

# Romans 5:1-5

Sunday 9/14/2008

We love You, we thank You, Father, for all that You have done for us and for all that You have given us. We thank You for the men and women of this church, Lord, that seemingly rise to every occasion, that everything that comes our way, Lord, we meet that challenge and meet it, Lord, with a greater overwhelming force than the challenge itself. I thank You for the men and women that have worked so diligently on the building over there and given up so much time from their family and their own jobs. Lord, You are the only One that can reward them, but it speaks so well of this church. Lord, I thank You for this church. I thank You for what it stands for, how that You have given us a haven, Father, of truth. Lord, we ask You now to just bless us today. We will be careful to give You the honor and the glory in all that You do for us in the praise. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

## I. The Foundation of God's Righteousness

In Chapter 5, we begin to look at the great New Testament doctrines. Recapping just briefly, we saw in Chapter 1 through Chapter 4 how that God was dealing with and laying out and setting up the foundation for understanding the great concept of getting God's righteousness. We saw in Chapter 1 how that the Gentiles are in a terrible state. The Gentiles were a group of people that followed their conscience in the Old Testament. They did not have an Old Testament law that was written down like the Jews did. They followed the law of their conscience. We found out in Romans Chapter 1 that that will not work any longer. You cannot solely rely on your conscience now for what you are going to get from God and what God has for you. You have to build a personal relationship.

Then we saw in Chapter 2 how that the Jews, who had the law, thought they were better than the Gentiles because the Gentiles had no written law, but the Jews did. We went through all of this. Remember that the Jews had a superiority mindset; they thought they were better than the Gentiles because they had the oracles of God that were given to them by God, and therefore they had become puffed up and thought they were better. We saw in Chapter 2 where God told them that they were not any better.

Then we got into Chapter 3 and 4. In Chapter 3 and 4, He began to show us why, now that Christ has come and died on the cross, God's dealing with man will not be solely through their conscience anymore. In the same token, it will not be solely through the law, the Ten Commandments, anymore. Now that Christ has come and Christ has died on the cross, God has changed the game plan, so to speak, and now we are in the New Testament. God now freely, and that is why we study David's life and Abraham's life. Those two men are really what the great doctrines of the book of Romans are built around. The great doctrine of Romans, first and foremost, is that you and I, the moment we got saved, we got God's righteousness imputed to us. Because of that, we now have salvation based on nothing that we did or nothing that we could do to merit it. This is the foundation from which the book of Romans is going to build on. From this point on, we are going to see major New Testament doctrines that really help you and me understand what we have as New Testament Christians.

## II. The Significance of "Therefore"

There are a number of things in this passage today, and I want to try to get through them in the time that we have today. First of all, look at verse 1. I never want to miss these kinds of things.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Let me just say this: this is one of the must-have verses in the Bible. There are certain verses in the Bible that you just have to have memorized, and this is one of them. This is one that is absolutely an incredible verse. When you are dealing with somebody about salvation or in your own personal life, that is one of the greatest verses you will ever commit to memory. I try to point those out to you as we go through.

Now, look at the first word: "Therefore." I remember one of the greatest things anybody ever taught me about the Bible, and this seemed like an easy thing to get, but I was not the brightest light bulb in the box when I was younger, still am not now. But I remember being told all the time that what you want to get in the Bible when you begin to read it is a context. The sentence structure or the grammar of the Bible itself is what helps you do that. Many times we read the Bible, and let us face it, most of us probably did not get a great grade in English or English grammar structure or English literature. I know personally I did not, and I had to go back when I got into the Bible and kind of re-educate myself and buy those kinds of, I felt kind of stupid at 29 years of age going back in and buying fifth-grade grammar books, but I did it. I learned and taught myself the structure that I did not get because it is vitally important.

I remember years ago when I was at a Bible study, Mel Shabaka, my father in the Lord, was teaching, and he stopped, in fact, it was this verse. He took the word "therefore" and he just stopped and he said, "Now look, anytime you find that word in an opening verse or in the Bible, you are trying to find the context." The word "therefore," being justified by faith, we have peace with God. The word "therefore" means basically, "because of what I just told you." What you have here in Chapter 5, where he says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," what he is saying there is, "based on what I just gave you in Chapter 1, 2, 3, and 4." He is getting ready to add something to that. You always want to watch those places in the Bible because you have to watch how you read it, because "therefore" means he just finished saying something, and now "therefore" is a connection between what he just said and what he is getting ready to say, and many times that is how you get the context.

Verse 1 probably states the greatest news that man ever heard. It sums up, and this is why you need to memorize it, it sums up in one verse what we saw typified in the first four chapters of studying Abraham's life and David's life. It talks about and sums up the fact that the moment you and I trusted Christ, you and I were declared by God to be righteous before God. Not only did He just give you His righteousness, but then He gave you a book that makes a binding legal agreement. That is why I told you when we get into the study of the book of Romans, it is almost like a legal document. It is written in almost a legal format, and that is why some people have a tough time grasping the book of Romans. But in reality, when He gave you and me His

righteousness, He imputed it to us. Then He wrote us a book that makes a binding legal declaration that our sins have been completely washed away and paid for by the blood of Christ.

That is why when I started to study the book of Romans, I told you that the book of Romans is basically the constitution of Christianity. In Washington D.C., our founding fathers wrote a Declaration of Independence and a Constitution in the United States. In those two documents, they laid down the framework for our government, which back then was a republic. They laid down the framework of what our country was going to be based on the Word of God. Of course, the book of Romans does the same thing. It sets up the framework for what you and I have and what you and I should understand as far as our own salvation in Christ.

### III. Peace With God vs. The Peace of God

Obviously, you should already know this by what we have come through in the book of Romans. Before we were saved, we were at war with God. The Bible calls it enmity. Enmity is found in James chapter 4 verse 4 as enemy. In fact, that word "enemy" comes from the word "enmity." In truth, we were God's enemy. The fact that God's Spirit still reaches out and makes overtures to you and I, even though we are still lost, is only because of what Christ did on the cross, and God loves the sinner through the death of His Son. But as far as fellowship is concerned, as far as God hearing your prayers or God showing you something in the Bible, He limits Himself to showing you only things that bring you to Him to be saved. In reality, through the blood of Christ and Christ's death on the cross, for Christ's sake, in reality, we were God's enemy. We are an adversary toward God. But the moment you and I trusted Christ, God imputes His righteousness to us, and now we have ceased being God's enemy, and we are now His child.

This is why the Bible says in John chapter 8 verse 44, as far as an unsaved person is concerned, it says:

*John 8:44*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

It shows us that before I was saved, before you were saved, we were in enmity against God, and we were God's enemy. But when Christ died on the cross, He made it possible for God to reach out through His Spirit and give me the opportunity to come into Christ. When I did that, at that point, God imputed His righteousness to me and washed away my sins. That is what the Bible is all about.

Now, when it says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have what? Peace with God." We have got to look at this. There are a lot of things in here. In your Bible, there are two types of peace. You need to know the difference between these. There is the peace of God, and there is peace with God. In Romans chapter 5, it is peace with God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Peace with God in the context will always be a reference to salvation. When you got saved, what you did was, you made peace with God. You are no longer God's enemy.

The second type of peace in the Bible is found in Philippians chapter 4 verse 7. That is the peace of God. When it says over there, it says:

*Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Remember, we laid that verse out. Look at that: Christ Jesus. Remember a couple of Thursday nights ago, I told you the difference when you found Jesus Christ and Christ Jesus, how it set the context. What does it say there? You get the peace of God through Christ Jesus. Christ was the name of deity. Jesus was the earthly man. Remember, I showed you a couple of Thursday nights ago at Bible study how that when you find that title, it always shows you and denotes you the context. That context there puts the deity man first and the human man second. You know what that shows you? It shows you the context of Christ coming from heaven and becoming a man. When you find "Jesus Christ," the context will be being the Son of Man going up to the deified, glorified Christ. The context there is simply this: you got God's righteousness and have the peace of God now because He left there and became a man and died on the cross. That is how you put your Bible together verse by verse.

Peace with God will always be a reference to salvation wherever you find it. The peace of God will be the peace that you have once you get saved in your daily walk and your relationship with God. Understanding this is the basis for the great doctrine of eternal security. If I could just get God's people to understand the difference between the peace of God and peace with God, there would never be a question of anybody thinking you could lose your salvation. It is just that simple.

Both of the things in life that we struggle with have very easy answers to. Last week, we talked about God's will for your life, God's plan for your life, God's work for your life, and that when you get those three things lined up, you have the vision of God and what He wants you to do. Not your own vision, not some hocus pocus vision like the Charismatic crowd, but a vision of why you exist. What God has saved you for, what He left you down here for, and what He wants you to accomplish in your life for Him. Most people never get that in their lives.

Living in the supernatural versus the natural, we talked about getting God's vision and getting God's victory. Abraham becoming God's friend and getting the vision of God, really what is important in your life, becoming that living sacrifice like we talked about last week, getting the proper perspective on the world system. I think the reason why most of God's people do not really do what God wants them to do outside of their own flesh is because of the world. Look around, there are a lot of impending forces out there that really get scary, and I think many times people get so focused on what is going on in the world that they do not get to the focus of what God wants them to do in His life. You have to kind of ignore that. It has always been there, but you see, when you understand the peace with God versus the peace of God, then you get God's perspective. You are not afraid of the things that you should not be afraid of, and you are afraid of the things that you should be afraid of. I think it puts it in proper perspective.

I meet Christians all the time today that are paranoid because of the world that we live in. They actually think that the world we live in today, with all of its impending disaster and dangers out

there, is worse than it had ever been. Around the turn of the century, Halley's Comet comes through about every 86 years or something like that, and it came back in the, I think it was the 70s, and around the turn of the century, it came back, one of its orbits. People are very superstitious. Every time a comet comes by, because comets are goofy, they are way out there beyond the Oort cloud, in the outer supreme parts of the universe that are distant out there. Not even the greatest telescope, not even the Hubble, can see it. They are out there, and some of them have cycles of millions of years. Some of them have cycles, they have long-term and short-term comets. Some of them cycle through every two or three years, some of them every year, some of them like Halley's Comet every 70 or 80 years, and then some of them, like Hale-Bopp when it came through and Kohoutek when it came through, ten thousand years before it will be back.

But every time a comet shows up, human nature has not changed. Back in the ancient times, with the Babylonians and all those crowds, when a comet came through, they thought it was an omen. Some cultures thought it was a good omen, some thought it was a bad omen. In both cases, they offered up their sacrifices of people because they wanted to please the gods, and they killed a lot of people because they were superstitious. But human nature has not changed. Around 1800, or the beginning of 1900, right around the turn of the century, when Halley's Comet came through again, Thomas Edison was a saved man. He is the guy that created the light bulb, and he was a saved man. Somebody came to him and said, "You know what they are saying in the New York Times? Comet may spell the end of the world, man knows it," and all this stuff. Somebody came to Thomas Edison, who was a saved man, and he said, "You know what they are saying out there? They are saying that this comet could be the end of the world." Thomas Edison looked at him and said, "That is okay, we can do without it. We do not need it." He had the right perspective.

I was someplace a couple of weeks ago, and this thing in Iran, getting a nuclear bomb, and they get that, and here is what is going to happen: they get the bomb, and Israel goes in and stops them getting the bomb, and Russia comes down and allies with Iran, and then it goes from there, and then we have to ally with somebody else, and pretty soon, you know what you have? You have World War III, Armageddon, all in one little box. Somebody says, "Well, them blankety-blank Iranians, they are going to get the A-bomb, they are going to blow us to hell." I said, "Correct you, it is going to blow me to heaven. I do not know where it is going to blow you, it is going to blow me to heaven." It is all in your perspective, you see.

Right now, as we speak, Brian and I were talking about this last night. Right now, as we speak, over in Europe, you know what they are doing right now? They have a great big machine that is 17 miles in diameter. Can you imagine a machine 17 miles in diameter? That thing is called the atom crack cruncher or crusher. What they are going to do is they are going to try to get this thing up and running, and they turned it on last week, and everybody was happy because the little lights came on. In time, what they want to do, they want to recreate. They say that in time, when they bombard these proteins and protons or whatever they are, atoms and all this stuff, and they bombard them to the place that it will create the same time period in a smaller diameter right before it was when the Big Bang took place. You know what the Big Bang is. The Big Bang is when your wife backed out of the thing and hit the neighbor's car. It is when the universe started.

Now everybody is worried about that because they are saying, "Well, what if you," and they are talking about creating a very small black hole. The thing is, what if, everybody is saying, "Well, what if you create a black hole?" If you do not know what a black hole is, a black hole is something that sucks in everything, light and everything, and that is why it is called a black hole, because there is no light because it sucks all the light in. They are saying, "Well, what happens if you create this thing?" This will make a great horror movie, I think. I mean, I could just see the whole planet Earth being sucked down in France someplace, and then just open that thing up. I told Brian last night and was talking about some other way, I said, "You know what? I think it is the only sign of the time I am not worried about because I know the Bible." When you know the Bible, you do not have to worry about all this stuff that most people worry about because you know how it is going to end. I am not worried about somebody in France ripping a time warp in the fabric of eternity and having everybody sucked in, but I am kind of interested in doing that and building it and ripping a little time warp in that thing and seeing what comes out.

You do know Revelation chapter 12, 13, and 9, do you not? That something in the tribulation period comes out of that supernatural into the natural like they did in Genesis 6. You have got to watch what is going on, but you know what? When you have the peace with God, when you are saved, when you have peace with God, and you get saved, it automatically, in time, if you grow, gives you the peace of God. When you have the peace of God because you made peace with God, your attitude about all this stuff is, "Let her rip. Let it go, man." I cannot think of anything better than a whole world going up in smoke and being right in the middle of it and getting to watch a firsthand seat. It would be like being in a fireworks display and being right in the middle of it. I think it is great, but most people worry about that. Why? Because they do not understand that when you made peace, when you got the peace of God in your life, when you got that because you made peace with God, when you have that in your life, then you do not have to worry about what takes place in life.

## IV. Standing in Grace

Now look at verse 2:

Romans 5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

That is an incredible verse. We read those verses in the Bible, and many times, because we do not read it with the right mind's eye or do not have enough spiritual insight into it, it just looks like a verse. Let me tell you something, these five verses are some of the greatest material you are going to ever get in your life. Notice it says, "wherein we stand." There are a couple of things I want to talk to you about here out of this one, and the first concept is "wherein we stand." You know why most people do not stand for anything? God's people, because they do not stand in anything. If you are not standing in something, you cannot stand for something, and what we are standing for today is the Word of God. He says, "wherein we stand."

That brings up one of the greatest doctrines in the Bible that we have talked about before, but there are a lot of new people here, so let me briefly just lay it out for you, and it is the difference

between standing and state. When you got saved, going back to getting God's righteousness, when you got God's righteousness imputed in you, your standing in Christ is fixed. What Paul is talking about here is the fact that what he is getting ready to say, that we can glorify God and glory ourselves in God in everything we do because we have the assurance of the peace with God and the peace of God, and I am sure today because I am saved and I have this book that gives me the peace that God wants me to have, that I know where I am standing today. Nothing makes me afraid. Nothing should defeat us. Nothing should get us to the place where we get our focus off.

It is like a football game. How many times have you watched a beautiful play, and the guy, the quarterback, gets the ball snapped, he drops back out of the pocket, and some tight end is running out there running a perfect route, and he is at the end zone, only two steps away, and the guy let the ball go, and he is ready to catch that ball, and then suddenly he loses his focus. Why? Because he hears some 475-pound linebacker's feet banging the ground, and he knows he is going to get hit, and just for a split second, just for a microsecond, he takes his eye off the ball he is supposed to catch because he is worried he is going to get clobbered, and you know what? He misses the ball, and he still gets clobbered.

A very good one in my mind, and I am not much of a football guy, but I remember in my mind the greatest ball catcher I ever saw was Lynn Swann. I watched him play for the Pittsburgh Steelers. I watched him make some incredible plays years ago, and this was back in the 70s. He was a great ball player, and I do not care how hard you hit him. I do not care if you had 20 guys coming down on him, he never got his eye off the ball, and he always made the play. I watched him one time when he was running, and it is a classic, it is still shown in all the classic films. I saw it not in person, but I watched the game on TV when he did it. He is running out there, and somebody throws him the ball, and he comes up to that thing, and he is kind of leaning out, and he gets one hand on the ball, and he is falling over, and guys are hitting him, he tips the ball up, and just as he falls, he reaches out and pulls that ball in, and he gets clobbered, hits the ground. Incredible. You know why? Focus. He never lost his focus.

You know why we do not do what we are supposed to do for God? Honestly. We lose our focus. We hear the footsteps coming up behind us. God snapped the ball to you. When you got saved, you are running His route. He wants you to catch the ball and make a touchdown up in heaven. Some of you will drop the ball because of the ominous footsteps that you hear coming up behind you with this old world. When you have the peace of God and the peace with God, you do not lose your focus, and you can accomplish whatever God wants you to accomplish because you are confident wherein you stand. My standing in Jesus Christ is sinless perfection this morning. When God sees me, He sees me perfect. That is my standing.

Now, my state is something else. Where the standing deals with your soul and your eternity and your eternal relationship with God because He imputed His righteousness to you, that is your standing. Your state is your everyday relationship with Him that comes and goes based on your focus. All of you were saved here this morning if you trusted Christ as your personal Savior. If you are saved, if there was a time in your life when you trusted Christ as your own personal Savior, then your standing this morning is in Christ Jesus, and that is the end of it. But your state

could be something else. You can be saved here this morning and be standing in sinless perfection as far as your soul is concerned, but your walk with God could be something different. That is your state. That is the great doctrine of standing and state. What Paul is saying in here is, "by whom also we have access by faith into this grace," and then he says, "wherein we stand." That is a good question for every child of God: where you stand this morning, where you are at, whose side have you taken up? I know that if you are saved this morning, your standing is in Christ, but the bottom line is, where is your state? How do you translate standing into your everyday life? Of course, this is the great doctrine that Romans begins to lay out.

## V. Rejoicing in Hope and Tribulation

Look at verse 2 again. It says there, note the word "rejoice." You ever notice that the word that Christians use is the word "rejoice," the word the world uses is "happiness"? Do you know the difference between the word "rejoice" and the word "happiness"? Happiness is the word that comes from the happenings in life. So when something happens to you good, you are happy. When something happens to you bad, you are unhappy. That is the world's standard. A Christian never used to be happy unless it is happy in the fact that he is rejoicing. Rejoicing is something that goes on whether it is good or it is bad as far as the world is concerned. We are to rejoice, rejoice in the fact that the hope of the glory of God.

Now let us talk about that for a moment. Rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. Wow. That just seems like a nice verse. That thing is loaded. "Rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Let me explain that for you from a Bible standpoint. Let me take the word "hope." I do not know how many times I have seen somebody read a passage like that, and they say, "Well, I thought as Christians that we did not have to hope. I thought it was sure." Why does he use the word "hope"? Well, the word "hope" in the Bible does not always mean, "I hope I am saved." If you are drowning out there and you fell off a ship. If you fell off the boat, and Kristen comes out and sees you in the wake down there, and she throws you a big old life ring, one of those big old lifesavers. Now you are in the water, and she just threw you something. It is not the fact that you are saying to yourself, "I hope this life ring will save me." You are saying to yourself, "That life ring is my only hope." That is it. You are going to drown without it. It is not, "I hope it will save me." You know it will save you. You are saying, "It is my only hope. If I do not grasp that thing, if I do not have that, I am going to drown." Well, it is not the fact that you hope you are saved. It is the fact that because you are saved, Jesus Christ is our only hope. There is nothing else.

And then hope in what? Hope through tomorrow? Yes. Hope through the bad times in life? Yes. Hope through disappointment and heartache? Yes. But the hope in what? The hope of the glory of God. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. You know what the glory of God is in the Bible wherever you find it? It is Christ coming back. It is not just the rapture. When it talks about the glory of God for you and me, it covers the whole bottle of wax. It is not just a rapture, because once He comes back, the glory of God never leaves again. So it is everything from the rapture on out into eternity.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The

everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

You know what he is saying? He is saying that when you know where you stand, and you know what your hope is, not just "I hope I am saved," but your hope is the fact that you are in Christ, and Christ has got an incredible plan going out through eternity, and you see everything that is out there, and you are standing in it, so you know what it is. You are rejoicing in the fact that no matter what I have to go through today, no matter what I have to put up with in my life, no matter what happens, how it looks bad, how it turns out, I am rejoicing in the fact that it is only temporary, and brother, when He comes back, it is going to be one great day.

That is what Romans chapter 8 verse 18 is all about, and that chapter in Romans 8, when we get there, we are going to have a great time with that. It deals with the doctrine of the two adoptions for you and for me, one physical and one spiritual. You know what he says in Romans 8:18? He says:

*Romans 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

You know what he is saying? He is saying whatever we have to go through down here in life, when you are standing in Christ and understand the peace of God and the peace with God and understand the hope of the glory of Christ and rejoicing in it, not much in this life is going to ruin your day. Like Thomas Edison, "Well, we can get along without the world, blow it up like me." "Well, these Iranians are going to blow us to hell." Correction, it is going to blow me to heaven. Let us get it going. I do not care. I have no plans past this next second, and it gives you the proper perspective of the child of God, and without that proper perspective, you will never fulfill God's will in your life, never fulfill the plan, never get the work, and you will never grasp the vision because every time the great quarterback of the universe snaps the ball and fades back and throws that pass, and you are running through life, and you have got the old gospel shirt on with the number 77 on it, and you reach up to catch that ball in the millennium and get your judgment seat of Christ reward, suddenly you hear the big footsteps of the big old demonic linebackers who are going to crush you into the ground, and you get your focus off the ball, and you get your focus on that, and you miss the catch. Some of you like football, and I do not like it too, but I will tell you what, it does not even match the big game of life. It does not match the game of life that we all have to go through. The hits are just as hard, trust me.

This is why when a child of God understands the book of Song of Solomon, and he sees his relationship with Christ and how he should view Christ, and Christ actually sees how Christ views him. That is why when he understands the book of Ephesians, that intimate book where Paul lays out the church, he understands John when he wrote in Revelation chapter 2 verse 20, the last prayer in your Bible. The last prayer in your Bible was, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Why? Because he was rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God.

I will tell you this, not only are we to rejoice in the glory of the hope of the glory of God, look at verse 3:

Romans 5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

Here it comes, right down where we live. Now we are going to talk about not only having glory in the fun things or the deep things of the Bible. It is fun on Thursday night, is it not? Yes, it is fun on Thursday night when you ask the question about something in the millennium or something in eternity or something about there in the future, the rapture, the tribulation period, the Antichrist, and all those things, and we lay all that stuff out, and it is all that "wow" stuff. It is easy to get a Christian to look toward the things that have not happened yet, that nobody has gone through yet, that are just in the Bible, that are the neat things in the Bible. Hey, that is not hard to get somebody to rejoice in that. You know what is tough to rejoice in? The bad things you are going through right now from your perspective.

Now I hope this helps you. This is a great verse. This is the verse that has got me through more things than I could even mention to you. Not only are we to look to the glory and rejoice in His coming, but also in our tribulation. Now I have got to clarify this because, you know what, when you get into these situations, you have got to always clarify yourself. Let me talk to you. We have tribulation in our lives for two reasons. Hear me on this. I do not want you to get messed up on this. We have tribulation in our lives for only two reasons.

- 1.) The first one is the law of sowing and reaping, Galatians 6:7. That simply means that you screwed up in life and you made some really bad choices, and now you are paying the tab for it.
- 2.) The second one is found over there in 2 Timothy 3:12, and that is what I call the law of godliness.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

There are two avenues to this. For all my life, all my ministry, I have seen people who have absolutely done some of the stupidest things in their life. They are dysfunctional. They have no, they make bad choices. They get themselves way over their heads financially, and I hear all the same story. A couple told me one time that was years ago, they were just bad choices, stupid stuff, buying stuff they did not need. They just had to have it, a big house when they could not afford it, this and that when they could not afford it, and then they are upside down. They come in and they said, "You know what?" I said, "Well, how can I help you?" And he said, "You know what I need?" He said, "I need a million dollars." You know what I said back to him? "Why? So you can make some million-dollar mistakes?" There are some people it would not matter how much money you give them because money is not, lack of money is not the problem. Right now, maybe you only have, you have a hundred thousand dollars. So you know what? You have a hundred thousand dollar debt. You get a million dollars, you get a million dollars debt. You get ten million dollars, you get ten million dollars debt. The problem is not more money. The problem is more common sense, how you spend the money. That is where people are at today. They get into situations where they get themselves because they are bad, and then they want to

go around pretending that they are suffering for God. No, you are suffering because you are stupid. God had nothing to do with it. He has given you clear directives and principles how to operate your life. It is that simple.

I had a guy that could not keep a job years ago. If I told you his name, you would know who he was, and he is dead now, and I do not want to defame his name, so I will not tell you who he was. But he lost every job he had. He would always come into me like losing a job was a badge of honor for a Christian. He had been in it, he could not keep a job. Yet he was a good kid, and he loved God, and you know why he kept losing jobs? Because he kept witnessing to everybody on the job instead of working. His boss called me on the phone one day and asked me, and he never even knew this. But I guess what happened was he came, he is one of these big Bible-thumping guys, and his wife is a mess, but he is a Bible-thumping guy, and he came around a lunch hour, and you guys at workplaces, you know how they do it. They were playing cards on a lunch hour. Well, to him, playing cards is a sin. So what does he do? He walks over and throws the card table up. Then the guy is going to kill him. Then the boss gets in the middle of it, and the boss, he was a good guy, a lost guy. So what do I do? I try to take a bad testimony that somebody in my church has given a lost guy and try to show him, because I know what he is thinking, "So this is what Christianity is like." So I wanted to show him that we are not like that. And he said, "What do you want me to do?" And I said, "You know what I would do with you? I would fire him." "Really? I thought you would take him." "No, I am not going to take a shot. You are paying him to do eight hours. I will tell you what I will do. You fire him. I have another guy out here that needs a job who will give you eight or eight and a half hours for eight hours pay and give you what you want. We will just replace the idiot with the good one. Because I do not want you thinking that that is what my church is putting out over here. You need to fire him." He fired him, sent my guy over, got the job. He called me back three weeks later and said, "That was the greatest thing." He said, "And this was funny. He said, 'I have some more I want to fire. Did he send me some more over?'" And that guy, sure enough, that guy came in my office. "Well, they did it to me again." I said, "Did what to you again?" He said, "The devil. Can and for God, being a testimony of all you that live godly in Christ Jesus, self-suffering, I lost another job because I would not compromise what I believe." I said, "No, you lost a job because you are an idiot. Plain and simple with a big 'I'. And you are just going to lose every job you have until you realize that, you know what? Hey, I agree. Every Christian ought to witness, every, wherever you work, wherever you are at, wherever you do, from the hospital to wherever you are at, you are a nurse, you are a doctor, you are a policeman, you are a plumber, you are whatever you ought to do. Every Christian ought to witness, and sometimes, you should even use words."

Do you think how you live your life, I guarantee you, how you live your life is a thousand times more important and precious than what you say. If that guy would have had the smarts and he would have had the understanding, he would have given that guy nine hours work for eight hours, and then when the boss came over and said to him, "Why do you do the things that you do the way you do it?" Then you have a, then he is asked, there it is, 1 Peter chapter 2:

1 Peter 2:15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

You set up the scenario by doing what is right. You are not going up to him saying, "You need to get saved." He is coming to you saying, "Hey, as my worker, tell me, why do you give me and work the way you do?" "Why, sir? Because I am a Christian. As a child of God, I believe in good principles, and I believe that you were good enough to give me a job, and as a child of God, you are paying me for eight hours, I want to make sure I give you more. Not only that, I know you are in business to make money, I know you are in business to make a profit, and my job is to appreciate what you have given to me so much that I am going to make sure on my end, you make that profit." You will go out there with a raise. You will be as head foreman in a year. You see, but some people cannot do that. Some people are just so messed up. They have been in that pattern for so many years. Nothing is going to change it. They walk around thinking they are suffering because they are caught in the law of sowing and reaping. They have made some bad choices, and it goes on from there.

Then you have got the other side, that they suffer, they suffer legitimately. They are trying to do what is right. Sometimes it will be in your own family. Sometimes you will do what is right and try to take a stand, and people in your own family will clobber you. They will clobber you because they are not doing right. They see you are doing right, and your very existence at Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, whatever you have going on as a family, your very existence cramps their ungodly style, and they are going to blame you for it. That is the way to get it. Do not get persecuted because you are an idiot. Get persecuted because you are doing what is right.

I read a book one time, this book was a good book. It was not worth anything, but it taught me a lot. It said, "When Bad Things Happen to Good People." It gave you a suggestion that if you are a Christian, what do you do as a Christian when bad things happen to you? I want to write another book. I probably never will. But if I ever wrote a book, I would write a book that says this: "The Art of Glorifying God in the Worst Days of Your Life." We live in a Laodicean age, church age, where they do not believe the Bible anymore. You see people go out and buy a book, "When Bad Things Happen to Good People." The Charismatic Church teaches that bad things happen to you, it is because of the devil. When good things happen to you, it is because of God. When you get shaken, it is because of the devil. When you lose your job, it is because of the devil. When you get a raise, it is because of God. When you come back and everything is fine in life, it is God. That is not the way it works. How does that fly in the face when the Bible says in Romans chapter 8 verse 28:

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

You know what that verse says? That verse stands on itself by saying as a child of God, nothing bad happens to you. Our perspective is wrong. You think when you go out of here and you have a flat tire or you have a car wreck or somebody breaks into your house or you do this or you lose that, you look at that as a bad thing. Actually, the Bible says that as a Christian, unless you are

out of fellowship with God and God is chastening you, and even that is not bad. I mean, you had to have that and send him to hell with you. I mean, when you look at it and you look at your life and you get God's perspective, you realize that that is why you are to rejoice in your tribulations along with the glory of God because all things, all things, good, bad, indifferent, all things, terrible things, rotten things, worldly things, horrible things, catastrophic things, all things work together for good.

Now I want to show you in the time we have left the value of you coming to the place in your life where you learn to glory in your tribulation. Not your tribulation if you cast upon yourself, though you can learn from that if you learn from your mistake, but most people do not. But I want to show you the importance and the value of you coming to the place in your life where you actually understand why it is important to get the mindset that you just do not glory in the things that are good, the glory of God, but you learn to glory in your tribulations too, because in both cases, you are still standing in the same grace. That grace never changed. Incredible. If some of you get this today and develop this down the line, it will change your life.

Now look at Romans, look at this chapter 3 and 4 here again and 5.

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.

Now I want you to notice four things here in this little couple of verses, and these things are blockbusters. It is hard to believe that this little verse 3 and 4 could change your life as it stands by itself. If you learn what is in this verse based on what I have already given you at this point, that you are not just to glory in the things of God, rejoice in the glorious things of God, you rejoice in the temptations and the trials and the bad things that come into your life. When you learn to do that, it is a process that God takes into your life. A process of spiritual growth as you fulfill God's will, God's plan, and God's work, and as those things mold together, you then get His vision.

## VI. The Process of Spiritual Growth: Patience, Experience, Hope

Now why do we have tribulation in a good sense? Let me tell you first of all, give you a couple of things here.

1.) It forces us to look at the circumstances.

First of all, and this is foremost, when we have tribulation in our life, you know what it does? If you are in your Bible and you are where you need to be with God and you are a Christian, if you have tribulation or after it, it forces us to look at the circumstances. It forces us to look at it and see it as God sees it, not as it appears. When you begin to use the process, I call it the filtering process. A lot of times people have problems with anger, and somebody will say something to them, sometimes it is women, sometimes it is men, and they will get into a situation where in a

marriage where the husband or the wife will be, somebody will say something, and it may be right on the edge of something, and you just blow up at it. I tell people that have anger problems, I tell them that one of the things you have got to do is you have got to understand that this is why you have to learn biblical principles. You have to use the principles as a filtering process.

If we were out on the ocean and we were all kind of scuba diving under there, we were like in 20 feet of water, you could still see daylight, you could see the fish around. You go down about 200 feet, you do not see nearly as well. You go down 500 feet, you do not see very well at all. You go down one mile, it is pitch black. You cannot see your hand in front of your face. Now it is still daytime out there, and there is still light. Why do you not have any light one mile down? I will tell you why, because the water filters out the sunlight, and it takes so much water to filter out so much sunlight, and the amount of sunlight to come to this earth, you have got so much water, it filters out all the light. That water is a picture of what the principles of the Word of God does in your life. The sunlight will be the bad thing that happens or somebody saying something to you. The water between where it is all gone and where it starts is the process of the Bible, and what happens is the principles filter out what is said. By the time it reaches you, you do not react to it, you respond to it. You have a way of processing your anger, and as Christians, we need to have a way of processing the bad things that happen to us in life. The only way we can process those things is the principles of the Word of God. By the time it gets down to you, it is filtered out. The principles of God have overridden the problem. You now see, and it forces you to look at the circumstances, and the principles, the filtering process, forces you to look at this and see it, not as it appears, but as it really is. Those things in life are not really what they appear to be. So you have got to learn in time through the Word of God, which will scrape away all of the stuff that messes it up, and see what you really have. That is the process. That is what it does if you are using your Bible.

2.) It makes me examine my own self.

The second thing it does, it makes me examine my own self. When I have a tough tribulation thing that comes into my life, it makes me look at my and ask me my motive. I mean, I do not look at it and say because I did something stupid, I do not have to even think about that. I know it was me. But if it is not me, and I am just doing the best I can, the next thing I look at is I look at my motive of why I am doing this. Am I doing this for me or am I doing this for God? It makes you look at your motive. Why are you doing it?

3.) It keeps us from being prideful.

I will tell you something else, it keeps us from being prideful. The Apostle Paul was one of the greatest models in the Bible. Yet the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 12 that he had a thorn in the flesh. Now most people cannot figure out what that thorn in the flesh is, but if you go through the Bible, it is pretty clear from what he says in other places in the Old Testament passage that not too many people can match up today. He had a problem with his eyes, and that was a thorn in his flesh. Imagine the greatest healer that ever lived had a problem with his own eyes. By that time, the healing had gone, and he did not have any ability, so he is suffering with myopia or whatever he had, and he asked God three times, he asked God three times to take that away from him, and

God would not take it away. You know why? Because he says, "I do not want you lifted up with pride." Paul, you are the main man. Paul, people are coming to you, they are falling down to your feet, you are healing people, you are doing all these great things, you are starting the churches. I met with you one on one on Mount Sinai, gave you alone the whole plan of God. Now you are telling everybody, "You know what? If I do not keep you humble, next thing I know you will be getting a big old bus driving down the freeway that says, 'Here we go for God,' with big arrows pointing on it, and you will be setting up tent meetings everywhere in the world and taking all the glory yourself." He said, "You know what? So I am going to leave you have some struggles. I am going to leave you with some infirmities, and those infirmities are going to keep you humble, and I am not taking them from you." You know what Paul had to learn to do? He had to learn to glorify God in those infirmities that God would not take away. That is the key. It is being able to glorify God in the tough things that we go through.

You know the difference between Bible Christianity and any other religion is the fact that as Christians, we find joy in not just the good things, but by the things that are not good. That should set us apart. You know what James chapter 1 verses 2 and 4 says? It says:

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Listen, if God only let the good things happen in life to us, we would not be worth shooting. We would not be worth nothing. We would not learn a thing. Human nature is such, when everything is going good, we do not need God. You have got to learn, and I have got to learn, when we get to the place in our lives when the temptations come. Now notice this, I want you to see this. Just like there are two kinds of peace, there are two kinds of temptation in the Bible. Notice how in verse three and two, watch this, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations." Now watch how he defines temptation: "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith." See how he defined that? There are two kinds of temptations in the Bible. The temptation that makes you go away from God and lust after the things of the world, that is temptation with evil. God does not tempt any man with evil. But this temptation here is the trying of your faith. What we are reading about in Romans chapter 5 that you need to learn to glorify, I need to learn to glorify in.

Now I want you to see the process, and the process is quite incredible. When we learn to glory in our tribulation, it brings about patience. I want to tell you, verse 3, in the ministry, that is the key ingredient you must have. If you are ever going to be in the ministry, and I do not just mean pastoring, there are a number of you here who work with me very closely with people. I call you a personal worker. You do personal work with people who come in with different problems. Many of you, you are all in different stages. Some of you do it very well, some of you do it pretty good, and some of you are just learning to grow. My whole ministry and process is to put you in small groups where you can learn the process, we work together, and you get to that point where you can really be an effective personal worker. But when you look at this thing and you understand, when it comes to working with the ministry and working with people, patience is the number one thing you need to have.

You know how you get patience? When you put up with something like Paul did that you cannot change, and you cannot do anything about it. And God will not take it away. And it is not because of your own stupidity, it is because you are doing what is right. When we put up with something and we cannot change, we cannot do anything about it, it just wears you out, and finally it wears you out to the point where you come to the end of self that you just have got to give it to God and leave it over to Him. Then you know what you do? You give it to God, and you go back and you take it back, and you give it back to Him again, and you take it back where we can give it back to Him again, and pretty soon, through the process, you learn patience. That is the way you get patience.

You know how you become impatient or never get patience? Always looking for the quick fix. Always looking for the shortcut, the easy way out, the easy solution. Because you know what, folks, in life there is no easy quick way, there is none. I had people that have taken probably eight or nine, ten years and developed a horrendous marriage come into me and want me to fix it in a week. There are no quick fixes in life. You can always break something quicker than it takes to fix. You have got to know that if you have just been around in life for a while. I have had people that have ruined their kids, that have brought their kids in a mess and come to the point where kids get out of control and all kinds of problems, the parents bring me into it and say, "Hey, fix my kids. Can you do it by four o'clock, or do we have to go to soccer practice?" No quick fixes. No quick fixes. I have people come in and they say, "Hey, I want to learn the Bible. You know what I want to get?" Hey, no easy way, quick way to learn the Bible. It is a process that takes the rest of your life.

You know what the biggest difference between God and us is? In all of my time and all of my life and all of my studies, I have never found God to get in a hurry about anything. Never. We pray and throw up our request. In our time, God answers them in His time. Most of our prayers that go up to God, I believe they go into categories and they get answered. I am kidding you now, but it may illustrate my point. I believe they go into categories, and I believe the fullest category where God's people's prayers wind up is the category that has got a big sign on it like this, and it says this: "Lack of planning on your part does not necessitate an emergency on my part." File it. The older I get, the more I know about God, the more I spend time with God, the less of a hurry I get in. That is a statement for me because I was one of these guys years ago that made it happen, got it now, wanted it now. If I could not find out the way to get it, I would make it happen, give God the glory for it, and many times it worked out, many times it did not. But the bottom line is this, the older I got, the more I realized God is not in any hurry. We are in a hurry because we have not planned well. That is why. That is exactly why. You are in a hurry tonight with something in your life because you have failed to plan or take the right kind of a motive to get the thing worked out. So now you are in a hurry. Now you are in a panic. Now you have got to have this. Now you have got to have that. You have got to do what you need to do. You cannot wait on God now. You have got to make the house payment. You have got to balance this. You have got to do that. You have got to make the car payment. So what do you do? You step in and you take over yourself, and you never learn that way. You never learn that way.

You know what you need to do? Lose the house. Get a car you can afford. Do whatever you have got to do. Do not add to the process because you have got some status you have got to hang on to. Get yourself down with you and learn by the mistakes that you make. Who is going to do that? Nobody is going to do that. Not in the day and age that we live in. You know why so many people are losing their homes right now across this country? Because they have got to talk. You know why they have got to talk? Because somebody offered them a deal. You know what my grandmother used to say? Your grandmother probably said it. I think all of our grandmothers had a meeting at one time and all learned the same thing to tell us kids. You know what my old grandmother used to say? She used to chew tobacco. I love her to death. She said this. She had some sayings that I cannot tell you. It would be hilarious if I could tell you today. I mean, I just roar when I think about it. I cannot say them in church. I am a pastor. I cannot say those kinds of things. But anyway, it is kind of me privately. Maybe we will talk about it. But anyway, you know what she says? She says, "You know what? If a thing looks too good to be true, it probably is."

We have got a whole generation today and three or four generations behind it that have come to the place that all they want is what they can get. When this country was started, Patrick Henry, one of the great guys, most of you do not know who he is. Nobody said one of his greatest statements was this, "Give me liberty or give me death." Three or four generations later, it was just "Give me liberty." Now your generation, the last three generations, you just "Give me." So somebody comes along and says, "You want this house? Cannot afford it." "Oh, we can make you afford it." They do not read the fine print. They want what they want so bad they are willing to sign a piece of paper, and then they wind up, "Well, now, now, now." You know why they will never learn a lesson? That it is a fall for an element because the federal government is going to come in and bail them all out, and they will never learn a lesson from it. You know how you need to learn a lesson? Lose your house. See, that sounds terrible. Well, when in your life are you going to clear up a spot and start doing what you have got to do and take the lumps you have got to take and then move on from there? Or are you just continually going to make one bad choice after the other? I mean, it is like, you know what? It is just some place on the line. You have got to stop. You have got to put the thing in perspective. It is a thing where, you know, it is just a way that it is.

When you get into dealing with people in the ministry, you need patience. Patience because people are going to have problems. The ministry is people. If you are a personal worker, if you are someone who personally sits out with people and works with them, there is no quick fix to it. Many times they want to prod you along to make a quick fix. There is no quick fix. You have got to have the patience because people do not always jump through the hoops that you want them to the way they want to. Sometimes you have to wait it out. Sometimes it takes a while for it to sink in, and it can be very hard. You know what? God's people get out of fellowship. When God's people get out of fellowship, they have issues. Sometimes you just have got to be patient as they struggle through, help them through, do what they can do, do what you can do, and get the thing done. But sometimes in the process, the very people who loved you and were your friends will get sideways with you.

The greatest example is in the Bible. If you are ever going to go in the ministry, if you are ever going to go in the ministry, or are you ever going to be a personal worker for me, you need to learn these things because the tribulations that you go through bring about patience. When you are dealing with people and work with people, patience is the number one thing. You have to be patient because the greatest example of this is Paul. I wish in my life, I mean, I do not care, I give up what Paul knew about the Bible. I give up his relationship with the Lord. I could just fine-tune in my life and focus the way that he dealt with people to the point where how he dealt with it. I mean, if anybody is the epitome of being in the ministry or working with people and seeing people who you put your life into, gave your life to, many of them won to Christ, you work with them, you help them, you bring them along, you go through the tough times, and then because they get sideways in something, they turn against you. You need to learn this because this is the tribulation that you have to go through to get to the point. Boy, Paul did it.

The church at Corinth, a great example. The church at Corinth was a church that he started on one of his missionary trips. If you get into Chapter 1 and 2, he actually won many of the leadership to Christ there. That was Paul's mode. He went into a place. He started preaching, guiding people, winning to Christ. He stayed for a while. He disciplined them, got them ready, got a guy ready to take over the church, and then he went to the next place. That church began to go on its own and grow on its own. Paul was like the spiritual father to many of those people, many of those churches. Well, in the church at Corinth, you know what happened? The church at Corinth got sideways with the Bible. The church at Corinth is so screwed up and unbelievable. Paul writes them a letter, 1 Corinthians, and it is a hard letter. It is a hard letter. He tells them, he nails them almost every chapter. Well, the church gets repentant, or most of it does, and then so he writes them 2 Corinthians, and this is hilarious to me. When he writes 2 Corinthians, he is trying to tell them how to fix their problem. Would you believe it that in the church at Corinth that Paul started, where the very people he won to Christ, there are some people in that church are saying, "Are you sure you are qualified to help us, Paul?" In chapter 2, you know what they say? They say, "Before we accept your advice," now keep in mind, this is the church that he started, people that he won to Christ. He invested his life in, and now the church is coming back to him and saying, "Before we take your advice, could you send us a letter of commendation that we know you really know what you are talking about?" You know what his answer was? "You want a letter of commendation for me? Fine. How about you? You would not even be saved if it was not for me. You would not even be a church if God did not use me to start it. You want a letter of commendation of my qualifications? You will be the letter of my commendation. You would not even be there if God did not put me in your world."

He gets into the church of Galatia. Now you know what happened to the church of Galatia? They were a young church that he started. He put his life into those people. Now the church, somebody has come in, as soon as he left, somebody has come in, and they got them on a bad doctrine preaching another gospel. Paul writes them a letter, and he starts to deal with them. There are some people in that church that he won to Christ, who obviously were one time and thought Paul was everything he needed to be, who now are sideways with him, and they do not like the fact that he is coming back and saying, "You are wrong." You know what he says to them? Wow. One of the greatest pastors in the Bible. He says to them:

Galatians 4:16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

See the patience in that? He did not get mad. He did not get upset. He did not take it personal. He understood. He understood that in the ministry, good people get sideways. They have issues in their life that get them off focus. Sometimes they make you the problem. You. You are the problem. You know what? You have got to understand that all through his life, he had men, saved men, who stabbed him in the back, who had issues with him when he tried to do what was right. They lied about him. They slandered him. They slandered his character. Their sole purpose was to hurt him. But he never lost his focus, and he always glorified in his tribulation. He never, never, never let what it was lose his focus. In fact, in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 14, he says this, greatest verse in the Bible as far as ministry is concerned. Incredible. He says:

2 Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

He says, "We ought to always triumph in Christ." You see, when you do what God has called you to do, and when you get clobbered, and you will, you will. There are some of you right now that I put with people to work with, and you know those people have burned you. Because you come to me and you feel like there is something you did wrong. There have been people in this church that came for 3 or 4 years that this church did not have anything. This church took care of their kids at Christmas. This church took care of this, took care of that, took care of that. Nobody ever knew about it. Because that is what a church does. You know what? This day they are out bad-mouthing the church. That is just the way it goes.

I love to give Bibles away. If I find somebody that really gets plugged into the Word of God and it looks like they are really doing well, I will give them a wide margin Bible. I give it to them, I always tell them this. I love making an investment in people's lives. But I always cover my backside too. I always say, "Look, I want you to have this. You take this." "Wow, this is great." "Yeah, I want you to have it. But here is the deal. Here is the deal. The day you do not want to serve God anymore and you do not want to read it and you do not want to fellowship with God and you do not want to do anything with it, give it back to me. I will just cross your name out and give it back to somebody else." "Okay, okay, okay." Do you think anybody has ever given it back to me? No. It is all right. You always want to do what is right even when nobody else does or the other person on the other side does not. That is what a minister does. He ministers. She ministers. Through the tough times. You glory in the tribulation. You never take it personal. You never lose your focus.

I watch some of you people. You love people. I love people. You try to help people. You give them your time. You reschedule your families. You do your activities someplace else. You unconditionally give them yourself. You do over and above, and you try to build a relationship. You do everything by the book, and what happens? At the end, they stick it to you. It hurts. It hurts. I know it hurts you. I talk to you. Hey, it hurts me.

Go back to James 1:4: But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Perfect for the work of God. You see, when you go through those things, it helps make you perfected for the work. Because you learn. You learn the things you have got to deal with. You realize that what it produces is when you glorify God in tribulation, you get patience. The ministry is people, and brother, nothing will teach you patience better than dealing with people in the ministry.

Look at verse 3. We are not done yet.

Romans 5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

Look at verse 4. Here it comes.

Romans 5:4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

You know the second thing you need in ministry? Experience. Experience. Patience and experience. That is why Bible colleges never work. Most parents send their kids off to Bible college to learn the ministry. You will never learn the ministry in Bible college. You know why? You do not get any experience there. You will take a class on church building by a guy who never built a church. That is like a guy with no legs teaching Olympic running. It will not work. God's program is a local church. You see, when you get into this work, but it is in my work, and you take up the shoulder of this work that God has given us, and you learn through my work, and I give you part of my work, and you start to experience the bad times and the good times and the tribulations and the problems and the heartaches and everything goes along with it, from that you have to learn patience, and as you go through the patience process, patience does its perfect work, and you get experience. You do not get experience.

We were over there working at the thing yesterday, and I was talking to Jason Williams, and Jason is the fastest mudder in the world. I mean, I love his hip movement on the cart. You stand on that thing? Most people, and Bubba, I think it was Bubba, was down there. He had somebody moving his cart. You know how he is done, he has got to move down? And Bubba had had somebody push his cart down. Bubba. But Jason, I am watching it. He is up there like this. He is on his cart about this high. He is mudding stuff, and when he wants to move, he just goes... He is moving right down that line. I was not impressed. I asked him, because you know what? Mudding looks easy. That is tough. To get it right done is tough. I asked him, and this is my point. I asked him, he said, "How long did it take you to do that?" He said, "Well, the first year I wore all of it." You know what he just said? He learned experience to be a good mudder by the bad things, not just the good things. He came home with mud on him all the time. He came home with dirt on him all the time. He got more... He would be like me. When I paint, I get more paint on me than I do on the wall. He learned through the process of it. He got experience, and he was patient. He was patient.

It is just one of those things where it is like driver's ed. You can go through driver's ed all you want, get all the book learning, watch all the movies that you want, but you do not learn how to drive until you get behind the wheel, turn that car in there, and start driving it. I made a terrible mistake. When I bought my girls' cars, I bought them stick shifts, because I thought every girl

needs to know how to drive a stick-shift car. They do not even make stick shifts anymore, I do not think. Everybody... I thought they needed to drive one. I bought them stick shifts, their first car. Taught them how to drive. Worst mistake I ever made in my life. Worst mistake. Nothing more panicky for a girl when she is on a hill, when she has got to stop, and she has got to take her foot off the clutch and get into the gas with a thing, who will roll back to the car and buy it. It is all right if there is nobody there. You can roll back 300 feet. You have got a big old semi or a bus back there, or some old lady back there with a car, but you are going to hit her bumper. Oh, yeah. My girls did. They got to the place where they could not do it. I am not kidding you. They just parked the car in the middle of the street and left it there and ran home. But I wanted them to have the experience. I figure every woman ought to be able to do two things. She ought to be able to shoot, and she ought to be able to drive a stick shift. Experience.

You know, an auto mechanic, how he becomes a good mechanic, he has dropped his tools down the engine block. He has burned his hand on a hot engine block. He has banged his head on the oil pan. He forgot to put oil in the car crankcase after he drained it out, and the guy driving down the road and the red light is coming on. In other words, he has learned by experience by what not to do as well as what to do. Experience means you have learned from your mistakes and what you have done well because they are both important, and you learn to rejoice. You know what the problem is today? People do not want to learn from their mistakes. People do not like to be told when they make one.

You know what my generation has over you? And I say "you." I am not really talking about you because you guys are... and you know how you are with me. You guys are... I do not look at you, but in preaching, you just use the word "you," and they will take it personal. But you know the difference between my generation and your generation? My generation was appreciative of what somebody did for him. John, our generation. My father-in-the-Lord is Mel Shabaka. You know why I am in my mind, and maybe in your mind I am nothing, but in my mind where I am at with God and my ability to deal with people, my ability to see things. You know why? You know why I believe if I am successful at all in the ministry, and I am not saying I am, but if I am successful at all in the ministry, there is one thing that I attribute my success to, and that was my generation had enough wherewithal to say to the man that was the Apostle Paul of my life, Mel, "You have got a ministry. You know what you are doing. I want you to teach me everything that you know, and Mel, I am going to give you this license. If you see me doing something that is out of whack and out of line, that is going to get me messed up down the line someplace, would you please come to me and tell me? I guarantee you I will not get mad, upset. I will take it in the spirit you are given because I am asking you to do that." If I have one gleaming thing that helped me more in anything in life, it was I gave that man in my life that option to do that. You know what? You cannot do that today. You cannot do that today.

Now, maybe some of you can, but your generation, they do not want to hear what is wrong. They do not want to be told anything. Why would you let me into your life to tell you something when you have not listened to your parents for the last 15 years? I mean, you know, that is the difference between the generations. You know what? The generation, my generation was appreciative. When a man or the Word of God did something in my life, I appreciated it. I know

talking to you from where you have come from, I know it is true in your life and you older people in here. I know it is true. I see it in you because we come out of that generation when we were thankful for what. But the generation today is not like, my generation is, "I want to thank you for what you did for me yesterday and thank you from the bottom of my heart for what you did." The generation today simply says, "Forget what you did yesterday. What are you going to do for me today?" It is unappreciated. Again, not you guys, because you guys are, but I am saying that is the difference. If you are going to be a personal worker, if you are going to minister to people, you have got to have patience because people are going to get sideways who were once your friend, part of your family. It is going to come to the point where it is going to happen. But the reason why you glory in those tribulations is because it works patience, and from patience, you get experience. That is the difference.

Now you personal workers that work with me and people, you know what all this means, what I have just told you? Have you calculated it into your brain yet? Sometimes I want you to know this. Sometimes I put you with people. I mean, you might as well know the mindset behind it. Sometimes I put you with people who I do not think those people are going to make it. Now I am not clairvoyant, and I do not have a crystal ball, but the bottom line is this. You see in the world that we live in today with people who live their lives the way they do when they come in with problems, you know most people who just spend 15, 20 years out in the world, you do not have much of a chance to get back where it needs to be. You are just, I mean, I am not saying you cannot, but it is going to be harder for you, and most people do not have the wherewithal to do it today. There is no discipline in their life, there is no respect in their lives, there is no self-worth in their life. They have been beat up by their parents, by their family, and they are left just along the side of the road. It is up to us to bring them in and try to bandage them back up. That is tough.

I have given you people before that I knew probably were not going to make it. But I do that for two reasons. One, I want to always look back, and even though I thought they might not make it, I want to give them the benefit of the doubt that we give them the best chance we can, even though my professional opinion is it is probably not going to work. But that is okay. Give them every chance they can have. One or two, three or four chances, that is what it takes. I do not care. They may be the one that is going to break the cycle, and I am all for that. But on the other side of it, I want you to learn from it. If you just had people that were really easy to work with and people that did not give you problems and people that did not drive you nuts, you would not learn anything. You would not learn anything. So sometimes I purposely put people in your world that will help develop you.

Now you know what this means for you people who want to work with people and get to that point where you minister to people. You know what it means? It means you are in a building process. Just listen to me now. It means you are in a building process, and it simply means that you probably will really, really, really not be effective in dealing with people and ministering to people until you get your heart broke about 15, 20 times. That is what it means. You really will not be good at what you do until you invest everything you have got and somebody just put it to you. That is what it means. But that is the process.

May I give to you today in these final moments? Do not close your Bible yet. It is not that final. May I give to you today the most private verse in my life in ministry. My own family does not know what this... This is my hiding place. If you go to this place in my Bible, it is worn out more than any other place in my Bible because this in the ministry is where I have learned to live, to deal with the ministry, to always try. Do not say I do. Always to try to glory in the tribulation and the heartache of dealing with people. It is in Zechariah. Zechariah chapter 13, one of the most incredible verses in the Bible. It is my hiding place in the ministry. Yet it is one of the saddest verses in the Bible.

Now in Zechariah chapter 13, the context here is the millennial reign of Christ. Christ is now back on the throne, and He is in the millennium. When you come down through here in the first four or five verses, it is talking about Christ being back in the land and all that stuff. Zechariah is the next to the last book in the Old Testament if you are trying to find it. That is fine. I am going to say it from time to time. It is okay. Just go to Matthew and then work back two books, and there it will be.

Look at Zechariah chapter 13 verse 6: And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

The Bible says He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. The Bible says the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came to the nation of Israel as the Messiah, and somebody is saying in the millennium, "Where did you get the wounds in your hand?" And you know what His answer is? His wounds, "These were the wounds I received in the house of my friends." Sometimes people that are your friend are going to give you wounds, ladies and gentlemen. That is just the way that it is. You know what my answer to that is? When somebody says, "Well, I would," hey, if He got wounded in the house of His friends, why are we any better than Him? When you do His work and you do His ministry, you are going to get wounded in the house of your friends. People will get out of fellowship, and they will stop growing. They will get into some problems in their life, and you will be the cause. Patience and experience is the key. When you do your work, you will be the cause. Patience and experience is the key.

I do not know how many of you know Roy and Donna Hardman. I love Roy and Donna. My wife just disciplined Donna, and I love spending time with Roy. Roy is a neat guy. Roy always leaves me better than he finds me. He is one of the greatest encouragers to me as a pastor that I have ever had in my life. I love Roy. A while back, Roy and I were talking, and he told me something. He told me a story. Rob, I do not know if you have ever heard this story or tell the story or not, but it is a great story because, you know, in the ministry and in the tribulation and working with people, you have got to keep it in balance. You have got to keep it in perspective. Hey, let me just tell you, there are some people out there who will really want to hurt you, who will want to hurt this church, who will say some of the most ungodly, tough things, try to slander you and me and this church and do everything they can do. There are people like that, but that is in one category. There is nothing you can do about that, so you glory in that. But then you have people that are in your own ministry, good people who have problems too, and they do not always live up, and they have issues that come in and problems that come in, and it may get them off focus for a little bit. Hey, you cannot treat, listen to me, you cannot treat both groups the same

way. The people out there that hate this church, hate me and hate you, and people that have come through here and bad-mouthed you every time and came to me and said, "Well, so and so did this, did this, did that to me, and they did not do this right," and I just simply say, "You know what, they have worked with me with 20-some people, and they have done everybody right. Now, you are the exception to the rule? Hey, you know what, here is the door, hit the road. If I have got to protect you or them, I am taking them. See you later." They are always going to be there. But enduring them with people, sometimes good people struggle with things, and you have got to be there for them. You have got to give them that time, the patience and the experience.

I have to tell you this story. I love Roy. Roy was telling me a story. He said, "You know what, me and my dad years ago, they had this dog, and this dog was a great dog." Rob, you know that, you heard this story from him? You do not know yet? Okay. He said, "This dog," I hope I tell it exactly right, but you will pick it up. He said, "Me and my dad, I had this dog. My dad and I were out someplace, and this dog was a great dog, and I love this dog. This dog was running out in the field one day, and it jumped over a fence, and it got his leg caught in the fence. You know, barbed wire fences are like this, and the dog jumped over, and his one leg down here, and then the top leg, and so when he went over, the fence just went around his leg. The dog is laying on the ground, and he is yelping and struggling and everything." He said, "My dad and I went over to get the deal, and I said, 'I went over to pick the fence out of the thing,' and the dog reared up and really bit me. I got back, and I am thinking to myself, 'What did you bite me for? I am just trying to help you.'" He got over there, and he got a dog trying to bite him again. He tried to get down there, and a dog kept snapping at him. So finally, they just got something and cut the wire, and the dog, and five minutes later, they are walking back, and that dog is up next to him, rubbing his head, and he is patting him, and they are walking back, and he is, boy, he said, "I was thinking, you know, now you want to be my friend?" And my dad said this. He said, "You know what? He said, 'You do know that dog never stopped loving you. You do know that that dog was always your friend. You do understand that that dog bit you just because he was caught in the fence.'"

Sometimes we get caught in the fence, do not we? I do not know how many times since he told me that story, I have dealt with somebody or saw somebody struggling with something, and instead of taking it personal, that thing has come home to me, and I said to myself, "That is okay. You know what? They are just caught in the fence. Just caught in the fence." We all get caught in the fence at times. In the ministry, you are going to deal with a lot of good people who just get caught in the fence. It is okay because we all get caught in the fence. We all get caught in the fence. When you start to do ministry, ministry comes to the point where it gets you, it gets you patience, patience gives you experience.

You know what my feeling on it is? Romans 15:1 says: We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Here is how I feel about it. If right now what you need is somebody to blame your problem on so you can get out from under the conviction you are on so God can then give you more conviction because that is what will happen. If you need to blame that on me or somebody else here that you can, until you deal with it, that is okay. You know what? That is okay. That is okay. Because that

is what strong Christians ought to do because all the people are sometimes just caught in the fence. Just caught in the fence. They are good people. Nothing wrong with them. But when you deal with people, people have problems, and people have issues, and not, hey, do I respond to every problem exactly right the way that I should? Certainly I do. No, of course I do not. Of course I do not. Talk to my wife. Of course I do not. We all get caught in the fence. If we all as God's people want to work with people, you know how you work with people? Start with working with each other. Allowing people to have the days they have and the struggles they have. Not running around and saying, "Well, you know so and so is this, this, or did that, or he did this, or she did that." This was the high point. Everybody has their day in the fence. You have got to be able to discern between what is here and what is over here. That is what experience gives you. That is what patience gives you.

Then he says this, and I am finished, verse 5:

Romans 5:5 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.

Getting God's will, getting God's work, getting God's plan will give us God's focus, God's vision, and God's perspective. My hope, He is coming. I have a job to do for Him till He gets here. My hope, this life is only temporary. Even the bad things that go on are only temporary. My hope, do not major on the minors. Focus on the real issues. My hope, I am not ashamed of God for what I do. What is my hope? I do it because I love Him, and because we love Him, we have got to love each other, and we understand that this is our ministry together. Nothing should separate this because we are standing in something. We are standing in the grace of God.

You know what Paul said in Romans chapter 8 verses 35 and 39? He says:

Romans 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

See there it is. There is what we have. That is what we have. We are standing in something. I heard as I was out there in the hall singing the song this morning, and it is one of my favorites. You sang it this morning, but I listened, and I just sang it, and I thought to myself, "I wonder if they even understand what they are singing." You sang, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name." Whatever it is. That second verse: "When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace. In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil." You see the theology in that? "Anchor holds within the veil." It was the veil that got ripped between the Holy of Holies and the Tabernacle that put you and me in Christ Jesus and got us His righteousness. "On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand."

We stand on something, and when we stand on something, the world does not matter. It gives us the ability not only to glorify in the fact that we are standing on Christ the solid rock in His glory, but we glorify and rejoice in the trials and tribulations of this life, knowing that we have got a job to do. Knowing that from the tribulations, when we glorify Him in our tribulations, comes patience. Patience works its perfect work, and we get experience. Experience brings hope, and hope is what we are standing on. Not "I hope I am saved," but I am firmly anchored on the hope of the whole world, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what it takes.

So you see, when Romans chapter 5 begins to open it up, it sets the pace for where we are going. It sets the pace for you and I to walk down through life realizing that there is a price to pay helping each other. You that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, knowing that in the ministry and as you personally work with people, you are going to have the issues of dealing with people's personalities, people's old sin nature, and the way they struggle. Just remember Jesus said, "I was wounded in the house of my friends." You are no better than He is. I am no better than He is. They rejected Him. They reject you. They reject me. The bottom line is this: thanks be to God which always causes us to triumph in everything because my feet are anchored on those principles, and we all have our day where we get caught in the fence.

Let us pray. We thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus.