***Why Do Christians Suffer?
RO48-02***

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Please open your Bibles once more to Romans 5:1-5 on the effects of justification summarized. This is section number 11 in this series.

**The Hope of Glory**

The glory of God is the subject that we are on currently, and the glory of God is the basis for our respect for God, and our obedience to His will. The more we understand concerning the glory of God, which reflects His Holiness, the more subject and the more inclined we are to listen to Him, and to be obedient to Him.

We have been talking about the visible display of the glory of God via what was called the "Shekinah" glory cloud. This was a preview of the glory which all of us, as believers, are someday going to share in eternity. So, the apostle Paul has said that for all of us there is a hope. And the word "hope" always means a certain fulfillment. It is something that is a sure thing. This hope if of experiencing the glory of God. There is no one like God in all the universe. So, there is none who shares His glory. God is unique, and that's what the idea of glory means. The uniqueness of God. He is unique because of His Holiness – His Holiness displayed in a visible splendor of visible light glory.

**The Glory of God**

We have reviewed the nature and the display of the divine glory in Scripture. We have a few more final points to add to that to the doctrine of glory.

1. **The Highest Duty of Man is to Glorify God**

First of all, we add the point that the highest duty of man is to glorify God. Whatever else we are called to do in life, the number one thing that we are called to do is to glorify God. Romans 15:6 therefore says, "That you may, with one mind and one mouth, glorify God; even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Believers should have a unity upon this thing above all else, and that is that they glorify God. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, the apostle Paul says, "Whether, therefore, you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Here's our daily day-by-day experience. Whatever our daily experiences; whatever we think; or, whatever actions we take in the day's time, they should all be considered with a view to being to the glory of God; that is, to be to His honor.

Well, there are very certain specific ways that the Bible indicates that we can glorify God: We can bring Him honor; we can bring him praise; and, we can recognize His uniqueness.

* 1. **Worship**

We do this by worshiping Him. 1 Chronicles 16:28-29 and Psalm 96:7-8 teach us that.

* 1. **Supremacy**

We also glorify God by proclaiming His supremacy as God (Psalm 115:1-3). We're not going to read these verses, but these are all tremendous passages of Scripture that are very moving to read. And indeed you can see how obedience to them will bring glory to God.

* 1. **Honor and Praise**

We can glorify God by ascribing honor and praise to Him (Luke 17:18).

* 1. **Divine Good Works**

We glorify God by producing divine good works (Matthew 5:16).

* 1. **Gratitude**

We also glorify Him by expressing gratitude to Him (Romans 1:21).

* 1. **Our Physical Bodies**

We glorify God by the use of our physical body in the proper way (1 Corinthians 6:20).

This is all because God is the God of Glory, Acts 7:2 tells us. Because He is the God of glory, our highest duty is to glorify him. You must remember that this is the main thing that God is doing in everything that He does. Everything that God does is to display His uniqueness, and thus to bring glory to Himself. Whatever God does, the main thing that God does is to bring glory to Himself. Some people think that the main thing God does is to bring us salvation. That is not so. They think that the main thing God does is to deal with the human sin problem. That is not so. His dealing with the human sin problem is to serve His greater purpose, which is to bring glory to Himself, and to display His uniqueness. So, you must always remember that the main thing on the mind of God is to display His uniqueness and to bring glory to himself. Therefore, we say that the highest duty of man is to glorify God.

1. **A Woman's Long Hair**

The Bible teaches us that a woman's long hair is a glory to her; that is, it is her uniqueness (1 Corinthians 11:15). Long hair on a man is a disgrace. It's a shame, the Bible says. But long hair on a woman is her uniqueness. It identifies her special place in God's creation.

1. **The Right Woman for the Right Man**

The Bible tells us that the right woman is the glory of her right man (1 Corinthians 11:7). When a man is married to the one particular woman that God has designed for him from eternity past, then that woman becomes a source of glory to him. It becomes a source of identifying a uniqueness about him. It's a source of credit and praise that is reflected upon him. Of course, you can see that the very opposite is true. If a man is married to the wrong woman, she becomes a disgrace to him. She becomes a dishonor to him. No matter how she may try or how he may try, that woman cannot be a glory to that man. She cannot in any way display uniqueness and credit toward him. So, the Bible is very clear that you have to get the right people together. Then a woman, whose glory is her long hair, becomes (by taking her place of subjection to her right man) a display of that man's glory. If it isn't the right man, she will never be a glory to him.

1. **Pastor-Teachers**

The pastor-teacher will receive a special crown of glory for service which is faithful to his calling in the local church (1 Peter 5:4). He will not get a crown of glory just because he went to theological school, and just because he is the pastor of a church. He will only receive this special crown of glory, which is a badge of honor (a Medal-of-Honor type of recognition) if he has been a teaching, expository pastor-teacher. If he has not been a teaching, expository pastor-teacher, then he will not receive this crown. The reception of this particular badge of honor is dependent on what he does – not on whether people were responsive to the instruction or not. Whether people are responsive to the instruction of the pastor-teacher is their problem. But their availability of the instruction is his problem.

1. **Miracles**

Miracles are display of the glory of God. John 2:11 tells us this. One of the ways in which God's glory is very obviously demonstrated is through His miracles.

1. **Human Glory is Transient**

Human glory, in the sense of impressiveness, is a transient thing (1 Peter 1:24). Human glory is a useless thing. And there is a lot of human glory. People pursue human fame, but when they die, it's all gone. It's a transient thing.

1. **Unbelievers' Acts of Shame**

Unbelievers, the Bible tells us, have a glory or uniqueness in the form of their acts of shame (Philippians 3:19). Now this is an interesting point. Unbelievers are guilty of great acts of shame – shameful things. And it makes them unique. Therefore, they have a glory. You see the idea of uniqueness and glory. Uniqueness makes you impressive. It gives you an influence. And there are people who are so uniquely evil that they have a great influence among unbelievers for evil. So, the Bible tells us that unbelievers have a glory also. It is the glory of the shamefulness of their sin.

1. **God's Glory is Exceedingly Rich**

The glory of God is an exceedingly rich glory, the Bible tells us (Ephesians 1:18, Ephesians 3:16, and Philippians 4:19).

1. **Believers are Being Transformed into the Glory of God**

Christians are now being transformed into the glory of God through the sanctifying work of the indwelling Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). Right now, from day-to-day, and from moment-to-moment, God is actually transforming you into that ultimate display of glory that will be yours in His presence. We're going to get into that more when we get into Romans 8 because Romans 8 takes up the subject of sanctification. It takes up the subject of how God is glorifying us day-by-day on this side of eternity.

1. **Believers will Share in God's Glory Forever**

The last point to close the summary is that believers will share with the dazzling "Shekinah" glory of God forever. Let's read two passages on that. We have this in Daniel 2:3. Believers will shine with the dazzling "Shekinah" glory of God forever: "And they that be wise (that is, those who are informed with Bible doctrine) shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and, they return many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." There again is the writer's poetic description of the brightness of the glory of God.

Then let's look at one verse in the New Testament. 1 John 3:2 is describing what your future is going to be: "Beloved, now we are the children of God. And it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Now our study of the "Shekinah" glory has demonstrated to us what Jesus Christ is going to look like. Here John says, "When he returns, you're going to look just like Him." You and I are going to have that same brilliant, dazzling display of light glory about us.

Coming back, with that closing of the summary of the doctrine of glory, let's come back now to our passage in Romans 5:1-5, where Paul is giving a summary of the results of justification. Let's just review the line of argument that we have in this passage, because we may have lost track of it since we've been summarizing the ideas of hope and glory.

**The Results of Justification**

You may remember that in Romans 5:1, the apostle Paul said that there are certain definite consequences for the believing sinner as the result of the justification provided by God. This justification has been previously described in detail in Romans 3:21 all the way through Romans 4:25. Having completed the description of that justification, he takes up in Romans 5 the consequences (the results) of it. And he summarizes these results in the first five verses. This justification is entirely the work of God. No human effort or participation is involved.

1. **The Past Results of Justification**

The consequences of this justification, Paul says, is threefold. First of all, it has a past result for the believer. The believing sinner has been declared by God the Father to be not guilty of moral guilt: "Therefore, being justified by faith, Paul says. Since absolute righteousness has been imputed to the believing sinner, God pronounces him to be justified. This divine justification is a gift from God to the believing sinner, and therefore, Paul says that it is received by faith in God's Word. As a matter of fact, he's made it very clear that no justification is possible on any other ground than and a grace gift. That's the believers past.

1. **The Present Result of Justification**

The present result of justification for the believer is twofold.

* 1. **Peace with God**

First, we have peace with God. This refers to a condition of harmony with God in the sense of rest and contentment. There is a tranquility in the believer's soul, relative to meeting God after death. He is not afraid of having to face God someday. This was provided by the Lord Jesus Christ who paid for the sins of the world on the cross. He is the agent of justification.

So, Paul says, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the peace of your personal salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. We pointed out to you that, if in your own heart you do not have this peace, and if you are afraid to face God and what He's going to do relative to your sin, it is almost a sure sign that you are lost. Anybody who sits and grovels, and is fearful about facing God, you may be pretty sure, is not a believer, and he has some straightening out to do. Either that or he's a hugely, monumentally ignorant believer, who has got things so fouled up that even though he's born-again, he still thinks he has ground to fear facing God. This is a very important point concerning the believer’s present condition.

* 1. **Permanent Grace**

There's another factor in our present condition, and that is a permanent standing in the grace gift of justification. Paul says, "By whom also, we have access, by faith, into this grace in which we stand:" "We have an entree into this grace in which we stand." The grace he refers to here is the gift of justification. The work of Christ and paying for sin has provided the believing sinner with a salvation which is absolutely unconditional. The ground of salvation provided by God is the complete satisfaction of the justice of God against sinners, so it cannot be reversed. Paul has been very careful to stress that the grounds of justification is the satisfaction of the justice of God. The ground of justification is not because God loves you. That isn't the ground of justification. It is a little deceitful to be talking to unbelievers about the fact that God loves them. The thing that God looks upon a sinner, in relationship to, is the fact that God again, dealing with Himself first, has had His justice satisfied. The thing that a person has to know is not that God loves him, but the thing a person has to know is that God is no longer angry at Him – that God's wrath is no longer directed toward him, but that God's wrath has been deflected from him to a substitute in the form of Jesus Christ.

So, when Paul says, "We have a permanent standing in this grace of justification, he is declaring to us that God's justice has been permanently satisfied, and God's justice will never be unsatisfied. It makes no difference how much God loves the sinner. That wouldn't do a thing for anybody. It's whether God's justice has been satisfied. That is our point of contact with the Almighty.

There are many false approaches, consequently, to God, which stress the love of God, and they ignore his perfect justice. All of the cults are destructive of the souls of those who follow them because they stress the love of God. And it is not the love of God that the Bible stresses. What the Bible stresses is that justice has been satisfied. Now God can act toward the sinner. Always recognize that that is the point of contact between a lost sinner and God. They are brought together with the justice of God. You'll learn about the love of God, consequently, but it is the justice of God which brings peace to the sinner’s heart. Once a sinner knows that God's justice is satisfied forever, and irrevocably satisfied, then he can breathe a sigh of relief, because he can never again lose out. He can never again be lost.

1. **The Future Result of Justification**

Then there is a future result of justification for the believer. And that's what we have been looking at. The believing sinner exalts in a hope which is certain of fulfillment someday. And this hope is to experience the holiness of God with a visible display of blazing light from Himself. The glory of God, as we have seen, is the colorful, spectacular, visible display of His absolute righteousness, which makes Him the unique person of all creation.

This, of course (the glory of God) is an experience which is too fantastic for a sinner to dare to expect. Yet it is the believing sinner's destiny someday to reflect the glory of God. So, no matter how bad you think you are, and no matter how much of a failure you think you are, or how weak you are, always remember that someday you are going to shine with the same kind of brilliance of glory that Jesus Christ did on the Mount of Transfiguration. Only a justified person could reflect the splendor and the beauty of God's "Shekinah" glory. But because you are a justified person, that's exactly what you will reflect.

The apostle Paul adds, from verses 3-5, a little more information concerning the believer's future, because the apostle Paul is a very realistic kind of person. So, we have, in verses 3-5, the sanctifying chain of hope. Paul is going to conclude his description of the justified person's future by tying it to his present, because we can't live just in the future. We can't just live with visions of great glory that are before us. After we walk out of church, we have to come back down to earth in the day-by-day problems where we live.

This is the problem with inspirational preaching. This is the problem with devotional preaching. It always point the eyes of people toward the future; toward the glory; and, toward the destiny. So, they get all excited and thrilled; and, that *is* wonderful. You want to stand up and shout, "Hallelujah," but then you have to walk out of church, and you have to come to grips with all those people you live with; all the human beings that you have to deal with; all the personal weaknesses in yourself; all the attractions of the world that you have to resist; and, everything that is the reality of daily living.

So, the apostle Paul is led by the Spirit of God to say, "Now, just a minute. I want to tie something together, lest you misunderstand what I have said. Here is the glory. And you will shine in the glory of God someday." And here you are down in the present, and this is a very rocky road that you have to walk in the present. Now Paul says, "I must add one thing to show you that the glory that I have described for you, which is your destiny, is directly connected here to this rocky road of your daily life. You are going to go to glory from here. Therefore, every up and down that you meet in your day-by-day living is a step toward that glory. If you do not understand that, you might think about the glory of being someplace far off. And that's nice, but it's not too meaningful to you in meeting the current problems of your life, and the trials, and the burdens that you bear. That is wrong. You have missed the connection. So, here it is.

Whatever future is in store for us as believers, we obviously are going to have to arrive at it from where we are living right now. So, Paul indicates that while he looks with exultant rejoicing to the future sharing of the glory of God, he is not in a state of depression about the trials of the present. So, he begins in verse 3 with the words, "And not only so." The word "and" is the Greek word "de." It is a conjunction. It introduces a further explanation about the Christian's future. The word "not" is the Greek word "ou," the strongest Greek negative. It is a very definite negative. "Only is the Greek word "monon." "Monon" is referring back to the idea of hope for glory of God in the future. The word "so" is not in the Greek. "And not only" is what he says: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God someday in the future. And not only." And what this phrase says is not only do we rejoice exultantly in a future glory, but we also take a great deal of satisfaction in something right now, where we are living, that inevitably leads us to that glory that we exultantly anticipate."

"And not only are we looking to the future, but we glory in tribulations also." We have this combination of words: "but," and then a little later, the word "also." This is a characteristic Greek phrase to expand an idea. The word "but" is a different kind of word "but." Before, we had "de," That also means "but." But this is a stronger one: "Alla." "This is an opposing to the previous negative. He says, "And not only do we do this, but," and this "but" is in contrast to this negative, referring back to this hope of the glory of God in the future. It is opposing negative. He introduces something more that is done by Christians.

The word "also" is the Greek word "kai." And this whole combination indicates an expansion of the future glory with present daily realities of life: "Not only do we look to the future, but we glory." "Glory" is the Greek word "kauchaomai." "Kauchaomai" we have had before. We had it previously at the end of verse 2, where the King James translates it as "rejoice." So, if you had a Greek Bible, you would see that the word "rejoice," at the end of verse 3, and the word "glory" at the beginning verse 3, are exactly the same words. They are both this word "kauchaomai," and that word means "to exalt." This is that excited, delighted anticipation – a joyous exaltation of something which is coming upon us.

The word "kauchaomai" conveys the idea of being privileged. "I'm so privileged" is the idea that is conveyed by this word. It connotes something that just delights us because we are privileged.

Paul says, "That he exalts in the future hope of displaying the same "Shekinah" glory of God. But he also exalts in something in the present. It's present tense. He continually exalts. It's active meaning. So, Paul's personal volition is doing this. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact. And he exalts in something. This is the preposition "en," and here it means "because of." And we're going to see that what he is exulting in is what he calls tribulations.

The word "en" does not mean that he's exalting, or that he's having a happy attitude, in the midst of his tribulations. He's not grinning and bearing it. That's human viewpoint. "Grin and bear it” is human viewpoint. That's not divine viewpoint. So, don't ever use the phrase. Paul is not saying that I'm just grinning and bearing it here in the midst of all these troubles and these agonies that I'm going through. No. Paul is saying, "I am glorying. I am exalting. I am having a joyous expectation because of these tribulations that I am experiencing. I am experiencing something that is a great blessing to me. The things I'm experiencing are not pleasant, but they are a great joy to me, unpleasant as they are."

**Pressure**

What he's experiencing, he calls tribulation, which is the Greek word "thlipsis." We have had this word before. The word "thlipsis" is a word that connotes pressure on a person due to his circumstances, or due to antagonisms of others. Now here is a word you surely can relate to. Surely all of us can relate to pressures that are upon us because of circumstances of life in which we find ourselves, or because of other people.

It is often very hard often to disassociate ourselves from the pressures that other people put upon us. We may go along here without any problems at all. We may have a good spiritual maturity structure that's working, but along comes somebody here, and he puts a pressure on us in one way or another. Sometimes we can evade that pressure. That's known as not becoming part of other people's problems. Some malcontent comes along, and he has to display and promote his cause. So, he puts a pressure upon you, in your relationship to the Lord. Here you've been going along great; you've been happy; you've been making progress; you've been faithful; and, you've been productive, and some clown comes along who's got problems, and he imposes his problems on you, and if you are not wise, you will not know how to handle those pressures, and you'll become part of the problem. We all experience the pressure of circumstances; the pressures of other people; and, the pressures of their antagonisms.

Usually this refers to external pressures – not something that comes from within you. These are things that come from outside of you. Often, you can't control it. You have no control over the thing. It's just a pressure that is there.

Here's how the word is used in the Bible, just to give you a little illustration. It's used of the future tribulation period in world history. In Matthew 24:21-29, it is translated by the word "tribulation," and it is this word "thlipsis." The whole tribulation period in world history is described as an external pressure upon people. This is a very apt description.

It is used also of financial needs (2 Corinthians 8:13). There it's translated by the word "burden." Financial pressures are described by the word "thlipsis." These are externals that come upon a person, and it puts pressure on you. Now you have a tribulation. You have a trial to bear.

It is used of the experience of a woman in childbirth in John 16:21. There "thlipsis" is translated as "anguish." She goes through an external pressure upon her physically in the course of childbirth.

It is used of persecution suffering in Acts 11:19. It's translated as "persecution." In Acts 14:22, it's translated as "tribulation." In both of these places, it is pressure in terms of being persecuted for your faith in Christ.

It is also use of the sufferings of Jesus Christ for sins. In Colossians 1:24, it's translated by the word "afflictions." Jesus Christ was under great external pressures in the process of paying for sins.

It is used of human suffering in general. 1 Corinthians 7:28 translates it by the word "troubled." 1 Thessalonians 1:6 translates "thlipsis" by the word "affliction." So, the whole concept of troubles (human suffering in general) is covered by this word "thlipsis."

The apostle Paul is indicating to us here that he was very realistically aware of the day-by-day painful, debilitating pressures that are upon a Christian. You and I do have troubles. And you can take a Pollyanna, rosy attitude that it doesn't exist. You can try to sell yourself on positive thinking, and you're just going to think that everything is great and wonderful. You say, "I am alive. I am a human being. I am God's creature. God is wonderful. He makes only wonderful things. He made me, and I am wonderful. I am wonderful. Look at yourself in the mirror, and tell yourself, 'You are wonderful.'"

What's the idea that? Well, to sort of get out there and meet the guy who's meeting you at the door, and says, "I'm taking your car because you haven't made payments." And you say, "I'm wonderful, and life is wonderful. God has made it all. Take my car. I only live 15 miles from work. I'll walk it. Life is wonderful."

Now the apostle Paul is not giving us that kind of guff here. He is using the word "thlipsis," and he says, "Now look, Christians. I know that up here is glory. That's where we're going, and that's where you are going to be, and that's where you're going to shine with it. But right now, we've got to start right here, which is tribulations. That's where we are. And we go from tribulations to glory."

So, Paul says, "Let's be realistic about this. That is our destiny, but let's take a look at where we are right now. Where we are right now is in a painful day-by-day situation of "thlipsis." And while our future is inevitably glorious, our present is often very grim.

So, Paul is not trying to psych himself or to psych us to meet life by pretending that things are not bad for us at times. Paul did not feel sorry for himself, nor did he feel sorry for other believers, because of the crushing pressures of their sufferings. Paul understood that tribulations produce a condition in a functioning believer that leads him right smack into the glory of God.

So, Paul is saying, "While we have our eyes set upon the future, you might think that it has nothing to do with your present, but you're wrong. The very pressures you're going through now are setting up a chain reaction in you that is going to take you right into the glory of God, even on this earth before you've arrived at it in eternity." So, Paul's attitude here is not that of passive helplessness, but as an awareness of something that is being powerfully accomplished in him.

**Joy**

One symbol for this in the Bible that exemplifies this is oil and wine. As you read through the Scriptures, you discover that oil and wine represent joy. Psalm 45:7 and Psalm 104:15 indicate to us that oil and wine are symbols of joy. But you know what you get oil from? You get oil from olives. Olive oil comes from olives. The only way you're going to get the oil is by crushing the olive. You know where wine comes from. It comes from grapes. And the only way you're going to get wine is by crushing the grapes. And some of the better wine, I'm told, comes from grapes that have a harder and a tougher skin, which means that they have to have more pressure upon them to crush them in order to produce the superior wine. So, here you have in Scripture an illustration that it is pressures that produce joy. It is the pressure upon the olives, and the pressure upon the grape, the produces the oil and the wine which symbolize joy.

**Suffering**

Of course, the normal Christian does not go looking for suffering in order to find these spectacular blessings. But he knows the value of sufferings when they come. We are not trying to train a bunch of spiritual paranoiacs who go out looking for sufferings and trials. But the apostle Paul said, "I am going to reflect the 'Shekinah' glory of God, and I am starting to reflect that right now in the tribulations that are upon me, in the pressures that are upon me." We won't take the trouble to read them, but let me give you the passages of Scripture that will very clearly lay out for you the kind of sufferings that Paul went through so that you know he's not just some cute little preacher who's making a statement about suffering, and never knew what suffering was himself. Just read through: Romans 8:35-39; 1 Corinthians 4:9-13; 2 Corinthians 1:4-10; 2 Corinthians 11:23-30; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Philippians 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:11-12; and, 2 Timothy 4:14-16. If you run your eye through those verses, you'll know what real suffering the apostle Paul experienced.

**Why Do Christians Suffer?**

Why do Christians suffer? There are three reasons why suffering is going to come into your life. But whatever the reason is, it's going to be step number one toward the reflection of the glory of God in you. The glory of God can be reflected in us now – not the external light (that comes later). But the qualities of that glory can be reflected in us now. And that's what Paul is saying. He's saying the future glory light will be shining, but the glory now is already upon you. And step number one in the chain is tribulations which come upon us for three reasons.

1. **Correction**

First is corrective – divine discipline. Sometimes God has to straighten out something in our lives as His children. So, for the purpose of divine discipline, God brings trials and tribulations upon us. This is taught in Hebrews 12:5-13, which describe how God, who loves us, chastens us. And he points out that an earthly father, who loves his children, will chasten them. He points out that at the time of chastening, it's not a very pleasant experience, but the results are something very fantastic in time. So, he points out to us that we should appreciate the chastening of God, even as we appreciated the chastening of our earthly fathers as we looked back upon it and saw how they pointed us with that chastening in the right direction.

So, one of the reasons we suffer at the hands of God is to get something straightened out in our lives as believers. Anytime we go wandering from God's path for our lives, we're going to find ourselves in thorns, and it's going to hurt. Anytime we want to go charging down the wrong road, our Heavenly Father is going to throw up a roadblock, and we're going to go crashing right into it. So, when that happens, get out of the thorn bushes by getting back on the road; pull yourself away from the roadblock; and, follow a different road – the one that He has prepared for you that has no problems on it. So, one of the reasons for troubles is correction.

1. **Construction**

A second reason for our "thlipsis" (our tribulations) is constructive; that is, to develop a spiritual maturity structure in the soul of the believer. 2 Corinthians 12:10 is the apostle Paul's statement which summarizes the five facets of the spiritual maturity structure of the soul. Paul says, "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities; in reproaches; in necessities; in persecutions; and, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong." There you have grace orientation; you have the mastery of the details of life; you have a relaxed mental attitude; you have inner happiness; and, you have the capacity to love. Those five facets of the spiritual maturity structure of the soul are what the apostle Paul is rejoicing in, and he recognizes that suffering is building the quality of spiritual maturity.

Also, you may add to this Psalm 119:67, which says, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray. But now I have kept Your Word." That's putting it beautifully. The psalmist says, "Before I was hurt, I was going far astray from you. But once you started hurting me, Lord, now I'm back on the track; I'm keeping your Word; and, now things are better for me." So, God builds us with tribulations. In other words, God trains the believer to make him a more capable spiritual soldier in the angelic warfare.

1. **Exemplary**

Then, of course, the third reason is exemplary. We have tribulations to make us an example. Our suffering is not always punishment. There are always some idiotic people who think that every time a person has troubles, and anytime a person has some problem in his life in the way of suffering, it's because God is punishing him for something. That is not the case. You remember in John 9:1-3 you have the story of the man born blind, and the disciples asking: "Why is he blind? Is it because of a sin that his parents committed, or a sin that he committed?" And Jesus said: "Neither, it's to make an example of him of the glory of God." There are times, as in the case of Job. Read Job 1. That is a very clear demonstration. There's nothing wrong with Job. He was being used as an example of the glory of God. So, sometimes suffering is simply for us to demonstrate God's power and God's glory. God shows Satan. He shows the unbelieving humans the reality of the new birth in the examples of the faithful, stable believers in the way they respond to undeserved suffering.

**Christians Suffering is a Blessing**

So, the Bible makes it very clear that Christian suffering is a blessing. Matthew 5:4, for example, teaches us that. Suffering is a blessing: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you." One of the great rewards in heaven for the persecuted believer is the glory of God.

So, you can see how indeed the apostle Paul is laying down an important principle. Glory is our destiny. If you think that tribulations have nothing to do with it, you're wrong. Every bit of tribulation; every bit of trial; and, every bit of suffering is beginning to make the glory of God pour forth from you. The grape is being crushed. The olive is being bruised. It is put under pressure, and the joy of happiness of the oil and the wine is pouring forth.

Acts 5:41 may be added to this principle that suffering is a blessing for the believer: "And they departed from the presence of the council (that is, the disciples) rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." These men were humiliated before the religious leaders of Israel. What was their reaction? They delighted that they could suffer this for Jesus Christ.

One point more is in 1 Peter 4:13-14, that we may add to this: "But rejoice inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's suffering, that when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part, He is evil spoken of, but on your part, He is glorified." Do you see the connection? Your glory is connected directly to your suffering. So, if you suffer now, you're sharing what Jesus experienced – the suffering at the hands of people, for what? Because of righteousness. He says, "And because Jesus suffered for righteousness sake, He was also glorified." And the same thing will happen to you. If you suffer for righteousness, you will be glorified even as He will be. "So, happy are you, for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

But notice verse 15: "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffers as a Christian, let him not be a shamed. But let him glorify God on his behalf." You're not grinning and bearing it in the midst of your "thlipsis" condition. You're not saying, "Oh, it's really all wonderful. I'm just going to look at it with a positive attitude." You're saying, "Lord, it hurts. It's rough. It's tough. But I'm finding it a great satisfaction because it is permitting the glory of God to start developing in me now, so that I start reflecting the glory of God.

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