

Romans 5:3-5

"Assurance in Suffering"

Romans 5:3-5, "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (NIV). "Romans 5:3-5, "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" (KJV).

Introduction

"Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 5, Romans chapter 5 as we continue to look at reasons for assurance. Reasons for assurance in Romans chapter 5. Last week we saw that we have assurance of salvation. If we have believed in Christ [Yeshua haMeschiach for our Messianic Jewish believers], and have been born again by the power of his Holy Spirit, we will go to heaven [be in the 1st Resurrection to immortality, cf. 1 Cor. 15:49-54]. And we have that assurance, verse 1 says, because we've been saved, we have peace with God. We're not at war with God, and God's not at war with us anymore, we have peace with God. We have made our peace with God, we don't have to wait till the day we die. It's been done at the cross. Amen? And then secondly, verse 2 says, that we have access to God. Whereas before, God was, there were many barriers separating man from God. Now Jesus Christ has made the access for us, through the blood that he shed, and we now can come to the Father at any time. And thirdly, we have hope, we have the hope of

heaven [or as some believe the Scripture says: "entering the Kingdom of Heaven, which will be established on earth at Jesus 2nd coming, the same period of time when the righteous dead will be raised as immortal beings"]. We have the assurance that we're going to heaven, and really, heaven has begun already. There's a change that has begun in our lives that God never begins without completing. And so, we have assurance for those three reasons.

Assurance In Suffering

But We Don't Have Immunity From Trouble

Now Paul says, ***'Now it's just not all assurance in the by-and-by, there's some real assurance you can have right now, meeting the troubles and suffering that everyday life brings.'*** And he says, 'We have reasons to rejoice because of our assurances of salvation, we have reasons to rejoice in even our sufferings and our troubles.' We'll look at that in a minute. Well, let's read **verses 3, 4, and 5** right now. ***“And not only this, we also exalt in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance (or endurance), and perseverance proven character, and proven character, hope. And hope does not disappoint because of the love of God which has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us.”*** When you talk about suffering, we need to understand that Christians are not immune from suffering. Sometimes listening to the people on TV [he means the "Sunday Morning Comedy Hour" or some televangelists] and some of the people on the radio, you begin to get the idea that Christians have been guaranteed some kind of immunity from trouble and suffering and poverty, if they will just give enough, if they'll just believe enough, and if they'll just say enough times what they want, that's what they'll get. [*“Positive Confession”* we talked about in Romans 4:17-25, pp. 12-14] I've picked that up, listening to TV preachers, listening to some of the people on the radio. I've picked it up looking at certain books you can buy in the Christian bookstore. There's a big problem with that, it's not true. Christians are nowhere guaranteed immunity from life's storms. Christians are nowhere guaranteed freedom from trouble. Nowhere have we been guaranteed success and freedom from poverty. I'm sorry, it's not what God's Word teaches. Jesus said speaking to his followers in **John 16**, I'll just read it to you,

“These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace” -- because, boy you're going to need it because of the next thing I'm gonna tell you. And he goes on to say -- **“in the world you'll have tribulation, but be of good courage”** he said **“I have overcome the world.”** Jesus said, **‘You're going to need my peace, followers, because in this world, you're going to have trouble. You're going to have tribulation. You're going to have hard times, you're going to have trials. In this world you're going to need my peace -- because I haven't guaranteed you immunity from life's hurts.’** The apostle Paul says something very illuminating **in Acts chapter 14**. Turn there with me, just go to the left one book, Acts chapter 14. For some of you this may be your life verse, **Acts chapter 14, verse 22**, and you'll see what I mean in a minute. Let me give you, as you're looking, a little bit of background for the verse. Paul had been preaching in a city where they thought he was God and he just declared, **‘I'm just a man with a message.’** They rioted, they stoned him, throwing rocks on him until he died, he actually died, because verse 20 says that while the disciples were standing around him, it looked as though he'd been left for dead, and he actually did die, it said **“He arose”** and that word in Greek is the word that's always used for a resurrection from the dead. He died, and he actually was brought back to life by God, and he went back into the city and began to preach again. Well, these early disciples realized right away, that **just because you're a great apostle doesn't mean you have immunity from the flying rocks of this world**. They may score a hit, they may knock you down, but the neat thing, if God isn't finished with you, he'll pick you right back up and stand you on your feet and away you go. Right? God was in control. But the apostle Paul didn't want them to lose heart. So it goes on now in **verse 22**, it says that he stayed there awhile, and he strengthened the souls of the disciples. And this is what he did to strengthen them. **“Encouraging them to hang in there, to continue in the faith, and saying”** -- and this is a life verse for some of you -- **“through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”** Is that your life verse? I think it's mine. Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. Now why did he say that? Did he not have enough faith? Was he making a negative confession? Of course he had plenty of faith. You're talking about the guy who wrote the Word that saved you. Yes, he had faith, but **he did not have immunity from trouble**. And he's saying, **‘Look, in this world you're going to have tribulation. In this world, you're going to have trouble.’ ‘But be of good courage’**, as Jesus said, **‘I've overcome the world.’** **“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of heaven.”** Paul told Timothy, his buddy, in **2nd Timothy 3:12**, he said **“All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”**

We could probably just say, **'All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer.'** Now you can't erase these verses from the Bible. And I'm concerned for some of you who have been taught wrong things about pain and suffering and trouble and trials. I'm concerned, because I understand that bad theology can turn your life sour and bitter towards God. **Nowhere in the Bible are you promised immunity from hurt, pain or suffering.** I'm sorry, but it's not there. And I never told you that you were immune from that. You look at the Bible, and look through every book of the Bible, all 66 of them, and you will see that in every one of those books there is some kind of talk about suffering and pain. The book of Psalms, for instance, has 150 Psalms, and of those 150 Psalms, 90 of them talk about trials, talk about pain and hurt. There's no believer in the Bible that I can think of, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, Peter, Paul, James, the early church--I can't think any of them that we have any real information on their life that didn't suffer, that didn't have some kind of trouble. And it wasn't the result of sin in their life. It was the result, many times, of their opposition to sin that they got into trouble. **Our response to suffering is determined by our understanding of God.** Why do people get mad at God when bad things hit? It's because they don't know God. They don't really know the living God. See, the basis, the foundation for talking about suffering is you gotta know the character of God. You've got to understand that **God is love**, and that God loves you. Someone says, *'Well, if God loves me, then why doesn't he answer my prayers?'* Well, you're probably praying prayers, *'Give me this goody, get me out of this jam, Lord protect me from this jam, Lord I need money here, I need money there,'* and it doesn't happen, and you're saying, *'Well, he doesn't answer my prayers.'* -- because it's his will for you now to be in trouble. You say *'What!?',* what are you saying?' I said it's his will right now for you to be in trouble. *'Well, then I don't like him.'* You see, that's so immature. That is like, I mean it really is, it's like my little kids, you know. Especially my three and a half year old, you know, she's at the age right now where she's beginning to reason I think, and she's beginning to talk back, and she'll argue with me, and I'll ask her to go to bed for her nap, and oh man, you'd think I'm the meanest guy on earth, she doesn't like me for awhile, she rejects me for awhile, she gets mad. You ask her to eat certain vegetables on her plate, you know, and there's this big deal and you're such a scoundrel, but see I know vegetables are good for you. I know that she'd better take a nap, because she needs that rest. And she doesn't see things from a mature perspective yet. And many times when we're shaking our little fists at God, and we're kicking and screaming in trouble, we don't understand that the trouble in our life works something into our life that nothing else

can do. Believe me, God loves you so much that if some other way could work what trouble works into your life, God would use it. If there were something besides trouble he could use, he would. Remember Jesus (Yeshua), God's beloved Son, right? He's praying in the garden, he says **“Father, if possible, take this cup”**, the cup of death, **“take it from me. But not my will, but your will be done.”** You better believe that if there was a possibility that God could have done the work in some other way, he would have done it. But it necessitated the death of his Son. And you can believe that God loves you so much, that if there was any way that he could spare you an ounce, a drop of trouble, he would. He loves you, and he has withheld so much trouble from you. But that which he does allow is working a work that nothing else can do in your life as a Christian. It doesn't apply to you if you're not a Christian. [But God does know and care that people in the world do suffer. He even made a remark by Paul or one of the other apostles which shows people in the world are suffering as we do. He goes as far as to call them “our brothers in the world.”] But if you're a Christian that's true. There is meaning to your suffering and to your troubles. [Comment: And in the overall plan of God, there will be meaning for the suffering of the whole world, throughout it's long suffering history. Don't forget a clear biblical fact, one ignored by most Christian teachers, that God created and placed on this earth Adam and Eve, mankind--a planet infested with evil demons and Satan himself. This is Satan's evil world right now. Responsibility for all six thousand years of human suffering will some day be placed on Satan's head, as he and his demons are banished from earth and the presence of mankind forever (cf. Leviticus 16, whole chapter, Rev. 20:1-3, 7-10; Genesis 3:1-6; Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:12-17). God had to have a very good reason for placing mankind that he created on a planet infested with demons, with Satan as their evil ruler. Remember, nothing in the angelic or demonic world gets done without God's approval, it's his universe, he created it and rules over all of it. God must have a plan that goes far beyond our limited human vision, a plan that encompasses the whole numbers of human lives he was responsible for the creation of. Don't forget, it is God who is responsible for creating man on a planet infested with demons, with Satan as their evil ruler. The buck stops on God's desk, not ours, not Satan's. Just keep this in the back of your mind when you think of trouble and that this whole world is a world of trouble, pain and suffering. We live in an evil world right now, it's not God's world right now--Satan and his demons hold unseen authority over all life on the planet right now--except for those God has specifically called out of this world. God has a purpose worked out, and mainstream Christianity hasn't focused on that whole purpose yet. Christian teachers currently have just focused on the

specific plan of salvation for the individual believer--the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. You can be sure more on this theme about God's overall plan and purpose will be revealed after Jesus returns, things he hasn't revealed to us yet. The Old Testament is filled with more prophecies about the actual physical coming of God's kingdom on earth than anywhere else in the Bible. But very strangely, pain and suffering seem to be banished from those living in that Millennial Kingdom of God. Christians who have lived and died during the Church age (30AD to the 2nd Coming) must be a special leadership cast, as Revelation 20:4,6 brings out. Our reward for suffering and building the resultant Christian character into our lives through suffering must bring us a **huge** reward, in comparison to those yet to be born-again after Jesus Christ's 2nd coming. During that time, Satan and his demons will be banished, the evil societies of man will be gone, a thing of the past.]

Our Response To Suffering Is Determined By Our Understanding Of God

Our response to suffering is determined by our understanding of God. What we think about God will determine how we respond to the trials. When we shake our fist at God [we prove] that we don't know him--we don't know him well enough to trust him for what we don't know. We need to learn to live above the level that we can see, I call it the "see level". Too many Christians are living at "see-level", "see" you know, and they live by sight and not by faith. And when you step into trouble, it's a big lesson in living above "see-level". You've got to get your sight on things above. You've got to get your sight on the things of faith and the things that God's Word says, and not just on what you can see. We need to understand that God is in control of our trials and our suffering. [i.e. in spite of seeing that this is really Satan's world we live in right now-God even in these awful circumstances, is still in control.] Satan is not in control of them. For awhile, as I was coming into Christianity and the things of the Lord, there's so many winds of teaching, so different things, and I would buy the popular books and read them. For awhile, I had the view that a lot of people have that when God's busy over here with John Doe, and got his back on me, Satan comes running in and does some mean thing to me, and God turns around -- *'Hey, hey, hey! Get away, get away! That's my son, you know.'* And as long as God's watching me I'm OK, but then

when--it's like Satan can sneak up on God and do things to us. And I remember telling people *'God is not in control of suffering. God never wills that you should suffer or be in pain, it's not God's will that you be in pain and suffer.'* And that would effect the way I would pray and everything I would [teach], I would try to rebuke everything bad in someone's life [i.e. "Positive Confession" baloney]. Well, that's a bunch of baloney. God is in control of the suffering that we go through. It is not just by chance, nor is it the devil coming in and doing things that God doesn't know about. [Good case in point, read the whole book of Job. See in the beginning, God has a hedge set about Job, but for Job's own good, God let's Satan trouble Job. But you have to read the whole story. God does use the evil that he's allowed to remain on this planet, and he uses it for our good, for our spiritual development, and yes, for the spiritual development of the entire world later after Jesus' return.] Satan is not some kind of a semi-god or a little demi-god. Satan is just a big created being with a lot of power. He's like an elephant, you know. I mean, to me, an elephant is a lot stronger than me. I don't want to get one [mad at me]. Elephants are mighty creatures, I don't want to mess around with them, or a polar bear [where everything a polar bear sees is food to them!], or a lion [and Peter refers to Satan as being a roaring lion] or anything like that. I acknowledge their authority, their power, but they're not God, and Satan is just a created being, he's not God. And anything he does is just because God allows him to do it.

Is There Anything In Christianity That Helps Somebody Face Trouble?

Look at 1st Peter, chapter 4, verse 19, very important verse. **1st Peter chapter 4, verse 19**, Peter is talking about suffering. When we were in the book of Peter years ago, there was a real precious brother who was fellowshipping with us for a time, and finally he says *"I'm leaving here, I want to hear something positive. I'm tired of hearing about suffering and trials. I'm going to go to a church where I don't hear about those things."* You know, I've thought about that so many times since then, I thought *'He wants to go bury his head in the sand.'* He's a superstitious Christian that thinks that if he talks about trouble it's going to happen. No, trouble can happen whether you talk about it or not. Right? And I don't have to go looking for it, it finds me, knows my address very well. But talking about it,

gang, is what we ought to do. Instead of coming here with this phony-baloney stuff, saying, *'Oh, we who have real faith, why we're not in financial troubles, and those of us who really believe, we're not sick.'* Instead we wear these little line-masks, where instead we ought to get real and get honest and say *'Hey, look, we're all in trouble. We've all got trials, we've all got suffering.'* Some of us have marriage problems, some of us, money problems, some have kid problems, some have other problems, we have sickness, some of us have cancer. Now let's come to God's Word and see how we can get through this! Is there anything in Christianity that helps somebody face trouble? Listening to some of these people you would think there isn't. And so we have to pretend that there's no such thing as trouble. Hey, if you're in trouble, you're in pretty good company. Jesus was known to be a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Sorrow and grief come from trouble, don't they? **1st Peter 4:19** tells us that God is in control of our suffering. And it is sometimes God's will that we suffer. **Verse 19, "Therefore let those also who suffer" -- how? -- "according to the will of God, entrust their souls to a faithful creator in doing what is right."** I've heard people tell me *'Well, I don't believe that,'* and I say *'Well, sorry but this is the Bible, you know -- like 'Are you a Christian?' 'Well, I don't believe that.'* It says, **"according to the will of God." *They're suffering according to the will of God.* 'It's not God's will that I suffer.'** Well, if you're into that, man, there's not much we can do with you, because we swear allegiance to the Lord, and the Lord of this book. And the book says it's God's will, sometimes that you suffer. And he says, *'What should you do?' 'Don't fight him, and trust your soul to a faithful creator in doing what is right.'* When Jesus was suffering his greatest trial as he stood before Pilate and was about to be crucified Pilate said to him, ***'Ooh, you're not going to answer me?'*** Pilate had asked him some questions, Jesus just remained silent, fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah would stand dumb before his shearers. ***'You're not going to answer me, huh?'*** Pilate says, **"Don't you know I have authority to release you, and I have authority to crucify you?"** And Jesus broke his silence. He answered **"You would have no authority over me, unless it had been given you from above" John 19.** What Jesus is saying here is, ***'Look, my Father's in control of my suffering right now. You think you're in control of me because you have my hands tied, because your men have been spitting in my face, because you've been bludgeoning me, because you've been pulling out my beard by the roots, you think you have control over me because you're going to deliver me over to be crucified, but you're not in control, my Father's in control.'*** And if that's true of God's beloved Son, gang, it's true of the children of God too.

There's no authority over you right now that hasn't been allowed by God. God is in control. Remember that last time before his death, that Jesus had with Peter, there on the night of the last supper? Jesus predicted that Peter would deny him. He said, **“Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded and has obtained by asking permission to sift you like wheat”**, Luke 22. What do you learn there? You learn that Satan couldn't touch Peter without first obtaining permission from God. He had to ask. He had to submit in triplicate or quadruplicate his plan. It had to be reviewed by God and God could say yes or no. It's so incredible, gang. The Bible teaches us all the way through that God is in control of his children's lives. Because you suffer doesn't mean God's on a vacation, God's taken the day off, something slipped by him while his back was turned. Not on your life. Look at the book of Job, think about it. Remember **Job in chapter 1**? It's a day when the "sons of God", the angels of God stand before the Lord, and Satan happens to come in among them. God says to Satan, **“Have you seen my servant Job who serves me with integrity in his heart?”** And Satan replies, **“Aagh, the only reason why Job serves you is because you have put a hedge of protection around him. He's a rich man, he's a healthy man, he's a happy man. Take away those things from him, his money, take away his health, take away his happiness, and he'll curse you to your face. No one loves you for who your are. The only reason why anybody serves you is because you give them things, you buy their love.”** You can just imagine the accusations behind all these things. God says, **‘OK, I'll give you permission, I'll give you permission to take away his money.’** He had his first ‘stock market crashed’, Job's wealth was all in his stock -- his cattle, crashed in one day. His house was destroyed. His children, his happiness, they were taken away, they were destroyed. His health, he became afflicted with severe pain. And finally, his sweet wife turned into a nag. She said **“Why don't your curse God and die.”** Such an encouragement, in time of need. [laughter] Remember that, brothers and sisters, be encouragers to one another. Well, did Job curse God? No, in spite of all that he went through, Job served God. He said, **“Though he slay me, yet I'll trust in him.”** **‘I just love him, I know he loves me. Those things have fallen to me, I'm in severe pain.’** I'm sure he wasn't saying it with a big smile on his face, but he's saying **‘Hey, I trust him. I know him. I'll trust him.’** Part of the problem with Christians is they really don't know God. They really don't know God, the real God of the Bible, or you'd be able to trust him a little bit more. **And walking through the trouble are times when you learn to trust him, because then you look back on past experience – ‘Hey you got me through this’ I can trust him for this one too.**

*We Understand That Everything That Happens To Us Has
First Passed Through The Loving Of God For Our Lives*

Look at 1st Corinthians 10, verse 13. It's a verse, that man if it's not highlighted in your Bible, you'd better get with it and highlight it. You'd better underline it, put a star in the margin, or something! How have you gotten by without this one? **1st Corinthians chapter 10, verse 13, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man."** See, I told you, you're not immune. I'm not immune from having my house blown off the map by a hurricane in Florida! *'Oh, I'm a Christian. Our tower is still standing, that means we're better than everyone else!'* It's funny, in that same region, that's what representatives from a certain Christian broadcasting company said, *'Everything's fine, our tower is still standing.'* But it's interesting to me, another Christian radio ministry's tower was destroyed. So what does that mean? It's funny, the one who preaches the heresy is still standing. The one who's preaching the truth, probably it fell, you know. Interesting to me. The thing is, Christian people had their houses totaled. They had their cars wiped out. Christian people lost lives. It's common to man, see, we're not all of a sudden made immune to trouble when we become Christians, no, not on your life. But I tell you, as a Christian -- you say, *'Well, why should I become a Christian?'* -- that's another point I want to talk about. **If, if the moment everyone walked down the aisle, pray or do whatever, if the moment they were saved, if everything went perfectly for them -- they became rich overnight--healthy, wealthy, happy--*who wouldn't become a Christian!* You would be out of your mind, not to become a Christian, you'd be stupid, stupid, stupid.** And so, I mean, the whole world would serve God, or at least say they did. But you see, no one would believe in the cross, no one would accept Christ [Yeshua haMeschiach], and put their faith really in his gospel, and put their whole life into his hands. You wouldn't have to, man, you wouldn't have faith. You wouldn't need faith, everything's taken care of. [And as my first pastor told us all (when I was a babe in Christ), that is the real danger everyone living in the Millennial Kingdom of God will face, *'Why should I really accept Christ, and Salvation through the cross? Everything's perfect, coming up roses, no war, peace, prosperity.'* He was a very perceptive pastor] So it's not that way. You accept Christ [Yeshua] because you love him. Because you know you're a sinner, and you know he died for your

sins, and you accept the gift of salvation, and you're promised eternal life with him, yes. And you're promised his presence with you now in trouble, but you're not promised immunity from trouble and suffering and hurt. **"No temptation has taken you, but such as is common to man. And God is faithful"** -- don't forget that, God is faithful in those times -- **"who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you're able"** -- underline the word "allow", permit, whatever it says in your translation. I love that point, because he's saying right here in this verse, that before you can be tried or tested or tempted -- and the word for temptation there in the first part of the verse can mean **"tried, tested, or temptation"** -- he says none of these things can come to you without God giving permission first. He won't allow you, you see. It can't just happen by chance. See, Christians have an inside track here.

Trouble In God's Hands Produces Something

We understand that everything that happens to us, has first passed through the loving will of God for our lives. You say it's the loving will of God that some Christian gets cancer? Yes. That some become crippled by arthritis? Yes. Talked to a man at the door in the first service, broke down at the door weeping, visiting family from Pennsylvania, precious man. He said his wife is there, she couldn't come on the trip, she's so crippled with rheumatoid arthritis, she can barely walk. And yet, he says, "I love God" and began to weep. He said *"she's such a testimony, such an encouragement to those who are around her."* He says, *"Sometimes I think God chooses people to go through these things so that they can show the great power and grace of God."* And we just hugged. It may be God's will that you suffer.

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

But our troubled times are not a waste, they're not meaningless. You see, that's where the world, I mean, the world would just commit suicide--'You know, forget it man.' 'Give me a lethal injection.' 'I've just got more than I can bear, and I've made an appointment at the.' You know, they'll think some wonderful name for it, *The Exiting Center* or something, you know. But our troubled times are not wasted, they're not fruitless. Trouble in the hands of Jesus, Yeshua, produces in our lives--and that's what we're happy about. I'm not happy about any trouble I'm in. But I'm happy about what it's doing, it's not a waste in my life because I'm a child of God. Vance Havner told a story of a small town in the south who's livelihood was based entirely on cotton growing. These people grew cotton, picked cotton, baled cotton, and they were eeking out a living at it. They weren't rich, but they were getting along. Then disaster struck the community when the bollweevil's invaded. And they began to destroy these little cotton plants. And they invaded the whole area, and they infested the fields and threatened to destroy everything. Financially, most of the people thought they'd be ruined. As it turned out, though, the farmers by this disaster began switching crops from cotton to other crops like peanuts and crops that weren't vulnerable to the bollweevil. And these crops also that they had to switch to, they discovered, yielded a much greater return on their investment and their labor. Actually, what happened was these new crops brought such an undreamed of prosperity to this town, that to show their appreciation, they raised a monument to the bollweevil. [laughter] And to this day, in that little southern town, that monument with the bollweevil on it, is standing. As the people said "Thank God that the bollweevil came to destroy our crops. Because of this we planted in a new direction, and we have become well-off." ***Trouble in God's hands produces something.*** Trials, trouble and suffering can produce things in your life that nothing else can produce. That's why God allows them. Now he does not get a kick out of seeing you cry. He doesn't get a thrill out of seeing you suffer. But he does get a thrill out of seeing that raw ore turn into 24 karat gold. And that's what trouble does in our lives.

One Key Thing Trouble Produces, Endurance

And so we're told now in Romans, going back to Romans, chapter 5. And we'll look at **verse 3, "and not only this, but we also exalt (or rejoice) in our tribulations."** Is he out of his mind? Did he get hit

with one too many rocks? *'We exalt in our tribulations?'* Well the word in Greek is very powerful, it has the meaning of "shouting for joy." It has the meaning of "jubilation." We might say "Joy to the max!" How many of you rejoice that way? You call up your friends, *'Hi, I'm so excited, I'm so thrilled about what's happened! The doctor said I've got five weeks to live!'* *'You invite your friends to come over for a party'* -- what for? *'We've lost everything!'* [laughter] *'We're broke. It's pot luck for that reason. We have nothing left. Wow, we're so excited, we're just rejoicing in this!'* Call the men with the little [white] jackets. But really, that's what the Bible says. **"Count it all joy my brethren when you encounter various trials" James 1 says, "knowing that these troubles produce in your life."** Peter says the same thing. He says, ***'Hey, hang in there a little while you're suffering, because God is working this gold ore into the real 24 karat stuff.'*** We rejoice in our sufferings because we know what suffering and tribulation produces. It's not because we're a bunch of sadists or masochists, and it hurts so good. I don't rejoice in the pain, but I rejoice in the product. He says it produces, **verse 3**, tribulations produce **perseverance**, or as one translation says, **endurance**. Or the King James Version says **"patience."** The word "endurance" here means "to stay under pressure." **Oh, it was a military term to begin with, that was a word for a soldier who stayed in his spot in battle, no matter how heated the battle became, he stayed in place.** [Watch "The Band of Brothers", Part 7, "The Breaking Point" tape (about the battle of Foy), showing the frozen fox-hole emplacements they held onto despite repeated German barrages of 88's and 105's they had to endure, and "stay in place -- holding the line." That describes this kind of endurance that's being talked about, developed by our trials. It puts it into flesh and blood perspective in graphic living color what this word **endurance**, Greek for "holding the line", meant. And some of those men are still alive, elderly vets who endured under extreme pressure to pay for our present freedoms. Another military movie which graphically shows this, a true WWI story, is titled "The Lost Battalion". Men that physically endure and hold the line do develop a special character that stays with them for their entire lives. Tremendous spiritual types jump off the screen here. There's tremendous physical character exhibited for us by the examples of these soldiers. The type transfers directly over into our lives, by this Greek word Paul used for **endurance**. We're all in a war-zone. We all live on a planet infested with demons under Satan's command, and they're all at war with God and all of us who are God's -- that's us folks! We've been called -- every Christian who has been born-again from above -- into a spiritual war-zone. Planet earth is a spiritual war-zone. If you doubt me, just read the news closely for a week. We are more literally soldiers of Jesus Christ than most

would want to admit, and we must develop the character of a good soldier. I would highly recommend Brian Brodersen's booklet *Spiritual Warfare*, but for some reason it's been taken out of print from the Calvary Chapel lineup of booklets, you might ask them why these "Calvary Basics Series" booklets are no longer available.] And when the pressures are on, and the troubles are coming at you, you stand firm, **endurance**. It means "to stay under." It sounds to me almost like what happens to a piece of coal, as it stays under tremendous pressure and tremendous heat it turns into a tremendously valuable gem [a diamond].

*Never Give Up, Never Give Up, Never Give Up, Never,
Never, Never, Never*

Near the end of his career Winston Churchill was invited to speak at the commencement of his Alma Mater. The young graduates were in hushed expectancy as this heroic giant of a statesman rose to speak. Every eye in the auditorium was fastened on Churchill. Though he was just a little over five feet tall, he was a giant in their eyes, for he had led Great Britain triumphantly through one of her greatest crisis. Everyone waited expectantly to hear what this man after years of experience, years of knowledge, would say to these young graduates. And I'll tell you what they heard, they'd never heard anything like it before, and they'd never hear anything like it again. And I'll give you his entire speech. "Young gentlemen" he said, "**Never give up, never give up. Never give up. Never, never, never, never.**" And with that he sat down. God is saying the same thing to us. Children, never give up. Hang in there. Let the trouble work in your life what nothing else can do that works in the hanging-in-there-ness. That doesn't happen when we're in the good times, when there's some lovely person peeling grapes and popping them into your mouth, fanning you with ostrich feathers--just doesn't cause endurance in your life, it doesn't. But the hard times do. Real Christian faith has never been destroyed by trouble. It is developed by trouble. Do you understand that? ***Real Christian faith has never been destroyed by trouble, it's developed by it.*** [You might say here, to be more accurate, the faith the Lord places in us is developed into, transformed into, battle-hardened **endurance**.] Every piece of film to be developed, to have that image perfectly reproduced-what happens to it?-it has to go into a "dark" room. We call it that, a darkroom. And I tell you, for the image of Christ to be

reproduced in our lives, if you want to be more than a black & white, upside down negative, you've got to go into dark times too. You've got to go into God's developing room. And there, chemicals of God's will, and God's permission will be applied to your life, and the result will not be a disaster. It won't be an explosion, it will be the image of Christ reproduced in your life. We won't ever be given more than we can endure. Remember **1st Corinthians 10:13** said **“No temptation has overcome you, but such as is common to man, and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to endure, but will with the temptation provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure.”**

Your Troubles Don't Come To Trash You, They Come To Burn Off The Things That Are Binding You

A week ago I was supposed to be on this little vacation, relaxing, and I woke up in the beauty of Flagstaff with a migraine headache. I've never awakened with one. The pain was so severe that as I got up fighting nausea, not able to open my eyes and to move them, I felt like someone had stakes in my eyes. I sat in that chair because I couldn't lay my head down, Leslie was rubbing my head, it hurt to rub my head, it hurt not to have her rub my head. And I told you, *“You know, I wish I could just pass out.”* And I was thinking, *‘God, I know you're in control, and I know you love me, I don't understand why this has to be, but if you want me to pass out right now, it would be really fine with me. You said you wouldn't give me more than I could endure.’* A few moments later the medication I took began to take effect. For six months I've been passing kidney stones. I mean, if they were gold, or diamonds or rubies, I'd be independently wealthy. I watch some of you go through your sufferings and trials, I watch my wife go through her trials, I watch my kids with the battles they have physically, and I can honestly say, I trust God. You know, I'm not just talking as some guy who never had anything bad happen to him. God's OK, and his work is good. And it hurts. But you know, the only nice thing about all of the trouble is that, hey, it's working something in all of our lives that we'd never have before. And we need to know that we never get tested alone. **Hebrews 13:5** says **“I will never leave you or forsake you.”** And I think of Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego there in Daniel chapter 3. They were very involved in the government, and the king, out of his mind, basically, had

commanded a huge image be put up in the plain of Babylon [Dura], and that all the people gather out there, the officials of the country, and that they bow down when the music started playing, they all bow down before his image and worship him. And you know, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were good men, they were godly men, they weren't about to bow to an idol. They worshipped the Living God. And it's interesting to me that that's what got them in trouble. It wasn't sin in their life. It was just being a follower of God. **"All those who live godly in Christ Jesus [Yeshua haMeschiach] shall suffer"** the Bible says. You're gonna suffer. And so they didn't bow the first time the music played, and the king said, **'Look, if you guys don't bow, you see this furnace over there?'** **'Yeah, I see it.'** **'Well, we're heating it seven times hotter than it's ever been heated, and that's where you're going!'** **'We're going to have roasted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego if you don't bow.'** And they said, **"Oh king, live forever, you're very great, but we serve the Living God, and we can't bow down to you, and our God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of our hands and from the fiery furnace, but even if he doesn't deliver us, we're not going to serve you and bow down to you."** Well, the music played again, the king was so enraged the Bible says that his countenance changed, his face changed he was so mad, **'Seize them! Throw them in!'** So they threw them into the fiery furnace. It was so hot that flames leapt out of the fiery furnace and killed the two men that threw them in. They bound them hand and foot, threw them in fully clothed. And the king said **'That's what happens to people who don't bow to me.'** And that's sort of the way the devil is, you know. God allows him to do things to our lives, God allows it. God allowed that. And the king of this world, Satan you know, the god of this world -- Jesus called him that -- he thinks *'I've triumphed now, they're in the flames now.'* **"Wait, wait, wait, what's going on here? How many people did we throw in the fiery furnace?"** the king asked. **"We threw three in, your majesty."** **"Then why do I see four, and the fourth one looks like the Son of God!"** I'll tell you why, because Christians, God's children don't go through trouble alone. You can't enter into the fiery trial without Jesus Christ, the Son of God standing right there with you. And he said **"Why do I see them lose and walking about?!"** Because I tell you, the fire for a Christian ain't as hot as for a non-Christian. I'll tell you, when you're a Christian, God takes your troubles, and rather than consuming you and burning you to ashes, all that was consumed, when he **called "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, you servants of the Most High God, you come out of there. Come here, I want to talk to you."** He didn't call the fourth One, did he? [laughter] Interesting. *'And you, the Son of God, you stay there.'* They came out, and they were loosed and

walking. How were they thrown in, gang? Tied up. The people looked at them, **“Man, their clothing's not even singed, their hair hasn't even been scorched. There's not even the smell of smoke on them!”** (I wish that could happen to me when I go into some restaurants. Don't you?) **“There's not even the smell of smoke on them.”** The only thing's that have been burned are the ropes which had bound them. You see the purpose of trials, gang, is not to destroy you, how stupid that would be of God. Why, he redeemed you with his blood. He bankrupted heaven, so to speak, to purchase your salvation. How silly to trash you. Your troubles don't come to trash you. They come though to burn the things that are binding you off. They come to loose you, to free you. Sometimes it's self that's getting burned. Sometimes it's pride that needs to be burned. Sometimes it's disobedience that needs to be burned. [Disobedience to what? God's will is expressed in his law, the spiritual mirror we are supposed to use to cleanse ourselves (cf. James 1:22-23), under the power and help of the indwelling Holy Spirit.] Or some other work of the flesh that needs to be burned out of our life. But I'll tell you, God doesn't mean any of the trouble you're in right now to destroy you. No way. It's really to make you into the purest of pure.

*God's More Concerned About What's Happening
Inside You Than Outside Of You, Get An Eternal
View*

It says, going on in **chapter 5 of Romans, verse 3-4, "tribulation brings about perseverance-endurance, and endurance brings about proven character."** The word *proven character* here comes from a word that means "to smelt metal, to refine gold ore, or metal ore." We could say **'And perseverance brings about 24 karat character.'** **'And 24 karat character brings about' -- what? -- "hope" in verse 5, "And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."** God's whole purpose in our life is that all these things will work together a greater glory for us. You know, the process is to make us more like Christ. But God will reward you for going through the process. Isn't that silly? I mean, we ought to be like Christ anyway. But then God, when you go through the troubles, he rewards you. And one last verse in **2nd Corinthians chapter 4, verse 16-17, "Therefore we do not lose heart."** So often that's about what you do, isn't it? -- just about lose

heart. **“But though our outer man is decaying”** -- when you hit your 30s it starts, you begin decaying. Sort of a weird way to put it Paul. Why did you have to say that? But you do begin, your hair starts falling out, teeth start falling out, memory starts falling out, stomach muscles start falling out [laughter], the chest sags, oh man -- **“though our outer man is decaying”** -- we're all just sitting here decaying! What a picture -- **“yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”** God's much more interested in what's happening inside you than he is outside of you. OK? So if you don't get healed, just remember, God's more concerned about what is happening inside than outside. Sometimes the outside affliction that's affecting the decaying body is having such a tremendous impact on the inside, that God would be crazy to not allow it to continue. I mean, it really is doing a work in your life -- and wait, don't turn me off! -- because when you stand before God, you see, you're going to get rewarded for what God has been doing in your life through that affliction. The next verse says that, look. **“For our momentary light affliction”** -- now I know, that is offensive to some of you -- *“How dare you call what I'm going through momentary [or light], I've been going through this thing for 15 years! HOW CAN YOU CALL IT LIGHT?! Have you been what I'm in?”* We'll it is encouraging to know that the guy who wrote this went through more than all of us combined as far as trouble is concerned. But the reason he calls it momentary and light affliction is because Paul is seeing things in eternity's perspective. He's saying, **‘The problem with you guys is you're seeing everything right now in the tunnel vision of the here-and-now.’** He says, **‘Hey, look beyond see-level. Get your eyes up and look at things that are seen by faith, and you'd realize this stuff is all working for your glory to come, a reward to come.’** Look, he says, **“For our momentary light affliction is producing in us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. While we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal”** -- temporary -- **“but the things which are not seen are eternal.”** Get an eternal view. And rejoice in your troubles. Throw a party. Throw a *‘we're losing our house party’* and invite us all over. I'm not kidding. We ought to, I told the last service, I said *“I think in a couple weeks, we're going to throw a trouble party.”* Oh, the superstitious won't come. They'll be afraid if they come, trouble might happen. But I mean, would you go? I'd go. I got things to celebrate. How about you? And we'll put balloons in the place, and streamers, we'll deck out that fellowship hall over there, inaugurate it with a *“trouble party”* and we'll rejoice. We'll give our testimonies. And we'll just give God praise -- the praise that

really counts, because when things are falling apart and you praise God, I tell you, that's awesome praise. Amen?"

***“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal”
(2nd Corinthians 5:16-18)***

[This is a transcript of a sermon given by Pastor J. Mark Martin of Calvary Community Church, P.O. Box 39607, Phoenix, AZ 85069]