

Endurance, Character, Hope, Love

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- [0:00] I forgot to put on my microphone until after the service started today so we didn't have a chance to do a sound check.! Are we all rocking and rolling? Good. Good morning.
- My name is Matthew Capone and I'm one of the pastors here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. It's my joy to bring God's word to you today. Special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here.
- This morning we are continuing our series in the book of Romans. You'll remember that the book of Romans is a letter written by the Apostle Paul in the 50s AD.
- The book of Romans is called Romans for a very simple reason, which is that it's written to the churches in the city of Rome. And this letter is about the gospel. It's about the good news of Jesus' life and death and resurrection.
- We just started chapter 5 last week. You'll remember we had three sections. We looked at peace and access and glory, especially focused on glory.
- [1:04] That is, to fully know and to be fully known by God is the fulfillment of all our greatest desires. This week, though, we turn to a problem and the problem is this.
- We do not yet fully know God. We're not fully in his presence yet, and there are things in this life that turn the lights off.
- There are things that we experience that change our world from color to black and white.
- In fact, some of you may be there this morning. You may be wondering, will the world ever be color for me again? And so we look at what we saw last week, verse 2.
- It says, We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. You might think, Well, that's great. I'm happy to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. But then Paul tells us something surprising, maybe offensive here.
- [2:11] In verse 3, He says, Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings. And you might think, Well, I can get behind rejoicing in God's glory.
- I'm not so sure I can get behind rejoicing in suffering. It seems naive at best. Maybe it feels offensive, seems dismissive when you think about how deep and profound some of your sufferings are.
- I would say that everyone in this room has suffered. Some of you have experienced profound suffering. Some of you are in the midst of profound suffering in this very moment.
- We have maybe 30 minutes together to look at this passage from God's word. We're going to only scratch the surface. There's not enough time for me to do justice to everything that Paul has for us here.
- If I were to do it again, by the way, I would probably do seven sermons on Romans chapters 1, verses 1 through 5. I'm not going to bury the lead. I am here this morning to say to you one thing, and it's this.
- [3:28] We rejoice in our sufferings because God uses them to transform us. We rejoice in our sufferings because God uses them to transform us.

God uses our sufferings to make us more like Jesus. Just like last week, because there is so much going on in this passage, and I want to keep us focused and make sure I don't get lost and you don't get lost, I'm going to tell you also, we're going to look at four things.

These are printed in your worship guide on page 6 as our four points to our sermon this morning, and it's this. Endurance, character, hope, and love. With that, I invite you to turn with me now to Romans chapter 5.

You'll find it on page 6 of your worship guide. We're going to read now, starting at verse 3. Remember that this is God's word. Proverbs chapter 30, verse 5, tells us, every word of God proves true.

He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. So that's why we read now Romans chapter 5, starting at verse 3. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

[5 : 07] I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we do again praise you and thank you.

That you have given us your word, that you speak to us in ways and words that we can understand. We ask that you would do that again this morning. You would grow our hope.

We'd experience your love that's been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. You give us hope in the midst of our suffering. You'd give us comfort. Lord, you'd help us to set our eyes on you and to head towards the future that you have for us, no matter the present.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. From time to time, people will ask me, you know, Matthew, what is it that you do for fun?

And I tell them I do two things for fun. It's very simple. I read books and I go to the gym. When I tell people that, that's great, except there's one problem, which is that it's a lie.

[6 : 18] I do read for fun. And I don't go to the gym for fun. In fact, I often hate the gym. Many times, I have to make myself go, yes, it is satisfying and fun sometimes.

And often, it's really miserable. If I'm totally honest, there are days that I would rather stay home, many days, and yet in the midst of that, I actually pay money to suffer.

I make myself go to the gym and I make myself go for many reasons. One of them is this. I am now closer to age 40 than I am to age 30.

And I know what I want my future to look like. An idea of where I want to be at age 40. And so I rejoice in it, going to the gym. I may not like the process.

I do like the results. I tell you that because as we look at our first four, our first, our points here, our first of the four is this. We rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance.

[7 : 35] And the word endurance here is a muscle word. It's a strength word. Paul is saying we rejoice in our sufferings because it produces strength.

strength. And by making you strong, it prepares you for the future. By making you strong, it gets you set for what is ahead.

And some of you know that for several years, I worked out with a junior army officer. At one point, he was training for special forces selection and he was obsessed with his deadlift number.

And I asked him at one point, I said, why do you care so much about your deadlift? He said, well, Matthew, do the math with me. The heaviest guy in my platoon is 260 pounds.

He has 30 pounds of body armor. He has 10 pounds of ammo and his rock is 60 to 80 pounds.

[8 : 41] If I'm in combat with that man and he gets shot, I have to lift him off the ground. If you're doing the math, we have made it here to 360 to 380 pounds.

We actually want some margin of error there. So actually, let's set it at 400 pounds. If I want to be ready for the worst thing that happens to me in combat, I need to make sure I can deadlift 400 pounds.

One of the other things we would do together is farmer's carries, which is where you walk carrying a heavy weight in each hand. And he had a set of 80 pound kettlebells, which if you've never done a farmer's carry, that's a lot of weight.

And he said, when it gets hard and I don't think I can make it anymore and I want to put the kettlebells down on the ground, I imagine that I am carrying my wounded buddy to the medevac helicopter.

Doesn't matter if I want to put it down, right? He has to make it. Tell you this for this reason. There will come moments in your life where you are grateful for the suffering that God has brought to you because it gives you strength that you must have in that moment.

[10 : 11] There will come times in your life where you are grateful for the suffering that God has brought to you because that was the only way you have strength for that moment.

When I sit with some of you who are in the midst of suffering, I praise God for the times he has cut my legs out from under me.

because if he had not, I would have nothing to say. I told you that I work out because I know what I want my future to look like.

Christian, do you want your future to look like one of clinging to Jesus Christ? If you do, you must suffer.

That's what the strength looks like. Looks like clinging to Jesus more and more. We rejoice in our suffering knowing that suffering produces endurance.

[11 : 40] It produces endurance. So we're asking this question.

Why do we rejoice in our sufferings? We have our first answer. It makes us stronger. It gives us endurance. We also rejoice in our sufferings because they grow our character.

That's our next point and it is very simple. You'll see it in verse 4. Endurance produces character. The word for character here is kind of a technical term that is referring to the process of refining metals.

This is an image that's used in the Bible multiple times and the idea is this. If you have some gold and you want to take that gold and remove its impurities to separate the gold from the ore you have to put it in the fire.

And as it heats up those things come apart. Right? Suffering can force the impurities out of your life.

[13 : 02] Sometimes when I meet with someone who is in the midst of suffering they ask me this. Why has God allowed this? How can I trust serve and obey a God who would permit this to enter my life?

And I tell them this. I have no idea why God has brought this into your life. I don't know. I'm not the prophet or the son of a prophet.

God has not given me that answer. Here's what I do know. This suffering that you are walking through can make you a deeper and richer person.

This suffering that you're in can make you a deeper and richer person. Now I say can because it's not inevitable.

If you choose not to submit to God's work in your life it can instead make you angry and anxious and bitter. You do have to continue to follow the Lord in those things.

[14:10] You can't run away from it. but when you do it will purify and refine your life.

Of course it will do it in many ways more than we can list this morning. I'll give you a few examples. Suffering will loosen your grip on this world and it will make it easier for you to set your eyes on heaven.

By the way it is wonderful to be around people whose eyes are set on heaven.

Suffering makes what we talked about last week much easier. When you suffer it is much easier to make your hope the hope of glory.

Suffering can give you a resilience and a steadiness can make it hard for you to be rattled. One time many years ago I had a disappointment a setback and had a pastor I was not a pastor at the time I had a pastor call me and I shared it with him and he quoted to me Psalm 112 for the righteous will never be moved he will be remembered forever and here's the kicker he is not afraid of bad news his heart is firm trusting in the Lord do you want to be the type of person who is never afraid of bad news I've got bad news for you to get there you must suffer it's suffering that forms that in your life if you get your legs cut out from under you gives you a chance for your pride to be replaced by humility could even go further we could say suffering is what forms in us love joy peace patience kindness gentleness and self control suffering is God's way his way of bringing these things about remember

[16:51] Hebrews chapter 12 for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it do you want that peaceful fruit of righteousness if you do the way to it is through suffering why do we rejoice in our sufferings first they give us endurance they make us stronger second they give us character they make us better our sufferings make us deeper and richer people third Paul tells us that our sufferings give us hope and this one is counterintuitive it doesn't really make sense so I'm going to explain it to you this way my uncle my dad's youngest brother had a career with the state department he's now retired he was stationed all over the world and at one point he was stationed in

China and while he was in China a member of our family went over to visit him that member went to the streets of China and found some amazing deals and one of the deals that member found was north face jackets for ten dollars imagine that we've been paying hundreds of dollars for north face jackets over here and they're just selling them in China for ten bucks those jackets were given to various family members as gifts I received one when I was in high school if you were around in the 90s and the 2000s and you were a kid you know that back then north face was super cool so I was super cool then I went to college I was on this traveling study abroad program and while we were there we were in the city of Delphi which is in Greece had my rain jacket with me and it rained all day so I put my jacket on and at the end of the day you know what

I was soaked through you know why I was soaked through because that rain jacket was worthless that rain jacket had nothing to do with north face north face had never touched it all it did was have a cheap imitation of the logo the point is this we do not know what is real or what is fake until the storm comes we do not know what is real or fake until the storm comes when Paul says our sufferings give us hope he means this the storm of suffering proves to you your faith is real you can look back and you can say hey it actually worked

God's people did provide the support that I needed as I walked that path God's promises were true God did keep his word to me God's word was sweet in that season wow God really is powerful I knew it in my mind now I know it in my heart my faith is real even more than that God is real we might put it another way if Christianity cannot hold up in the storms of this life then it cannot hold up but it does and so we have hope the more you suffer the more hope you have because the more you see

God come through why do we rejoice in our sufferings we rejoice in our sufferings because they give us endurance they make us stronger we rejoice in our sufferings because they give us character they make us better we rejoice in our sufferings because suffering builds hope takes us to our final point God's love Paul says this here hope does not put us to shame this is verse 5 because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us this is hard to wrap our heads around talking about our experience of God the things that we feel inside of us and so I'm just going to tell you a story in 1977 there was a group of insurgents who attacked the

[22:30] Salvation Army Mission Station in Rhodesia at that mission station after that attack two women were killed a third woman was left for dead at one point Ruth Bell Graham Billy Graham's wife had a chance to sit down with the third woman by the way there's someone here this morning who had Ruth Bell Graham as her Sunday school teacher I'll let you fill out your bingo card later this morning so she sits down with this woman and this is what she tells in her book stories from a pack rat impulsively I leaned over and whispered how honored I was to be sitting beside her as I had never had to suffer for my lord the way that she had believe me she replied simply with a smile it was a joy then perhaps noticing the wonder on my face she added you know

I never had to suffer for my lord before this happened and in spite of the horrors going on all around me at the time there was such a sense of the presence of the lord Jesus himself that it was pure joy that's what Paul's saying in verse five he says your hope will not put you to shame because because of the holy spirit you will have such a sense of the presence of the lord Jesus himself that it will be pure joy it's the joy we experience at times in prayer it's the joy we experience together as God's people when we worship him it's the joy!

he brings us by his holy spirit is reminded in his word of his encouragement his promises to us if you are some of you are in a moment of profound suffering!

love! Some of you know three years ago I herniated a disc dead lifting and I messed up L5 and S1 which means something to some of you doesn't mean anything to me I learned a lot about pain and I gained an incredible empathy for folks who struggle with chronic pain if you've struggled with chronic pain you know the worst part is not the pain the worst part is the way that it just sucks your energy dry now as I say this I'm actually you know 99% pain free I'm dead lifting more than I ever have before I recognize that some of you actually have chronic pain and it goes on year after year after year for me my pain lasted longer than they told me it would so I was told hey you know six to eight weeks you should be good two to three months later I'm thinking I don't know how much longer

I can do this do I really you know I'm in my early thirties this is going to be the rest of my life I'm going to have this kind of energy sucked every day so I went to talk to my doctor and he said here's what I'm going to do for you I'm going to give you some pain pills here's the catch you cannot take these every day if you take them every day they will mess you up you can take them once or twice a week he said tell me what is your most painful day of the week and I said well my most painful day is Sunday makes sense I'm moving around it's stressful there's lots of things going on so he said okay you can take this pill on Sunday and so there were times throughout the week where I would be in pain I knew I couldn't take the pill but I would think to myself Sunday is coming brothers and sisters no matter what pain you are in in this world right now or will walk through

[27:30] Sunday is coming when the Lord returns and wipes away every tear from your eyes when faith will be sight through many dangers toils and snares I have already come his grace have brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home let's pray to God our Father in heaven we do praise you and thank you that you don't waste our sufferings you do use them to transform us to change us to make us into the image of your son and our savior our Lord Jesus we ask that you would remind us of that this morning that we would not waste it we would not become people of anger and bitterness and anxiety but we we ask that you do this for the sake of

Jesus we ask these things in his name