

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: March 23, 2014

## Don't Waste Your Trials

by Dan Trygg

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult upon hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; <sup>4</sup> and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; <sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Romans 5:1-5

“Consider every joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its complete work, so that you may be mature and whole, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” II Corinthians 1:3-4

**I have been going through a period of time when something seems to be breaking down almost every day.** They have not been disastrous, but little nickel-and-dime repairs that take time and money. **The funny thing has been the timing. It is usually not more than one thing at a time, but as soon as I fix one thing, something else breaks.** It has been like this for several weeks. Another couple involved in the ministry has had health problems requiring surgery. The wife had her tonsils out on a Tuesday, and her husband had hernia surgery on Friday. They, too, have had a series of problems. Her car broke down, then his did. Then, their shed collapsed under the weight of the snow, etc. Another fellow has been busy helping someone get her plumbing restored after her pipes froze. He has spent part of almost every day over there for the past two weeks. Pipes broke, the water heater needed to be replaced, etc., etc. Another team member has been sick with a stomach problem for a couple of weeks. She is normally very healthy, but she has been having trouble with stomach pain, indigestion, etc. She feels weak, listless and doesn't know exactly what to do. Another woman intended to have church at her home. Twice, things happened on a Saturday night that kept her up all night, and she couldn't have church in the morning. In fact, *her* water heater sprung a leak, too! Then, she had to have surgery on her feet, and is incapacitated at home.

**The timing of these events, and the serial nature of their occurrence, indicates to me that this is more than coincidence.** I could be writing about spiritual warfare, but I'm not focusing on that. Instead, I want to point out that, **no matter what life throws at us, we can be more than conquerors. We can “exult” in our tribulations.** “Exult”? What does that mean? Some translations have “rejoice”, but that gives the wrong impression. **We are not to rejoice “in” the affliction or difficulty**, ... as though *it* were fun, or a positive experience. By definition, it is *not* a “fun” thing, or it wouldn't be an “affliction”. **The word, “exult”, is an attempt to translate a Greek word, *kauchaomai*, which is kind of a cross between “boast” and “rejoice”.** The first time the word occurs in Romans 5 is in the second verse, “**we exult upon the glory of God**”. **What is he talking about? Paul is saying that we can “boast” and “rejoice” upon the prospect of receiving God's glory.** You see, in 3:23, the apostle mentioned that everyone “lacks” or is “in need of” the glory of God. (The translation, “all have sinned and ‘fall short of’ the glory of God” is a poor translation. The word means to “be in need of” to “be lacking”.) Now, in Romans 5, he says that we “boast” or “rejoice” upon the hope of the glory of God. **It is now available to us! What is this “glory”? It is the inner reality and outward radiance of the Spirit of God within us.** He is the Spirit of glory (I Pet. 4:14). It is His purpose to transform us into the image of Jesus, and radiate the life of Jesus through us to the world around us (II Cor. 3,4). The “hope of the glory of God” is “Christ in you, the hope of the glory” (Col. 1:24-29). Just as Jesus Himself was the “outshining of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Heb. 1:3), God wants to work the same reality in us. **This is the victorious, overcoming life of the Spirit within us**, ... the “age-type life”, the “life of the age to come”, which we receive when we trust in Jesus and are born from above (Jn. 3:5-8; 5:24). The apostle Paul says that if you have the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead living in you, He will *give life* to *your* mortal flesh. **We are not to live by our fleshly nature, but by the Spirit who indwells us** (Rom. 8:9-14). If we walk by the Spirit, we will *not* fulfill the lusts of the flesh, nor will we produce the works of the flesh. If we walk by the Spirit, right now in our present-day living, we *can* experience and express the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16-23). **Like so many other aspects of our salvation, there is both a present and a future aspect of this.** We live in the “already, but not yet” incursion of the Kingdom of God into our present evil age. We experience *some* aspects of our salvation *now*, but the *fullness* will not be revealed *until Jesus returns*. **This is true for the process of “glorification”.** There is a *present* outworking and experiential aspect of this, ... and there will be a *future*, complete manifestation when Christ returns. **In one sense, we are already “glorified”,** just as we are also presently “justified” and “sanctified” (Rom. 3:24; 8:30; I Cor. 1:2). It is part of our

inheritance in Christ. **We already *have* the glory of God, and we *are learning to walk in and experience that glory now*, as we walk out the life of the Spirit.** *In the end*, all vestiges of darkness will be removed, and we will be fully radiant in the life and character of God (Matt. 13:41-43; Rom. 8:18-25).

**All of this is the backdrop for Paul's statement of Romans 5.** *We can* exult in the hope of the glory of God. It is a *sure* thing, a *certainty* we can depend upon. God has given us the Holy Spirit as a *mark* of His love, the *source* of His inner life, and the *guarantee* of our inheritance (II Cor. 1:22). **Even in our afflictions, we can boast and rejoice that God is working to transform us, and to manifest through us the life and character of Jesus.** Our hope is not in the *external* comforts or ease. Our hope and power is in the *inner*, overcoming, powerful life of the Holy Spirit. **What the enemy might mean for harassment, God is using to *build inner character and spiritual strength*.** Our hope is not *just* that God will *remove* the difficulties, but that **He will enable us to live with integrity, love and grace, even in the midst of them.** In fact, **God can use these very trials to *develop and strengthen our spiritual character*.** It is the dry seasons of life that cause the tree to put its roots down deeper in search of water. The deeper roots will not only secure it against future dry times, but will also fortify its ability to resist the other storms of life. **If life were always *easy*, we would not be driven to seek the deeper things of God.** We would simply live surface lives of comfort and self-gratification. **When trials come, we must choose between self-indulgence or principle, ...compromise or truth, ...flesh or faith.** When what *used* to work *doesn't* work, we have to look *further*.

**James picks up the same concept.** Note that I translated verse 2 as "consider every joy", not "count it all joy". There is no "it" in the original text. It is very plainly, "*think about every joy* when you encounter various trials". **We are not to rejoice *in* the trial**, just as we were not to boast *in* the afflictions in Romans 5. The trial is not our friend. It is *not* a desirable thing, in itself. It remains an attack, an obstacle, a painful reality, an affliction, a detriment, ...often a drawn-out, negative experience. In Romans, we can boast *while* we are *in* a trial, because God is working out a deeper purpose. James is saying something similar here. **We are to think about every joyful thing, and especially to recognize that the testing of our faith produces endurance** (the same thing Paul mentions). Note, however, that **James points out that *our response is critical to fully benefit from the faith-test*.** "Let *endurance* have *its* complete, fully-developed work, ...in order that *you* might be being mature, whole throughout, lacking in nothing." The implication is that **if you do not hold fast, you will circumvent the potential benefit of the trial. If, however, you do not give up or compromise, something will be produced in you that will mature you, heal you or equip you.**

In II Corinthians 1, Paul blesses God, because *He* comforts *us* in our afflictions, *in order that we could comfort others in whatever affliction they might have, with the comfort God ministers to us.* Paul says *nothing* here about God keeping us *from* afflictions, or of taking us *out of* them. Instead, in this passage he says that he, and they, are sharing in the sufferings of Christ. **We are in a spiritual war, and we will be opposed, reviled and persecuted because we are following Christ.** Jesus even spoke of this. He said that we would be hated and suffer because of Him (Jn. 15:18-16:4). **Paul assures us that in Christ there is *more than enough* comfort for us who come under such resistance, opposition, rejection and suffering.** In fact, just as it seems that these sufferings of Christ come at us, and seeming overflow, Paul testifies that **the comfort of God will also *overflow to us through Christ, not only so that we might endure, but that we might be equipped to help others.***

II Corinthians is a *tough* book. It deals a lot with struggling, afflictions and persecution. **We would like it to say that God will *protect* us, or *quickly* take us *out of* these kinds of tests or sufferings. That is *not* what Paul tells us** in this book. In fact, he lays bare his own soul, and tells us that *he recently had come to despair even of living* (1:8)! He experienced affliction, was perplexed, or at a loss, at times. He was persecuted, even thrown down. But, he was *not* totally crushed, *nor* was he left in total despair and abandonment. He was *not* destroyed (4:8,9). **In each of these cases, the life of God's Spirit enabled him to rise up and go on.** In fact, it was *through* these afflictions, the darkness and the brokenness of his own human ability, that the overcoming and life-giving power of God was most *clearly* and *powerfully* seen. **In his experience, the trials and afflictions were like he was carrying about in his body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus could also be clearly displayed in him** (4:10). Later on, after listing an incredible record of hardships, struggles and persecutions he endured for Christ (11:23-28), he mentions how God even permitted some kind of "thorn in the flesh" an "angel of Satan" to buffet him from time to time, to keep him from exalting himself. As he sought God for this to be removed, God said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is matured in weakness." Paul's response? "Most *gladly* therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." **Afflictions made way for the power and glory of God to be clearly seen in him.**

**It is natural to want to avoid pain and difficulty. Do not be surprised if they come, however. God will use them to build you, mature you, equip you, and teach you His compassion so that you can help others. Have faith and be confident in God's care.** Ask for His life and His comfort to carry you through, and for the life of Jesus to be displayed. **Look for His inner glory to fill you and be displayed through your life.**