

Sunday Sermon: June 16, 2019

Sermon Text: Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.³ Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.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.

Sermon Theme: Rejoice in Everything..... Even Suffering.

When we hear the word *rejoice* what do you think about? The word rejoice is not a word that we don't use all that often today. It is a Bible word and because of that maybe we think of Bible things. Maybe we think of the Israelites leaving Egypt with rejoicing. Maybe we think about Elizabeth and Zechariah rejoicing when they had John the Baptist in their old age. Maybe we think of all the people that Jesus healed who rejoiced at the miracle of their healing.

Rejoice is a word that is used to express thanks and joyfulness. Rejoice is an action word. It is a response of thankfulness and praise over something that happens in our life.

Maybe there have been times when you have responded to something with rejoicing. Maybe on your wedding day, maybe at the birth of our children, maybe at some other time in your life there was joyful thanks to God for a blessing he had given.

When we look at our sermon text this morning, we see that we have reason to rejoice. While our earthly rejoicing stops and starts, the Apostle Paul tells us we have reason to rejoice always..... even during our times of suffering.

We usually want an authority to teach us about certain things. For instance, if we want to know about history, you might go to a museum, or find a college professor who has looked into those things. If you want to learn about sports, you go to a sport guy. If you want to find out about a car, you go to a car guy. If we want to know how to make the computer run right, we ask a teenager to help us. In short we go to the authority.

Paul is an authority on suffering and remaining faithful to God through the suffering. In 2 Corinthians he lists many things that he suffered for the sake of the Gospel. **I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.**

When we read these things it's important that we understand Paul's tone. Why is he saying this? Does he sound like Job and is complaining about his lot in life? Is he like Abraham, who just isn't sure what the next step is? Is he like Moses, asking God for clarity?

Paul's his tone is none of these things. His tone is one of rejoicing. **Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Any one of Paul's sufferings would probably be too much for us. While Paul rejoices in his sufferings, what do we sound like when we have hardships, struggles and problems? We are very good at listing them for other people. Have you ever gotten to the end of the week and realized that you have told almost everyone you saw about a problem you had. You were looking for sympathy, pity, maybe a little anger and frustration like you were feeling. Maybe you wanted understanding from others, and acknowledgment that life can be terrible. Maybe, you wanted someone you were talking to just make it better. Maybe they will open their checkbook and pay for the problem to go away. Maybe they will makes some calls and take care of it for you. Maybe they will offer to help us and tell us what to do.

Whining and complaining is the opposite of rejoicing. Whining and complaining comes from a heart that is not joyful but sad. A heart that is angry and frustrated, not joyful. When we whine and complain about our troubles we have lost our focus on God and the reason we have for rejoicing.

Paul was not one of those people who was always happy. You know those people who are almost a little bit too happy. Every time we see them they are sunshine and daisies, hearts and hugs, warmth and a smile. Paul is not talking about a rejoicing that is a false happiness, or a good act. Paul is talking about a type of rejoicing that is built on the right things. He is talking about rejoicing because we have something even with we have problems and troubles in our life.

Many of Paul's writings deal with similar topics. That is why we can reference 2 Corinthians and Romans in the same sermon. In each case, Paul is talking about a faith which is focused on the correct thing. This faith is not built on self, but on the Savior. **Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.**

Our foundation for this life is not on what we build, what we accomplish or what we accumulate. Our foundation is built on our God and what he has already for us done through Jesus.

Instead, we try to build our foundation on what we do. But when we do that we cannot rejoice. When it is our own foundation, we will have reasons to complain and whine because the foundation we try to build ourselves certainly can be shaken, it can be broken down, we can lose it all. If our foundation is our own, when trouble comes we have no reason to rejoice, only reason to worry and be afraid of what will happen next.

But when life is built on the foundation of faith in our God and what his Son has done for us, we have reason to rejoice. We have been granted access to something that we don't deserve. We have been granted access in the grace of God. Through Jesus we are children of God, washed in the blood of the Savior, and heirs of eternal life. This grace of God in saving us, never leaves us. It cannot be shaken, it cannot be changed. Jesus work is completed. You are saved. You are forgiven through Jesus. You stand now in God's grace because of what Jesus has done. What's more these blessings of God do not leave you because you are having a trouble or a problem. They remain yours. This is reason to rejoice.

You have reason to rejoice because you have a God who loved you from eternity, who sent his Son to save you and even now sends his Holy Spirit through the Word to build you up in faith. This great God and what he has done is reason to have joy and thanks and to show that joy and thanks through rejoicing.

It is also reason that we have to rejoice, even in our earthly struggles.

Do you remember what Paul said about suffering from our sermon text? The suffering that we go through in life always produces something. If we do not have the firm foundation of faith, our sufferings might produce pain and anger, sadness and depression. But with the firm foundation of faith in a loving God and Savior who gives us blessings that never go away, we have reason to remain hopeful and joyful and even rejoice in suffering because it produces something for us. Paul says, **“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. 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.”**

What does suffering produce in a believer? When suffering and problem comes, where's the first place a believer should look? We should look to our loving and caring God. When we look here first we can be reminded of what our foundation is. It is there at the foot of the cross, at the foot of the throne of God that we are reminded that God can and does work through all things to bring us closer to him.

What does suffering produce? Perseverance. In the Bible we have several cases where Jesus commended perseverance of faith. Perseverance of faith is holding on to the promises of God, even when the world, or the evidence around us seems to indicate something else. Perseverance of faith is when we continue to pray, even when it doesn't seem like God is answering the way we want. Perseverance of faith is when we dig into Scripture more, we look to our God more, instead of getting angry at God and asking him why.

Perseverance builds character. What kind of character? The type that overreacts, gets angry, and is always unhappy about things? No, when we have this perseverance that comes from faith, our character will be God-pleasing. It will cling to the hope that God gives, even when troubles are all around.

That character builds hope which is built on the foundation of God never disappoints because we know that God is leading us to something that is very special. It might take some peaks and valleys of life, but the

destination that God has in mind is neither peak nor valley, it is heaven. This is the destination that God has in mind for you and me and this where he is leading us.

Paul is not complaining about his suffering, he is not boasting either. He is showing that the life of a Christian will have suffering. Yet, he rejoices. He rejoices because he has a God who loves him and a Savior that has already given him great blessings. He teaches us how to remain focused on those gifts that can never be taken away which will help us rejoice always..... even in our sufferings.