

“The Cross And Suffering”
Romans 5:1-11
Sermon Series: “Suffering And Good News”

Introduction: We have been addressing the question, “Can suffering be avoided?” The biblical answer is no, because suffering is unavoidable due to the reality of sin. That answer leads to a second question, however. Is there any hope then? The answer to that question is that we can hope because of what God has done for us through Jesus.

Main Idea: We can have hope in suffering because Jesus suffered for us on the cross.

1. Through the cross, we have direct access to God despite our sin and suffering (v. 1-2, 6-11).

We were enemies with God because of our sin, but our justification also brings reconciliation to God. We are now beloved children instead of enemies. The word “peace” means “to bind together that which has been separated” (Wuest). The word “with” literally means “facing” (Wuest). Instead of being ashamed and afraid, the believer in Jesus can now face God with peace because we have the righteousness of Jesus.

-Robert Smith Jr. said, “When faith is stripped to the bone-no marrow, no tendons, no muscles, no fat, no gristle-and all our props and crutches are gone, our faith in God that He is good and is still on the throne is the only thing that will keep you going.”

2. Through the cross, we are assured that there is a divine purpose in suffering (v. 3-5).

“Tribulations” as it is used here does not refer to the normal trials of life common to all humanity, but it specifically refers to tribulations and persecutions specifically received by believers because of their faith in Jesus. We can rejoice in these tribulations when we understand that God has a purpose in them and when we know what He is doing through them.

A. Tribulation produces perseverance. We develop endurance by enduring things.

B. Perseverance produces character. As we go through things, character is developed in the trials.

C. Character produces hope. Our hope is more settled and grows as we go through things because we experience the Lord bringing us through things. J.D. Greear defines hope as “the confidence that God will keep all his promises, is working all things together for good and, that one day he will restore all things in the resurrection, and that in the meantime he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

3. Through the cross, we are guaranteed that God loves us no matter what suffering we are experiencing (v. 6-8).

John Stott: “I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross....In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on

his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time after a while I have had to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings become more manageable in light of his. There is still a question mark against human suffering, but over it we boldly stamp another mark, the cross which symbolized divine suffering. 'The cross of Christ... is God's only self-justification in such a world' as ours.'

4. Through the cross, we are spared from eternal suffering and brought into the glorious presence of God (v. 9-10, 2).

-Our eternal experience will either be the wrath of God or the glory of God.

-Reasons to believe in hell (Mark Clark, The Problem of God):

A. Jesus believed in it (Matthew 25:41, 46; Matthew 8:12, Mark 9:43)

B. God's greatness and justice

C. The weight of our offense

D. People don't stop sinning in hell

E. The cross

-Revelation 20:11-21:4

Conclusion:

-Turn to Jesus for comfort in your suffering because He is the God who suffered for us.

-Turn to Jesus for salvation from eternal suffering and be reconciled to God and receive the gift of eternal life through Him.