes all things to work together for the good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). When the Devil comes, lies to you, and says, “Just give up; give in, it is not worth it,” you say, “In the name of Jesus, it is written that everything works together for good for the lives of those committed to Jesus, and those who are committed to be conformed to the image of Jesus.” Romans 8:28 is one of the high points in the book of Romans, but Paul actually introduces this theme of trials working together for good in Romans 5. He brings it to a crescendo in Romans 8.

PAUL GIVES US A THREE-FOLD ASSURANCE OF EXPERIENCING FULLNESS

Let’s back up, and we are going to look at Romans 5. Let’s go to Romans 5 now where he introduced this theme. Now one of the main points that Paul made in Romans 5 is Romans 5:5: “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” As Paul is discussing trials, this is a critical point. Paul

says that “hope does not disappoint” in Romans 5:5. The word for hope can be usually interchanged with the word confidence.

When you read the New Testament and you see hope, often you can put the word confidence in that place. Paul is saying in context here in Romans 5:5 that our confidence is that everything is going to work together for good. That is the general theme that Paul is working on here. We will not be disappointed with the work that God does in us because that work will be inspired and influenced by the revelation that God loves us. He is going to pour love into our heart. That is the foundational work that He is going to pour out love; He is going to reveal the Father’s love. That has been happening to a lot of people recently, but He is not just going to reveal the Father’s love, or Jesus’ love. He is actually going to impart it. He is going to supernaturally put love in us back for God that will overflow to people.

CONFIDENCE IN HIM IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS AND PRESSURES

The foundational principle to God’s purpose is basically: “Everything works together for good if you are committed to God’s purpose” (Rom. 8:28, paraphrased). What a promise for people called according to His purpose. Again in context of Romans 8:28-29, the purpose is to be conformed to the image of Jesus. Now we are successful in that purpose, as we understand that God loves us, and we respond by loving God as simply as that is. It is one of the simplest statements: the Holy Spirit has touched my heart with this simple statement for thirty years. I have said it thousands of times. From my early, mid-twenties to my mid-fifties, I have said this statement over and over: “God loves me. I am loved by God. I am a lover of God; therefore, I am successful.” When I get in pain, when I get in pressure, and I begin to ask the question, “Is it even worth all the effort?” I would ask the deeper questions: What is going on? What is the meaning of all of these things? The muscle I would work over and over by saying this: “I am loved by God, and I am a lover of God. By the grace of God, you know because most of the human race does not love God.” The very fact that you love God is God’s gift to you. The fact that He has stirred you to love Him is an amazing work of grace in your heart because the majority of the human race does not love God, but you do. How did that happen? I realize it was by the grace of God. You had to say yes, but that is a great work of God in your heart. Do not take that for granted. The fact that God loves you, I mean the Genesis 1 God, He loves you. He likes you.

PRIMARY IDENTITY AND TRUE SUCCESS: I AM LOVED, AND I AM A LOVER

The fact that you have connected with that truth, it means something to you, and you have responded back by the Holy Spirit to love Him. Our love is weak, but our love is real. Weak love is not false love; it is just weak. The very fact that God loves us, and we love Him; beloved, regardless what else happens in your life, you are already profoundly successful in your life. If you do not accomplish anything that gets the attention of other people, you are already one of the most successful people in the human race. No, this is true. People who receive the love of God, instead of rejecting it, and then they choose to return it by loving God, they are the most successful people from God’s point of view in all of human history. It is a minority of the human race.

It is actually a small percent. That is grievous; but, it is true. You are numbered amongst those people; so your core identity is not what your ministry is. It is not how many people like you. It is not what you accomplish. Your core identity is that He loves you, and you have received it. You love Him, and He receives it. Beloved, you are profoundly successful. This is the primary definition of success in your life in anybody's life. This is the number one definition of success. When I stand before God, He is not going to ask me first about my ministry. He is going to ask me first about my relationship to Him according to this definition: did I receive the love of God, and did I give love back?

By the grace of God, I can say yes to Him. That is the measure of my success in this life. You can be profoundly successful without anybody being aware of what you are doing, or what you are accomplishing with your hands, your ministry, or your money. That is important. I appreciate accomplishing things, but that is not the primary definition of your success. We are going to tie this theme of having confidence based on the revelation of the love of God because Paul said in Romans 5:5: "We have this hope." We will not be disappointed when all the information is made known on the last day; you will not be disappointed with this confidence that you have being loved by God and are a lover of God. This is the core reality of your life—that core truth. You will not be disappointed on the last day when you stand before God—that confidence will show itself to be true and to be wise.

THREE-FOLD ASSURANCE OF EXPERIENCING FULLNESS OF OUR SALVATION

Now, we are going to look at Romans 5, which is the passage that develops how trials and the love of God work together. After Romans 5, Romans 8 puts that great crescendo on it when Paul writes in Romans 8:28, "that everything works together for good for those who love God."

Paul is going to declare. He declares three benefits to everybody who receive salvation. These benefits are fantastic, but then he is going to relate those three benefits to trials. He is going to show how trials actually enrich our experience in these three benefits. Let's read it in Romans 5:1-5: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

That is benefit number two: access into grace. Number three: we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. That is benefit three: we rejoice in the hope, or the word confidence. Again, interchange hope and confidence, as Paul is speaking about the confidence of walking in the glory of God. So he gives three statements or benefits. I will give you a sentence on each one of them, or two.

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

He says that we are justified by faith. We have access into grace, and we have confidence of walking in the glory of God. Now look what he says in Romans 5:3-4: "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance,

character; and character, hope.” In addition to these three things of perseverance, character, and hope, Paul gave a little bit of definition where it is as if he is saying, “There is something in addition to these three grand truths.” It is almost like Paul is changing the subject, but he is not. We are going to find out in a minute that he is actually amplifying and elaborating on the subject. He says in Romans 5:3: “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance.” The word glory and rejoice is the same word.

We rejoice in tribulations. It seems that Paul makes a radical shift in the subject from talking about being justified by faith, access to the grace of God, the confidence in the glory of God, and then he talks about rejoicing in tribulations; it seems like he made a radical shift in the subject, as if he just changed subjects in mid-sentence. He did not. Paul said that we do not only rejoice in these three things, we also rejoice in tribulations because we know that they produce something in us. He goes on to say “perseverance,” and then he adds proven “character,” and “hope”—then he goes on.

We will talk about that in a minute, but the point I want to say is we have these benefits, but we also rejoice in something else called tribulation and pressures because of what pressure produces in us when we respond in the right way. If we do not respond in the right way, then the pressure does not produce anything good in us. Actually, it pulls us into bitterness, despair, and into negative emotions.

WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

Well let’s look at the three benefits real quick: number one: we are justified by faith. Every born-again believer has been accepted as a first class citizen in God’s kingdom. We have all the benefits of a citizen in the kingdom of God. Now most of us have grown up in America, which is a nation with many benefits, and being a citizen of a nation with benefits is something we take for granted. It is the most prosperous nation in history. It is like, “Well, OK that is nice.” More liberty, more prosperity than any nation in history, so it is the benefits we look at that is happening in our nation with the immigration issue. I do not want to talk about that, but I want to talk about the heart behind it. There are so many people trying to get into this nation. They want to be a citizen in a nation that gives them benefits. It is huge. It is massively important to them. You know there are multitudes of people who get on a little rubber raft over the last decades; these people from Cuba take a raft across ninety miles of open sea just for the chance of getting in a nation that will give them benefits as a citizen.

WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH AND HAVE ACCESS TO GOD’S HEART

Well, God says everything that would disqualify you has been removed because these immigrants get to the border, or they run into the officials, and they are disqualified. They are sent back; or what is worse, they are disqualified, and it is so disheartening. Paul says in Romans 5:1 that we have been “justified by faith.” That means in a real kind of practical sense that you have been accepted. Your passport is stamped. You are a citizen. All the benefits of the nation are yours. They are numerous, and this lasts forever. Nobody can take this citizenship from you. You are justified by faith. You are a citizen. Wow, amazing.

WE HAVE ACCESS TO THE GRACE OF GOD

Number two: Paul is writing, and I am sure Paul is excited when he writes that because he gets it more than we understand the implications of having access to the grace of God. There is more to it than that. You have access to the grace of God. Access to the grace means we have access to the King. You know there are three hundred million Americans, and 99.9 percent have never had a personal conversation with the president; 99.9 cannot pick up the telephone and call the president. They are citizens, but they do not have access to the throne. They do not have access to the president. They cannot call up the president and say, “Hey, Mr. President would you use your executive powers to help me out, and by the way, I am going to drop in Washington D.C. next week. Could we have a meal together? I want fellowship. I want to hang out for a while.” The reality is that 99 percent of the nation’s citizens do not have access to the President, but Paul encourages us that we have access not only citizenship, you have access to the King. You can make a phone call—it is called prayer. You can fellowship. You can touch His heart. He will release His power. You have access. You have more than citizenship. You have access to the King’s heart and His power. Wow. It has gone up. It is upgraded. But Paul points out that there is another point.

WE REJOICE IN THE HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD

There is a third point: we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Again, the word hope means confidence. We are rejoicing because we have confidence that we can walk in the glory of God. This is a big statement. That confidence in the glory of God operates in this age. It is not just confidence for a future glory. Certainly, it is that, but it is also a glory of God in this age, even now in our individual experience. When you study the word “glory,” as Paul the apostle uses it, many times the concept of glory is more than just going to heaven, seeing angels and God’s throne.

The glory of God has a very profound, personal dimension to it in the New Testament when Paul writes about it particularly in the Pauline Epistles. Paul describes the glory of God that every believer will have. Each believer will have a different measure of the glory of God in this life and in the age to come. We will not all be the same. There are people in this room who will have a far greater measure of the glory of God than other people. That is how it is. So the issue of the glory of God is very personally related to our destiny, our divine mandate, our divine assignment, and how we are in the Lord—in our mandate, our stewardship, our assignment. Paul says that not only are we citizens, not only do we have access to the King, but we have a role. We have a mandate. We have an assignment. You can be confident that you can have hope that you can walk in that assignment in a successful way. That is the idea—that you do not need to fail in that invitation—in that assignment to walk in the glory of God.

You can walk in it in this age, and you can walk in it in the age to come. The glory of God in this age has an outward dimension of impacting others for sure, but the glory of God in this age has a far more powerful, internalized dimension of our heart being transformed. What Paul is saying is that right now, we can rejoice in the confidence and the hope that we are actually engaging in the glory of God in the full way that God wants us to. Now, I do not know what my measure is in God, and in some ways, I do not care what it is. What I care about: I want to walk in the fullness

of what has been ordained for me. I do not want to walk in your assignment. I want to walk in mine. You do not want to walk in somebody else's shoes because the Lord is only going to relate to you, and He is only going to evaluate you based on the assignment in the glory of God that He gave you. That is all He is going to require from you to answer for that.

My goal is not to get a really big impact this way, or that way. I appreciate a big impact, but that is not my number one goal in life. My goal is to walk in the fullness of my assignment in the glory of God in this age, and in the age to come. But in this age, there is an external dimension to it, as we impact others. But the majority of the experience of the glory of God is internal. It is the transformation of the inner man into the image of Christ. Paul said, "You can have the confidence right now that you are walking in the measure of glory God has given you, and you can be successful in that right now." If you are successful in that, beloved, you are one of the most successful human beings who ever walked the planet. It has nothing to do with how big a crowd that you draw with your ministry, how much money you have, how many people pay attention to you. You can walk successfully in the glory of God by yielding your heart and giving yourself to Him in a wholehearted way.

I want to walk in everything that God has ordained for me. So now, Paul comes along, and it is as if he says, "OK, you are a citizen, you are justified, you have got citizenship, and all the benefits, good. You have access to the King, His heart, and His power." That is really good. You can have confidence today that you are actually walking successfully in the measure of the glory that is available to you. That is the key. I want to walk in the measure that is available to me.

WE CAN INCREASE IN EXPERIENCING GOD'S GLORY THROUGH TRIALS

It is as if Paul says, "I want to add one more thing though. You can also rejoice not just in those three things. You can rejoice in tribulations." Rejoice in tribulations because trials—tribulations, or pressures—they are all the same thing. There are many different types of trials, tribulations, and pressures, Paul is talking about just the general idea of pressure on your life, regardless how it came, just pressure. This is how you respond to pressure. There is financial, spiritual, relational, or physical pressure. There are many different types of pressures that touch all of us. What happens is that pressure when it touches our heart causes us to grow; pressure is designed in God's intention to cause us to realign ourselves with our core identity being, "I am loved by God, and a lover of God; therefore, I am successful." Pressure comes, and we feel like a failure in our assignment; we are blowing it, and that is why pressure stresses people out. They feel like they will be a failure. When pressure comes, it threatens their sense of success.

You know if it is in a ministry, the money is not there, the people scatter, or your ministry is not flowing. The fear, the pressure creates a fear that our success is in jeopardy, or whatever assignment God has given you. Whatever type of ministry or whatever assignment in the market place, home, or neighborhood, it is all ministry from God's point of view. So pressure comes when we feel that our success is being threatened, then we have to get an answer. We can get into fear, despair, or we can go to the place of dialogue with the Lord about our core identity. "You love me. I love You"—this is our identity in the primary sense. There are secondary ways of our success, but in the primary ways I am already successful.

If IHOP gets really big, or IHOP gets really little, if I have a lot of money, or I lose all my money, I get a lot of friends, or I lose all of my friends, my success is not impacted at all in terms of my primary success, which is my relationship with God. None of those things help me, or hurt me, in my primary success, which is my core identity to be loved and to be a lover of God. Pressure makes us realign ourselves with this. Pressure itself does not change us. Some people get mixed up. They think the pressure is the point. No. There are a thousand different types of pressures that might hit you.

PRESSURE WORKS IN US AND CAN MAKE US BITTER OR BETTER

What changes you is when you dialogue with the Spirit, you renew and realign your heart with your core identity. That is what changes you. The pressure just pushes you to do that. So the guy coming against you—that is not what helps you. The guy coming against you makes you go into a more focused dialogue with the Spirit, and with truth, which is what changes you. What the Holy Spirit knows is this: the Holy Spirit knows that this core identity is one thousand times more valuable to you and to me than we know. We say, “Well, of course, that is a good truth.” We like that truth.

We have got lots of teachers and singers who proclaim that truth, but the Lord would say to me, “IHOP-KC, you do not have any idea how vital that truth is that you get your core identity in this way.” The implications of changing us in this age, and even the implications in the age to come are radical; the implications that come from getting a hold of that truth. Even those who appreciate this truth, which is the vast majority in this room, if not everybody, though we appreciate this truth of our core identity by nature, we do not really lay hold of it much. Our natural way is to appreciate the truth, and then kind of live without it, but occasionally reach to it every now and then.

So the Lord says, “I love you so much, you have no idea how valuable this is. So, I am going to allow some pressures to help you enter into that dialogue more often because that dialogue is worth gold to you. You just do not know it. You get that worked in your spirit when you stand before Me, you will see how much gold is in your spirit.” I will just use gold just to make an analogy, as it is pure gold if you get a hold of this reality. Though we appreciate that truth that our core identity is this, we usually will not lay hold of it very fiercely or with tenacity. However, when pressure comes, the pain of pressure, the longing for the release of the pain drives us into that dialogue, and the Lord says, “I would rather you do it without the pressure. But, I know that you will do it far more zealously with pressure.” Just so you do not feel badly, this is also true of Paul the apostle. Pressure made him interact with the Lord at a new level. He said that the pressure is creating a greater weight of glory in his own life.

NEVER WASTE A TRIAL

So on a perfect day, I would say, “Lord, I do not need the pressure. I am going to tenaciously lay a hold of this, but as the months and years go by, I found out that when the pressure is on, I lay hold of it with a far greater tenacity.”

The Lord responds, “You will be very happy for the seasons that I helped you press into this because it will be gold in your relationship when you stand before Me, and there is nothing that will be more valuable than this reality that you have developed through the times of pressure.” The Devil comes, and he tells us the opposite. He tells us that trials are the proof that we are disqualified from the benefits of our citizenship. The Devil comes and tells us that trials are the proof that we do not have favor with the King. He will come and tell us the trials prove that we are not successful, but rather we are failures. So the Devil comes and tells us trials prove everything that we want in Romans 5; those three things, we lose our experience of them, and trials prove we are out of God’s favor. We are disqualified, and we are a failure.

It is as if Paul says, “No. It is exactly the opposite. The trials are meant not as a statement that your relationship is wrong with God, but it is meant to strengthen it because God cares so much for you.”

TO GLORY IN TRIBULATIONS

Romans 5:3-5: let’s develop it for another moment or two. Paul said in Romans 5:3-4: “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Let’s watch this divine logic that God gave Paul. We glory in the tribulations. We do not glory in the tribulation itself, just so you know. We glory in the impact that it has. I mean we do not glory in the Devil attacking us, but when the Devil attacks us, man attacks us, God disciplines us, or we just create a mess by our own decisions, we glory. It is not the Devil, or God, or anybody else. Sometimes, we just do dumb things. Regardless what the source is, if we repent of the negative, rebuke the Devil, and we realign ourselves with God, then the process strengthens us in God.

It says that if we glory in tribulations, and again we glory in the impact the tribulation has on us, we respond to it in a right way. We glory in tribulations knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, that perseverance produces character, and character produces hope or confidence. Remember hope and confidence are the same thing. This confidence will not disappoint you because this confidence is rooted in the experience of the love of God. Now notice Paul connects these three ideas, he puts them together: perseverance, proven character and hope. I am using the word proven character, as many other translations add the word proven character.

Now we look at these three virtues, and we do not automatically know how they are connected, but this is divine logic, and Paul had insight into it by the Holy Spirit. We have to see how these three work together; so that it maximizes our experience in a trial. I do not want to waste a good trial. I mean that. I do not want to go through a certain season and not gain anything. Many, many, many believers go through a hard season, and they do not gain anything in the Spirit. They do not understand that the trial is meant to produce perseverance in them. What they want is vengeance or vindication. What the Holy Spirit wants is perseverance. So they are talking to the Holy Spirit, “I want vindication. I want you to pay that guy back. I want a little bit of vengeance—mostly vindication.”

TRIALS CAN MAKE YOU BETTER IF YOU DO NOT CHOOSE TO BE BITTER

The Holy Spirit says, “That is not even on my agenda. My agenda is to produce perseverance in you.” When we disconnect from many trials, honestly they are just wasted. It is worse than that. It is not only that we end up neutral, as many believers go through a tough season. They end up with a residue of bitterness, or a full root of bitterness, which is worse than a residue. So instead of being enhanced in their experience in God, they have actually lost ground, and trials will be here for the rest of your life. But we can live in confidence when trials come that they are working in us, instead of just experiencing despair, confusion, and fear every time a trial comes.

PRESSURE FROM GOD’S DISCIPLINE, SATAN’S RAGE, OUR SIN, OR THE SIN OF OTHERS

Roman numeral III. The word tribulation means pressure or difficulties. There are four sources of pressure. I do not want to break this down: I just want to point it out. Four sources of pressure: God loves us, so He disciplines His children, and He shakes the nation. Satan hates us: therefore, he attacks us in the nations. Man sins against us, so he hurts people. He defiles the nations and Romans 8:22 says that “for we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pains together until now.” Creation groans; there are volcanoes, earthquakes, and hurricanes, which are a result of sin being in the created order. The groan of creation: there is a correspondence to sin in the human race, and the creation groaning and convulsing in negative ways—in a way that hurts the human race. Each one of those sources of pressure have a different response. I do not want to go into it right now. The problem is that sometimes there are several sources mixed up in one. I mean coming together in one pressure.

Sometimes it is God disciplining us, the Devil raging against us, our own sin getting us in trouble, or somebody else’s sin against us. It is all mixed up; so we have different responses to the pressure and to different parts. But here is my point: regardless what is the combination of the source of pressure, how many sources are contributing here, if we respond rightly, if we agree with God, rebuke the Devil, repent of our sin, we will increase in our relationship with God. Our response to trials: a right response begins with a right focus. Everyone’s natural focus is to be angry at the one who caused the pressure. So we get angry at God, we get angry at people, or we get angry at ourselves.

ANGER DOES NOT HELP US GROW IN OUR TRIALS

James 1:20: “For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” This passage tells us this: the anger of man does not accomplish anything in the Holy Spirit in your life. It does not accomplish anything. You gain no spiritual ground; there is no increase in the spirit in your life by anger. You can get mad at the people resisting you. Nothing good will increase in your life by that response. Well, I will get them out of the way, but another pressure is coming because God is interested in you connecting with Him. That is what the pressure is about. We say, “Well, I want vindication, or vengeance.”

God says, “Yeah, but I want perseverance out of you. We have two different agendas.” Even if you are angry at yourself, put yourself in the penalty box for a while, beat yourself up, it does not

achieve anything good in your life. Some people feel better about beating themselves up. They say, “I am so bad. I am so bad. I did it. I hate myself. I did so badly.” It is just a bunch of noise that does not gain anything in their spirit. It accomplishes nothing. It is good to learn the lesson, but it is better to learn the lesson, repent of it, push delete, get into a dialogue with the Holy Spirit, and forget beating yourself up. That is just distraction from connection with God. It looks humble, but it is not really humble. It is a waste of time and a distraction. It achieves nothing. No anger achieves anything in God.

The biblical focus, which is not natural, is that the pressure creates a greater dialogue with the Spirit and in the Word. The pressure creates a response of, “Holy Spirit, I want to talk to You. I want to read the Word, and talk to Jesus when I am reading the Word. I want to touch Your heart God. I want to align with my core identity. I am loved and a lover. That is my core success and identity. I want to repent of the flaws in my character, and I want to rebuke the Devil. I want to talk to You. I want to grow in You. I want to encounter You. That is the issue—not to just get free of the pressure, but to encounter the Holy Spirit. That is the issue.”

THE BIBLICAL FOCUS IS TO GROW IN FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

The goal is not just to encounter Him in getting your enemy taken out of the way. The Holy Spirit will do that. He will remove the enemy. I have seen that happen many times in my life, but He says, “I want and that excites my heart to see the Holy Spirit moves in dynamic ways.” It is exciting to see Him settle issues, but He wants an encounter between my heart and His heart—not just you know me having a victory. He wants a dialogue between our heart and His heart.

“GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD” (GENESIS 50:20)

Joseph’s brothers threw him in prison, and he was in prison over ten years before he got out of prison. He was one of the richest men in Egypt. He was actually the second most powerful man. So now he has ten older brothers, and their little brother Joseph is the wealthiest man in the earth besides Pharaoh. So now he is talking to his brothers, and Joseph focused on God’s hand—not on his brother’s evil throughout those ten plus years. It was more than ten years that Joseph focused on God’s hand and connecting with God’s heart—not on what his brother’s did.

Here is what it says in Genesis 50:20: “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.” Joseph spoke to his ten brothers, as they are scared because they respond, “Little Joey now is the most powerful man in the world. We thought we threw him away in prison and sold him into some slavery is what they did to him.”

Joseph said, “You meant it for evil. God meant it for good. God used your evil intention, and it was tough, but I encountered God. Now, God turned everything around, but I know God. God did it in order to bring it about, so I can save many.” Then he looks at the brothers who betrayed him and sold him into slavery. He says, “Do not be afraid of me. I am not a vengeance guy. As a matter of fact, I will even give you money. I am going to share my prosperity with you.” Joseph comforted the brothers who threw him in prison and sold him into slavery. He spoke kindly. We might think, “Where did he get this because he saw God’s hand in it?” He was wanting to

encounter God—not trying to get even with his brothers. What his brothers did was never the big point to him. What God was saying about connecting with God captured his focus. There are so many points here in Genesis 50 that I am going to skip.

PRESSURE IS MEANT TO PRODUCE OR WORK GOOD THINGS IN US

Pressure works in us. Look at Romans 5:3: “We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance.” We glory in tribulation. We know that tribulation produces perseverance. It produces something in us. 2 Corinthians 4:17: “Our light affliction is working out more and more surpassingly an eternal weight of glory.” Affliction is working in us. Tribulation is producing something in us, if we respond rightly. Again, the pressure itself is not what changes us. The pressure causes us to get a more tenacious, consistent dialogue with the Spirit and the Word. That is what marks our heart, changes us, and we will carry the impact of that through our life all the way through eternity. We will carry the impact of that dialogue with God that happened because we were under pressure. That is why we went into the dialogue in a more tenacious, fierce way. The impact of that dialogue marks us, and we will carry the mark in the good sense all of our life and into the age to come. The Lord says, “You cannot imagine how valuable this will be to you when you see the whole story. You will so value what those trials did to you, if you respond rightly.” Now, we have to exercise our faith. We have got to realign ourselves. We have to talk to the Spirit in the Word. We do not talk in our mind about the guy who mistreated us; we do not talk to people about the guy who mistreated us. We talk to the Spirit about us. “Holy Spirit, I know the guy treated me badly, but it is You and me who I care about. I want You to take care of me. I mean I do want You to move him out of my life. I want to have a dialogue with you. It is not a dialogue in my mind against the man, or a dialogue with You against the man.” It is a dialogue with God about me. If we get a hold of this, it will change our life.

THE ATHLETE, MUSICIAN, AND ATHLETE

The athlete: resistance training is what builds a muscle. It is the action of doing the weight over and over to break down the muscle, which causes the muscle to be built up. That is how it increases by resistance training. The musician: constant repetition develops the skill. It is over and over again. Now, we are not looking for a skill per say in this particular issue of trials. We are looking for a spiritual muscle to be developed.

The butterfly in the cocoon struggles to get out of the cocoon. When the butterfly is struggling in the cocoon, it is the little caterpillar. What is happening, is through the struggle of that little worm, it transforms into a butterfly. The struggle produces fluids to go through the wings of that butterfly while in the cocoon. If you open that cocoon prematurely, that butterfly will never fly. We all have seasons of the cocoon, but if we get out of that cocoon in a wrong way, we will never fly. That butterfly will just be a little worm crawling the rest of his days. You can do the math.

Paul said, “We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance.” It is knowing this divine logic. Knowing these three things—perseverance, character, and hope—

those are the three things God is after, which is far more than vindication, or vengeance, He is after producing this in you. We will look at these three things really briefly.

Perseverance: that is the first thing the Spirit wants. Perseverance is an internal attitude. To consistently realign the intention of our heart and go hard after God—that is perseverance. It is under pressure, I have said many times that the number one temptation that everyone has is to quit. That is the number one temptation of believers and unbelievers—to quit pressing in hard to God, to give up, and to give in. The enemy tells us to, “Give into the sin, give into the unbelief.”

Then, we think, “You know what? It is too much effort to try to get a hold of this love of God. I am a king, a son, and a bride. Eternity and the Millennium? Forget it. I will just watch TV.” Many people who sin, just do not want to put the work in. They just give into their sin. They have these impulses, instead of warring against them. It is just easier to give up and give in, just give into spiritual passivity, and accept a mediocre life in God, instead of the fullness of what God gave us.

KNOWING THE PROCESS

So perseverance means that we do not give up the vision to press in hard after God day after day. To press in hard after God does not mean for you to fast every day. I am not saying perseverance is doing something outwardly—that is really intense. I am talking about an internally engaging with the Lord. People give up on the inside long before it shows up on the outside. There are many people undoubtedly in IHOP-KC who have been on staff, and they have already given up. They sit on row ten, or twenty in the prayer room. They have already decided not to engage hard with God. They are coasting. They have given up under pressure. They might sign back up again in a month, two, three, or four; but perseverance means not giving up in the daily vision. It means to daily connect with God in a meaningful way. Perseverance means we keep signing up everyday. We work the muscle everyday; perseverance actually increases the more that we work that muscle everyday. I do not even mean going in the prayer room, but let us just use that example.

It is our whole life. It is an attitude in our spirit: I am not letting go of my vision to connect with God in a deep and meaningful way day after day. I am not taking a week off. I am not taking a month off. I may go on vacation, but I am not going on vacation from God. The vision in my heart is to dialogue with the Spirit and the Word. I want it to be true everyday. We will fail. We will come up short, but when we come up short, we sign back up. We keep the vision. That is what perseverance is. When we are under pressure, we ask new questions. When we are under pressure, we realign our heart to our core identity. That is how we get our comfort. When we are under pressure, I am talking about the one who responds in the right way under pressure; they make new decisions about obeying God. Under pressure, they have a new resolve to fully give themselves to God. They press into God for a Holy Spirit breakthrough—a solution to their problem. That is the right response. That is called perseverance. They keep asking the question. They are not giving up their vision to have a daily encounter and dialogue with the Word and the Spirit. I do not mean a five-minute dialogue and then to say, “Well, I did it today.” They want their lives consumed with God. They are not trying to take time off from God.

There are some people who have their prayer room life, and they have their “out of the prayer room life.” The Holy Spirit says, “I want perseverance. I want steadiness in your resolve to encounter Me. All the times of your life, not just when you are sitting in a prayer room, I want that resolve in your spirit, so we sign back up day after day.” We sign back up. That is called perseverance. Pressure creates perseverance. We work the muscle. A lot of people, they get under pressure, and they quit. Then, the trial is wasted. They end up in bitterness, and they actually lose a lot of ground in the Lord.

WASTED TRIALS WHERE WE DO NOT GAIN ANYTHING

Some people just grit their teeth in the trial, and they do not talk to God much, they just wait until the trial passes. That is better than getting bitter, but they still did not gain anything. Now if you have proven character, if you get perseverance, and again perseverance is not something that happens once. It is an internal resolve to sign up day after day. You do not have perseverance because you have done it for three months, or for a year or two. Perseverance is worked in us over years. That is what the Spirit wants. When I get under pressure, I say, “Lord, I like vindication. I like breakthrough, maybe a little vengeance just be nice to them.”

The Lord says, “No. That is not My agenda. I want you to sign up more to talk to Me more. I want perseverance. Do not even think about those other things. Get in line with Me. I am after perseverance. Let’s get on the same page. That is what I am going for in this pressure. I want you and Me to be closer. The next thing is proven character. Proven character is not the internal attitude. This is the external. This is the follow through in behavior. It is consistent behavior when no one is looking. It is living in purity when nobody will catch you, one way or the other. I do not just mean sexual purity, I mean purity with our words. It is caring about our words when nobody will catch us. We want proven character. Now proven character increases our capacity to experience and feel God.

There is a dynamic relationship by what we do. Speaking is a behavioral thing. It is an action. There is a dynamic relationship by what we do, how we feel, and what we see in the spirit. There is a very close, dynamic relationship, and a lot of people do not like that relationship because they say, “Well, if what we do matters that means we are earning it.” No. I am not talking about earning it. You could never earn the goodness of God. It is given to us freely, but when we line ourselves up in agreement with the Spirit with our actual behavior and character, we increase in our capacity to experience God because our capacities increase.

THE PURE IN HEART SHALL SEE GOD (MATTHEW 5:8)

Look what Jesus said it in Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” The pure in heart will see God more clearly. They will feel more. They will see revelation. I do not just mean gifts of the Spirit, though it includes that. But they will see the revelation of God, when they open the Word. I do not mean that they will be a great Bible teacher—that is not the point. You know our purity in our character impacts the way we see and feel in our spirit. Hebrews 12:14: “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the

Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”

PURSUE HOLINESS TO SEE GOD

Pursue holiness. Without holy behavior, you will not see the Lord. You will not encounter Him in the way that God ordained. Love is not mature until it is tested and walked out under pressure. The Lord wants love proven and walked out under pressure. When Abraham offered up his son Isaac, the Lord said to him in Genesis 22. When the Lord offered up Isaac on the altar, it was as if the Lord said, “Now I know you fear God.” I mean the Lord knows everything, but He says, “It is now documented in the chronicles of heaven. It is now a part of your history in your relationship with Me.”

PROVEN CHARACTER INCREASES OUR CAPACITY TO RECEIVE FROM GOD

Beloved, actions really matter. It is false grace to think that we do what we want to do because if we repent of it, we can be forgiven. We will stay spiritual babies for years and years with that attitude. We never increase in our capacity to encounter the Lord. Our whole spiritual life is not getting forgiveness because of just sinning all the time. The Lord says, “I have more for you. I want perseverance, but I want it to turn it into proven character because when we walk out our obedience under pressure in private, it moves God’s heart.” God sees that it costs us. It moves His heart, and it increases our capacity to feel God.

HOPE IS TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S PLANS IN THE FUTURE

Hope: now we think how hope can be the end of the progression. Hope is confidence. Now, the hope He is talking about is the hope of experiencing the glory of God in Romans 5:2: “the hope of the glory of God.” Now, here we are talking about the confidence that we are walking in the glory of God when we live by our identity. See guys will look at you, when you are pressing into God. They will see that you are living out of this core identity: “I am loved. I am a lover; therefore, I am successful.” You are throwing all of your eggs in that basket so to speak. You are counting your life that this is the way of wisdom to live. They are out doing other things. You are developing your heart, and you are developing your identity in God. They say, “Come on. You are wasting your time.”

Paul says, “No. This confidence that you will get is that you are living in the glory of God. This confidence is that you are successful in God. You will not be disappointed is what it says in Romans 5:5.”

By this hope, you will not be disappointed when all the truth is laid out on the last day; you will see that wisdom and God will vindicate you in that day. You have chosen wisely, but beloved, blessed is the man or the woman who has confidence and stays steady. They have confidence. They have perseverance. They have proven character, and out of that perseverance of proven character, they have confidence. They have revelation that love and humility are the most powerful and wise ways to live under God’s eyes; they have so much confidence that they will not back away from it even under pressure.

So the guy comes along, he has got a lot going on. He says, “Hey, where is your resume? Show me what you have accomplished.”

You say, “Well, I have done things. I have served people all my life, but I do not have a big following. I have not made a big splash, and nobody even knows what I am doing. But I have invested in my heart in God. I cannot show you all that I have done, but it is under His eyes.”

THIS HOPE WILL NEVER DISAPPOINT US, OR NEVER LET US DOWN

Paul says in Romans 5:5: “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” To invest is not to buy into a wrong idea; it was not hype. You will not be put to shame. You will see the gold and the glory of that kind of lifestyle; God will show you the wisdom of it, and you will not be disappointed because a lot of people lose their confidence in this kind of vigorous spirituality. When the pressure is on, people want to know what you are making out of yourself, and what are you doing, having this kind of confidence is like an anchor in your soul. It is as if Paul said, “If you end up with that kind of confidence, you are one of the richest and the most powerful people on the planet. You really are. Blessed is the man who has this confidence that living under God’s eye is gold. It will not perish no matter what men say about it.”

In Romans 5, Paul summarizes three benefits that you have as you are a citizen. You have access. You can talk to the President, but you have confidence that you can experience the glory of God now. You can have all that God has for you in this age. His eyes are on you. You also can rejoice in tribulation because tribulation does not undermine those privileges. It actually enhances it because if you know that the tribulation drives you into a more tenacious dialogue with God.

It produces perseverance. The perseverance over time actually changes your behavior. That behavior sets you up to have far greater spiritual capacities. You have far more revelation, and that revelation becomes hope, which is confidence that you are living under God’s eyes. God is watching you. God’s way and His eyes are on you—it is the wisest way to live. He says, “You are a rich man in the spirit, or a rich woman if that process works in you.”

MINISTRY TIME

Amen. Let’s stand. Now, I realize we have covered a lot. That is what handouts are for. That is what prayer rooms are for. You can sit and say, “What? Now, what is this perseverance thing again? Let me check that out.”

There is a number of you who just because you are human—not because you are doing something wrong, but the pressure is on, and the enemy is tempting you to just give up. I mean that is everyone’s pressure to give up.

Do not feel picked on, but you are saying, “Hey, I would like some prayer. I mean the pressure is on. I am going to realign my heart instead of figuring out who did it to me. I am going to talk to God about me and God right now. I am going to shift the conversation.”

Even before any of you respond and come up here, I am going to invite you to come up in a minute. Close your eyes. I want you to talk to the Lord. Say, “Lord, I want to get into a deeper dialogue with You.” Say it in your own words: “I want a deeper dialogue with You in the Word. Dialogue with the Word means you are praying over the Bible, when you read it. You are talking to Jesus when you read the Bible. That is what I mean by dialogue with the Word.”

You are saying, “I do not want to waste a trial anymore. I am going to change the focus of my soul under trial. I am going to make the trial about talking to You and about my heart, Holy Spirit, instead of talking to You about people who bug me. I am going to talk to You about me. I am going to change my goals. Instead of get vindication and pay back, I want to talk about me getting perseverance, to sign up more, more tenaciously to connect with You on a daily basis. I want to walk in godly character. When no one is looking, I want what I do with my eyes, my money, and my words, I want when no one is looking I want to live in love before You. I want to show my love to You when no one is looking. I want to prove my love to You when no one is looking. I want to manifest it. Then I want a vibrant spirit called hope or confidence or revelation. I want my spirit alive with confidence, so I will never back away from this lifestyle ever.”

So you are talking to Him: “Holy Spirit, I ask You come and touch us right now in this room. Come, Holy Spirit, release Your fire. I ask You for the fire, the wine, and the wind of Your Spirit to come and touch our hearts right now.”

When pressure comes, we become more committed to dialogue with God in pressure, instead of some other out. We want to dialogue with God under pressure. That is where we want to take our pain into dialogue with the Holy Spirit. That is where we want to take our frustration: dialogue with the Holy Spirit. I want to invite. Some of you say, “I would like prayer because I am just really the enemy is hitting me hard. I know he is hitting everybody, but I feel that pressure intensely. He is pressuring me to give up. I am not going to. I do not mean give up on IHOP-KC. I mean to give up in my pursuit to connect with God in a deep way on a daily basis. I am not going to. I am resigning up, but I would like prayer because I am under this real pressure.”

Beloved, that will be true for many of us many times in our lives, when that pressure mounts up. I just break off the spirit of heaviness right now. I speak to it and command it to go, the spirit of heaviness, and the spirit of despair. It is just a flaming missile from the enemy. It is like a flaming missile coming to touch your heart the spirit of despair. I command it to leave now in Jesus name. I ask for a spirit of praise. A spirit of praise does not just mean a worship song. It means a spirit of gratitude because you see where you are going in this journey. I ask for the spirit of praise rejoicing in the journey, the divine logic. There is logic in what is happening. I take authority over the spirit of despair, and I rebuke it in Jesus name right now. Go. Go. Just all over the room, Holy Spirit, just rest on them. We ask for a realignment of the heart, a realignment of the heart.

Let Your fire come right now. Release a spirit of praise for the spirit of heaviness. I ask You to lift off the spirit of heaviness right now. I rebuke it. I command it to leave right now. Just confess

in your heart that everything works together for good. Just in your own heart to the Lord say, “Everything works together for good.” The Devil is a liar. The Devil is a liar. Everything works together for good. That is my confession for those are called according to His purpose. I am going for Christ-likeness. I am going for the purpose. I am going for the image of Jesus that is what I am going for. I invite people to come up and pray. Maybe about fifty of you: Come on up and pray for folks. More Lord, release Your glory; release Your power, Lord, right now in this room.