

PEACE WITH GOD: DESPITE TRIALS & AFFLICTIONS

I. [Romans 5:1-11](#) [James 1:2-4](#) [1 Peter 1:3-9](#)

A. There's an old story told about an Illiterate Janitor: Somerset Maugham (*Mawm*), the English writer (1874-1965), once wrote a story about a janitor at St. Peter's Church in London. One day a young vicar discovered that the janitor was illiterate and fired him. Jobless, the man invested his meager savings in a tiny tobacco shop, where he prospered, bought another, expanded, and ended up with a chain of tobacco stores worth several hundred thousand dollars. One day the man's banker said, "You've done well for an illiterate, but where would you be if you could read and write?" "Well," replied the man, "I'd be janitor of St. Peter's Church in Neville Square (London)."

B. Suffering of all kinds is a part of the human experience in our fallen world. So are believers exempt? While some errant preachers say if enough faith is present, suffering needn't be a part of the Christian experience. But they've just not read their Bibles. Tell such nonsense to Job or Jeremiah or Paul or the Disciples or all the Martyrs down through history. One third of the Psalms are Laments. Paul wrote five letters while imprisoned. John wrote Revelation while exiled on Patmos. Hebrews 11 lists numerous suffering saints. John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* while incarcerated. Many great hymns were penned with tears falling on the parchment.

C. The normal Christian life includes many trials and afflictions. These come even after God has made peace with us and we with Him. God's peace does not leave us bereft of suffering and woe; God's peace is ours despite suffering and woe. The outcome of our difficulties have unseen purposes. We can trust God that they are leading to His good and ours too. (e.g. *Romans 8:28*) Psalm 126:5-6 (NIV) is a verse that especially ministered to me after my Mom & Dad passed away: 5 *Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. 6 He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him. (Tears often water the seeds we've sown, prompting them to germinate.)*

D. Listen to some wise men who knew something about trials and afflictions.

1) I once own a framed copy of this C.S. Lewis quote: "The real problem is not why some pious, humble, believing people suffer, but why some do not."

2) Charles Spurgeon, who suffered from debilitating depression said: "Would you like to be there [heaven] and see yourself pointed at as the one saint who never knew a sorrow? Oh, no! For you would be an alien in the midst of the sacred brotherhood."

3) Henry Ward Beecher, preacher & abolitionist, said: "God washes the eyes by tears until they can behold the invisible land where tears shall come no more."

E. Romans 5:1-11 (ESV) is written to former guilty lawbreakers who've now been justified; former at-war-enemies of God who're now considered His friends; former spiritual orphans now adopted as God's children; former dead men walking who've been made spiritually alive; former blind souls who've been made to see; former targets of God's wrath who've now become targets of His love...

1) **V1: 1** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **(Talk about 'no justice, no peace'! There could be no justice before God without Jesus Christ absorbing our due punishment on the cross. Nor could there be peace with God without Jesus Christ quelling the storm of God's wrath against us! Strangely, the greatest symbol of Peace is the cross.)**

2) **V2: 2** Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **(There is no access to God without Jesus becoming the way! He is indeed *The Door*. He's the curtain torn asunder!)**

3) **V3-5: 3** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. **(So in the midst of suffering and woe, we cling to faith, hope, and love, in Jesus Christ our Lord: Why? On to 6...)**

4) **V6-11: 6** For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **(Hey, we were weak & ungodly!)** **7** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person-- though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- **8** but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, **(Hey, we were all sinners!)** Christ died for us. **9** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. **10** For if while we were enemies **(Hey, we were enemies!)** we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. **(The Bread & Cup remind us.)**

F. James 1:2-4 (NIV) Jesus' brother, James, seems to echo Paul when he writes:
2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. **(I don't believe it's possible to consider our trials as pure joy unless we have an understanding of what Jesus has already accomplished for us through His suffering and likewise have a settled assurance that what He's allowing in our lives, as hard as it all may be, is serving His purposes and transforming our lives into His likeness.)**

G. 1 Peter 1:3-9 (NIV) completes our trifacta. Paul, James, & Peter all suffered for their faith and died as martyrs. All Saints Day this past Friday honored these, among countless others who suffered and died for their faith in Jesus Christ: **3** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, **5** who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. **6** In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **7** These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. **8** Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, **9** for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

II. Communion

A. As we prepare to take the Bread & Cup, we do so realizing that many folks we love are suffering. In fact, many of you are suffering. Some have suffered losses while others are facing them. Some have afflictions in the body, or mind, or spirit, or of all three. For some, there's weariness and exhaustion plaguing your days followed by sleepless nights. For many, tears are falling. There's fear and trembling. Some crawling on their hands and knees trying to recover their missing songs in the night. Add to this a foundering culture unraveling at the speed of a wind-driven wildfire. We are wrestling with dark demonic forces that have bewitched people into calling evil, good and good, evil. The Word of God is being called a hate-filled book and those who believe it are being labeled as hate mongers. Stupidity runs rampant. Reason has been exiled. Truth is being denied or dismissed. Love is being abandoned and forsaken. BUT NOT BY ALL!

B. Our God in Three Persons is sitting upright on His throne. He's taught us to cry out to His hallowed name, "*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*" **It is coming! As sure as the dawn will follow tonight, His Kingdom is coming! And the blood-bought Peace won for you by The Prince of Peace, despite every ounce of trial and affliction, suffering and woe, puts you on the victorious side of celestial history. And you will most assuredly bask one Day in the unending glorious bliss of our God Almighty! May the Bread & Cup remind us!**

*** Pray & Serve Communion...**

*** Psalm 34:17-19 (ESV) will take us all home today: *17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. 18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.***

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Psalm 126:5-6 (NIV)

5 Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. **6** He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

Romans 5:1-11 (ESV)

1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **3** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. **6** For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- **8** but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. **10** For if

while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

James 1:2-4 (NIV)

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

1 Peter 1:3-9 (NIV)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, **5** who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. **6** In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **7** These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. **8** Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, **9** for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Psalm 34:17-19 (ESV)

17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. **18** The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. **19** Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

An Illiterate Janitor

Somerset Maugham, the English writer, once wrote a story about a janitor at St. Peter's Church in London. One day a young vicar discovered that the janitor was illiterate and fired him. Jobless, the man invested his meager savings in a tiny tobacco shop, where he prospered, bought another, expanded, and ended up with a chain of tobacco stores worth several hundred thousand dollars. One day the man's banker said, "You've done well for an illiterate, but where would you be if you could read and write?" "Well," replied the man, "I'd be janitor of St. Peter's Church in Neville Square."

- Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) English playwright, novelist, & short story writer. Bits and Pieces, June 24, 1993.

Quote by C. S. Lewis

"The real problem is not why some pious, humble, believing people suffer, but why some do not."

Quote by Charles H. Spurgeon

“Would you like to be there [heaven] and see yourself pointed at as the one saint who never knew a sorrow? Oh, no! For you would be an alien in the midst of the sacred brotherhood.”

Quote by Henry Ward Beecher

“God washes the eyes by tears until they can behold the invisible land where tears shall come no more.”

Video Clips & Important Articles

"Through It All" - Guy Penrod (Song written by Andrae Crouch)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnLbf98NzGE>

Our Benefits Package - Romans 5:1-5 - Skip Heitzig

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwaEL8zyD58>

What's the Biblical Understanding of Conversion? - Nathan Malpass - 9Marks

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BKss_S_y9k

Finding Peace with God - Sinclair Ferguson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JaCyWJmvmQ>

Bonus Stuff

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV)

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. **17** For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. **18** So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Quote by Martin Luther

“If we consider the greatness and the glory of the life we shall have when we have risen from the dead, it would not be difficult at all for us to bear the concerns of this world. If I believe the Word, I shall on the Last Day, after the sentence has been pronounced, not only gladly have suffered ordinary temptations, insults, and imprisonment, but I shall also say: *“O, that I did not throw myself under the feet of all the godless for the sake of the great glory which I now see revealed and which has come to me through the merit of Christ!”*”

Quote by Malcolm Muggeridge

“Contrary to what might be expected, I look back on experiences that at the time seemed especially desolating and painful with particular satisfaction. Indeed, I can say with complete truthfulness that everything I have learned in my 75 years in this world, everything that has truly enhanced and enlightened my experience, has been through affliction and not through happiness.”

- Malcolm Muggeridge, in *Homemade*, July, 1990.

Quote By Vance Havner

At the Nicene Council, an important church meeting in the 4th century A.D., of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith.

Quote by Samuel Rutherford

"If your Lord calls you to suffering, do not be dismayed, for He will provide a deeper portion of Christ in your suffering. The softest pillow will be placed under your head though you must set your bare feet among thorns. Do not be afraid at suffering for Christ, for He has a sweet peace for a sufferer. God has called you to Christ's side, and if the wind is now in His face, you cannot expect to rest on the sheltered side of the hill. You cannot be above your Master who received many an innocent stroke. The greatest temptation out of hell is to live without trials. A pool of standing water will turn stagnant. Faith grows more with the sharp winter storm in its face. Grace withers without adversity. You cannot sneak quietly into heaven without a cross. Crosses form us into His image. They cut away the pieces of our corruption. Lord cut, carve, wound; Lord do anything to perfect Your image in us and make us fit for glory! We need winnowing before we enter the kingdom of God. O what I owe to the file, hammer, and furnace! Why should I be surprised at the plough that makes such deep furrows in my soul? Whatever direction the wind blows, it will blow us to the Lord. His hand will direct us safely to the heavenly shore to find the weight of eternal glory. As we look back to our pains and suffering, we shall see that suffering is not worthy to be compared to our first night's welcome home in heaven. If we could smell of heaven and our country above, our crosses would not bite us. Lay all your loads by faith on Christ, ease yourself, and let Him bear all. He can, He does, and He will bear you. Whether God comes with a rod or a crown, He comes with Himself. "Have courage, I am your salvation!" Welcome, welcome Jesus!"

Quote by Samuel Rutherford

"Whenever I find myself in the cellar of affliction, I always look about for the wine."

Quote by John (Jack) Shea

"In the drama of life the need to play the friends of Job is fueled by our fear of playing Job himself."

Things Birthed Out of Difficulties

Most of the Psalms were born in difficulty. Most of the Epistles were written in prisons. Most of the greatest thoughts of the greatest thinkers of all time had to pass through the fire. Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* from jail. Florence Nightingale, too ill to move from her bed, reorganized the hospitals of England. Semi-paralyzed and under the constant menace of apoplexy, Pasteur was tireless in his attack on disease. During the greater part of his life, American historian Francis Parkman suffered so acutely that he could not work for more than five minutes at a time. His eyesight was so wretched that he could scrawl only a few gigantic words on a manuscript, yet he contrived to write twenty

magnificent volumes of history. Sometimes it seems that when God is about to make preeminent use of a man, he puts him through the fire.

- Tim Hansel, *You Gotta Keep Dancin'*, David C. Cook, 1985, p. 87.

Trusting God in Times of Trouble and Perplexity

J.I. Packer

Grace is God drawing sinners closer and closer to Him. How does God in grace prosecute this purpose? Not by shielding us from assault by the work, the flesh, and the devil, nor by protecting us from burdensome and frustrating circumstance, not yet by shielding us from troubles created by our own temperament and psychology, but rather by exposing us to all these things, so as to overwhelm us with a sense of our own inadequacy, and to drive us to cling to Him more closely.

This is the ultimate reason, from our standpoint, why God fills our lives with troubles and perplexities of one sort and another -- it is to ensure that we shall learn to hold Him fast. The reason why the Bible spends so much of its time reiterating that God is a strong rock, a firm defense, and a sure refuge and help for the weak is that God spends so much of His time showing us that we are weak, both mentally and morally, and dare not trust ourselves to find or follow the right road. When we walk along a clear road feeling fine, and someone takes our arm to help us, likely we would impatiently shake him off; but when we are caught in rough country in the dark, with a storm brewing and our strength spent, and someone takes our arm to help us, we would thankfully lean on him.

And God wants us to feel that our way through life is rough and perplexing, so that we may learn to lean on Him thankfully. Therefore He takes steps to drive us out of self-confidence to trust in Himself, to -- in the classic scriptural phrase for the secret of the godly man's life -- "wait on the Lord."

- James Packer, *Your Father Loves You*, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986.

Joy in the Midst of Trials

By S. Michael Houdmann

<https://gotquestions.org/joy-trials.html>

Question: *"How can I find joy in the midst of trials?"*

Answer: [James 1:2-4](#) says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." This is the very first thing James writes in his letter after his salutation. Why? Because of its import. Many Christians think once they've made that decision for Christ that everything will fall into place and life will be that proverbial bowl of cherries. And when trials and tough times come upon them or continue, they begin to question, "why?" Wondering how they could possibly endure horrible circumstances and consider it joy.

Peter also tackles this subject of joy through trials. “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” ([1 Peter 1:6-9](#)).

In both of these passages, we see the instruction of what we *should* do. ‘Consider it pure joy...’ ‘In this you greatly rejoice...’ Why? Because trials make us stronger. The James passage clearly states that the testing of our faith produces perseverance. And the Peter passage states that our faith, which is priceless, will be proved genuine and result in praise to God. But how? How can we find joy in the midst of all the junk, hardships, and painful circumstances?

First, we need to understand that joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness comes and goes sometimes as often as waves hitting the shore. Happiness isn’t something you can cling to when you’ve lost a loved one or are facing bankruptcy. Joy, on the other hand can stay with you for the long haul. The reason? Real joy is from God. For the believer, it is like a bottomless well of water—always an abundant supply. Even in the darkest days, when sadness, grief, and loss may threaten to overwhelm you, God’s joy is there.

Second, we need to understand that God’s joy cannot be taken away. Oh, you might think that it’s gone—that the hands of misfortune have snatched it from you—but it’s not. As believers, we are promised the constant presence of the Holy Spirit. We are promised His joy. Just as our salvation is assured through Jesus’ one-time sacrifice for all. Jesus’ words in [John 15:11](#), “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” Other examples, [Acts 13:52](#), “And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” [Acts 16:34](#), “The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.”

Third, we need to stop wallowing, whining, and complaining and grab onto God’s joy. Just like salvation, joy is a free and perfect gift from Him, and we must reach out and accept that gift. Grab onto it. Like a lifeline. Choose joy. Over bitterness, anger, and sorrow. Make a decision to choose joy every day. No matter what. Look at these great examples in Scripture: “Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability” ([2 Corinthians 8:2-3](#)). “You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit” ([1 Thessalonians 1:6](#)). “Be joyful always” ([1 Thessalonians 5:16](#)). “You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and

lasting possessions” ([Hebrews 10:34](#)). And the best illustration of all, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” ([Hebrews 12:2](#)).

All through Scripture we see the persecution of the church, the trials and hardships that believers have faced. The challenge then is to truly learn how to consider each trial joy.

This topic is very near and dear to my heart because it is a lesson I’m relearning each and every day. My daughter has a rare nerve disorder, she’s had brain surgery, and we’ve faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles, mountains of medical bills, bankruptcy, and foreclosure. But you know what I have discovered? God’s joy really is there. You can consider each trial joy, you can greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory even when you feel like you are face-first in the mud puddle. You can endure whatever circumstances are making you quake in your boots right now. If you have been saved through faith in Jesus Christ—you have all you need.

Grab onto God’s joy.

Recommended Resource: [A Shelter in the Time of Storm: Meditations on God and Trouble by Paul David Tripp](#)

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