

# We Glory in Tribulations?

Habakkuk 1:1 – 2:4, Romans 5:1-11

27 March 2022

Halifax, 10:30 AM

## Introduction:

As most of you know by now, I am doing a few sermons on various topics having to do with our life together as a congregation.

- So far, we have had a sermon from Joshua exhorting us to be sure that we are on the Lord's side.
  - He is the One who is establishing a righteous kingdom where sinners are reconciled to God so that they are forgiven and so that they live for God.
  - Be sure that you are living for His agenda (as one who is reconciled to God through Christ) rather than your own.
- Then we had a sermon about using church discipline to preserve the character of the church as a people reconciled to God in Christ.
  - We are to remove those from our midst who show that they are not trusting in Christ for forgiveness or living for God.
- Last week, we looked at how we are to deal with things that come between us and other believers.
  - Either we are to bear with them, or we are to forgive them.
  - If we do not, our relationships with each other will be filled with garbage and so will not be for God.

Today, I want to look at how we, as believers, handle tribulations or hardships.

- It might seem a little shocking because it says that we *glory* in them.
  - Turn to Romans 5 and I'll show you.
  - I will read verses 1-11. This is the Word of God.

**Romans 5:1-11:** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> and per-severance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. <sup>6</sup> For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For

scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. <sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. <sup>11</sup> And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His holy Word.

Did you note verse 3?

- **Rom 5:3: And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations.**

- First, we will consider what the tribulations are and what it means to glory in them.
- Second, we will look at who the people are who glory in tribulations and what it is about these people that makes them glory in them.
- Third, we will look at what tribulations actually do in their lives.

## I. What are tribulations and what does it mean to glory in them?

### A. Tribulations are hardships or afflictions of any kind.

- The word used here speaks of hard things that press upon you.
1. The Lord has always told His people that they will have tribulations.
    - a. Jesus declared that it would be so.
      - 1) When He was leaving the world, He said: **John 16:33: “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**
      - 2) When He sent word to the church at Smyrna, He said: **Rev 2:10: Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**
    - b. The Lord warned His people of tribulation in the Old Testament too.
      - 1) When He called Abraham, He said: **Gen 14:13: Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is not theirs*, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.”**
      - 2) After Joshua died, we read **Judges 2:1-3: Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: “I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you. <sup>2</sup> And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? <sup>3</sup> Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be *thorns* in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.’ ”**
    - c. Paul made a habit of telling new believers to expect tribulations.
      - 1) In Acts 14:21-22, we are told how he and Barnabas returned to the churches they had planted: **And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”**
      - 2) He advised his young apprentice Timothy to expect persecution: **2 Tim 3:12: Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**
  2. The Lord makes it plain that He is the One who sends tribulation.
    - a. This was brought out in our reading from Habakkuk 1:5-7: **“Look among the nations and watch—be utterly astounded! For *I will* work a work in your days *which* you would not believe, though it were told *you*. <sup>6</sup> For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places *that are not theirs*. <sup>7</sup> They are terrible and dreadful; their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves.”**

- b. In Amos 3:6, it is put very simply: **If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it?**
- B. None of God's people are strangers to tribulation.
1. This is the day of our congregational meeting—when we review the past year and look ahead to the coming year.
    - We have suffered with many things in the previous year—lockdowns, even of our church, restrictions in movement and visitation, division in families, wayward children, job losses, chronic illnesses, fear of illness, oppression from a government that increasingly rules with an iron fist in areas outside of its God-given authority, unjust and oppressive laws, economic troubles, supply chain issues, inflation, destructive wildfires, floods, storms, a nation that is divided, citizens that are increasingly turned over to self-indulgence, irrational fears in our society, addictions, anger, and now we are seeing international conflict in the Ukraine and elsewhere.
    - And of course we have the daily annoyances such as burning the toast, dealing with irritating people, or glitches in computer software.
  2. Paul was certainly no stranger to suffering.
    - a. He was shown at the outset of his ministry what things he would suffer.
      - **Acts 9:16: For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.**
    - b. He testifies of it in 2 Cor 11:24:
      - **2 Cor 11:24-28: From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; <sup>26</sup> in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; <sup>27</sup> in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—<sup>28</sup> besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.**
  3. The Lord Jesus Himself bore more tribulation than anyone else.
    - a. In Isaiah 53:6-8, it says: **All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. <sup>7</sup> He was oppressed and He was afflicted... v. 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.**
    - b. He Himself declared it. Matthew 16:21: **From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.**
- C. But what does Romans 5 mean when it says that we *glory* in tribulation?
1. The word *glory* means *boast*. We *boast* in our sufferings.
    - You look at them as something that is good, something to rejoice about.
    - This same word is used when we are told not to boast in our works, but in the cross of Jesus—or not to glory in man, but only in the Lord.

- It is translated by the word *rejoice* in Rom 5:2 to say that **we rejoice** [glory or boast] **in hope of the glory of God.**
2. But boast or rejoice in tribulation??? Are we twisted people who take pleasure in pain and hardship?
    - No. That is clearly not what is in view from the scriptures.
      - The Bible teaches us to pray for deliverance from such things and it promises us that we will be delivered from all affliction at last day if we have come to Jesus.
      - Jesus showed us His power to heal and deliver from all affliction.
  3. The kind of boasting in view here is perhaps more familiar to us than we might think.
    - It is like students boasting in a rigorous university program...
      - They went to a hard school because they wanted to get a better education.
    - Or like an athlete boasting in his training...
      - all that their coach (whom they dearly love and admire) put them through...getting the best performance out of them.
    - Yes, the boasting Paul has in view here is boasting in tribulation because it is beneficial for us.
      - In other words, it is not the affliction itself, but the benefits of the affliction.

TRANS> Now let's move on to our next question...

## II. Who are the people who are said to glory in their tribulations?

- Who is the “we” when Paul says, “**we glory in tribulations**”?
  - Is he talking about himself and his companions in his apostolic ministry?
    - No. It is clear from the first verse that he is talking about all those who are justified by faith in Jesus Christ.
      - Look at 5:1-3: **Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations...**
    - Every occurrence of *we* all the way until verse 11 refers to *we who are justified*.
      - The *we* who has peace with God through justification is the same *we* who glories in tribulation.
- A. Being justified by faith is the best thing that could ever happen to a person.
    1. Before we were justified, our condition was deplorable—we were deplorable—most deplorable.
      - Paul has shown that in the first four chapters of Romans.
        - We were enemies of God our Maker—think of it! What could be worse?
          - We hated Him and we were under His wrath and curse.

- We were directionless, we were on the road to misery—utter misery forever.
    - We were, of all things, against our just and benevolent maker.
    - What hard hearts! what corruption! What a future of wrath and indignation was reserved for us! We were justly condemned to the Lake of Fire forever.
2. But now, if we have believed in Jesus Christ, we are justified.
- It may be that some of you have not believed. If you have not believed, then this is not true of you...
  - But for those of us who have believed, who have come to Jesus for pardon and new life, we are justified by faith—justified through faith.
    - We are now declared by God Himself to be righteous, and we are treated by Him as righteous.
    - We have trusted in Jesus Christ who promised to make sinners righteous if they would simply turn to Him to be saved, and He has saved us.
      - He delights to receive all who come to Him.
      - We are justified by faith in Him.
- B. Look at how the blessings we have from justification are described!
1. We have peace with God.
- vs. 1 says: **Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...**
    - We were His enemies—God’s enemies, but now we are reconciled.
    - Now we live in harmony with God, and that means that all is well for us.
    - God is no longer against us and we are no longer against Him.
2. Verse 2 says that we have access to God’s grace that prevents us from falling away.
- vs. 2: **through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand...**
    - Before we were justified, we did not even want to stand for the Lord in this world that opposes Him. We opposed Him too.
    - It is His grace that transformed us so that we were able to come to Him, and it is His grace that enables us to stand now—that is, to continue to serve Him in this world that opposes Him.
      - The Holy Spirit is at work in us.
      - We are kept by the power of God through faith—the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us to enable us to stand.
3. Verse 2 also shows that we are eagerly waiting for God’s glory to be revealed to us and in us.
- As it says at the end of verse 2, **“We... rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”**
  - Because we are justified, we are assured that we will be with the Lord when His glory is revealed.
    - We will see His beauty and majesty.

- We will delight in His justice and love with clarity.
  - And we will be glorified so that we can live in glory with Him.
  - We will be all that we ought to be.
    - We will know Him as we ought, and we will love Him as we ought, and we will worship and serve Him as we ought.
      - That will be glory. That is our expectation in Christ.
- C. So to be clear, you see that it is not everyone who glories in tribulations.
- It is only those who are justified by faith in Jesus Christ.
    - Why is this so?
1. It is because, by justification, they have been utterly redefined as people.
    - They are now God's people. They belong to Him.
      - They have an entirely different goal and reason to live.
      - They are living to please God and to know God.
    - a. They know that they have a long way to go.
      - They yearn to grow—to become more like Jesus—to love God with all their heart—to put away their pride and selfishness.
      - They want to proceed from glory to glory.
    - b. Their desire to grow is so strong that they welcome anything that will help them grow.
      - They learn quickly that tribulation helps them grow—it helps them deny themselves and it breaks their pride—
        - It drives them to the Lord and it helps them to see better how great He is and how holy and how much He means to them.
    - c. And so even though the tribulation is not pleasant, they welcome it.
      - This is not to say that they always see how tribulation will help them or always welcome it when it comes—
        - but they come around...because they know that God has sent the tribulation and that He is using it to help them grow in their relationship with Him.
  2. But you see, if you are not justified, then growing up in the glory of God is not important to you.
    - a. You will be okay with some tribulation—when you can see that it helps you reach your goals—like a hard soccer practice or even trials that help you to grow to be what you see as a better person...
      - but there will be limits!
      - There will be many tribulations that you will find useless because if you are not justified, your goal is not the glory of God.
    - b. Let me illustrate this.
      - If a man lives for riches, he may be willing to sacrifice hobbies and free time and even relationships for his riches.
        - But if he falls in love with a woman, then he is willing to sacrifice his riches that he might have her.

- But if he is blind to the value of the superior thing—the love of a woman in this case—then he will sacrifice her for his riches.
- This is what makes those who are justified different from those who are not.
  - Those who are justified will sacrifice everything for their relationship with God.
  - Those who are not justified will sacrifice a relationship with God for whatever they cherish in this world.
- They are blind to the superior thing—the glory of God—because they are not reconciled to God.

TRANS> Now let's turn to the third thing.

### III. How do tribulations actually help us?

- I have said that we glory in them because they help us grow in our relationship with God—which is more important to us than all the world...
  - But how do they help us?
- In Romans 5, Paul actually spells that out for us.
  - In verses 3-5, he lays out a cascade of benefits that come through tribulation.
    - Rom 5:3-5: **And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> and perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**
  - You see that there are four benefits brought on by tribulation in this cascade—one leading to another—
    - Let's look at them.

A. First we are told that tribulation produces perseverance.

1. Perseverance is the ability to keep on going for God even when it is difficult.
  - The Lord, in His wisdom, sends us various trials of our faith.
    - A new believer may face opposition from his family.
    - He has to learn to serve God even when he is opposed.
      - And as he does that, he is able to endure more and more.
2. Think of someone training with weights.
  - When they first begin, they can't lift very much.
    - But as they work at it, they can take more resistance.
    - They get stronger and stronger.
3. By God's grace, those who are true believers will keep on going when tribulation comes, and they will get stronger and stronger.
  - They may have seasons of weakness, the way Abraham did when he took Hagar, or the way Moses did when he went into the wilderness and didn't even circumcise his son...

- But if there is true faith in them, the Lord will work and they will overcome the world through faith, becoming stronger and stronger.
  - Like Abraham, you will see that you can trust God so much that you will be ready to offer the son of promise, knowing that God can raise him up.
  - And like Moses, by faith, you will be willing to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season.
    - By faith, you will learn to keep going for God. His grace will change you.

B. Perseverance, we are told, brings about character.

1. The word *character* refers to that which is proven by testing.
  - The way you know that something is solid is by testing.
  - If someone comes out with a new phone that is supposed to be tough, it's character will be proven by testing.
    - The more that it endures, the more its character will be proven.
    - You drop it on the concrete while on a ladder, a car runs over it, it goes through the washing machine...
      - The tribulations that the phone endures cause its character to be seen.
2. So with you—
  - When you are called to suffer rejection for Christ... and you do—for His sake—it shows that you are a true disciple, that His grace is in you.
    - It demonstrates true Christian character.
  - Maybe you heard the sermon last week about dealing bearing with one another and forgiving one another.
    - You take that to heart and by the grace of God, start doing it—and you get tested by the person that is the most trying person in your life...
      - But you continue to love them and to reach out to them with mercy and forgiveness.
      - They will see your character, you will see your new character, other people will see it, and the Lord Himself will see it.
    - God will be glorified because you will be living for Him, and because you will be doing it by His grace.
      - If you are alive in Christ, it will be important to you to grow—it will be very important to you to have proven Christian character.
      - All the glory will go to God because He is the one who changed you.

C. Your growing character that was produced by perseverance will bring about fresh hope.

1. Hope is the assurance of obtaining what God has promised.
  - When tribulation comes to test your faith and you endure it and your character begins to develop,
    - it will make you more certain of God's promises.
    - Seeing His work in you will give you confidence that He can and will do yet more in your life and in the lives of His people.



2. In this hope, you will take fresh courage and find much joy.
  - This will cause you to increase your service and to persevere even more.
  - You will be like David who, when he saw how God delivered the bear and the lion into his hands as a shepherd boy, was then ready to take on Goliath.
    - He learned to put his hope in God, and soon he was leading Israel into battle against their enemies.
3. For you, it may be much simpler than that.
  - It may be that you will realise that you can actually respect your husband and treat him with honour.
    - That you can actually give of yourself to serve him in ways that you were too selfish to do before.
  - Or as a husband, that you can let go of your bitterness, not by running off, but by actually taking responsibility to lead your family.
    - You will be able to pour your hope into your wife and children and into some of your friends at church—encouraging them to trust God whose grace is sufficient.

TRANS> So you see the cascade of benefits that come from tribulation for those who are justified...

- Our goal is to advance from glory to glory in our walk with Christ, and tribulation develops perseverance, and perseverance character, and character hope, and now, the fourth thing...
- D. Hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
1. This refers back to when you first received the Holy Spirit—the time of your conversion.
    - a. If you are a covenant child, it may have been in your infancy.
      - John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother’s womb...
      - What matters is that the love of God has been poured out in your heart by the Holy Spirit.
    - b. The effect of that outpouring of the love of God was that, from that time, you began to see God’s love in Christ.
      - By the Holy Spirit, your blind eyes were opened and your hard heart was softened so that you were enabled to see His love for a sinner like you.
      - You were enabled to see what Paul speaks of in verses 6-11—captured in verse 8, **“that God demonstrates His love in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”**
        - That is what you see when you believe... this love.
        - The Holy Spirit pours out the love of God in your heart which means He enables you to see God’s great love in Christ.
          - That is what transformed you so that you were done with living for yourself and began living for the glory of God.

- And now you are persevering and your character is growing and your hope is increasing as you advance from glory to glory in Jesus Christ.
2. Your hope will never be frustrated—as it says, it will never disappoint—because the Spirit of God has given you faith to trust in God...
    - Faith to believe in His goodness and grace revealed in the gospel so that you have come to Him and so that you will continue with Him to the end.
    - Paul will speak more about this love in Romans 8 where he will describe it as something that tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword cannot take away—
      - That rather in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.
      - Not only do we overcome them, but we benefit from them... we are more than conquerors.
  3. And in fact, as you go on, growing and maturing, this sense of God’s love keeps on growing too.
    - You (Eph 3:18-19) **“comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”**
    - The ultimate outcome of your tribulations is a greater delight in the love of God in Christ!
      - God is rescuing us from a deep pit.
        - Painful suffering is necessary.
      - You see, tribulation, in His gracious hands as our Saviour, brings about perseverance, and that brings about proven character, and that brings about hope and hope does not disappoint because the Holy Spirit has shown us the great love of God for us.
        - We glory in tribulations because tribulations are used by God to bring us to maturity in our faith and so to prepare us for glory.