



Pilgrim Home Baptist Church

NT 260 2022 • THE ROLE OF SUFFERING IN SANCTIFICATION • ROMANS 5:1-5 • 6/12/2022

MAIN POINT

God uses suffering to sanctify us.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What role do you believe suffering plays in spiritual growth?

Have you ever experienced doubt or anger toward God because of suffering?

Suffering is a common obstacle to faith. People who don't know God can have difficulty reconciling suffering with the idea of a God who loves us. Suffering is also a primary catalyst for doubt among believers because we tend to feel that if we're faithful to God, He should be faithful to us and shelter us from suffering. We're tempted to think God doesn't love us or is punishing us if we go through a season of suffering. The pain of our trial clouds our ability to see God clearly, making it difficult for us to comprehend the possibility that He might have a purpose for our pain.

Today we'll hear Pastor Mason talk about the role of suffering in our spiritual lives. We'll see that suffering plays a critical role in our sanctification, especially if we're willing to trust God through the process and submit to His refining work.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| WATCH SESSION 3 OF UNLEASHED AND READ ROMANS 5:1-5.

Pastor Mason covered a very difficult subject in this session, one that often leads people either to a new depth of faith or to a season of distance from God.

What do you think about the fact that many of the early Christian leaders, including most of Jesus' disciples, suffered for their faith?

Why does it seem counter-intuitive to nonbelievers to rejoice amidst suffering? How can suffering be a means of God's grace, as Pastor Mason said?

Have you encountered any teaching within the church or broader Christianity that minimizes or overlooks—perhaps intentionally—the role of suffering in the Christian life? How is this a misunderstanding of the gospel of a crucified and risen Messiah and God's sovereignty over our suffering?

Many of us struggle to understand why God allows suffering in our lives. Yet we can rejoice in suffering not only because we are secure in Christ, but also because God is in control of our circumstances and uses them to make us more like Christ. Furthermore, we are reassured of God's love and favor toward us because of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives, reminding us that Christ died on behalf of ungodly sinners like us (see vv. 6-8). Our suffering is an assurance that God is with us; it is not an evidence that He has forgotten us.

What do you think about the sculptor analogy from the video? How might God use suffering to chisel you into the image of Christ?

Pastor Mason said that hope is "a visionary picture of a preferred future that is transformed by the work of the Lord Jesus." Like the illustration of a sculptor from the video, God is also seen as a sculptor (see 2 Corinthians 4:7-18). What does this teach us about our God?

How does allowing ourselves to be molded by the sculptor change our lives?

We all know suffering can be difficult for us to deal with. Read Psalm 34:19 and 62:8. What do these verses that Pastor Mason shared teach us about how we should deal with suffering in community?

Our sufferings should not put us to shame because God's love is being poured out in our hearts (1 Pet. 4:12). When that love is poured out, it can look differently to different people. At times, God works through our suffering to bring about perseverance and character in our lives. This chiseling is not always enjoyable, but it produces in us the ability to see beyond where we are and to know that God has something better for us. Scripture is filled with people who suffered honestly and pointed back to God—including Jesus. We should feel comfortable and confident

expressing our struggles to God and other people in our lives, knowing that we can find help. As we walk through suffering, our ability to locate God in that suffering grows with our faith, and God uses this suffering to sanctify us.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What kinds of suffering are you currently experiencing? In what way(s) do you need to align with the Lord in these areas of suffering?

How can we as a group support you specifically in your suffering?

How can our countercultural response to suffering show people the glory and worth of our God?

PRAYER

Pray and thank God for allowing us to grow closer to Him through all circumstances, even in the midst of our suffering. Also thank Him for sending His Son to suffer on our behalf.

COMMENTARY

| ROMANS 5:1-5

5:1. When Paul used the term therefore, he was summarizing in a word the totality of his previous arguments made in 1:18–4:25. The only reasonable conclusion to make (and what God had revealed to Paul) was that believers are declared righteous by faith. Righteousness cannot be earned by any amount or duration of good works; it is received only as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ. For Paul, being declared right with God by faith opens a floodgate of divine grace in believers' lives.

First of all is the gift of peace with God. Peace through Christ brings an end to the divine wrath we faced because of our sins. Apart from this peace we would have no recourse and no hope standing before God in the judgment. Second, peace through Christ refers to the effective restoration of a loving relationship with our Creator. Our sinfulness broke that relationship. With the removal of sin's curse through Christ's atoning sacrifice, believers are reunited in purpose, favor, and fellowship with our God. Third, peace through Christ enables a new relationship among believers. Our alienation from God because of our sins also alienated us from one another. In Christ, all barriers to unity and fellowship are effectively removed (see Eph. 2:14; Col.

3:12-14). Fourth, peace through Christ empowers believers to become agents of genuine peace in a strife-filled world (Matt. 5:9; Heb. 12:14; Jas. 3:18).

Paul declared that peace with God comes to believers through our Lord Jesus Christ. That is, Jesus is the Agent through whom we receive this amazing, multifaceted benefit. The name Lord connects Jesus with God's revelation of Himself as "Yahweh" in the Old Testament era (see for example, Ex. 3:13-15). Jesus is the Divine Sovereign. The names Jesus and Christ emphasize that the Lord is the Savior and the Promised Messiah. The pronoun our emphasizes the personal relationship believers have with God.

5:2. In addition to receiving peace with God through Christ, believers gain genuine hope that can withstand even the darkest times of trouble and affliction. God's grace is not just a one-time experience that comes and goes at conversion. Rather, in Christ we have obtained access into this grace in which we stand.

Paul wrote the Greek verb rendered we stand in a tense that communicates a completed (that is, perfected) action, the results of which continue in full force. Thus Paul declared that believers receive a complete supply of God's grace at conversion, yet its benefits keep on working in full force throughout our lives and in whatever situations we find ourselves. In particular, God's grace continually helps us stand strong in faith when we face life's trials (see 2 Cor. 12:8-9). Moreover, God's grace is sufficient to help us stand without fear before our Lord when He returns to claim His people (see 1 Pet. 1:13).

God's continuing grace thus gives us cause to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Because His loving grace is permanent—not fleeting like the morning dew—the promises of redemption and glory cause us to rejoice. This kind of rejoicing has nothing to do with the boasting of the self-righteous. Rather, it is akin to boasting in the Lord and is an aspect of a believer's true worship (see Jer. 9:24; 1 Cor. 1:31; Gal. 6:14).

5:3-4. Christian joy runs deep and endures because its source is the ever-flowing stream of God's grace. This is why Paul could state that we as believers also rejoice in our afflictions. Paul's statement doesn't imply that we somehow enjoy suffering. Rather, it means that we have confidence God will use even our afflictions to bring about His good purposes in our lives. For this confidence we need look no further than the example of our Lord Jesus. He willingly bore the most horrendous pain and suffering with a view that His death and resurrection would open the way to our salvation (see Heb. 2:10; 12:2). Endurance is self-authenticating; we grow in endurance by staying the course of faith and not being swayed by trials (see Jas. 1:2-4). Proven character follows naturally from the believer who has remained faithful through trials. Enduring trials causes us to grow in faith, and such growth is a testimony of faith's authenticity.

5:5. Christian hope that emerges from the nourishing flow of God's grace in our lives will not disappoint us. It goes without saying that many a person's self-generated hope has been dashed by the brutal realities of life. Hope in God, however, is hope that endures forever. We can trust that God will fulfill His promises to the end. A Christian also can live with enduring hope because of the Holy Spirit who was given to us. The Holy Spirit is our indwelling Witness who testifies that God loves us. Paul further explained the work of the Holy Spirit in believers in chapter eight. Suffice it to say here that the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is a pledge, guaranteeing what will be ours as believers in the fullest measure in the age to come.