

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Rom 5:1-5)

Lesson 1 of 29

INTRODUCTION

With great power, the Spirit has affirmed that when righteousness is sought through law, "faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect" (Rom 4:14). This being the case, those under the Law are left in a perpetual state of agitation and alienation, for without faith it is not possible to please God. There can also be no quietness within. As we will see, this is a critical point. The impact of “doctrine” upon the individual tells more of its association with the truth than the words which contain the doctrine. By "words which contain the doctrine," I do not mean Scripture itself, but the representations of Scripture given by men.

GOD'S DOCTRINE IS EFFECTIVE

When proclaimed and received doctrines do not yield the results described in Scripture, they are false. The doctrine of God, when received, always produces the effects promised by God. This is the proclamation of the Lord Himself. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass" (Deut 32:2). Isaiah also confirms this marvelous reality. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but IT SHALL ACCOMPLISH that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa 55:10-11).

These utterances reach their highest fulfillment in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God's "doctrine" and "speech" are at their highest level in the words of the Gospel. The "word of the Gospel" (Acts 15:7) waters more, causes more, and gives more than any other word from God. It has provided a more complete expression of His Person, and contains more of His power. It is a more complete message, and accomplishes more than any other Divine utterance. The Gospel, and the Gospel alone, is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). This cannot be said of any other word from God.

All of this is by Divine intention. It does not suggest that other words from God lack power, or that they are in any way deficient or unnecessary. However, now that Christ has put away sin (Heb 9:26), and plundered the forces of darkness (Col 2:15) – now that He is exalted to the right hand of God, and been given all power in heaven and earth (Phil 2:9-11; Matt 28:18), God is free, so to speak, to more extensively reveal things concerning His purpose. In the Gospel, He

declares more of Himself than ever before. He unfolds more of His intentions than He has before. He promises more that ever was offered under the Law. All of this is a remarkable commentary on the effectiveness of Christ's atoning death, confirming resurrection, and current presence in heaven at God's right hand.

EFFECTIVE UPON EARTH

Christ's death, resurrection, enthronement, and present intercession, are also effective upon the earth. That effectiveness, as we will see, is realized by faith among the sons of men.

EXPERIENCE

Much of the religion of our day is merely philosophical. It has little or no practical element to it. Some even object to any presentation of the Gospel that includes the subjective, or experiential, point of view. However, it is absurd to think of a salvation that is not experienced, or a Gospel that has no word relating to human experience. After all, sin and alienation are experienced, and produce a host of other experiences. The devastating wake of sin has produced trouble, sorrow, pain, death, sickness, disquietude within, and hopelessness. It introduced a defiled conscience, hatred, foolishness, deception, and evil desires.

What would constrain any person to imagine God would present a salvation that did not reach as far as transgression reached? Is it not written, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom 5:20). If sin infected our whole person, much more will experienced salvation bring wholeness to us.

VALID EXPERIENCE

Our text will deal with the very core of spiritual experience. The Holy Spirit will not even mention many things that are emphasized by religious sectarians. Some have chosen to accentuate spiritual experiences that are not stressed by the Holy Spirit – experiences that are nowhere bound upon the saints of God.

It is not my purpose to question the validity of these experiences, or the integrity of those who stress them. However, I do intend to emphasize with all of my being the approach to experience taken by the Spirit of God. We owe no allegiance to any teaching that is not a MAIN POINT of the Apostolic doctrine. Such teachings will inevitably distort our understanding, cause confusion in our minds, and create division among the people of God.

I am going to take the liberty of mentioning some experiences that are valid, yet are inappropriate as an emphasis. They are experiences that are not common in all the household of faith. They are also never emphasized by the Spirit. Men are never condemned for lacking them, and never applauded by God for having them. I do this with great caution, realizing I will be misunderstood by some. Yet these things must be said for the sake of those of tender heart. Keep in mind, I am not denying the reality of these experiences, or stating those who claim them are lying. I AM saying, the Spirit does NOT emphasize them, or bind them upon the children of God. In fact, He does not even mention some of them, thus making them purely a creation of

men. I AM saying they are not a suitable basis for the unity of God's people, or an acceptable foundation for dividing them. I AM saying God has not made an issue of such things among His saints, and men are entirely out of order in doing so.

The "second blessing," the baptism of the Spirit, speaking to men in other tongues, praying in unknown tongues, healing the sick, dreams and visions, being slain in the Spirit, holy laughter, animal sounds, etc. These are only representative of a host of emphases men have espoused. If you are unfamiliar with them, it is of no consequence. There are people who evaluate the whole of their identity with God upon the basis of such things. With no hesitancy whatsoever, I affirm this is totally wrong. It not only cannot be substantiated by God's Word, it is in stark contradiction of it.

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Lesson 2 of 29

RELATING THIS TO OUR TEXT

Our text will deal with the heart of Kingdom experience. It will deal with the powerful effects of faith and consequent justification. These are at the core of what occurs to believers, and is common among them. Not only that, this is a declaration of Divine intention. It tells us where God is going with salvation, and what He has purposed to take place through it. These are things we are to expect in ALL believers. There is only one genuine “salvation,” and it is truly God’s “so great salvation” (Heb 2:3). It is an “eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9). When it comes to those participating in it, it is a “common salvation” (Jude 1:3).

This salvation is FROM certain things: “from wrath: (Rom 5:9), deliverance from this present evil world (Gal 1:4), deliverance from the condemning Law (Rom 7:6), being made “free from sin” (Rom 6:22), being made “free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2), being made “free indeed” (John 8:36), etc.

Salvation also involves being saved TO something: being made “partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14); becoming “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4); being saved to “walk in the light” (1John 1:7); have access to God (Eph 2:18); possessing a purged conscience (Heb 9:14); having “peace with God” (Rom 5:1); being able to “put on the whole armor of God” (Eph 6:10-18); being “justified from all things”(Acts 13:39); having “everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2 Thess 2:16); being “made righteous” (Rom 5:19), or “made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus” (2 Cor 5:21); and being taught by the grace of God (Tit 2:11-13), etc.

Where these things are lacking, one of two conditions exists. Either the individual has not believed the Gospel, or, because of spiritual infancy, these things have not yet been seen. Our text assumes the latter, as it is addressed to those who are in Christ Jesus.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Once again, I want to emphasize the nature of this text. I do so because it is at variance with so much of the religion of our time. When the Holy Spirit determined to show us the effects of our identity with God, these are the things He chose to open up to us. He holds before us Divine priorities as made known in the experience of those who believe. If these things have no relevance to us, we ourselves are alienated from God. There can be no reconciliation to God where disinterest exists in things pertaining to that reconciliation.

The subjects now placed before us reflect the purpose of God for His people. They announce to us the Divine intention behind Christ's death. They show us what to look for in our own persons, and where to place our emphasis. Here are things on which we must unite, and where division is not permitted.

These are matters concerning which no human opinion is of any value whatsoever. None of these things are optional, or may be viewed as unnecessary or irrelevant. There is a solid foundation under every proclamation. All of this will be readily apparent to every humble and contrite heart.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 3 of 29

WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD

" Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom 5:1)

We will now come to the effects of the righteousness that come by faith. Let me again emphasize the importance of this righteousness. While some men banter over the name by which we are called, or the day on which we gather, or some particular experience in the body, the Lord sets His righteousness before us. He does not take for granted that we have it, but affirms it is realized through our faith. It does not come by means of a law, or through a procedure. If we do not have this righteousness, it makes no difference whatsoever what else we may claim to have. All such claims are worthless.

HAVING BEEN JUSTIFIED

Believers are apprized they are already justified because of their faith: i.e., "having been justified" (NASB). Other versions read, "being justified" (KJV), "since we have been justified" (NIV), and "since we are justified" (RSV). It is BECAUSE we ARE justified, that the benefits now expounded are realized. They do not belong to us because of what we have done, but because of

what we ARE – “justified.” That is not an incidental observation! God cannot and will not, in the sense of our text, bless an unchanged person. We must be made acceptable before we can experience the benefits of the covenant.

This is a critical matter with God. Multitudes of professed believers, unaware of this truth, are trying to gain Divine acceptance. Not persuaded the Lord has received them, they labor under the bludgeon of law, trying to measure up to their perception of an approved state. It is a most difficult way to live, as they themselves will acknowledge. But our text says we are already "justified," already “accepted” (Eph 1:6), and standing in the favor of God.

In the book of Romans, justification has been mentioned six times to this point. Under the law, "the doers of the law shall be JUSTIFIED" (2:13). By the deeds of the law, "there shall no flesh be JUSTIFIED" in the sight of God (3:20). We are "JUSTIFIED freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (3:24). The conclusion is that "a man is JUSTIFIED by faith without the deeds of the law" (3:28). If Abraham was "JUSTIFIED by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God" NKJV (4:2). Jesus "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our JUSTIFICATION" (4:25).

It is apparent that the BASIS of our justification is outside of ourselves and independent of our own works. The MEANS of appropriating that justification is our faith. Therefore, all who have faith ARE justified, and all who do not remain in a state of alienation. It is no wonder we are admonished, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?; unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Cor 13:5, NKJV). The personal persuasion of faith is a kingdom asset without which we cannot make any progress. Further, the awareness of our faith is the way we have of knowing we have been justified, and are in a state of Divine acceptance.

KNOWLEDGEABLE EXPRESSIONS

There is no substitute for the knowledge of personal justification – of being confident of our standing with the Living God. Ponder some of Scriptural expressions of this confidence.

1. ". . . for I KNOW whom I have believed and am PERSUADED that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim 1:12).
2. "For you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, KNOWING that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven" (Heb 10:34).
3. "For I am PERSUADED, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39).

Just as surely as the individual can be convinced of personal alienation from God and the need for justification, so a settled persuasion of reconciliation and justification can be realized. The

doctrine – "having been justified" – can be apprehended by faith, and the heart fully convinced of its reality. In fact, the teaching of this passage assumes this to be true. That is the strength of the passage. Where assurance of justification is lacking, the words that follow will have no comforting effect upon the soul.

This must not be approached as though it were a cold and lifeless doctrine. This is not a point upon which official positions are to be developed. It is not to be approached in the spirit of the scribes, and Pharisees, and lawyers. This relates to obtaining the righteousness of God, not maintaining a theologically acceptable position – and there is a vast difference between the two. Much of my earlier life in the faith was spent trying to maintain a correct theological position, without regard to my own standing with God. I can testify with authority to the unprofitableness of such an emphasis. Knowing you are justified does not allow the individual to maintain erroneous views of Scripture. Faith will never settle for a lie, a distortion, or a misplaced emphasis. As soon as men do this, they are no longer walking by faith.

– Given O. Blakely

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 4 of 29

PEACE WITH GOD

“ . . . we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom 5:1)

Note the firmness of the text. We **HAVE BEEN** justified, and "we **HAVE** peace with God." These are possessions, not mere positions! It is essential to our victory over the world that we know how we stand with God more than where we stand with men.

The Spirit now shows us the effect of justification upon our persons. It is legal, but not merely legal. It is recognized in heaven, but not only in heaven. There is a blessed fruit yielded by the tree of justification that is both essential and enjoyable. It is "peace with God."

The prophets spoke of an era that would be characterized by quietness within the soul. "For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength'" (Isa 30:15). Again, it is written, "The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever" (Isa 32:15). Both of these verses are written in the form of a hebraism. That is a type of Hebrew poetry in which the same truth is stated two different ways.

This way of Divine communication is particularly evident in the Psalms and Proverbs, as well as throughout the Prophets. Thus, Isaiah 30:15 equates "rest" with "quietness and confidence," while Isaiah 32:15 parallels "peace" with "quietness and assurance." Elihu well said of this kind of peace, "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" (Job 34:29).

"Therefore . . . we have PEACE." "Therefore" not only means there is no longer a war between the individual and God, but that there is an acute sense of safety and tranquility. This kind of

peace is expressed by the Psalmist in a most practical way., "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety" (Psa 4:8). The awareness of being at peace with God has wide-sweeping ramifications. It yields the fruit of assurance, confidence, and boldness, to name a few.

NO PEACE UNDER THE LAW

The peace in our text is realized through the purging of the conscience – the removal of a sense of guilt and defilement. This marvelous benefit could not be realized under the Law, for there was no justification under the first covenant. Sins were not removed, and even the sacrifices for sin only stirred up the remembrance of sin, thus defiling the conscience (Heb 10:1-4).

One of the passages that most precisely conveys this thought is found in the tenth chapter of Hebrews. It perfectly parallels the passage now before us. The Spirit recalls to our minds the highest and most lofty occasion under the Law: the day of atonement. Year after year, sacrifices were made that had no satisfactory impact on those for whom they were made. "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect" (Heb 10:1). Elaborating upon this failure, the Spirit clarifies the meaning of "perfect." He is not speaking of moral perfection, but of the perfection, or cleansing, of the conscience. "For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins" (Heb 10:2).

Under the Law a sacrifice was made according to Divine commandment. It was offered in a manner specified, in the place He ordained, and by the individual He designated. It was the kind of sacrifice He demanded. The sacrifice itself was a work of man, and was not attended by faith in the ones for whom the sacrifice was made. Although the Divinely specified order was followed, the "worshipers" were not "cleansed." That is to say, their sins were not removed from them. The reason for this failure is declared: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could TAKE AWAY sins" (Heb 10:4). As a result, the ones who were coming near to God according to the Law only remembered their sins, with their conscience remaining defiled. This condition is described in the words, "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year" (Heb 10:3). They had no "peace with God" (NKJV).

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 5 of 29

WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
(Rom 5:1)

How different the condition of those who are in Christ Jesus! Because they have been justified by faith, they HAVE peace with God. There is no enmity between them and God. Their

conscience is no longer defiled with the taint of guilt. Although they remain in the domain of trouble and toil, yet they themselves experience confidence and assurance. They have quietness in their soul, knowing that God is working all things together for their ultimate good (Rom 8:28). Their "peace" is not a mere formality, but something that is experienced in their hearts. What was written by Isaiah is fulfilled in them: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa 32:17).

This kind of tranquility of soul cannot be obtained by arduous activity. You cannot work to obtain it. It is the fruit of faith, for we are justified "by faith." Mark it well, where men find it difficult to believe God, they will be unduly troubled by circumstances, and life in general. The Pharisee who stood and "prayed with himself" cited his works as a basis for being heard by God. "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (Lk 18:11-12). He was not praying before God, but before men, with an acute consciousness of those about him, not the One above him. That is why Jesus said he "prayed with himself." He was oblivious of God, and thus spoke as though he had confidence.

Peace with God is not after the Pharisaic manner! It is peace BEFORE God, as well as with God. It is being confident when we are in the presence of God, as well as our enemies. Those who have "peace with God" can come boldly, or confidently, into the presence of God. In fact, they are exhorted to do so. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:19-22).

"Peace with God," therefore, refers to a state of mind and heart that is in tune with ultimate reality. There is a quietness that settles over the soul because we know we are "justified" before God, washed clean, and made suitable to stand in His presence. That awareness spills over into every aspect of life. We are not afraid of our enemies, and we are not afraid to let our requests be made known unto God. We are not afraid to face God, and we are not afraid to face man! Life does not cause us to fear, nor does death. If we appear before the tribunals of men, we will not be moved, nor does the thought of appearing before the throne of God cause us to be shaken. The person with peace knows the things that are present cannot separate him from the love of God, nor can the things that are to come. All of that is in "peace with God."

This is a peace that can dominate, or rule, the heart. In fact, this is what it WILL do if we will permit it to do so. Thus we are admonished, "And LET the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful" (Col 3:15). Every major translation says the same thing: "RULE in your hearts." The word "rule" means to govern or arbitrate—literally, to be an umpire. We would say, preside over your hearts, or control and direct them. This means peace will assist us in knowing the proper direction to take, decisions to make, and how to react. We decide in favor of "peace with God." Whatever disrupts our fellowship with God, and our persuasion of acceptance, is to be avoided. No matter how long you have been in Christ Jesus, you will be amazed at how consistently peace will lead you.

Remember, this is something those who are justified HAVE, not something they SHOULD have! Those who do not possess peace either are not justified before God, or are not aware that they are. In our time, many fall into the latter category. Because they have heard so little of the Gospel of Christ, they can scarcely imagine they are "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6). But they are, and that is one reason for the presence of this marvelously comforting text.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 6 of 29

THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom 5:2).

The basis of this boldness and confidence, aspects of peace, is not that God is our Friend, but that Christ is our Savior and High Priest! No person, regardless of seeming spiritual progress, is familiar enough with God to come before Him apart from Christ. Whatever you may think of your reconciliation, or the covering of your sins, you CANNOT come before God without coming through Jesus. Perhaps the four living creatures (Rev 4:6-9) can stand before the throne of God independently (although that would be difficult to establish), but you cannot!

Our peace is "through the Lord Jesus Christ" because His sacrifice, and His sacrifice alone, enabled God to justify us. Our exoneration from sin MUST be right. If a valid dissenting voice can be heard from heaven, earth, or hell, our justification cannot be right. If any personality can justly raise an accusation against those whom God has justified, then they have not been justified at all! If our salvation is not right, it is not real! If God is not “just,” or righteous, in acquitting us, we have not been acquitted! That is why it is written, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be JUST AND THE JUSTIFIER of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:24-26, NKJV).

All of this may appear quite needless to say, but it is really most needful to say. That is why the Spirit has said it! Many treat salvation as though it were a mere Divine technicality, with no regard for the righteousness of God, or maintaining His integrity and holiness throughout the entirety of salvation. It is the complete disregard for this aspect of our salvation that has moved men to imagine they are locked into Christ rather than "accepted" and "received" in Him. Those who espouse a salvation that allows for sin and a lack of fellowship with God have thrown Jesus aside, as though His necessity ended at the cross. But He is as necessary now as when you "first believed." The more fellowship you have with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), the greater the peace you possess. This is the ordained means through which progress is realized.

Should that fellowship diminish, and there is no need for this to occur, peace will also decrease. When this happens, temptation gains strength, resisting the devil is more difficult, and God is not

as present as before. One cannot be comfortable before God and comfortable with sin at the same time. Light cannot have fellowship with darkness under any conditions (Eph 5:11). Therefore it is written, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:6-7). There should be no need to comment on the effects such conditions will yield.

Of course, all of this postulates a lively sense and value of knowing the Lord and being aware of His presence and approval. There is a form of "Christianity" that does not culture Divine fellowship such as is described in Scripture (1 Cor 1:6; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 John 1:3). There are assemblies of professed believers where the people are being led in pretension, without due regard for faith and a lively cognition of the presence of the Lord. This is a day when more thought needs to be given to having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It does not appear that enough room has been made for Jesus, whose name is "The Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6).

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 7 of 29

ACCESS INTO GRACE BY FAITH

" . . . through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand . . . " (Rom 5:2a)

The Spirit continues to elaborate on the effects of our justification by faith. These are very practical, or utilitarian, benefits, and relate to daily living and spiritual progress. All of these require righteousness and faith. Furthermore, neither of these possessions can be maintained in isolation of the other. Where there is no righteousness, there is no faith. And, where there is no faith, there can be no righteousness. It is necessary to affirm this because men insist upon separating the two. It is not possible to possess God's righteousness if there is no trust in Him, or unreserved acceptance of His promises. Any approach that allows for Divine acceptance without the presence of faith, is simply not true.

For purposes of clarification, faith is not defined by men, but by God. The manner of faith has been seen in Abraham, who did not consider contradicting fleshly circumstances, and was persuaded God was able to do what He promised. "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Rom 4:19-21). That is the faith that saves, and no other faith is recognized by God. The words that follow are built upon these foundational Kingdom realities: righteousness and faith.

THROUGH WHOM

The Spirit will not allow us to forget the necessity of the Son. His presence at the right hand of God, and His intercessory and mediatorial work, are imperative to our continued acceptance. We come into Divine favor through Jesus, and that favor is maintained through Jesus. If the communication between the individual and Jesus is not clear, the benefits that accrue from Christ's death, resurrection, and consequent enthronement will not be consciously realized. Our salvation from wrath depends upon our relationship to Jesus (Rom 5:9). Being more than a conqueror depends upon our identity with Him (Rom 8:39). We cannot even believe in God apart from Christ. As it is written, "who THROUGH HIM BELIEVE IN GOD, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1 Pet 1:21, NKJV).

This aspect of our salvation cannot be overemphasized. It has nearly been obliterated by the sectarian emphases of our day. Those with no real knowledge of grace depend upon their own efforts to bring them to glory. Those who entertain a corrupted view of God's grace view themselves as already there, with no regard to the jeopardy of their surroundings. In both cases, fellowship with Christ is neglected, even though we have been called into that vibrant and life-sustaining activity (1 Cor 1:9). The "communion of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor 13:14), and being "taught by" Jesus (Eph 4:20-21) are not viewed as essential by many, and are thus ignored. This text will not only affirm the reality of such things, but will show them to be absolutely essential.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 8 of 29

WE HAVE ACCESS

“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom 5:1-5)

Those who are justified by faith and have peace with God, also have "access" to the heavenly realms. This is an "access" that is needed. It is not a mere luxury, or option that can be disregarded.

The very concept of "access" suggests something outside of the domain of flesh and blood. It speaks of a legal admission into an area unlawful for others. The word "access" means privilege of entrance. At once you should see that salvation involves a continuous experience – "access." Faith is not only required to take you out of Egypt, it is required to cross the Red Sea (Heb 11:29), and bring you into Canaan (Heb 11:30). Not only is faith necessary for Isaac to be born (Rom 4:17-21; Heb 11:11-12), it is also essential for him to be offered up to God (Heb 11:17-19).

In churches with whom I have been affiliated, there is a marked absence of the concept of "access." There is, of course, that blessed remnant that has taken hold of these things. But they have done so in spite of the institution, and not because of it. There is a carnal religious structure that leads men to think they are safe in a creedal view rather than in a vibrant Divine fellowship (1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 John 1:3). But such a view is only a delusion, fostered by the wicked

one to keep men from entering into rest. It leads men away from God and salvation.

Notice how the responsibility falls upon men, even though the blessing comes from God. He does not say we are guaranteed the promised benefit, but that we have "ACCESS" to it. It is obtainable, but we must enter into the appointed area to obtain it. This does not mean the realization of the benefit is totally dependent upon our effort. Here is the view declared in Scripture. First, God has, through Christ, brought the blessing close to us. Second, in Jesus, He has raised us up and made us sit together with Him in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6). But there is a small distance that yet remains to be traversed by us. It is small when compared to the distance that once existed between us and the essential benefit. From the standpoint of diligence and faithfulness, however, it is challenging enough to engage all of our ransomed powers. All of this makes perfect sense to faith, but absolutely no sense to the flesh.

God's people are required to get into the area where needed spiritual resources can be obtained. This is one of the reasons why God's people must insist upon a wholesome spiritual environment, where the soul can be cultured, and heavenly realities obtained. Religious fads and imagined worship that is "in vogue," are a great hindrance to this requirement. They belong more to this world than the world to come, which never has to update its heavenly manners.

As a matter of observation, a religion that must continually be updated does not reflect the eternal order, but the temporal one. While creativity and innovation are certainly not wrong of themselves, when they are applied to such things as worship, prayer, preaching, and other staple kingdom activities, a door is opened that will let more in than godly people desire. One only has to behold the effect of current religious trends to confirm this is the case. None of them, I emphasize, NONE of them, has made God more accessible, or the blessing of God more obtainable. Such benefits are consistently realized by faith, not procedure.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 9 of 29

INTO THIS GRACE

“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2)

The phraseology used by the Spirit is critical to our understanding. "Through Him (Jesus Christ) we have obtained access to this grace" (NRSV). The idea is that Christ has personally brought us into this realm through our faith. The New Living Translation reads this way: "Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of highest privilege."

The words "this grace" parallels with the "heavenly places" of Ephesians 2:6. The Ephesian text emphasizes the realm to which we have come, and our text emphasizes the benefit to be found there. The idea of the text is that justification has resulted in the believer being put where the required blessings can be obtained. These are the "all spiritual blessings" referenced in Ephesians 1:3, and the "all things pertaining to life and godliness" of Second Peter 1:3. The placement is

described in First Corinthians 1:30. "But by His [God's] doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption" (NASB).

Referring to the same glorious reality, Ephesians says, "But God . . . made us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:4-6). All of this refers to the "access" our text affirms is possessed by those who are justified by faith.

The words "THIS GRACE" are like a nail upon which our advantage continually hangs. Apart from this "grace" there is no advantage whatsoever. Initially, we are "justified freely by his grace" (Rom 3:24). "Everlasting consolation and good hope" are also realized by God's grace (2 Thess 2:16). It is "under grace" that sin loses its dominion over our lives (Rom 6:14), and it is "by the grace of God" that we maintain our manner of life in this world (2 Cor 1:12). It is called "THIS grace" because it is the very grace by which we were justified, and in which we are to remain.

IN WHICH WE STAND

We are not passive in this declared benefit. God has put us into Christ! From another perspective, He has raised us up and made us sit together with Christ in heavenly realms. From the standpoint of our text, He has given us access to "this grace wherein we stand." The NIV reads, "in which we NOW stand." This is the only realm in which Divine requirements can be fulfilled. Here is where we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18). This is the domain where the flesh is crucified (Gal 5:24), the old man put off, and the new man put on (Eph 4:22-24). Here is where we are "taught by God" (1 Thess 4:9), the "whole armor of God" is put on (Eph 6:10-18), and steadfastness and constancy are realized (1 Cor 15:58).

A PLACE OF BENEFIT

Blessing and benefit are here. An acute consciousness of the Lord and His Christ are maintained here. Covenant blessings are experienced here. The "grace wherein we stand" is the realm where we are "filled with all joy and peace in believing" (Rom 5:13). It is where prayer is answered, and we are "changed from glory unto glory" (2 Cor 3:18). In this sacred place we "obtain mercy and find grace to help, in the time of need" (Heb 4:16). Here vision is clarified (2 Cor 4:18) and an anchor for the soul is realized (Heb 6:19).

OTHER REFERENCES TO THIS REALM

Standing in grace is another view of abiding in Christ (John 15:1-8). It also is the same as remaining in Christ's love (John 15:10), and "continuing in the Son and in the Father" (1 John 2:24). This is walking in the light (1 John 1:7), living by faith (Heb 10:38), and walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:25).

Our text addresses the same thing from a different perspective. All of the views place the responsibility for maintaining the position in which they have been placed squarely upon the

believer. To be sure, God will underwrite the task, guaranteeing our efforts are not in vain. But if anyone thinks abiding or standing can be achieved with no effort on the part of the individual, the evil one has deceived them. It makes just as much sense for Jesus to have laid down His life without any effort, as for you to lay down your's without exertion.

INVOLVEMENT IS REQUIRED

Salvation makes no provision for passive involvement – a sort of spiritual automation that allows for the benefits procured by Christ to pass to the recipient without their involvement. Multitudes of professed Christians appear to be living as though this was not true. Their persons are not involved in what they call salvation. They are spiritually emaciated, and appear to think little or nothing of it. They imagine their connection with the institution is sufficient – but it is not.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 10 of 29

STANDING IN GRACE

“ By whom also we have access by faith into this grace WHEREIN WE STAND . . .” (Rom 5:2)

The very posture of "standing" assumes a hostile environment, enemies, and the possibility of debilitating weakness. “Standing” means nothing if there is no resistance, no tendency to fail, or no opponents to face.

"Standing" not only assumes militant surroundings, it also implies boldness, courage, and freedom from fear and a withdrawing spirit.

"Standing" cannot be accomplished on the feet of human works, but within the framework of God's grace. That is precisely why we are given free access to the grace of God, that we might be "able to stand" (Eph 6:11). Apart from this grace, "standing" is not possible. Those, therefore, who hear and know little or nothing about the grace of God are at a decided disadvantage – and it is greater than they dare to imagine.

A divided house, for example, "cannot stand" (Mk 3:24). There are some who are weak, whom God must "make" to stand (Rom 14:4), but that is not a lifetime guarantee. At some point, the believer must become "strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Tim 2:1), and "in the power of His might" (Eph 6:10). Our faith must "stand . . . in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:5). We ourselves are to "STAND fast in the faith," continuing to trust in the lord (1 Cor 16:13). We are admonished to "STAND fast in the liberty" for which Christ has freed us (Gal 5:1). There is STANDING to be done "against the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:11), and STANDING "in the evil day," under focused and intense onslaughts by Satan (Eph 6:13). We are to think in terms of STANDING "perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col 4:12).

And how is all of this to be accomplished? How will we be able to fulfill such lofty

requirements? Our text tells us.

DIVINE FAVOR

It is in grace that we are enabled to "stand." Peter put it this way, "this is the true grace of God WHEREIN YE STAND" (1 Pet 5:12). The grace of God speaks of His love and favor, His preference and attraction. When someone is in the grace of God, they are in His favor, and receive His benefits. Thus "Noah found GRACE in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen 6:8).

Because we have believed on His Son, according to God's own record (1 John 5:10-11), God has lavished His favor upon us. In Christ, He has placed us in the realm where His loving favor dominates, and where it is not restrained. Our responsibility is to remain there, not succumbing to the devil's attempts to lure us away from the sacred citadel of Divine favor.

Adam and Eve were once in God's favor, and then were drawn away from it (Gen 3:24). Israel experienced the love and preference of the Living God, then moved Him to abhor them (Psa 106:40). King Saul was chosen and favored of God to be king, then so conducted his life that God "repented" He had "set up Saul to be king" (1 Sam 15:11).

STERN ADMONITIONS

Men are not to take for granted they will remain in God's favor. Solemnly saints are told, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" (1 Cor 10:22). Believers are told they "should not lust after evil things" (1 Cor 10:6), neither be "idolaters" (10:7). We are admonished to not "commit fornication" (10:8), or "tempt Christ" (10:9), or "murmur" (10:10).

Those in Christ are warned, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God" (Heb 3:12), and to take every measure to avoid being "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb 3:13). They are told to "harden not" their hearts, as Israel did in the day they provoked God to anger (Heb 3:15). Those in Christ are exhorted, "quench not the Spirit," and "grieve not the Spirit" (1 Thess 5:19; Eph 4:30).

Why are such warnings issued? What purpose do they serve if we are standing in the grace of God? They are given because of the necessity of REMAINING in God's grace. The same God who delivered us can be provoked to anger – by the very people He once delivered. If you are naive enough to doubt that, let king Saul and the Israelites speak to your heart. Their record is written "for our admonition," not our information! If we imagine God cannot be provoked by His own creation, and thrust them from the very realm in which He placed them, then we must seriously consider Adam and Eve. That is what happened to them. God made the garden. God made Adam and Eve. God put Adam and Eve in the Garden. God expelled them from the Garden. The record is too plain to require further explanation.

Spiritual stability can only be realized within the circumference of God's favor. That favor can only be realized through faith, for salvation is "by grace through faith" from beginning to end (Eph 2:8). Remember, "without faith, it is impossible to please God" (Heb 11:6). It makes no difference whether you have received the initial promise like Abraham, or are asked to offer up

what God has given you, like Abraham offering Isaac – faith remains imperative. Heaven does not take your faith for granted, but puts it to the test, that it might appear to honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus (1 Pet 1:7). Why would men take it for granted? It is only because Satan tempts them to do so.

Be sure, the faith that saved you can ensure that you are kept. We are, after all, "kept by the power of God THROUGH FAITH" (1 Pet 1:5) – no faith, no keeping! God is pleased with everyone who is believing, regardless of their past. Equally true, God is displeased with everyone who is not believing, regardless of their past. There is absolute consistency in these things.

Let every believer see to it that they remain where God has placed them. Your faith will ensure this happens, for faith is always honored by God, and never overlooked by Him. It is never vain or disappointing to trust God! How marvelous to begin in a place where we can, by the grace of God, remain; finally to be placed in a realm where we will abide forever!

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 11 of 29

REJOICING IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD

" . . . and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom 5:2)

What powerful effects are wrought in our justification! Not only are iniquities forgiven and sins covered, we are placed in a realm where spiritual firmness and solidity with rejoicing are realized.

While in this blessed domain a new kind of rejoicing is experienced. It has no parallel in the world, and is so lofty the flesh is incapable of imagining it. This is a joy that is common to all believers – to everyone who has been made to sit together with Christ Jesus in heavenly places. It is not an impulsive joy, but springs from faith. The Spirit refers to this as "joy of faith," or "joy in the faith" (Phil 1:25, NASB). Because it is "of faith," joy can increase and abound. It is exhilarating, but is not only exhilaration. It is emotional, but not mere emotionalism.

REJOICING IN HOPE

This is a rational joy, proceeding from the awareness faith brings of the hope set before us. You have, after all, been called in "one hope of your calling" (Eph 4:4). That "hope" is personal, yet differs nothing from the hope of all other believers. There is a single hope, common to all believers, yet intensely personal – "one hope of your calling" (Eph 4:4).

STEADFAST AND SURE

It should at once be obvious that "hope" is something firm and steadfast, for men cannot be set to rejoicing in something that is not sure, or certain. In fact, this hope is described as "an anchor of

the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Heb 6:19a). Unlike anchors employed on the seas of earth, this anchor is secured upward, within the heavenly realms – "the Presence behind the veil, where the Forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus" (Heb 6:19b, NKJV).

ANTICIPATION

By its very nature, this "hope" involves a lively awareness of the exalted Christ, and "the heavenly places" into which we have been raised. It is also accompanied by a solid persuasion that we too will be there soon, with our Lord and in possession of an "eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:15). Where these elements are missing, the believer is wholly inadequate, and can expect little or no victory.

POWERFUL AND ESSENTIAL

This vibrant hope, or expectation of glory, is "as cold waters to a thirsty soul" (Prov 25:25). It buoys up the soul, enabling the child of God to make progress under pressing and difficult circumstances. This hope can survive the desert of oppression, deep pit of near-despair, and the storms of persecution. The evil one has nothing in his arsenal that can dent the helmet of "the hope of salvation" (1 Thess 5:8).

Here is something for which holy men prayed. Paul, for example, did not discontinue praying for the saints of God. He prayed God would give them "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know WHAT IS THE HOPE of His calling" (Eph 1:17-18). This was no passing notion, for through the Spirit the Apostle saw the necessity of such illumination.

One of the great spiritual contradictions of our time is the development of mega-churches with pygmy hope – large religious institutions with little or no awareness at all of the glory that is to come. It is reflected in the brevity of their gatherings, the shallowness of their preaching, and their lack of spiritual appetite. This is not intended to be a mere diatribe against legitimate and God-honoring growth. It IS intended to point out that it is serious to lack the critical aspects of life in Christ.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 12 of 29

REJOICING IN HOPE

“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom 5:2)

This hope is frequently related to rejoicing. Romans 12:12 admonishes believers to “REJOICE IN HOPE.” Hebrews 3:6 goes so far as to say we are Christ's household only "IF we hold fast the confidence and the REJOICING OF THE HOPE firm to the end" (NKJV). Indeed, that is an arresting consideration! Referring to this confident joy, Hebrews 3:14 also makes a firm

statement. "For we have become partakers of Christ IF we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end" (NKJV).

Romans 15:13 also shows the association of joy with hope. "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (NKJV). Here we see an abounding hope requires "all joy and peace in believing," which is only possible through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Those in Christ are to be continually reminded of the hope set before them. Their minds are to be challenged and comforted by the proclamation of their Divinely determined conformity to the image of the Son (Rom 8:29-30). If they are told of their duty, they should be told twice as much of their inheritance. If they are corrected, they should be given exceeding great and precious promises to provide a joyful incentive to shape up. We have the example of the Son of God Himself, who moved flawed churches to correct their condition by holding lofty and joyful promises before them (Rev 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21).

Having come from a background where a great deal of emphasis was placed on being the right church, or the "New Testament church," I can tell you I never heard any emphasis remotely similar to these. In fact, if I had not read the texts for myself, I would probably have had no idea they were even in the Bible!

OF THE GLORY OF GOD

Here is a marvelous thing! Notice the reality with which Kingdom hope is associated: "we stand, and rejoice in hope OF THE GLORY OF GOD." This is a dominating hope that swells and rises above the pandemonium of "this present evil world," FROM WHICH Jesus has "delivered us" (Gal 1:4). Other versions read as follows: "we exult in hope of the glory of God" (NASB), "we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God" (NRSV), "we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory" (NLT).

We do not rejoice in the hope of only seeing God's glory, but of SHARING in it – participating in it. Every person who has dwelt upon the earth will see God's glory. There is nothing unique about that. As it is written, "And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isa 40:5). All, indeed, will "see it together," but all will not "share" in it!

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

What does it mean to rejoice in hope of sharing the glory of God? This is the "glory of God" as it will be revealed in the sons of God. The whole creation is waiting for this unveiling, as well as we ourselves. As it is written, "For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" [NASB] (Rom

8:19-23).

According to God's eternal purpose, everything is moving toward an appointed end, or conclusion. The entire natural order is sensitive to this crowning culmination. However, the most pronounced longing is found within those who have been justified by faith. They have been given more insight into the appointed terminus of all things, and are eagerly awaiting it.

The "glory of God" will override all other glories, moving them into oblivion. No competing glory will be able to survive the Lord Jesus returning in His glory, the glory of the Father, and that of the holy angels (Lk 9:26). The natural order, which has several times been shaken by God drawing near (Psa 77:18); 1 Sam 14:15), will burst into flame at the appearing of His glory (2 Pet 3:10-12). This glory will be unveiled in the Person of Christ, who is "the express image of God" (Heb 1:3), and the "fulness" of His Person (Col 1:19; 2:9).

The saints are rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, because when His glory is seen, their's will be seen also. As it is written, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col 3:4). No more dissimilarities will be seen in the saved, but they will "bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor 15:49). No more struggle! No more frustration! No more cry of wretchedness! The glory of God will end all such things for the saved!

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, all things presently competing with the glory of God will be gone, dissolved in the wake of a greater glory – a revealed glory. Satan will be banished. Principalities and powers will be thrown down in every quarter of the universe, and the defeat they experienced when Jesus died (Col 2:15) will be clearly seen. The blazing glory of God will be seen for what it really is – dominating, invincible, and forever more. All other glories will be seen for what they are: subservient, powerless, and only for a time! It is no wonder faith moves us to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God!"

We must not fail, however, to see the relation of this glorying to justification by faith. When the righteousness of God is imputed to us, it produces these effects. This is the "effect of righteousness" (Isa 32:17) – what we experience as a result of possessing the righteousness of God.

No child of God can do without "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." This is not a luxury, but a necessity, else it would not be integral to God's great salvation. If you desire this kind of joy, your mind must become enthralled with the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It will not be found in your circumstances or in your attainments, however good they may appear to be. When you can see this truth concerning the righteousness of God being given to you, rejoicing will be kindled. What is more, the salvation of God is calculated to help you see it.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 13 of 29

GLORYING IN TRIBULATION, #1

"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations . . . " (Rom 5:32a)

Just as justification is wide in scope and profound in depth, so are its effects. When faith is counted to men for righteousness, no small accomplishment has taken place. This involves a Divine pronouncement, to be sure, but it also is the "WORK of God" (John 6:29; Rom 14:20). Just as the natural creation was filled with all manner of life and activity, so is the new creation pervaded by all kinds of fruit and expression. Already we have been told of "peace with God," free "access" into the grace in which we stand, and "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." Already, we have heard of benefits far surpassing any advantages we may have had before Christ. Yet, there is more.

NOT ONLY SO

Life in Christ is the "not only so" life, or the "more than that" (RSV) blessing. As we will see, living by faith addresses every facet of life, both pleasant and unpleasant.

Thus far, the benefits affirmed have been pleasing: peace with God, access to grace, and rejoicing in hope. The Spirit now lingers on the matter of rejoicing. It is not limited to the contemplation of our future glory, or the sheer pleasantness of salvation. Justification enables us to deal with the present, even when it is most grievous. When we talk about salvation, we are not philosophizing, or dealing in mystical speculation and mortal opinion. A religion that leaves one in the realm of philosophy brings no advantage to the individual. Our EXPERIENCE in this world must be touched by what we believe, and this is precisely what faith does.

GLORYING IN TRIBULATIONS

Other versions read, "rejoice in our tribulations" (ASV), "rejoice in our sufferings" (ESV), "We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials" (NLT), "exult in our tribulations" (NASB), "exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings" (AMPLIFIED), "boast in our troubles" (CJB), and "brag when we are suffering," (GWN).

For the most part, this is not what is being seen in the Christian community. I find there is an uncomfortable increase in the assessment of their past: complaining, murmuring, griping, grumbling, complaining, and expressing discontent. Some people complain for years about bitter personal experiences they have had, and apparently have great difficulty getting over hard times. Is all of this all right? If being justified causes people to "glory in tribulation," then what is the source of all of this complaining? Let no person forget the example of the Israelites. When they were wandering in a desert, where there was no water (Num 20:2), the presence of scorpions (Deut 8:15), and only one thing to eat (Numb 21:5), they "complained." Their complaint was heard in heaven: "And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord : and the Lord heard it; and His anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp" (Num 10:34). That record was "written for our admonition" (1 Cor 10:11). When it gets right down to it, no believer really has a right to complain – even when it is popular to do so.

The suffering of godly people has long been a mystery to those without faith – and even to some who have faith. Here is a part of life in Christ that is conveniently ignored by the religious opportunist. Some who choose to deal with it seek their personal advantage rather than that of the suffering saint. There are even professional high-paid careers that are wholly occupied with helping the troubled. While I do not deny that some good has come from these efforts, they are far inferior to the benefits of being justified by faith. When what men can do for those in trouble is accented, what God has promised to do is necessarily minimized.

WHAT IS TRIBULATION?

Here is an extremely strong word that every person senses is laden with difficult things. Etymologically, "tribulation" comes from a word which means "affliction, anguish, trouble, persecution, burdened, and afflicted." It involves being pressed together with hardship, experiencing oppression, being distressed, and placed in straits-between two hard places. Elsewhere, Paul uses this precise word to testify to the hardships brought on by faith. He shows the wide variety of "trouble." "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults [riots], in labors, in watchings, in fastings" (2 Cor 6:4-5). These are matters over which the afflicted ones have no control, unless it be that they not suffer as an "evil doer" (1 Pet 4:15).

These "tribulations," or "afflictions," are not to move the believer from the joy of salvation, but to bring solidity and stability into the sphere of experience. Thus we are exhorted, "That no man should be moved [shaken from the foundations] by these afflictions: for yourselves know that WE ARE APPOINTED THEREUNTO" (1 Thess 3:3). No believer, therefore, should be surprised by afflictions, or think that "some strange thing has happened" to them (1 Pet 4:12).

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 14 of 29

A FRESH ASPECT SEEN

"And not only so, but we glory in TRIBULATIONS also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience." (Rom 5:3).

Other versions read "troubles" (BBE), "afflictions" (CSB), "sufferings" (ESV), "hardships" (NJB), and "problems and trials" (NLT).

Here a fresh aspect of tribulations is seen. They are an appointment! They come by Divine direction, and are governed by the purpose of God, not the shifting circumstances of life. Properly seen, tribulation, or affliction, is one of the manners in which God works with us, conforming us to the image of His Son. In this experience, the Holy Spirit is actually changing us from one stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18) – moving us further from the world and closer to the Lord.

Tribulation is similar to a threshing process, where the chaff is separated from the wheat. It is

like a smelting process, where impurities are removed from the righteous. Of themselves, tribulation, anguish, and trouble, are anything but pleasant. Tribulation is sometimes the means God uses to bring out the best of us – like crushing a grape to get its juice to flow. Yet the believer is enabled by grace to derive the best from the circumstance, seeing more clearly, and becoming more confident.

THE DEVIL'S CONFUSION

I do not know if the devil is continually confused, but should not be surprised if this is the case. If God is never confused, and the devil is the precise antithesis of God, it seems reasonable that he is continually confused and bewildered at the responses of the saints. We know from the book of Job that Satan thinks the righteous will be moved away from God by trouble and hardship. Here was Satan's reasoning. "But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to thy face . . . Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face" (Job 1:11 ; 2:4-5). Both of these Satanic assumptions were wrong. They were not wrong philosophically, but were proved wrong by the response of Job.

After the first barrage of Satan's temptation God Himself said to him, "Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and STILL he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst Me against him, to destroy him without cause" (Job 2:3). Satan had said, "But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he WILL curse Thee to Thy face" (Job 1:11). Satan was proved 100% wrong, as the continued record of Job affirms.

Satan is STILL wrong in that assumption of anyone who is living by faith. Today we hear a lot about failing, falling, stumbling Christians who cannot stand up to extraordinary trials. It is time someone told the people that this is not what believers do.

All recovery methodologies for Christians need to be examined. The teaching of the Lord is, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim 2:24-26). Those who "recover themselves" were in a state described as "opposing themselves." Other versions read, "go against the teaching" (BBE), "opponents" (ESV), "contrary minded" (GENEVA), "oppose the Good News" (GWN), "are in opposition" (NASB), and "those who oppose the truth" (NLT). Those who oppose the truth do so either in verbal denial of the truth, or practical denial of it in life. In either case, the individuals involved have been captivated by the devil, and are in his snare. What can we say of those who treat such people as though they were merely in a state of unwanted addiction? Who is the modern counselor who has ever told a person to repent of addiction? Or that they are captivated by the devil? Or that God can give them repentance so they can acknowledge the truth and recover themselves?

Because of his thorough wickedness, the devil is unable to learn, or to be taught. Thus he continues to think men can be moved away from God by trouble and difficulty. Wherever he is

given leave by the Sovereign God, he brings hardship upon the saints, whether a thorn (2 Cor 12:7), a storm (Mk 4:37), a beating (2 Cor 11:25), or despair (2 Cor 1:8). Satan thinks if life is miserable for the saints, they will deny the Lord and go back to their old ways. That is his intent behind trouble, tribulation, anguish, and distress. However, his view is the wrong view, and is to be thrown down to the ground.

A further word about modern counseling. If improper conduct by a professing Christian can be traced back to bad experiences, then Satan's supposition about trouble is right. That, of course, would mean that God was wrong in allowing such trouble. Who is the person willing to embrace such nonsense?

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Rom 5:1-5)

Lesson 15 of 29

A HEAVENLY VIEW

“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.” (Rom 5:3)

Our text is a heavenly view of trouble – an inspired perspective. It declares the manner in which FAITH perceives tribulation. It announces how justification equips the believer to face the most grievous hardship.

Unbelief causes both heart and lips to murmur and complain when difficulty hems men in on every side. How vividly this was seen in Israel and their wilderness wanderings (Ex 15:24; 16:2; 17:3; Num 14:2; 16:41). Their trouble brought out their unbelief. For the one living by faith, it brings out their trust and reliance upon the Lord. Trouble, then, is a most accurate test that will determine whether the person is really walking by faith or not.

GLORYING

We not only rejoice in hope of the glory of God, but "we also GLORY in tribulations." Other versions read, "REJOICE in our sufferings" (RSV), "EXULT in our tribulations" (NASB), "BOAST in our sufferings" (NRSV), and "HAVE JOY in our troubles" (BBE). Capturing the aspect of admonition in the text, the New Living Translation reads, "We CAN REJOICE, too, when we run into problems and trials."

Glorying is confident joy and insightful boasting. It comes from spiritual insight and

understanding that sees beyond the trouble into the purpose and love of God. Glorifying recognizes the temporality of trouble and the eternity of salvation. It comprehends that sifting is occurring in tribulation, and rejoices in the prospect of the outcome. Unlike the swine, the eyes of the elect are not turned downward. Rather, they are looking upward, a stance that enables rejoicing to take place IN trouble or tribulation.

Glorifying in tribulation is the opposite of murmuring when trouble comes. Such glorifying delights the Lord, frustrates the devil, and strengthens the saints. It brings the aid of heavenly powers and overcomes evil powers.

Let it be clear, the glorifying, or rejoicing, is not in the tribulations themselves, but in the effects wrought by them. When it is known that they come by appointment, are strictly measured so they will not overcome us, and will yield a harvest of good things, men may glory in tribulations. It must be remembered that the way to the crown is by the way of the cross. Believers must be told this, else life will become too burdensome to them. That is why holy men were noted for "strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God'" (Acts 14:22). The godly therefore reason, "If I am suffering many tribulations, I am in the process of entering God's kingdom. I am coming closer to the inheritance and further from the curse. These sufferings of mine prove I am on the way that leads to life, and therefore I will rejoice."

When is it that God ministers comfort and consolation to us? When do we experience the rich solace that strengthens the heart, firms up our hope, and causes peace to flow like a river into us? Is it not in tribulation? As it is written, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us IN all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ" (2 Cor 1:4-5, NKJV).

ONLY IF NEED BE

There is a sweetness in considering various aspects of our trials. One of the most precious is this: our trials are only experienced as necessary. Thus it is written, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, IF NEED BE, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, 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, NKJV). Our tribulations are comparatively brief, and always with purpose. They only come to us if they are needed – needed to refine our faith, which is tested by fiery trial. Properly received, our tribulations will enable our faith to be found "to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." It is no wonder that we "glory in tribulations!" By grace, we are privy to both their purpose and outcome.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the

glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Rom 5:1-5)

Lesson 16 of 29

THE STRENGTH OF DIVINE LOVE

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, IN ALL THESE THINGS we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I AM PERSUADED, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 8:35-39)

The love of Christ for us is so intent and unrelenting that we cannot be separated from it by "tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword" (Rom 8:35).

The love of God in Christ Jesus is so strong toward us that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us" from it (Rom 8:39).

But this is no lifeless dogma. It is no spiritually impoverished and impractical creed. This is the truth, and is confirmed to the heart IN THE EXPERIENCE of tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, and other hard aspects of life. This is the knowledge that enables us to "glory in tribulations ALSO." The awareness of this condition of safety can only be experienced as we are “LOOKING UNTO JESUS, the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:2). As the faithful are traversing to glory, or being brought to glory by the Captain of their salvation (Heb 2:10), they are exposed to a vast variety of experiences. Some of them are pleasant and precious, some are difficult and hard to bear. But in them all, the superiority of faith is being demonstrated, as well as the strength of hope.

As the saints grow in their love for Christ, the saying of Solomon will be fulfilled in them: “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it” (Song of Sol 8:7). In this case, the “waters” are, what Isaiah referred to as, “the water of affliction” (Isa 30:20). Affliction or tribulation cannot diminish one’s love for Christ, or Christ’s love for the individual. But if there is an inordinate love of self . . . well, that is quite another story.

The strength of salvation is confirmed in “the furnace of affliction” (Isa 48:10). Affliction is the smelting pot through which our bonds are removed, like those of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were removed in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:24-25).

We exult in the confirmation of sonship that tribulation and affliction bring. We joy in the rich consolation that is ministered to us in the midst of them. We leap for joy at the anticipation of

being finally relieved of them all. We spiritually boast in the accomplishments of our Lord through them. Through them He is removing our dross, readying us for glory, conforming us to His image, and confirming the sufficiency of His grace. There is a Divine work being accomplished IN all of your tribulations and difficulties! It is He that is working within you (Phil 2:13). Don't be a complainer, but one that glories in the Lord.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 17 of 29

TRIBULATION PRODUCES PERSEVERANCE, #1

" . . . knowing that tribulation produces perseverance . . . " (Rom 5:3b)

There is a level of knowledge that can only be experienced by faith. It is a product of justification, and a proof of Divine favor. This knowledge is not theoretical, academic, or hypothetical. It is the kind of knowledge that yields both confidence and joy, as well as peace and strength. In our text, this knowledge involves perceiving, or understanding, that tribulation produces perseverance, or endurance.

There is a blight upon the church, which condition can only be removed by special "eye salve." I refer to it as an academic blight that exalts the scribes rather than the Savior, and gives honor to the lawyers rather than the Lawgiver. It is a malignant infection that puts more stress on the mind than the heart, and makes little or no room for faith. This approach to learning is completely incapable of producing the kind of knowledge declared in our text. This condition exists because such erudition cannot reach the heart, effect the conscience, or open the heavens. While there may be place for it, it is an extremely small place, nothing to be compared with the "large room" into which God places us by faith (Psa 31:8). In order to think in concert with our text, you must be set in a "large place" (Psa 118:5), where the restrictive walls of "the flesh" no longer exist. That place is referred to as "heavenly places," where those who are "baptized into Christ" are "set" by God Himself (Eph 2:6).

INTUITIVE, YET COGNITIVE

This knowledge is both intuitive and cognitive, which circumstance is indeed most marvelous.

INTUITIVE

By "intuitive," I mean instinctive – a knowledge that is inherent in the new creation. There is a sense in which it is not learned, but received. Just as the brute creation possesses certain instincts from birth, so the new creation has a certain kind of instinctive knowledge from its genesis. This is the kind of knowledge described in a marvelous aspect of the New Covenant. "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts . . . I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Heb 8:10; 10:16).

This is something God Himself does. It is NOT a learning process as ordinarily perceived. It is

the nature of the "new man" to know certain things – to sense their truth, and be able to move out upon that truth. This is another way of saying, "for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest" (Heb 8:11).

Those who are born again sense the truth of our text, even before they have heard it. By this, I mean it will not sound strange to them the very first time they hear it. The sound of the words, which is essential, will confirm what they already sense, or know intuitively, in their hearts.

COGNITIVE

By "cognitive," I mean knowledge that comes from intellectual awareness and judgment. It is knowledge reflected in thought and perception. It is learned through both teaching and experience, and, in matters pertaining to life and godliness, is the area of spiritual growth. In the Kingdom of God, cognitive knowledge always is in strict agreement with intuitive knowledge, and vice versa. To put it another way, the laws written upon, and put within, our hearts and minds are in strict agreement with the Scriptures, which have been written by inspired and holy men of God (2 Pet 1:21). What the new creation senses by its very nature, is confirmed by "every word of God." Conversely, every word of God will be readily acknowledged to be the truth by all those with a love for the truth (2 Thess 2:10), which is inherent in the "new man" (Col 3:10).

All of this is not an intellectual bypath, intended to introduce confusion to the believer. It rather shows to us why "knowing" is given such a high priority in the New Covenant (Rom 3:19-20; 5:3; 6:6,9; 7:14; 8:22,28; 11:33; 13:11;15:14; 1 Cor 1:5; 2:12; 8:1,4; 11:3; 15:34,58; 2 Cor 2:14; 4:6,14; 5:1,6,11,16; 2 Cor 8:7,9; 10:5; Gal 2:16; 3:7; Eph 1:17,18; 4:13; 5:5; 6:8; Phil 1:9; 3:8,10; Col 1:9,10; 2:3; 3:10,24; 4:6; 1 Thess 4:4; 5:2; 2 Thess 1:8; 3:7; 1 Tim 1:8-9; 2:4; 1 Tim 3:15; 4:3; 2 Tim 1:12; 2:23; 3:1,7,14; Tit 3:11; Heb 8:11; 10:26,30; James 1:3; 5:20; 1 Pet 1:18; 3:9; 5:9; 2 Pet 1:2,3,5,12,20; 3:3,17,18; 1 John 2:3,5,18,20,21.29; 3:2,5,14,15,19,24; 4:2,6,13; 5:2,13,15,18,19,20).

A lack of spiritual understanding always concerned Jesus and the apostles. Over twenty-eight times from Matthew through Jude a holy concern is expressed because of the presence of a lack of knowledge—i.e. "Know ye not," "do ye not know" . . . etc." Unlike mere erudition, this knowledge produces a rich confidence that enables the child of God to stand in the midst of a raging storm and tumultuous waves. There are key benefits that come to us "through the knowledge of God" (2 Pet 1:2-3,20).

Sixty-three years ago, when I first became acutely aware of the Scriptural emphasis of "knowing," I was struck with the alarming degree of ignorance that existed among professing Christians – ignorance of God, Christ, salvation, and the Scriptures. It existed at all levels, from leaders to the common people. I have also noted that it is much worse today than it was during those days. Considering the provision God has made for the acquisition of proper knowledge (Eph 1:15-18; 4:20-21; Col 1:9; 1 John 5:20), this condition is totally unacceptable.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 18 of 29

TRIBULATION WORKETH PATIENCE, #3

“ . . . but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.” (Rom 5:3)

NOT APPLICABLE IN NATURE

Young men or women can memorize certain mathematical tables and theorems, yet totally lack any confidence to employ them for building a large structure, or resolving a challenging problem. But if you could write those tables and theorems on their hearts, then they would make sense to them when they heard them, and they could use them productively. Their confidence would move them into action as though they had worked with them for many years. That is the known power of confidence.

In nature, this scenario – knowing that tribulation works patience – is not possible. But this is not the case in grace. Not only is this possible, it is integral to the New Covenant.

Let me be as precise as I can on this matter, for it is a critical aspect of understanding living by faith. When we read words like "we know . . ." or "knowing that . . ." it is assumed the individual has been born again. It is assumed that the words may be new, but will not be strange. They will not offend or confuse the hearer, but will be confirming and uplifting. The very process of edification assumes there has been a change in the individual. In that change, the heart is infinitely more advanced than the mind. It possesses a greater sensitivity and understanding than the mind. Yet, until the mind is blessed with confirming knowledge, the experience of the believer will be limited, and his experiential involvement with Christ abridged. Expression will tend to be clumsy, and spiritual naivete will cause unnecessary stumbling and error.

SOME ILLUSTRATIONS

Some illustrations of this will suffice to confirm what I have said. The following are things "we know." For many genuine believers, they are totally new intellectually, yet they are not strange, abrasive, or hard to receive. You do not want to miss how marvelous this is.

"And WE KNOW that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose . . . For WE KNOW that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens . . . Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but WE KNOW that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is . . . WE KNOW that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death . . . WE KNOW that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one . . . And WE KNOW that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (Rom 8:28; 2 Cor 5:1; 1 John 3:2,14; 5:19,20, NKJV).

There are many believers who know these things in their hearts, but are cognitively unaware of them. They have been written into their minds in this way: their minds are now able to receive and delight in these affirmations. They are written in their hearts in this sense: they recognize their truth when they hear them, and are capable of relying upon them without fear or doubt.

THE REASON FOR THIS DIVERSION

There is a reason for this brief diversion. The text before us affirms things that will stagger the natural mind, but rejoice the new heart. The person whose mind is renewed, and is devoted to serving the Law of God (Rom 7:25) will immediately see the truth of them. Such an one will relate what is said to life, and find it brings a comforting clarity and understanding that nature in all of its refinements cannot produce. The Spirit will now take us into high places that will suffocate the flesh, but bring refreshing vitality to the spirit.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 19 of 29

TRIBULATION PRODUCES PATIENCE, #3

“ . . . knowing that tribulation worketh patience . . . ” (Rom 5:3)

Here is a statement flesh cannot receive. “The flesh” sees tribulation as producing nothing of value, but only sorrow and grief. However, the truth of that matter is that “tribulation worketh patience.” Other versions read, “suffering produces endurance” (RSV), “tribulation brings about perseverance” (NASB), “trouble gives us the power of waiting” (BBE), “hardship develops perseverance” (NJB), and “problems and trials . . . help us learn to endure” (NLT).

Tribulation is productive because it has a Divinely appointed purpose. Trouble is not mere happenstance or fate. The difficulties that you have faced are not circumstances of chance. Something is taking place in them – something that is necessary and good. When you are in tribulation, you are in a productive mode, where very real and essential kingdom qualities are being fashioned. In your trouble, something is being given to you – something from God. Something is being developed in you – something by God. You are being helped along to another stage of glory by your afflictions! Can you believe that?

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE, OR PATIENCE?

The older word “patience” means continuing to run under hardship (Heb 12:1). It is continuing to row in the midst of a storm (Mk 6:48). It is still trusting when all of experience seems to contradict the promise. Patience, or perseverance, involves waiting on the Lord. It is looking to the Lord while we run, and expecting the fulfillment of His Word. Patience is Abraham continuing to believe God for Isaac twenty-five years after the promise (Gen 12:4; 21:5). It is Abraham taking Isaac to the mountain to sacrifice him to God, even though he was the only one through the promise of God would be realized (Gen 22:1-19). It is Sarah receiving strength to conceive against all the laws of nature (Heb 11:11).

Patience is Samson waiting for a chance to take hold of the pillars (Judges 16:25-30). It is David faithfully keeping a few sheep until the challenge of Goliath (1 Sam 17:26-37). It is Moses keeping the sheep of Jethro in the desert (Ex 3:1-22). It is Joshua and Caleb remaining faithful until they entered the promised land (Num 14:30; Josh 14:10-13). Perseverance is Paul writing from prison (2 Tim 2:9), listening for the Lord during a ship-breaking storm (Acts 27:23-26), and getting up after he was stoned (Acts 19:19-22).

Perseverance is consistency, dependability, and faithfulness. It is continuing in the race when it makes no sense to the flesh to do so. It is refusing to quit. It is remaining strong. It is looking up when nothing but black clouds are hovering over us. It is looking for food in a famine (Psa 33:19), expecting water to come out of a rock (Ex 17:6), and preparing a meal for three when there is only enough for one last meal for two (1 Kgs 17:9-15). Perseverance is singing at midnight when your feet are in the stocks (Acts 16:24-26). It is shaking a serpent that has bitten you into the fire, and continuing with what you were doing (Acts 28:3-5).

MOST CLEARLY SEEN IN CHRIST

This virtue is seen most clearly in our Lord Jesus Christ. Perseverance is Jesus praying when His sweat is like great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Lk 22:44). It is Jesus admitting He is the Son of God before those who mocked Him (Matt 26:63-64), and finding a person to save when He was on the cross of cursing (Lk 23:43). Perseverance is Jesus setting His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem and die for the sins of the world (Lk 9:51), even when His own disciples tried to dissuade Him from doing so (John 11:7-10). Perseverance is Jesus carrying His own cross (John 19:17), taking care of His mother when He was dying (John 19:26-27), and considering the joy set before Him when He was being made sin and cursed by His own Father (Heb 12:2). Jesus Christ set before us what it meant to persevere, endure, persist, remain, and hold on.

ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL

We are not speaking of some Kingdom novelty that can be received or neglected with no lasting results. Perseverance is something that is necessary, required, mandatory, and imperative. There is no salvation without this – no promise of life that excludes it.

Eternal life will be given only to those "who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality" (Rom 2:7). The rich promises of God are only inherited through "through faith and patience" (Heb 6:12). It is ever true that we "have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Heb 10:36). With stern yet gentle words we are admonished to "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb 12:1, NKJV).

If you are ever tempted to quit, or be less aggressive to obtain the inheritance, think of the words of Jesus. "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matt 24:13). Ponder the exhortation of Paul. "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim 2:3). Let there be no lingering doubt in your mind concerning the essentiality of enduring, persevering, and having patience unto the end!

HOW DOES IT COME?

And how is such endurance realized? How is perseverance developed in the people of God? It is not by means of pep-rallies, or shouting "You can do it" to one another. It is through tribulation, trouble, affliction, and persecution! All of these produce a vehement desire to get out of this world and into the next! Faith responds to difficulty by shouting, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim 1:12b, NKJV).

During tribulation it may not seem as though you are making any progress. Your tears may blind your eyes, and your sorrows weigh down your heart. But in your trouble the Spirit is changing you to another stage of glory. As you live by faith, you are becoming more determined to obtain the prize. The crown of glory is looming larger, and the promised inheritance is becoming more precious. The world is receding into the background, and a "better country" is coming more into view. Your flesh is growing weaker, and your spirit is growing stronger, being renewed day by day! If you are in Christ, you too "know" this to be true.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom 5:1-5)

Lesson 20 of 29

PERSEVERANCE PRODUCES CHARACTER

" . . . and patience, [works] experience." (Rom 5:4)

The NKJV reads, "tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character." The ASV reads, "steadfastness [produces] approvedness." Taking the words to their full etymological meaning, the NLT reads, "endurance develops strength of character in us," and the NJB reads, "perseverance develops a tested character." The word "character," or "experience," comes from a Greek word which means "having the quality of having stood the test: matured or proven character" (THAYER). It also stands for "the experience of testing, and the proof of genuine evidence."

In this text, the word "experience," is used in the KJV, Webster's, Douay-Rheims, Darby's, Basic Bible English, and Young's Literal Translation. It emphasizes the PROCESS by which true character, or worth, is established. The word "character," used in the NKJV, RSV, NASB, NIV, NIB, NLT, and NJB stresses the RESULT of the process, which is proven character or persona. Both translations are technically and spiritually correct.

Thus, we understand this verse to mean, through the testing and consequent continuance in well doing, true character is developed. To put it another way, by enduring the tests through which we are caused to pass, our profession is validated, and we are proved to be real, or genuine, disciples.

SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

Character, in the ideal sense, is moral excellence – the ability to make the right choices when faced with competing influences, and remain faithful when one must suffer to do so. Some people, like the unfaithful spies of Israel, are so intimidated by opposition that they shrink back in fear (Num 13:31-33). In their case, the circumstances proved they did NOT have faith. The identical circumstances confirmed that Joshua and Caleb DID have faith (Num 14:6-9; 14:30,38).

An untried person, if there be such a thing, is not to be placed in areas of kingdom responsibility. That is why, when considering the choice of deacons, it is written, “let these also first be proved” (1 Tim 3:10). Other versions read, “be tested” (NKJV), “closely examined” (NLT), and “tried and investigated and proved first” (AMPLIFIED). Such do not have the confidence and assurance that comes from passing through the floods and fires of Divine testing. That is precisely why the people of God are NOT to be led by novices (1 Tim 3:6).

The experience, or development of character, is beautifully stated by the Apostle Paul. In harmony with our text, he shows that tribulation proved the worth of the faith he possessed. "We are troubled on every side, YET NOT distressed; we are perplexed, BUT NOT in despair; Persecuted, BUT NOT forsaken; cast down, BUT NOT destroyed" (2 Cor 4:8-9). What he experienced was tribulation. What did NOT result from tribulation proved his character.

In our text, Paul speaks of trials differently than James. On the surface, they seem to contradict one another. Paul says patience, or endurance, produces a tried character. James says the opposite: "the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3). But there is no contradiction between the two. James is speaking of the testing itself, while Paul is referring to the outcome of the testing. Our text is saying, true character has been developed in the fire of trial. It is the CONCLUSION of the process. James is saying, the fire of trial comes upon us SO THAT our character may be proved true. The process has an appointed purpose.

This is precisely the affirmation of James, who pronounces a blessing on the enduring, or persevering, one. "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:12, NKJV).

The truth of the matter is that God places men in circumstances that will bring out what is really in them. For those who live by faith, the result will always be good! It simply is not possible to live by faith and walk in the Spirit, then succumb to, or faint under, trial. It is not possible to justify a wayward life by saying mistreatment led to such a thing. Those who become wayward because they were mistreated have failed the test. This does not justify the offender, but neither does it excuse the victim. The examples of Joseph, Moses, the Prophets, the apostles, and

ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ, prove that this is true.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Rom 5:1-5)

Lesson 21 of 29

THE CORINTHIAN DILEMMA

“ . . . knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope . . . ” (Rom 5:4-5)

There was a certain kind of testing to which the Corinthian church was subjected. Following Paul’s departure (after he had spent a year and a half in Corinth), false teachers came among them, spouting such heresies as can scarcely be imagined. Some said there was no resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12). Others doubted that Paul was even an Apostle (1 Cor 9:1-3). Still others declared they were followers of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (1 Cor 1:1:12; 3:4). Their presence even spawned contemptible conduct around the table of the Lord (1 Cor 11:20-22). It was a sorrowful situation. Paul wrote pointedly about these teachers, declaring he was going to come and see how much real power they had (1 Cor 4:19; 2 Cor 10:1-12).

And how will the Spirit speak of those circumstances? What will He say of the heretical teaching and conduct that had arisen in the Corinthian assembly? Here is His assessment. "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor 11:19). The NIV reads, "No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval." The NRSV reads, "Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine." What revelation trouble brings!

There, from a very high perspective, you have a reason for church squabbles, dissension, factions, and false doctrine. From this view, these are provings from God – provings that "must needs be"– to put the profession of men to the test. The Lord thus puts men into the fire to confirm the real worth of their faith. This is a circumstance that needs to be recognized.

When such tests are over, those who have been justified by faith, and are living by faith will always pass the trial. They will always end up on the other side of the raging sea. Their faith will be proved genuine by the blast of the fiery furnace and the ferocity of the testing waves. Even during their trials, they who wait upon the Lord will be able to mount up with wings like eagles, run and not be wear, walk and not faint! (Isa 40:31)

In the Scriptural sense of the word, "experience" is not having something unique happen to you.

It is not being struck down by the Spirit, or engaging in some activity that is considered euphoric or exhilarating. Real experience is going into the dungeon like Joseph, and passing the test. It is entering the lion's den like Daniel, and talking to the king in the morning. It is going into to a raging inferno, like the three Hebrew children, and only losing your bonds. That is real "experience."

Experience is young David facing the giant and seasoned warrior Goliath, and leaving the battle field with the sword of a decapitated enemy. It is Noah finishing the ark, entering it, and coming out after the flood had ravaged the world. That is real experience!

EXPERIENCE THAT IS KNOWN

The process of which our text speaks – real character being developed through the enduring fierce trials – is something that is known by the believer. This is not theoretical knowledge, but experiential knowledge. It empowers the trusting one to shout, "I cried to the LORD with my voice, And He heard me from His holy hill" (Psa 3:4). The believer confesses, "I sought the LORD, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears" (Psa 34:4). With joy, the one who lives by faith acknowledges, "This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psa 34:6). The faith of such a person is not true because he passed through the trial. Rather, he passed through the trial because his faith was true.

Faith tells the person this, and thus causes him to become more steadfast after the trial than he was before. Through a storm, advancement is made – against the wind, and in spite of the weakness of the tried sailor! The trial, therefore, becomes a confirmation of the work God has already done within the believer.

The words of Jesus are appropriate at this point, revealing the nature of the Kingdom. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen" (John 3:11). So it is with all the saved, who are proved true through trial. They can now speak authoritatively. For faith, that is a rich consolation, indeed!

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; AND EXPERIENCE HOPE: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Rom 5:1-5)

Lesson 22 of 29

CHARACTER PRODUCES HOPE

“ . . . and experience hope” . . .” The New King James Version reads, “and character, hope.” (Rom 5:4)

For the second time in this short passage, the Spirit brings "hope" before us. He first affirmed that, being justified by faith and having access into grace through Jesus Christ, we stand and "REJOICE IN HOPE of the glory of God" (5:1-2). Hope is like a precious gem, held by the setting of faith upon the ring of justification, and garnished with the precious stones of access and rejoicing. The whole of the beautiful arrangement glows with the grace of God, and is steadfast and sure.

What marvelous associations have been made with this "ONE HOPE" of our calling (Eph 4:4)! Justification, faith, peace, access, standing firm, rejoicing, and the glory of God! What an excellent commentary on the richness of hope, and the sustaining power it brings to the believer! These are matters relating to receiving a righteousness from God.

WHAT IS HOPE?

As I have already indicated, hope is a confident and joyful expectation of the future. It is faith in its forward posture. Just as faith reaches backward to the atoning death of Christ and obtains the benefits related to it, so faith reaches forward to the consummation of all things. It is convinced of the promised advantages related to the return of the Lord.

There is nothing ambiguous or uncertain about hope. It brings a certitude to the soul that can only be realized by faith. That certitude is referred to as "the full assurance of hope," and is to be maintained until the grand conclusion of all things. As it is written, "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb 6:11-12). The idea is that of being fully convinced of the promises of God. It is understood they are considered valuable – "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Pet 1:4), and that the trusting one is not willing to forfeit them.

A hope like this (and none other is acceptable) places a high value on "the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:13). It can be held only by the one who is not at home in this world – the person who has believed God and received a righteousness from Him.

Every person who is born again has this hope. It is not possible to come into Christ and be void of it. Here is how the Spirit states the fact. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again TO A LIVING HOPE through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, TO AN inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation READY TO BE REVEALED in the last time" (1 Pet 1:3-5, NKJV). Both the NIV and NRSV read that God "has given us new birth INTO a living hope." The New American Standard reads, "has caused us to be born again to a living hope."

The new birth, therefore, has put us into this living hope. It so sensitizes us to the eternal realm that we want to be with the Lord. This hope is necessary if we are to last through our tenure in this world and obtain the inheritance that is reserved for us in heaven. The hope also ministers a solid conviction to our hearts that God will keep us by His own power and through our faith in

Christ.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 23 of 29

THE RARITY OF SCRIPTURAL HOPE

“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Rom 5:3-4).

It is a matter of deep concern to me that such a hope appears rare indeed in our time – at least among those of the common Christian community. One rarely hears any allusion to the world to come, or being with Christ, to say nothing of having it dominate the conversation. I have personally spoken to hundreds of believers who confess to never having heard a message dealing with such realities. Such things ought not to be.

THE COMPLICATING FACTOR

Although we are born again into a living hope, there is a complicating factor. We are also occupying a hostile realm that militates against that hope. That hope must be maintained, else it will fade away. It must be nourished, for it must be strong to survive being in "this present evil world" (Gal 1:4).

When we are begotten to a living hope, it is not wound up like an automatic toy, so that it runs without our personal involvement until the day of the Lord. Viewing the condition of many believers, it appears as though some are convinced this is the case. Our salvation depends upon hope. It must be present with us at all times. Is it not written, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom 8:24-25, NKJV). There really is no such thing as salvation without hope, and our hearts should be repulsed by the very notion that is possible. When we see timorous and halting believers who are unsure of glory, and unpersuaded of their position in the Son, our hearts and minds should leap into action. Such poor souls stand in need of nourishment, strengthening, and edification, else they will not be equal to the challenges of life.

How can hope be sustained? What provision is there in God's great salvation that will ensure hope becomes strong? How can it increase and become more dominant in our hearts and minds? Our text has the answer.

EXPERIENCE PRODUCES HOPE

Kingdom experience, or the development of spiritual character, produces hope. Hope is fashioned when we survive the fire and flood of testing! Joshua and Caleb's longing for Canaan will get them through the wilderness! The more they are tested, the more their hope will grow. After forty years, when Caleb arrived in Canaan at the age of eighty-five, he said this to captain

Joshua. "And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said" (Josh 14:10-12).

What kept that man through the prime of his life, from forty-five to eighty-five? Why did he not ask to be entered into a Israelite version of a rest home? Why did he still want the land of the giants – an exceeding great mountain filled with fortified cities? Why did this man think he could drive out the enemy and possess the land for which he longed for forty long years?

It was hope! His hope had grown during the wilderness wanderings, not diminished! It had become more robust through the plagues and chastening of the camp, and the challenges of the enemy. His "experience" had produced hope!

The recollection of our deliverances causes hope to grow. The furnaces and fires through which we have come have served to ignite our hope and cause it to grow and flourish. God has not only delivered us, He IS delivering us. He not only IS delivering us, He will yet deliver us. As it is written, "Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us" (2 Cor 1:10, NKJV). Hold on, faithful pilgrim! Hold on! "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of HOPE UNTO THE END" (Heb 6:11). "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and HOPE TO THE END for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:13).

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 24 of 29

THIS WE KNOW

" . . . KNOWING that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope . . ." (Rom 5:3)

Now this is something that we "KNOW." We only have to consider how far we have come by God's grace to feel the freshness of renewed hope. This is something common to every child of God: "experience produces hope." The more our character is refined and matured, the stronger hope becomes.

It is an unwholesome practice to allow your thoughts to linger on the ills and abuses you think have happened to you. Your thoughts should be on what they have produced in you. If they have produced bitterness, anger, and other unlawful responses, you need to repent, and ask yourself why they have not resulted in the benefits delineated in our text. This is something those in

Christ KNOW – “KNOWING that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Rom 3:3-5, NKJV). The New Living Translation reads, “We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for WE KNOW that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.” If your trials have made you weaker, then your experience contradicts the affirmation of the Spirit.

This knowledge is not intellectual knowledge alone. That is, we do not know tribulation results in perseverance, perseverance results in character, and character results in hope merely because the Bible says so – although that IS reason enough to believe what is said about these matters. However, because what is written is the truth, it is confirmed in human experience. The triumphant nature of faith is revealed in its impact upon the human spirit. That faith produces the results of which our text is speaking. Your job is to assess whether or not those effects are found in you.

God's people should make much of rehearsing the righteous acts of the Lord. Hope is refreshed when you "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you" (Mark 5:19). When kingdom laborers report "all that God had done with them" (Acts 14:27), hope awakens within the believers.

The various trials through which you have passed are tutors. They have confirmed God's faithfulness to you, and that is fuel for hope. Take hold of this truth, and doubt it not.

"EXPERIENCE WORKS HOPE"

Born in 1697, and confessing his faith in Christ in 1716, John Gill said this of hope. "Hope is a gift of God's grace, and is implanted in regeneration, but abounds, increases, and becomes more strong and lively by experience of the love, grace, mercy, power, and faithfulness of God." Every person who is living by faith knows what brother Gill meant. That is an observation birthed in, and confirmed by, experience with God – experience in the furnace and the flood. It is common among all who live by faith, and it is exceeding precious.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 25 of 29

HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT

“And hope maketh not ashamed” (Rom 5:5a). Other versions read, “Now hope does not disappoint . . . ” (NKJV), “hope does not put us to shame” (ESV), and “And this hope will not lead to disappointment” (NLT).

There is a hope that is disappointed – a hope that cannot be fully realized. Solomon well said, "When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish, And the hope of the unjust perishes" (Prov 11:7). Again he wrote, "The hope of the righteous will be gladness, But the expectation of

the wicked will perish" (Prov 10:28). By this he meant the longings of the wicked will never be fully satisfied. Their hope is all in vain, and, because of that, what they expect cannot be realized as they desire.

But it is not so with the righteous – with those whose faith has passed the test! Their hope is actually a pledge or guarantee of what is to come! Their hope has been spawned by their new birth, and is no imagination of the mind. Further, it has grown in their tribulations. It is an increasingly secure anchor of the soul (Heb 6:19).

THE DIVINE MANNER

It is God's manner to first whet the appetite for the blessing before bringing it to pass. Before He gave Adam a wife, He first produced circumstances that would move Adam to want a wife. Before He brought Israel out of Egypt, He first produced an environment that made them want to come out. Before He gave them Canaan, He worked to develop in them a longing for a land of their own.

Before we inherit the ultimate blessing, God moves us through various tests and provings of our faith. He does so to produce a profound longing for His promises within us. He has no mind to cast us down, but to cause us to “hope in His word” (Psa 119:81,114; 130:5). When we yield to that intent, glorying in our tribulations, knowing they are "working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor 4:17), our hope will surely come to pass! We will realize what we long for, praise the Lord!

As with Abraham, faith convinces us "that what He had promised He was also able to perform" (Rom 4:21). Hope vaults us into the mode of expectancy, for it is guaranteed by God Himself.

"HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT!"

How often have you been disappointed with fleshly expectations? Things simply did not turn out as you desired – and your desires were even good and wholesome. Your employment, your home, your church, or even your spouse or your children, fell short of what you had hoped. Did not such things break your heart? Perhaps you did receive grace to overcome the circumstances. God might even have brought some spark of good from it all, as a reward to your faith. But in the end, things were not as you expected or desired.

NO DISAPPOINTMENT IN HOPE!

In Christ, you have entered another order – one where hope is not frustrated and deep desires do not go ungratified! Child of God, you must believe this, for it is the truth! "Hope does not disappoint us" (NIV) – not the hope to which God has begotten you!

The Lord can speak to your heart the very words He once spoke to Israel. They are even more true in Christ Jesus. "But Israel shall be saved by the LORD With an everlasting salvation; You shall not be ashamed or disgraced Forever and ever. For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not

create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: 'I am the LORD, and there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, In a dark place of the earth; I did not say to the seed of Jacob, Seek Me in vain'; I, the LORD, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right" (Isa 45:17-19, NKJV).

When God promises an "eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:15), He declares "things that are right!" Not only are they "right," but because He has created all things, and you, with purpose, He is fully capable of bringing His promises to pass. He has not asked us to seek His face in vain, or without solid expectation! If He did not say to the seed of Jacob, "Seek Me in vain," how much less has He said so to those who are in the Son!

Every one possessing the "one hope" (Eph 4:4) can, in their measure, say with Paul, "according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed" (Phil 1:20, NKJV). The hope we have received is "good hope," and comes through the grace of God, who has promised to fulfill His word to us. That is involved in the expression "everlasting consolation and good hope" (2 Thess 2:16). It is another way of saying it is not possible for those who have the hope not to realize its fulfillment.

Because of His commitment to those who trust in Him, God, "determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us" (Heb 6:17-18, NKJV).

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Rom 5:1-5)

Lesson 26 of 29

HOPE REQUIRES AFFIRMATION

Who is able to measure the terrible effects of obscuring this hope, or not speaking of it, or calling it into question? What of those poor souls who rarely have the hope set before them to ponder, contemplate, and embrace more fully? What massive deterioration of soul begins in those who are only told of earthly things, and continually confronted with issues that have no Scriptural foundation?

If we are saved by hope, and if God orders our lives so as to augment and strengthen hope, what favor has any one done for us by accentuating the here and the now? Those who are bent on making us look at things of the earth have hurt us, they have not helped us. It makes no difference how noble they may appear, or how friendly and concerned they seem to be. If their

words and manners do not assist us to look up, and "set our hope in God" (Psa 78:7), they are really our enemies, not our friends.

But those precious souls who sharpen our countenance with their heavenly considerations and manners, and who speak to us of "the hope set before us" (Heb 6:18), are the dearest of all friends. They will lend us aid in getting through our difficulties. They will help us to reach our "desired haven" (Psa 107:30). Count them a dear treasure!

Take hold of this word, and doubt it not: "Hope maketh not ashamed!" (Rom 5:5). Hear it again. "Now hope does not disappoint" (NKJV). Let the words sink down into your ears. "And hope does not disappoint us" (NIV). Refresh your soul with it. "And this expectation will not disappoint us" (NLT).

This is the hope of "ever being with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:17). It is the confident expectation of being "like Him" when we see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). It involves finishing the race (Heb 12:1-2; 2 Tim 4:7), obtaining the prize (1 Cor 9:24), and hearing the words "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt 25:23). This "hope" speaks of being "absent from the body, and present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). It shouts to us of entering into our house that is in heaven, fashioned by God Himself (2 Cor 5:1-5). It holds before us the prospect of sitting with Jesus in His throne (Rev 3:21), reigning with Him (2 Tim 2:12), and being a "joint heir" with Him (Rom 8:17).

Those in possession of such a hope "will not be ashamed!" There will not be a single element of disappointment when they come to the end of their earthly journey! They will not be disappointed in life, and they will not be disappointed in death. When they are raised from the dead, they will not be ashamed, and when they stand before the throne of Christ, they will not be ashamed. When they are given their inheritance, and receive their reward, they will not be dissatisfied. When they hear Christ's assessment and confession of them not one note of dissatisfaction will be heard.

You can believe this with all of your heart, with nothing doubting. Hope does not in any way disappoint! It never produces a bad crop, never crushes the heart, never caused shame and disgrace. No wonder we are admonished, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and HOPE TO THE END for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:13).

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 27 of 29

THE LOVE OF GOD Poured IN OUR HEARTS

" . . . because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Rom 5:4)

These are not empty words: "Hope maketh not ashamed" (Rom 5:5). They are not heavenly oratory which, like words from men, color the truth so as to make it more palatable. These words

clarify the truth, making it more sure to our hearts. For this reason, the Spirit elaborates on the subject, showing us WHY hope does not disappoint or make us ashamed – “because . . .”

LOVE POURED OUT

Here is the glorious reason. "BECAUSE the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts." Like a mighty torrent, the Holy Spirit has poured God's love into our hearts. What a remarkable picture of God's grace! I suppose that some think God cannot "pour" His love into our hearts. That certainly is not a common way of speaking. Then again, this is not a common thing that happens! We should not expect extraordinary blessings to come in ordinary ways!

The expression "shed abroad," or "poured out," is translated from a single Greek word. This is not a casual word, but an unusually strong one. On the negative side, murder is described by this word as the SHEDDING of blood (Matt 23:35). On the positive side, the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was said to be Jesus "SHEDDING FORTH," or "POURING OUT" the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33).

This word denotes an abundance, full experience, and rich satisfaction. It is being given over completely to something, devoted to it, and filled up with it.

Religious men have been able (in the flesh) to capitalize on, and even institutionalize being "filled with the Spirit." Such doctrines have been introduced in connection with this condition (Eph 5:18) as stagger the sensitive heart. But who has ever been able to capitalize for personal gain being filled with the love of God? What institution or pattern of theological thought has ever sought to exploit that idea? This is too lofty for flesh, which cannot even corrupt the idea! To have the love of God shed forth, or copiously poured out into our hearts is a most arresting consideration. There is nothing in the flesh that can assign any value to it, or move men to desire it, or anything like it. It cannot be related to a fleshly experience or soulish sensation. It defies carnal explanation, or even fabrication. The expression, "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts" is a heavenly one that soars high above the natural man. It is uttered from the heavenly places to those who are seated in those heavenly places (Eph 2:6).

This love is not OUR love for God, but God's love for us! It is GOD'S love, not our love! Thus, the NIV reads, "God has poured out HIS LOVE into our hearts."

Two things should be evident to us in this declaration. First, God's love for us is so "great" it can be poured out in abundance. In fact, it is called "great," or exceedingly large. "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His GREAT LOVE with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Eph 2:4-5, NKJV). Second, in Christ we receive new hearts that are capable of receiving an abundance from God. Just as you cannot pour out an abundance into a small and restricted vessel, so a circumscribed and hard heart cannot receive the abundance of God's love. The heart must be made new and enlarged.

This love was not poured out into our hearts by an impersonal means. God's own Holy Spirit poured His love into our hearts. That is one of His indispensable ministries. He brings to us an

enlarged awareness of the love God has for us. This is not an empty emotional passion, or a flickering desire for our fleshly betterment. This is a strong preference for us. It reflects a willingness to save us, lead us, strengthen us, and bring us spotless into His presence with exceeding joy (Jude 1:24). This is a sacrificial love, a considerate love, a beneficial love.

In the world, it is possible to be loved by someone who brings us no advantage, and may even bring harm to us. It is also possible to be legitimately loved by someone who cannot effectively communicate that love to us. But God is not restricted in this manner. His love is right, holy, and beneficial. It brings good things to us, for God desires to do us good. Once He said it to Israel, even more He says it to those in His Son. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer 29:11, NKJV). The Lord is, indeed, abundant in goodness!

When this love is poured out into our hearts, we become acutely aware of His affection and desire for us. This awareness compels us, thrusting us into a life of personal sacrifice and anticipation. Thus it is written, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor 5:14-15).

Only the Holy Spirit is capable of pouring this love into us. It is not a love that can be learned academically, or apprehended through logical processes. It is a work only God can do through the Holy Spirit – and He does it for every one of His children! It is no wonder we are admonished, "grieve not the Spirit of God" (Eph 4:30), and "quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess 5:19).

Because the Holy Spirit knows and searches "the deep things of God" (1 Cor 2:10), He is a capable Administrator of this love. As He pours God's love into our hearts, we become aware of "the things God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9-10). The rich promises of God begin to shine with eternal glory, the Word is more satisfying, and Jesus becomes more precious. All of this because we have seen something of the greatness of God's love for us.

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

Lesson 28 of 29

THE SPIRIT IS GIVEN TO US

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom 5:5).

God is careful to remind us of what we have received in Christ. The love of God is not poured out into our hearts from heaven, but from within. The Holy Spirit does not merely fall upon us, bringing fleshly sensations, erratic behavior, and unintelligible utterances. He is "given to us" (1 Cor 2:12; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; 1 Thess 4:8; 1 John 3:24; 4:13). This is not a mere experience, but the

indwelling of a Person – and there is a vast difference between the two. It involves experience, to be sure, but the pinnacle of the blessing is the Person of the Holy Spirit who Himself is “given” to us by God (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; 1 Thess 4:8; 1 John 3:24; 4:13)!

And what does the Spirit come to do? To be sure, He does not come as a casual observer. Nor, indeed, does He come only to handle emergencies that may arise. The Holy Spirit of God, like the Father and the Son, is a prodigious Worker. He is given to us to do something that cannot otherwise be done in us. His work is not a duplication of something men have attempted. He does not come to fortify a sectarian stance, or to promote a favorite theological position. His agenda has been dictated by God Almighty, not by mere human need. His work has to do with preparing us to survive the ultimate confrontation of God, and to live forever as “joint-heirs” with Jesus Christ (Rom 8:17).

What does this text declare the work of the Holy Spirit to be in regards to our subject? Why is it that hope is not associated with shame. How is it that those who possess the hope purify themselves, even as He is pure (1 John 3:3)? Why is “hope” associated with “rejoicing” (Rom 12:12; Heb 3:6)? How is it that “hope” is related to “confidence” (Heb 3:6)? “Hope” is mentioned fifty-one times from Romans through First John. In addition to the above, it is associated with believing (Rom 4:18), not being ashamed (Rom 5:5), being “saved” (Rom 8:24), “comfort” (Rom 15:4), “righteousness” (Gal 5:5), God’s calling (Eph 1:18), what is laid up in heaven for us (Col 1:5), the Gospel (Col 1:23), grace (2 Thess 2:16), the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim 1:1), eternal life (Tit 1:2), blessing (Tit 2:13; full assurance (Heb 6:11), refuge (Heb 6:18), an anchor for the soul (Heb 6:19), and making us perfect (Heb 7:19).

What compels the children of God? What moves them to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice to God (Rom 12:1), and give their various capacities as “servants of righteousness” (Rom 6:19)? Why do they live solely for Jesus, who died for them and rose again (2 Cor 5:15)? What has moved them to run the race that has been set before them, and do so with endurance (Heb 12:1-2)? It is not because of moral compulsion, or a set of rules, or threats of condemnation. They did not enroll in a course that taught them how to live for Christ. There was no heavenly police squad that enforced the requirements laid down by Jesus. There are no doubt some secondary reasons for living “unto” the Lord – like fear of the consequences for not doing so, or the desire to adhere to a system of Law without the involvement of the heart. However, things like that are not sufficient to induce consistent and indefatigable effort.

It is only to the degree that we perceive the love of God that hope springs eternal within! If there is doubt concerning God's love for us, there will be no joyful expectation of the future. Examine yourself and see if this is not the truth. When you see the extent of God's love for you, you will withhold nothing from Him. In return, He will so clarify your future glory, that no price will be too great to pay, and no suffering too long or painful to endure. All of this is intensely personal and gratifying. That, dear child of God, is how the Kingdom of God works, and it is all for your advantage. As it is written, “For THE LOVE OF CHRIST COMPELS US, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor 5:14-15. NKJV).

THE TRIUMPHANT NATURE OF FAITH

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Rom 5:1-5)

Lesson 29 of 29

CONCLUSION TO SERIES

We have perused a text of great magnitude, and have not been able to do it justice. My purpose has been to set forth the truth in such a manner as will provoke both thought and effort. This passage has placed before us the sure effects of being made righteous. While righteousness is imputed to us "without works," it is neither impersonal nor ineffective. Rich fruit is to be found on the tree of justification. The tranquility of peace with God is realized. With that peace comes refreshment from the presence of the Lord rather than intimidation. Fear flies away, and a certain tranquility of soul is experienced in the very presence of the Lord.

There also comes a realization that we have access to the grace we so sorely need, and that God is forward to give it to us. We can confidently approach the throne of grace to "obtain mercy and find grace in the time of need" (Heb 4:16). Our petitions will not be denied, but will be joyfully received and honored by the God who is thoroughly satisfied with the Person and accomplishments of His Son. So we come to Him, expectantly, and with great confidence. We can come as often as we desire, stay as long as we want, and obtain as much as we seek. It is coming into the presence of the Lord and obtaining grace that enables us to stand against all the wiles of the devil, and in all manner of trials.

Receiving the "gift of righteousness," and accessing the grace of God wherein we stand, we are set to rejoicing in anticipation of beholding the glory of God, and being ourselves glorified. This is no small accomplishment, for once we were in the grip of the fear of death. Now, however, it holds no dread for us. The future is now bright with promise.

While we await the return of our Lord and our consequent glorification, life is seen in an entirely new perspective. Now our tribulations are seen as an appointed means to an end. They are the door that opens to endurance, perseverance, and spiritual constancy. As life brings stress and burdens to us, our spiritual muscles are strengthened. Our wills become more determined, and we resolve to obtain the promised prize at any cost.

There is another glorious accomplishment of which we become aware. As we gain more experience in the faith-life, coming through more trials, and overcoming more enemies, hope is becoming stronger. It now speaks more clearly to our hearts. It is more difficult for circumstances to obscure the future, which is shining brighter and brighter. Heaven is now eclipsing earth, and the afflictions through which we are passing are offset by "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor 4:17).

In the stillness of the trying night, hope can be heard to whisper to us: "You will not be disappointed!" From heaven the shout can be heard over the din of battle: "You will not be ashamed for trusting in Christ and looking forward to the glory!"

And when the "old serpent" tries to convince us this is all of our own doing, the Holy Spirit witnesses to our spirit, "It is I who has poured out the love of your God into your heart. I have assisted you to see His great love, and it is because of this that you are not overcome. I have been given to you to ensure you comprehend the love of God, and at last receive your reward."

Now tell me, child of God, is that not a worthy salvation Does it not bring honor and glory to God to so perceive it? Is there any reason for your expectation to be weak? And it is all the truth! Keep running! Keep watching! Keep fighting! Keep the faith! Finish your course!
– Given O. Blakely