

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

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. God has called us to have confidence in Him in the midst of our trials and pressures. During the process of trials, we can have confidence that all things work together for our good.
²⁸ We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Rom. 8:28)
- B. Paul gave us a 3-fold assurance of experiencing the fullness of our salvation (Rom. 5:1-2). We are justified by faith, have access to God’s heart, and hope or confidence to experience His glory. Access speaks of the privilege of approaching the presence of someone great such as a king.
¹ Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace...and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Rom. 5:1-4)
- C. Paul gave us insight into how trials work for us, leading us to experience more of God’s glory (v. 3-5). Our sin does not end our hope to walk in God’s glory and plan for our lives, if we will yield to Him. We need not live without confidence in God by limping in confusion and uncertainty.
- D. Paul connected three significant ideas together; *perseverance*, *proven character* and *hope* in a way that is not automatically obvious to us. We must see how these three virtues are connected. These are essential to understand to maximize the benefit of trials. We can “waste” a trial.
- E. We become bitter or better in trials depending on how we respond to them. It is not enough to endure a trial, because we are not changed by the trial itself, but by responding rightly to God in them. When we understand God’s bigger purpose in our trials, then we can endure so much more. Without understanding, we live in despair, confusion, and fear.
- F. Our response to trials begins with our focus. Our natural focus is to be angry towards those who are responsible for our pressures. Thus, we wrongly get angry at God, people, or ourselves. Our anger does not accomplish anything in God’s purpose. Being angry at ourselves does not help.
²⁰ For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. (Jas. 1:20, NAS)
- G. The biblical focus is to grow in faith and obedience (love, humility, purity, and gratitude). We do this by seeing the darkness that works against us by demonic attacks and flaws in our obedience. Ask the Spirit for insight on both of these areas.
- H. Our primary response is to seek for the solution and end of our trials in our dialogue with the Spirit. We resist all expressions of darkness coming against us and to commit to grow in obedience. Confidence and gratitude are available to all believers regardless of our failure.

II. PRESSURE WORKS IN US

- A. Pressure is meant to “produce” or “work” good things in us. The word translated glory (v. 3) is the same word translated as rejoice (v. 2). We are to glory or rejoice in what tribulations produce in us as we respond to the Spirit. We rejoice not in the tribulations themselves, but in their effects. This is more than a determination to think in a positive way or to make the best out of it. The only way we can rejoice is by knowing that pressure produces something good in us.

³ ***We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance... (Rom. 5:3)***

¹⁷ ***Our light affliction...is working for us an...eternal weight of glory... (2 Cor. 4:17)***

- B. ***The butterfly:*** A butterfly’s struggle in a cocoon is necessary to develop their wings. Their struggle forces fluid into their wings so that they may fly. To “help” by cutting the cocoon would result in their wings remaining undeveloped. They would spend the rest of their life crawling. All must go through struggles to be able to “fly.” Our transformation does not happen without it.
- C. ***The athlete:*** Resistance training builds muscle strength. A muscle is strengthened when it is exercised beyond the norm using an increased weight that breaks down and builds up the muscle.

III. TRIBULATIONS OR TRIALS

- A. The word tribulation means pressure or difficulties. Paul called it tribulation and James called it various trials of our faith (Jas 1:2).
- B. There are four sources of pressure: *God, Devil, man, and fallen creation*
- 1). God ***loves***, therefore He ***shakes*** the nations and we ***agree*** with Him
 - 2). Satan ***rages***, therefore he ***attacks*** the nations and we ***resist*** him
 - 3). Man ***sins***, therefore he ***defiles*** the nations and we ***repent*** of sin
 - 4). Creation ***groans***, therefore it troubles the nations and we ***cleanse*** it (Rom. 8:20-23)
- C. All trials and suffering betray the presence of the enemy that we must resist.

IV. KNOWING THE PROCESS

- A. We can only rejoice in trials by knowing how they relate to perseverance, character and hope.
- ³ ***And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Rom. 5:3-4)***
- B. Transformation is not an automatic result of trials. It occurs only if we respond rightly and this depends on how we understand the pressures. Tribulation works perseverance instead of offense.

- C. Paul says that trials do not contradict the reality of having God’s favor, but they are occasions for increasing it. Trials cause despair unless we see a purpose in them. We rejoice only when we see the process that is worked in us and the blessing given to those who are transformed by trials.
- D. The greater the calling in this age and the age to come, the greater the pressures that come to prepare our character for it. A “billion dollar promise” has a “billion dollar preparation” for it.
- E. The transformation of a caterpillar to a butterfly is called metamorphosis. The name is a derivative of the Greek verb in Romans 12:2 translated “transformed” (metamorphousthe).
² *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:2)*
- F. The transformation starts with our mind. This includes our focus and perspective during a trial. As we meditate on the Word, the Spirit renews our mind and prepares us to express His glory.
- G. Transformation involves a process of coming into agreement with God with our intention (perseverance), behavior (character), and perspective (hope).
- H. **Perseverance**: to consistently realign the intention of our heart to believe and obey God instead of giving up and giving in to sin, unbelief, or spiritual passivity. We continually set our heart to press into God and to refuse to quit. Pressure makes us ask deep questions about the condition of our life and relationship to God. It leads us to make new decisions about obeying God and causes us to press into God for the breakthrough of the Spirit’s solution to our problems.
- I. Perseverance refers to spiritual fortitude that stays resolute in faith and obedience under pressure. It is made stronger by exercising it under pressure.
- J. **Proven character**: to follow through in changing our behavior (actions). This results in increasing our capacity to receive from God in a sustained way as the fog of spiritual dullness lifts from us. There is a dynamic connection between what we do and how we feel and see.
⁸ *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Mt. 5:8)*
¹⁴ *Pursue...holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; ¹⁶ lest there be any fornicator or profane person... (Heb. 12:14-16)*
⁶ *You greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith...though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ... (1 Pet. 1:6-7)*
- K. **Hope**: to have confidence about the future that is in agreement with God’s plan for our life purpose. We live with new perspective and a positive spirit instead of fear, complaint, and despair. Our perspective is influenced by the revelation of God’s love for us.

- L. This hope will never disappoint us. It will never let us down. Whatever we expect, it is too low. Hope will not put us to shame. It is influenced and colored by the revelation of God's love.
- M. This sense of the love of God never existed in the human heart until it was communicated by the Spirit. We do not have natural ability to comprehend God's love.
- N. Our hope or confidence is alive with a deep awareness of the love of God. The Spirit helps us to see that what we will receive is beyond what any eye has seen (1 Cor 2:9-12).
- O. Thus our tribulations lead us to new assurances of God's love. Hope is not static. It is like a muscle that grows weaker without use or stronger with use.
- P. Difficulty often makes us question why we are obeying and believing God instead of giving up and giving in. These regular reviews cause us to see more clearly.
- Q. The anguish of hopelessness is cured by constantly realigning our hearts with the Holy Spirit.
- R. We have the certainty that God loves us because it is "poured out in our hearts through the Spirit." The verb "pour out" speaks of an abundant effusion of the Spirit.

V. ASKING FOR INSIGHT IN A TIME OF TRIALS

- A. If we ask God for insight during trials, He will give it to us without any reproach or rebukes.
² Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience [perseverance]. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work [full impact in us], that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing [in our obedience]. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (Jas 1:2-5)
- B. We are to ask the Lord for wisdom into areas in which we lack complete obedience (v. 5). We ask the Lord to shock us now with insight into our lack of obedience instead of at the judgment seat. David asked the Lord for insight into areas in which he lacked complete dedication to Him.
²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; ²⁴ and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps. 139:23-24)
¹² Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret (unperceived) faults. ¹³ Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins...Then I shall be blameless... (Ps. 19:12-13)

