

Hard Times, High Hopes

Romans 5:3-5

Surrounded by the majestic doctrines of justification by faith, imputed righteousness, and original sin, our text provides a Christian with a glimpse of why these great doctrines are so essential to understand. Paul tells us in the first two verses of chapter five that we have peace with God, access to God, and joy from God because of our justification, but in our text, Paul says that justified sinners can have joy *in the midst* of our trials and tribulations.

I. Christians can *expect* hard times to come . . .

Paul writes vs. 3 with no doubt about tribulations coming --- they are expected.

These troubles can manifest themselves in many different ways in our lives:

“They could be tribulations from loss of health, or tribulations in broken or strained relationships, or tribulations in vocational hardships or disappointments, or in accidents or natural disasters, or tribulations in verbal or physical assaults, or simply everyday inconveniences. Tribulations are anything that makes life harder and threatens your faith in the goodness, power and wisdom of God” John Piper.

“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” Acts 14:22.

II. Christians can *exult* in hard times when they come . . .

It is impossible for the world to rejoice in the midst of hard times ----

(A). This requires the grace of God . . .

The grace of God that justifies is the same grace that brings joy in hard times.

An illustration of this is the Macedonian church in II Corinthians 8:1-2.

(B). God’s grace allows us to look beyond the hardship . . .

Hardship in a Christian’s life comes from the throne of God for special reasons.

(1). Hardship brings patience (perseverance) . . .

Rather than becoming bitter and resentful during painful times, the believer finds his faith in God endures and perseveres. Faith is fortified by fire.

(2). Patience brings proof (KJV “experience”).

The hardships of life prove, through perseverance, genuineness of faith.

(3). Proof brings positive assurance (hope).

I can say I believe God has justified me through the work of Jesus Christ, but when hardship comes, and my faith in God only **deepens**, then I have **proof** that I am a **genuine** Christian and am **assured** of His grace in me.

III. Christians can *experience* in hard times the love of God . . .

(A). To **know** the love of God in the midst of hard times requires a work of the Spirit.

It is the Spirit of God that “*sheds*” (literally “pours out”) His love in our hearts.

(B). To **know** the love of God in the midst of hard times requires the cross of Christ.

It is this work of the Spirit in us that causes us to love Christ’s work at Calvary.

(C). To **know** the love of God in the midst of hard times requires the Word of Truth.

A Christian is not one who is *better* than others; he is *better off* than others.

“God chose us for his love, and now loves us for his choice” John Trapp.