

(Romans) Glory in Tribulation

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen's sermon emphasizes the importance of glorying in tribulation as a means of spiritual growth and understanding God's purpose in our struggles.

Duration: 45:41

Scripture: Genesis 50:20, Matthew 6:33, Romans 5:3, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 4:17, 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, James 1:2-3

Topics: "Christian Suffering", "Eternal Glory"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of tribulation and trials in the Christian life. He emphasizes that these difficulties are not wasted but are part of God's plan to prepare believers for a greater glory in eternity. The preacher uses biblical examples such as Joseph and verses from the Bible to support his message. He also criticizes preachers who paint a false picture of the Christian life as solely filled with prosperity and material blessings, stating that Jesus himself acknowledged that believers will face tribulation in the world.

Transcript

All right. Well, let's open up to the fifth chapter of Romans and picking up tonight in the third verse. You remember Paul has been expounding on the doctrine of justification by faith.

And then in our last study, we looked at the the results of having been justified by faith. We saw that the results are peace with God and access into a continual supply of grace, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. And now in verse three, Paul says, and not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, glorying in tribulation, tribulation.

There's synonyms that sort of expound a bit, you know, beyond just the word tribulation. But what he's talking about or what's included in that would be oppressions, afflictions, persecutions, pressures, difficulties, distresses, troubles. Paul says we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

We rejoice in, you know, the access that we have, that we have peace with God. But then he says, and we also rejoice in tribulation. We rejoice in difficulties.

We rejoice in oppressions and things of that nature. Now, what we're going to consider tonight is how in the world you do that. You know, it's one of those things where you read that and you think, boy, I don't know if I'm there.

And of course, none of us are necessarily there. But when the tribulation comes, the grace of God comes along with it to enable us at the time. But that's what we want to concentrate on this evening.

But let's read through down through verse 11 and then we'll come back. So and not only that, we glory also in tribulation, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, perseverance, character and character hope. Now, hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

For when we were still without strength in due time, Christ died for the ungodly, for scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Yet perhaps for a good man, someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrated his love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us much more than having now been justified by his blood.

We shall be saved from wrath through him. 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.

And not only that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. So Paul is expounding on the. The benefits of having been justified by faith, all of these things rejoicing in these things, and then God's love being poured out in our hearts and all of the different things that he mentions here.

But again, going back to this point of glorying in tribulation. Now, I think most of you guys probably have figured this out already. The Christian life can be difficult at times.

This isn't for lightweights. You know, it always cracks me up when people say, oh, you're a Christian. You know, you know, you need a crutch or, you know, I'm I'm bigger than that.

I don't need anything like that. You know, the fact of the matter is everybody in the world has got some sort of a crutch, something that they lean on to try to get them through life. And of course, we're leaning on the Lord.

No question about it. But but the Christian life isn't for lightweights. It's it's a it's a battle.

It's a battle from start to finish. And, you know, the history of God in men, we have extraordinary examples of great men. We think of a guy like David.

You think David was a lightweight? You think he was somebody, you know, you'd want to sort of mock and scoff at and say, oh, you need a crutch. You know, I wouldn't mess around with a guy like David. And the reality is we are in a battle.

And there are struggles. And if anyone tells you otherwise, and they're they're just not being honest. And of course, there are those preachers and you can a lot of times see them on television.

They're they're painting a picture that's not realistic. They're painting a picture of the supposed Christian life that's made up of nothing other than prosperity and physical and material blessing and, you know, continual good health and things like that. That's just it's a delusion.

And it's certainly not supported by the scriptures. Jesus himself in John 16 33. He said this.

He said in the world, you will have tribulation. No question about it. You will have tribulation in this world.

In Acts 14:22, the Apostle Paul stated, we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. Paul, when he wrote to the Philippians, he said to you, it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake. And then to the Thessalonians, he said, no one should be shaken by affliction for you yourselves know that you were appointed to this.

This is the reality Christian life's about. It's a struggle. Now, tribulation is going to come.

No doubt about it. The question is, how do we who have been justified by faith? How do we respond to tribulation? What do we do when tribulation strikes us? Well, Paul says we glory in tribulation, just like we glory in the reality of heaven, just like we glory in all of these other more positive kinds of things. Paul says we glory in the same way in tribulation.

Now, he is saying that it's actually on the account of the tribulation that we're glorying. In other words, when the tribulation comes our way, we're looking at it saying, great, all right, I'm glorying in this. I'm excited about this.

Why would Paul say something like that? But, you know, Paul wasn't alone in saying that. James said something very similar. He said, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.

How many of you guys do that? I got to put my hand down because I don't do it either. I, you know, you read this stuff and you think this has got to be inspired by God because I know men can't do this. We just don't count it joy when we fall into tribulation, do we? Generally, when we fall into tribulation, the first thing we try to figure out is why in the world is this happening to me? Hey, I thought I was a child of God.

I thought God's hand was, I thought he was blessing. What, what is this? But the closer we look at scripture, we begin to understand that tribulation plays a very important role in our lives as believers. Paul said, you know, James says count it all joy.

Paul says this in writing to the Corinthians. He said, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distress for Christ's sake. Now, how could anyone really rejoice in tribulation? How could somebody say and actually really mean that they take pleasure in distress? Well, let me say this.

Not everyone can say that, of course. The unbeliever could never make a statement like Paul made. Because, of course, for the unbeliever, life is all about happiness and the prospect of happiness.

And anything that infringes upon that or anything that comes and would rob that in any way, shape or form is seen by the average person as a horrible type of a thing. So not just anybody can make these kinds of statements. But Paul made these statements.

James echoed the same thing. You see, really, it's only the Christian that can rejoice in tribulation. It's only the Christian.

But even for the Christian, rejoicing can only come if there's, first of all, an understanding. We have to understand something about tribulation. The ability to rejoice in tribulation comes from knowing this, knowing what Paul stated here.

We glory in tribulation. Why? Because we know that tribulation produces perseverance and perseverance, character and character hope. You see, this is how Paul could rejoice in tribulation.

He wasn't sadistic. It wasn't that he just, you know, enjoyed going through these kinds of things. He could rejoice in tribulation because he could see that there was something that God was going to do in his life through it.

You see, tribulations are the tools that God uses to mold us and shape us into the people that he wants us to be. That's the reality. Trials are God's tools.

God is making something eternal. Of each and every one of us. One of our problems is, of course, we're limited to our own life experience and to this time continuum.

And we think of things only in relation to time and how it affects me in time. God is working something in us that is, it's an eternal thing. And so there's the possibility that your entire time on earth could be spent in tribulation of one sort or another.

But that's not a wasted life. That's a life that's just being prepared for a greater glory in eternity. But you see, of course, only the Christian can lay hold of that.

Only the Christian could conceive of such a thing. Tribulation, trials, difficulties, struggles. These are the things that God uses to work his work in our lives.

Twenty-three years ago, I woke up one morning. Twenty-three years ago because it was January of 1983. It was January 4th of 1983.

I woke up on January 4th of 1983 and I knew that there was something that changed in my life that day. I had been feeling ill for a few months, but I didn't really know what to think of it. Didn't know what it was.

Just kind of kept on going, kept pushing myself. And I'll never forget, I was an intern pastor on staff here at the time. And I'll never forget going on a hospital call probably right about the end of the year.

And I remember going into the hospital and talking to people. And in my mind thinking, I wonder if there's room in that bed for me. Maybe I could, that's how bad I felt physically.

But you know, for whatever reason I wasn't thinking in terms of I need to go to a doctor or anything like that. Well, on January 4th, 1983, I woke up in the middle of the night. And I began to have symptoms and experiences that I'd never had in my life.

Like anybody else at, you know, what was I, 24, 25 years old back then. I had had all the childhood diseases and all of that kind of stuff that everybody else had. But I knew that this was something different.

I'd never experienced anything like this in my life. This was really bizarre. It was really frightening.

And all I could conclude is, okay, I must be dying. Because you can't feel like this and live. After all kinds of tests and several months of that kind of a thing going on, back in those days, they really had no diagnosis except you have some sort of a weird viral infection and we can't put a label on it.

That's what they told me back then. Now, 23 years have passed. And to some degree or another, that viral infection has remained with me for 23 years.

And I'll tell you, it has been hell for a lot of years. And yet I remember back in those early days, praying and pleading with God and asking for Him to deliver me and to heal me. And I'd come here and the elders

would lay hands on me and pray for me and all that stuff.

And I remember specifically one moment where I said to the Lord, Lord, I want to be healed. But if there's something that you're doing that I can't understand through this, then your will be done. And evidently there was something God was doing that I didn't understand because that healing has never come.

But I can tell you this, that although this has been in many ways an utterly miserable experience for me, I know for a fact that God has done things in my life through it that could not have otherwise been done. And I know that I would not be the person I am today in the Lord if it were not for this thing. I know that there would not be a depth.

There would probably be more of a shallowness. There's so many things I realize that this thing has accomplished or God has accomplished through allowing me to experience this thing. Now I'm so shallow just as a person.

If I had the option of either having this and being deep or not having it and being shallow, I probably would have said, hey, I'll just be shallow. You know, it's all right. Don't worry about it.

That's okay. We need a few shallow people around. But you know, God didn't give me the option.

A lot of times He doesn't give us the option because He knows we choose the wrong thing. Because He's the one that's working a plan and a purpose in our lives. So, God has given us assurance that tribulation is working out His glorious purpose in our lives.

And there's a threefold sort of an assurance. And that's what I want to communicate to you guys tonight. So, the first assurance that God has given us is in the plain statements of Scripture.

God has told us this stuff over and over and over again. And let me just remind you of some of the things that He said in regard to Christian's suffering. Going through tribulation, going through difficulty, distress and so forth.

Paul says later on in this epistle, in the 8th chapter, he said, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. And then in the 28th verse, a verse that we're all familiar with. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God.

To those who are the called according to His purpose. In 2nd Corinthians 4.17, Paul says, For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. James, my brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. And then Peter said, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials.

That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And then one more from Peter, Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you. But rejoice to the extent that you partake of the sufferings of Christ, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

So, the plain statements of Scripture, they tell us, the Scriptures tell us over and over again, that tribulation is something that God allows to come our way for His greater purpose, for His eternal purpose. You know, I'm amazed when Paul said there to the Corinthians, for our light affliction which is but for a moment. Now, think of the Apostle Paul's experiences, and you remember perhaps when he wrote to the Corinthians there, in the 11th chapter of the 2nd Epistle, he goes into some detail regarding his own personal affliction.

Listen to what he said. He said, In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in danger of death more often, from the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one, 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, 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, in weariness, in toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger, in thirst, in fastings often, cold and nakedness, and beside the other things, what comes upon me daily, my deep concern for the church. When Paul says, My light affliction, this is what he's talking about.

Now if Paul's affliction was light, I don't know that I could even say that I've experienced affliction. Look at this description that he gives. But this is what he's talking about.

In all of these things, he says God is working something in us. So we have the plain statements of Scripture, but secondly we have the lives of the saints. Remember last time we were talking about how the Scriptures have been written to encourage us.

God has recorded for us His dealings with people in the past, so we can know how He works with people in each generation. So as we look back at the lives of the saints, we see the same principle, we see the same thing being worked out in their lives. Think of a man like Joseph.

Joseph, the son of Jacob. And you probably remember the story from Genesis. And there's Joseph, he's a young man, he's 17 years old.

He's the apple of his father's eye, but he's the envy of all of his brothers. And one day they just decide, we're gonna do away with this guy. And they take Joseph and they attempt to kill him.

One of his brothers says, no, we can't kill him, he's our brother. So they say, okay, we won't kill him, we'll sell him. They take him and they sell him into slavery.

17 years old. Then they go back and they make up a story to their dad that he was killed by a wild beast. Take his coat and dipped it in lamb's blood and took it back to Jacob and said, is this your son's coat? And it looks like he was torn by wild beast.

The reality was Joseph was in a pit and then he was sold into slavery and he was taken down into Egypt. And you remember the story, he gets to Egypt and he's bought by a man named Potiphar. And he goes into the home of Potiphar and Joseph is a very handsome young man and he's a very capable young man.

So he becomes the steward of Potiphar's home. He's over all of the affairs of this great man. And there's a point where this man's wife tries to seduce Joseph and he resists.

He stands firm in his convictions and as a result of that, he's falsely accused by her. Potiphar takes him then and throws him into prison. And he spends several years in prison.

What did this guy do to deserve any of this? He didn't do a thing. He was completely innocent. Now, you know, we get into trouble at times and tribulation at times.

We have to distinguish though self-inflicted wounds versus things that just come upon us as a result of God allowing trials to come into our lives. Many of the things that we suffer we at times bring on ourselves, don't we? Because we make the wrong decision, because we sin. God is gracious and He even works through those things.

But what we're looking at more specifically is that type of tribulation that comes upon us not because we've brought it on ourselves, but simply because it has been allowed to come. And that's where Joseph was. And so he remained in that prison for several years.

You remember there were two men that Pharaoh cast into prison and Joseph was able to, and they had dreams. Joseph was able to interpret their dreams and their dreams were accurate and the one man is released to go back and Joseph says, Oh, when you get back to Pharaoh, tell him about me. Tell him that I've been accused falsely and I'm here unjustly.

Oh, sure, sure. You bet. I'll tell him as soon as I see him.

And he forgets all about Joseph. A couple years pass and he's still there in that prison. And then you remember the story.

One night Pharaoh has a dream and the dream is so troubling to him he can't sleep and he gets up and he's got to have an answer to this dream and he starts asking the men in his court about the possibility of interpretation and all of a sudden this guy says, Oh, I can't believe it. I forgot. I forgot about that guy.

There's a young guy in your prison and then he tells him the story. I had a dream and he interpreted for me. So you know the story.

They called Joseph forth and he came and stood before Pharaoh and he was taken then and made basically the prime minister over Egypt. But you know what? It was 13 years. He was sold when he was 17 and he stood before Pharaoh when he was 30 years old.

13 years. Man, that's a long time. You know, sometimes we go into trials for a couple of weeks and we think, Oh, what is this? I didn't sign up for this.

God, it's been two whole weeks I've been going through this. I remember when this affliction hit me back in '83. I remember, you know, you're trying to figure out how come I've got this and when's it going to run its course and so I, Okay, maybe next week I'll feel better.

Maybe next week. And then I got in my mind, You know, Jesus was tested 40 days in the wilderness. Man, okay, it's a 40-day illness.

You know, 40 days comes and goes and oh well, maybe I have to double it because I'm not Jesus. Maybe it's 80 days, you know. Because you just don't think of things going on indefinitely.

But sometimes they go on for much longer than we can imagine. But the great thing is that the light affliction is working for us a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory and even in life, God will bring us through things and bless us later on after we have suffered a while. Peter reminds us of that.

And that's what happened with Joseph. He went through all of this but he came out of it and he was blessed immensely. And you know an interesting thing? Joseph had two sons, you remember? His one son was named Ephraim.

You know what Ephraim means? It means fruitful. And this is what Joseph said, I have named him this because God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. See, that's what God's doing in affliction.

God is allowing affliction to come into our lives to make us fruitful. He wants our lives to bear more fruit. You know for a vine or any kind of a fruit tree or anything like that, for a tree to produce fruit, you know it has to be pruned.

And pruning is a pretty brutal process. You come in and you just chop everything back. And you can chop it back to the point where it looks like there's nothing left.

But it's through that very pruning process that more fruitfulness will come. That's what we see in the life of Joseph. But then we have another example.

We think of somebody even more well known for their suffering and that's Job. And Job went through severe trials, great difficulties. And all of his Christian friends came around and they tried to comfort him but they didn't get it.

They didn't know what he was going through. They couldn't, for the life of them, believe that you could suffer like this guy was suffering and not have sinned in some way or being punished by God. That's what they thought.

They thought, Job, you know, we like you a lot but you've really got to be a wicked guy and you've just hid it really well. But you see, God knows everything and He knows you're wicked so this is what's happening to you. And these guys who came to comfort him ended up being just they added insult to injury.

You know, they were just more of an affliction to him. And, you know, at one point he says you are all miserable comforters every one of you. And then as we follow the story through and, you know, Job is in some moments of great desperation during this affliction.

And I want to tell you guys this. Read through Job sometime and know this. Christians can go through some severe things.

Sometimes I think we we underestimate that and we we think that everything is you know, going to be somewhat light and, you know, easily explainable or that's not necessarily the case. Job is so afflicted he's so desperate at one point he cries out and he says, God, why do you hide your face from me and how is it that I've become your enemy? You set your sight on me I'm a target you're shooting at me. And that's how it seemed to Job.

It just seemed that he all of a sudden was cast off by God that you know, he had a relationship with God but then suddenly God just forsook him. That's how it seemed. Now that wasn't the case but from Job's perspective that's what it seemed like.

And I say that because we have to understand in our lives and in our ministries to other people people go through some severe things and we have to be careful not to be trite or not to realize that sometimes there are things that are beyond our explanation and sometimes the best possible comfort is just to be there and just to love somebody through a difficult time and just to pray for them and sometimes the best thing you can say is nothing because you don't really know what to say and anything you could say would probably be wrong in the first place. But we have a tendency to you know you want to help and sometimes people will say to me I'm going to go to a funeral or something and I know they're going to come up and what do I say? I say you know what don't say anything just put your arm around them just love them just you know you don't have to give an explanation for this you're not God you don't know all the details just be there and sometimes that proves to be the greatest comfort of all. But Job again we see in his life that the latter end of Job was more glorious than the first part of his life.

God blesses him exceedingly more so than he could have ever imagined in the end and then another great example would be David.

David who has all of these years of going into exile and fleeing for his life and running from Saul and all the attempts by Saul upon his life to destroy him and in all of these things God is working something out you see now of course God could have just thrown Saul out the instant he anointed David but he didn't do it he allowed Saul to remain in that position and it was Saul in his jealousy for David who persecuted David and David had to flee the country and all of that you look at that and you think Lord what's going on but you see God was building something in David he was working on David's character and that's what these things are all about look at what Paul says here he says that tribulation produces perseverance and perseverance produces what produces character you see God wants

to build character into our lives we might choose if it was up to us to be shallow but God as I said doesn't leave that choice with us because he wants us to be people of depth he wants us to be people of substance he wants us to be people that can actually minister to other people because we know we've been there we've experienced things in life so we've got the plain statements of scripture we've got the lives of the saints and then we have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit we have that testimony internally and those moments of encouragement that God brings to us during these times and it's in the midst of the affliction that God brings along that kind of comfort that only he can bring and it's that comfort that that settles us because we know that only God

can comfort like that only God can pour that love out into a human heart and it's sometimes during the most difficult times of our lives that we experience the greatest love of God or in the sense of you know being able to actually feel it almost tangibly that the Lord comes alongside and he blesses not necessarily immediately not necessarily frequently but at those key strategic moments because he will not allow us to be tested beyond our ability to endure at those key strategic moments he comes along with that love he pours that love out in our hearts he gives us that assurance and then Paul says here hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts hope there is in the Greek text what they call the definite article it's not just hope it's the hope the

hope does not disappoint what is the hope the hope is that God is with me that God is working out his plan that God is in control and that God loves me and he pours that love out of my heart to give me that reminder but it's it's that hope and guys as we go through things in life those are the things that we have to fall back on I can't tell you how many times I've fallen back on Romans 8 28 even though the particular circumstance seemed to defy the promise because from my limited viewpoint I can't understand how this could work together for good have you ever been in a place where you've asked God that question Lord how could this there's a lot of things I could understand working out for good but this is something I cannot understand working together for good and yet by faith you have

to fall back and say Lord even this somehow I just I believe that somehow this is working together for good I believe that as you said there's not going to be something that you allow to come into my life that I'm not able to survive you know there are times we feel like we're going to be overwhelmed we feel like we're going to be swallowed up there have been times when I've just I've just thought I'm not going to make it not going to survive this one and yet I'm still here why because He will not allow us to be tested the word there in 1 Corinthians 10.13 most of our Bibles really will not allow you to be tempted the word tempt and test are the same Greek word the context depends on whether it's tempt or test a temptation is a solicitation to do evil the devil is the one behind

temptation a testing is something a bit different God tests us He brings test into our life why as Peter said so that the genuineness of our faith which is much more precious than gold might be brought out that's what God's doing but you see it's an eternal thing God's preparing us for eternity and eternity is coming it's coming for all of us and if we get that perspective on life it's going to help us through the difficult seasons that we go through you know sometimes I'll think I get a little there are moments when I can get really frustrated I think you know I was afflicted with this thing when I was 25 years old the best years of my life in some sense have been spent in an affliction and were it not for God and His grace I would imagine I could be a pretty bitter person and think you

know I was robbed of the best years of my life we were out at a youth pastor's conference last week and my sons were out there and all and you know they're all going out and playing football and I used to love to do stuff like that man the thought of getting out on a football field with a bunch of 20 year olds I thought I won't survive that I'll just watch but I'd like you know I would like to jump in I'd like to participate a lot of things I would have liked to have done but this thing has been a hindrance and yet I have to step back and realize you know there's something beyond this life there's eternity and God is not primarily concerned with my temporary situation He's concerned with it of course but that's not the main concern because it is that it's temporary it's brief eternity is

forever as you know and that's what God is doing and that's what Paul says He's working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory man I've read so many stories of Christian servants who have suffered a couple years ago I read about 10 books on the church in China reading all of these stories of these pastors who were thrown into prison you know in their early 30's and not released until they were 60 70 years old sometimes unbelievable you think Lord what is that it's working a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory so Paul says we glory in tribulation why? because there's an eternal thing that God's working out so when testings come when trials come I don't have to be upset I don't have to be bitter I can say Lord this is your tool this is your tool to work something

in me that needs to be worked something that when it's all said and done I'll look back on it and say it was good that I was afflicted that's what David said you remember he said it was good that I was afflicted

because before I was afflicted I went astray it was good that I was afflicted that I might learn your commandments I'll tell you one thing guys and I think many of you know this by experience for me the one thing trials definitely do is they get me to God real quick you know I can be out there kind of doing my own thing and getting a little independent and you know and then all of a sudden something strikes and I'm right there oh Lord here I am oh you know and human nature there's that tendency for us to just sort of drift at times isn't there and isn't it true that a lot of times

it's when we're doing well financially we're prospering physically everything's going great you know we all want that kind of an experience we want a comfortable life we want a prosperous life we want an easy life that's just human nature but you know what that produces it produces a tendency to be independent from God when I'm in that comfortable state I'm not necessarily clinging to the Lord at that time but you know the Lord wants us to cling to Him so I have found in my life's experience He'll come and just knock the thing right out from underneath me and I'm left just holding on Lord Lord don't let me go when I was pastoring Calvary Chapel Vista years ago down in North San Diego County Hughes aircraft was big down there and probably half of the men in the church worked in the

aerospace industry and Hughes closed their plant and half the men in the church lost their jobs and I remember those times where you know people were just going through the most difficult times they lost their jobs and there were no jobs available they were you know they had been there for years and had good salaries and good pension plans it's all gone and I remember back in those days I of course didn't work at Hughes and didn't lose my job but the Lord allowed me to go through physical suffering and sickness and I remember at times thinking Lord I thank you that I'm afflicted right now I don't know how I could minister to these people if I was comfortable if I was prospering if everything was going smooth I'm getting my salaries paid you know all of that I didn't know that I could have

a real impactful ministry to them and God would allow me to suffer not the same thing but something that was a real affliction and I would find that it would translate so often and minister to them because they could look at me and say yeah you know Brian he knows what it's about he's suffering too so you see God is he's using all of these things for all kinds of different things one final thought Paul in writing to the Ephesians he spoke to them and he referred to himself as the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles you know Paul was really the prisoner of Nero from the human standpoint but Paul had the ability to look beyond Nero and he could see that his imprisonment was allowed by God and his sovereignty and instead of fighting against it instead of being resentful

about it instead of being angry with God God what are you doing letting me go to prison don't you know that I could be planting churches right now don't you know that there's a lot of places I want to go with the Gospel all of those things he said you know what I'm the prisoner of Jesus Christ Jesus Christ has me here and that's where Paul wrote most of his epistles aren't you glad he went to prison we wouldn't have half the New Testament if he weren't in prison probably but then he said this he said he's the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles and here's the final thing I want to remind you guys of when we go through trials when we go through tribulation we don't go through it for ourselves alone we go through it for other people so we can bless them so we can help them Paul said

blessed be the God and Father of Jesus Christ the God of all comfort the Father of all mercies who comforts us in all of our affliction that we may be able to comfort others also with the same comfort that we've been comforted with you see if I've never been afflicted then I've never been comforted if I've never been comforted I can't comfort anybody else really somebody comes to me and they can pour out their

heart and I can just sit there as you know I'm just like a stone just cold I don't know I've never been through anything like that but God lets us go through things and so we can see a person and we can identify with them and we can empathize with them and God can pass his love that's poured out in our heart through us to others and they can be blessed as well and so we rejoice in

all of these things and ultimately we rejoice in Jesus Christ through whom we have received the reconciliation we've been reconciled to God and God is working out a plan an eternal plan in each of our lives and we do not yet know what it's going to be but we know that ultimately we're going to be like him we're going to see him as he is and we're going to be like him let's pray Lord we thank you for your promise that tribulation is producing something of eternal value in our lives and Lord may we learn like Paul and James and others may we learn Lord to rejoice to glory to count it all joy realizing that these are the tools that you're using to fashion us and make us the men that you want us to be not just for time but for eternity and Lord for each person here tonight that's maybe in the

midst of some tribulation may they take heart may they be encouraged may they know that you're working something eternal in their lives we pray in Jesus name Amen

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