

Loving Jesus in the Midst of Pressure (Rom. 5:1-11)

I. THE MOST IMPORTANT ASSIGNMENT IN OUR LIFE

- A. The most important assignment in the life of every believer is to love God with all our heart and to spread the fame of Jesus to others, both believers and unbelievers (the Great Commission).
³⁷You shall love the LORD...with all your heart...³⁸This is the first and great commandment. (Mt. 22:37-38)
- B. One of the most common hindrances to staying diligent is found in having a wrong perspective about what it means to love God with all of our heart. Many have spiritual idealism about this. In Romans 5:1-11, Paul gives us an encouraging perspective that dismantles spiritual idealism.
- C. A wrong perspective about how God views our weak love is a hindrance that causes us to draw back. Some idealize their love for God thinking that if it is real, then they should strongly feel it and should accomplish big things for God. They despise the smallness of their love and disregard it because it does not feel powerful when they offer it to God. God feels it even when we don't.
- D. Our small and weak efforts to love God move His heart and are evidences of the glory of God in our life right now. Our love is real even when it is weak. Weak love is not false love.
- E. We are encouraged by understanding the way God views the way we love Him. Most of our ministry to one another is small and seemingly weak. We often misinterpret how God views it. Our weak and small efforts to love move God's heart now and result in eternal rewards. When we give someone a cup of cold water because of our love for Jesus, it will be rewarded forever.
¹⁰For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (Heb 6:10)
- F. We sometimes picture ourselves in the future with mature love, while disregarding our weak love in the present. Wholehearted love is not perfect, but rather it is love that withholds nothing. God is not asking for immediate maturity in our love, but that we would love Him with all our heart in the here and now. Though our "all" is small, it is still our all.
- G. Some imagine that when they get beyond today's pressures and after things settle down, then they will live wholeheartedly. In every season of life, people still find reasons to postpone their pursuit of wholeheartedness. They imagine that when things are different, then they will start. They wait for better circumstances to love Him and for more extreme expressions in loving Him.
- H. Some limit their understanding of loving God to activities that are traditionally considered "spiritual," like worship, healing the sick, evangelism, etc. However, our love is expressed in many areas of our lives. It develops in the weak and imperfect moments that we have right now. The "now" often seems mundane, ordinary, and weak. Jesus revealed how much God values the ordinary and routine aspects of our life by living that way Himself for thirty years. Imagine, Jesus as God embraced the common things of life.

II. WE STAND IN GOD'S GRACE (ROM. 5:1-11)

- A. In Romans 5:1-11, Paul presents a kingdom perspective of life that dismantles spiritual idealism. The word translated *glory* (v. 3) is the same word translated as *rejoice* (v. 2).
²*This grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* ³*And not only that, but we also glory [rejoice] in tribulations...* ¹¹*And not only that, but we also rejoice in God...* (Rom. 5:2, 3, 11)
- B. **Stand in grace:** Paul's main exhortation is to call us to stand in grace ***with confidence*** that God accepts and enjoys us (Rom. 5:1-2a), and to stand ***without compromise***, as we seek to walk out the first commandment (Rom. 5:3-11). We refuse both condemnation and compromise.
- C. Paul makes three surprising statements in instructing us how to stand strong in God's grace.
1. ***Rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God*** by seeing our small and weak efforts to love God as an expression of God's glory in our life and, therefore, of being successful in God's eyes (v. 2).
 2. ***Rejoicing in tribulation*** instead of quitting with despair (v. 3-5 as developed in v. 6-10).
 3. ***Rejoicing in God*** by engaging deeply with God (v. 11).

III. REJOICING IN THE HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD (ROM. 5:2)

- A. The word *hope* is often interchangeable with *confidence* or *certainty*. To rejoice in the hope of the glory of God speaks of having confidence that our life is anchored in God's glory. We are confident that to pursue loving God is to live successful in His eyes to such a degree that we even receive eternal rewards for it. Our weak love and small acts of obedience are evidence of and an expression of the glory of God in our lives now. Paul calls us to rejoice in this glory.
²*We...rejoice in hope [confidence or certainty] of the glory of God.* (Rom. 5:2)
- B. We rejoice that our life is successful according to God's definition of success, regardless of what man says and how many pressures we endure. We see the value of our life from God's perspective. We rejoice because our life really matters to Him and is connected to our eternal destiny. We rejoice, realizing that God values our weak obedience and small labors and impact.
¹⁶*Though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.*
¹⁷*For our light affliction...is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* (2 Cor. 4:16-17)
- C. When we understand the way that God views our life and love for Him, we are encouraged. He is so generous and kind. The fact that you are trying to love Jesus is an expression of walking in the glory of God now. Though it is hidden from our natural eyes it is real. Paul calls us to see and rejoice in the truth that our weak lives are anchored in the glory of God. We are to rejoice in this instead of despising our life as a failure and drawing back from God.
- D. Many view their life as a mess now but they believe they will walk in the glory of God in the resurrection. However, our love for Jesus now is the evidence and expression of God's glory in us now. The glory in our lives now is the very seed that is fully manifest in the age to come.

- E. The challenge is that we do not feel or discern the glory of God in our life in the present. It is indiscernible, even “hidden” from our five senses. We cannot measure it by our emotions or our five senses. Paul referred to our true life in this age as being “hidden” in Christ.
- ³*For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Col. 3:3-4)*
- F. In order to rejoice in the hope of glory, we must take time to fill our minds with what the Scripture teaches about the way God views our life now as an expression of the glory of God and what it says about our life in the age to come.
- G. To rejoice in the hope or confidence of living in God’s glory is a dynamic paradigm shift. By nature, we rejoice when we are successful in man’s eyes and feel God’s presence in our labors. It takes revelation to view our present small and weak life as successful in God’s glory to such a degree that we actively rejoice in this truth. This perspective causes us to live differently.

IV. WE REJOICE IN TRIBULATION (ROM. 5:3-5): UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

- A. Paul gave insight into how trials cause us to experience more of God’s glory (Rom. 5:3-5). He connected three significant ideas—*perseverance*, *character*, and *hope*—in a way that is not automatically obvious to us. We must see “God’s logic” in how these virtues are connected.
- ³*We also glory [rejoice] in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit... (Rom. 5:3-5)*
- B. We may ask, “How can we rejoice in God’s glory when we have so many tribulations?” Tribulation is not counterproductive to us experiencing God’s glory. It is the best soil in which love grows strong. Trials do not have to diminish our success and progress in God.
- C. The Devil lies to us, telling us that our trials are proof that we do not have God’s favor, that we are a failure, and that our relationship with God is deficient.
- D. Paul’s point was that our trials do not contradict the fact that our life is successful in love and that we have God’s blessing; rather, they can help us increase our success in love.
- E. **Knowing:** We only rejoice in trials by knowing “God’s logic” in how they relate to perseverance, character, and hope. Trials cause despair unless we see a purpose in them. We rejoice only when we see the good that is worked in us. It is essential to understand this in order to maximize the benefit of trials. Transformation is not an automatic result of trials. It occurs as we respond rightly to God. We do this best when we understand the process that is occurring.
- F. The word *tribulation* means pressure and includes many different types of trials or difficulties. James called them *various trials* (Jas. 1:2). We each have many pressures that include pain, boredom, resistance, busyness, frustration, financial lack, fear, misunderstanding, rejection, etc.

- G. There are four sources of pressure: God, Satan, man, and fallen creation.
1. God *loves*, therefore He *disciplines* His people and *shakes* nations. We must *agree* with Him.
 2. Satan *rages*, therefore he *attacks* us and the nations. We must *resist* him.
 3. Man *sins*, therefore he *hurts* himself and others. We must *repent* of our sin.
 4. Creation *groans*, therefore it *troubles* the nations. We must *cleanse* it (Rom. 8:20-23).
- H. Regardless of the source of the pressure, if we respond rightly to God, it will result in our good. We rejoice not in the tribulations themselves, but in their effects. We are to rejoice, in what tribulations produce in us as we respond to the Spirit. A trial does not change us, but our response to continually realign our heart to God and His Word is what produces change in us.
- I. ***Perseverance:*** This speaks of our commitment to continually reset our heart to love and obey Jesus instead of giving up. Pressure causes us to *ask questions* about our relationship to Jesus and why we should persevere instead of quit. It causes us to frequently rehearse the consequence of persevering or quitting. This leads us to *realign our hearts* to love and obey Jesus and to *press into God* for the breakthrough of His solution to our problems. Pressure causes us to work our “faith muscle.” Resistance training builds muscle strength. A muscle is strengthened when it is exercised beyond its norm by using increased weight that breaks down and builds up the muscle.
- J. ***Character:*** This speaks of a long-term change in our attitudes and actions. There is a deep connection between what we do and how much we see God. Those with godly character have an increased capacity to receive revelation and understand God.
- ⁸***Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Mt. 5:8)***
- K. ***Hope*** is the confident expectation of fully experiencing God’s glory. None will be disappointed when all the information that God has about us becomes clear on the last day.
- ⁵***Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit... (Rom. 5:5)***
- L. We will not be disappointed in the outcome of God’s love. It is based on reality not just human optimism or positive exaggeration. Hope allows us to see how deeply He loves us now (whether we feel it or not) and how much glory we have received by our small and weak efforts to love Him because of His great generosity. We will not be disappointed when we see how we really did receive God’s glory in this life and how our tribulations really did bear good fruit in us.
- M. We need not fear being disqualified from receiving God’s love—even when we were enemies He loved us. Paul develops the idea of the love of God not disappointing us (Rom. 5:6-10).
- ¹⁰***If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God...much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom. 5:10)***

V. WE REJOICE IN GOD (ROM. 5:11): THE ULTIMATE PRIVILEGE

¹¹***Not only that, but we also rejoice in God. (Rom. 5:10-11)***