



RED HILL LUTHERAN

CHURCH & SCHOOL

June 13, 2010

8:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

Time After Pentecost

Rev. Dr. Seth Britton, Pastor

PRELUDE

Chimings

Pat Thurman

GATHERING SONG

Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

Red hymnal #843 (back of book)

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS *please stand*

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen

Leader: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: Amen

Leader: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence is kept for reflection. Congregation kneels/sits

Leader: Most merciful God,

People: we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Leader: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. By the authority of Jesus Christ, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

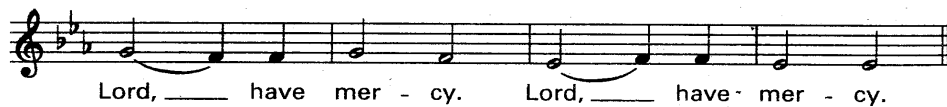
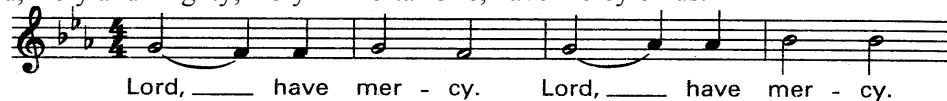
People: Amen.

KYRIE

Leader: Sisters and brothers, called to freedom in Christ: Grace, mercy, and peace be with you all.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us.



PRAYER OF THE DAY

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: O God, throughout the ages you judge your people with mercy, and you inspire us to speak your truth. By your Spirit, anoint us for lives of faith and service, and bring all people into your forgiveness, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

People: Amen.

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 32:1-8

Leader: Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

People: ² Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

Leader: ³ When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

People: ⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.

Leader: I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"—

People: and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Leader: ⁶ Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.

People: ⁷ You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. ⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

READING

NIV pew Bible page 1763

Romans 12:4-8

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his^[a]faith. ⁷If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Reader: Here ends the reading

People: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ANNOUNCEMENT *please stand*

Leader: The Holy Gospel according to _____.

People: Glory to you, O Lord.

HOLY GOSPEL

NIV Pew Bible page 1604

Luke 7:36-8:3

Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, ³⁸and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

⁴⁰Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

⁴¹"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,^[a] and the other fifty. ⁴²Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

⁴³Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

⁴⁴Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

⁴⁸Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

⁴⁹The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

⁵⁰Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

¹After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

GOSPEL RESPONSE

Leader: The Gospel of our Lord.

People: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

CHILDREN’S CHURCH & KIDS’ TALK (11:00 ONLY)

The children come forward for a discussion with Pastor Seth. They are then excused to their assigned classrooms.

Parents: please see the Announcements Page.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Prelude, Suite No. 2 in D Minor

J.S. Bach

David Coats, cello

MORNING MESSAGE

Pastor Seth Britton

Please see this morning’s “Brick” for an outline of the sermon.

SONG

Where Charity and Love Prevail

Red hymnal #359 (back of book)

Verses 1-4



1 Where char - i - ty and love pre-vail, there God is ev - er found;
 2 With grate-ful joy and ho - ly fear, God’s char - i - ty we learn;
 3 Let us re - call that in our midst dwells Christ, God’s ho - ly Son;
 4 Let strife a - mong us be un-known; let all con - ten-tions cease.
 5 For love ex-cludes no race or clan that names the Sav - ior’s name;
 6 We now for-give each oth - er’s faults as we our own con - fess,



brought here to - geth - er by Christ’s love, by love we thus are bound.
 let us with heart and mind and soul now love God in re - turn.
 as mem-bers of each bod - y joined, in him we are made one.
 Be God’s the glo - ry that we seek; be his our on - ly peace.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

PEACE

The congregation shares the peace of Christ.

GATHERING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Please complete your worship response card and place it in the offering plate.

OFFERTORY

Christ, the Cornerstone

Roger C. Wilson

OFFERING PRAYER

Leader: God of mercy and grace, the eyes of all wait upon you, and you open your hand in blessing. Fill us with good things at your table, that we may come to the help of all in need, through Jesus Christ, our redeemer and Lord.

People: **Amen**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Pastor: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God., through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join them in exclaiming:

People: **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

COMMUNION

In our church, all believing and baptized Christians are invited to receive communion. Please join us.

Although we use wine, a chalice of white grape juice is also available.

BLESSING

SENDING SONG

All Creatures, Worship God Most High

Red hymnal #835 (back of book)

Verses 1 through 4

POSTLUDE

All Creatures of Our God and King

Hal H. Hopson

Readers

8:00 Mark Reid **9:30** Trisha Gebhardt **11:00** Mike Padilla

Altar Guild

8:00 Dolores Cruz **11:00** Judy Omohundro

Acolytes

8:00 Picabo French & Sara Barring

11:00 Aaron Schmok & Jayson Umphrey

Ushers

8:00 Frank Schaefer Group **9:30** Jim Christensen Group

11:00 Jesse Hernandez Group

Welcome Table

8:00 Eileen Hamilton **9:30** Terri Holte **11:00** Lori Browne

Greeters

8:00 Max & Lois Landouw

9:30 Jim and Nancy Ryan

11:00 Marlys Lano and Patti LeBrun

Communion Servers

8:00 Peter Feher & David Kulcinski

9:30 Dave & Laurie Henry, Matt Hendricks & Melinda Olmedo
Monica Tenold

11:00 Leo & Marlys Lano

Worship Leaders

Worship Assistant Deborah Alg

Director of Liturgical Arts James M. Schaefer

Director of Music Jason Harney

Guest Organist Anne-Marie Bullard

Praise Leader Isaiah Coughranl



RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

THE WEEKLY BRICK

June 13, 2010.

As you come to him, the living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. - 1 Peter 2:4-5

June Sermon Series: “Mission: Possible”

Part 3

“The S.O.U.L.L. Path”

Romans 12:4-5 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Romans 5:3a Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings...

Where we have been:

In the early days of the church, believers in Jesus were called “the people of the way.” The Greek word for “way,” ὁδὸς (*hodos*) is defined as a “traveled way, a course of conduct.” Believers in Jesus were committed to Jesus who was “the way” (John 14:6) and taught a particular *way* of living life in the world. Jesus defined this particular “way” as the “Kingdom of God.” The process that equips and transforms the lives of those who love Jesus and live according to Jesus’ kingdom vision is called *discipleship*. Disciples are learners, apprentices, of Jesus and Jesus’ “way.” Discipleship begins with God’s *grace-full* call to follow Jesus Christ. In and through Jesus, we are forgiven, reconciled, and redeemed. We are given the Holy Spirit who transforms our lives through the process of discipleship. At Red Hill, this disciple-making process, the pathway toward a transformed life is described as “**The S.O.U.L.L. Path.**” Responding to God’s grace in through Jesus, we:

Surrender to God’s Love (Worship)

Obediently Hear and Respond to Jesus (Scripture and Prayer)

The Next “Steps” on the Path:

I. Unity with Others in Biblical Community.

Romans 12:4-8 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his^[a]faith. ⁷If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Matthew 18:19-20 “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ^[20]For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”

II. Learning through Loss and Change.

Romans 5:1-5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Psalm 130:5-6 For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. ⁶ When I felt secure, I said, "I will never be shaken."

Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

St. John of the Cross: "The Dark Night of the Soul"

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Day #1--Monday, June 14th Read: Romans 12:3.

In Matthew 28:19ff, Jesus said to the church: "Go and make disciples..." Discipleship is the work of the church of Jesus Christ. As we continue to study the nature of discipleship, we do so exploring the practices of Biblical community and how God deepens our discipleship through the times of loss, transition, change, and struggle.

In Romans 12:4ff, Paul encourages unity among Christians through an attitude of humility and respect towards one another. A disciple's commitment to the Father and the transforming lifestyle that is the fruit of such commitment, are demonstrated through the exercising of their spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. Paul warned the church individually ("every one of you"), to not think more highly of him/herself (Greek: "*hyperphronein*," "think higher"). Rather, Paul encouraged them to think ("*phronein*") of one's self with "sober judgment" ("*sōphronein*," "sound thinking"). By his involved word play on various forms of the Greek verb "*phroneō*," which is translated, "to think," Paul emphasized that human pride is wrong (See also Romans 3:27; 11:18, 20) and humility is necessary. One of the best definitions of humility I know came from a college professor who defined humility as "being teachable." For example, if I believe that I have nothing to learn from others in a relationship, that I alone know all things, I am not humble, I am proud. Pride is an attitude of heart that leads to a multitude of sins. Humility creates an atmosphere of acceptance and valuing the other. Likewise, Paul encourages the Christian community to respect one another. When we approach someone in humility and respect in God's name, and the other person does the same, there is mutual love, value, and encouragement; Biblical community is created and God is glorified.

One more point here. In this passage we see that we are to "measure" ourselves, not by one another, but by *the measure of faith* (Greek: "*metron pisteōs*") given to each one of us. Even faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. As a gift of the Spirit, the "measure" of faith given us is not ours to boast about! Every believer has a different gift, and God has bestowed these gifts to disciples so the church can grow in mutually edifying and balanced ways.

Question/Reflect: How clear is your sense of the gifts God has given you? Are you inclined to "think of yourself more highly than you ought" (v.3) or put yourself down?

Day #2--Tuesday, June 15th Read: Romans 12:4-5.

Paul was writing to Christians who were members of local churches in Rome. He described their relationship to each other in terms of the "members" (body parts) of the human body (He used this same picture in 1 Corinthians 12; and Ephesians 4:7-16.). The comparison Paul makes between the physical body which consists of various "parts" and differing functions, with the community of disciples of Jesus (the church) which is a spiritual "body" with various "parts" and differing functions is a perfect analogy. The basic idea is that each believer is a living part of Christ's body, and each one has a spiritual function to perform. As we saw yesterday, each Christian must exercise his or her spiritual gift by faith. Whatever spiritual gift (function) we have (member) must be dedicated to God and used for the good of the whole church (body).

As the physical body is considered healthy when all the parts and their functions are working together, so the body of Christ is healthy when all of its "members" and functions work together. The working together of the body of Christ is the mutual serving of one another in love and to the glory of God. One other comparison is helpful here. In the physical body, the members and functions of the human body serve the body; the body does not serve the members. If the church is healthy, the members and their functions (spiritual gifts and abilities) serve the church (the body of Christ); the body does not serve the members. Many churches today are dying because they have become a "holy huddle" serving only themselves and not others for Jesus Christ. What are the essentials for the health and growth in the body of Christ? Yesterday, we looked at the essential of honest, personal evaluation. Another essential is faithful cooperation. In short, we belong to each other, we minister to each other, and we need each other. Each believer has a gift (or gifts) to be used for the building up of the body and the perfecting of the other members of the body for the purpose of serving those outside the body, for the purpose of honoring God's name. The mission of God to redeem and reconcile the world is carried out through the church. This is one reason why Biblical community is so vital.

Oswald Chambers comments on the mission of God to redeem and reconcile humanity and the importance of the body of Christ:

[God's]Rehabilitation means the putting back of the whole human race into the relationship God designed it to be in, and this is what Jesus Christ did in Redemption...The rehabilitation of the human race in Jesus Christ's plan means the realization of Jesus Christ in corporate life as well as individual life...We are not here to develop a spiritual life of our own, or to enjoy spiritual retirement; we are here so that the Body of Christ may be built up. Am I building up the Body of Christ, or am I looking for my own personal development only? (*My Utmost for His Highest*)

Question/Reflect: Am I building up the Body of Christ by using the gifts that God has given me? Prayer: *Jesus, empower me to use the gifts, abilities, and talents that you have given me to build your body, the Church. Amen.*

□ Day #3--Wednesday, June 16th Read: Romans 12:6-8

Allow me to say this again: We are saved "by grace, through faith" (Ephesians 2:8-9). We must also live and serve "by grace through faith." Since all of our spiritual gifts are from God, again, even the faith we possess so that we can believe in and trust, Jesus, we cannot take the credit for any part of our spiritual maturity. In this text, Paul cites specific spiritual gifts. Elsewhere, Paul mentions specific gifts in two other places (1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 28; Ephesians 4:11). A comparison of these texts reveals that he is not seeking in any of them to give a comprehensive list. Rather, in each place Paul selects examples that will be relevant to his purpose.

Paul's goal at this point is to encourage each Christian to use his or her gifts energetically and properly and not to worry about the gifts others may have, or the way in which they may be using them. Prophesying (v.6b) is the gift of conveying to other Christians truth that has been made known to the prophet from God. One's "prophesying" is to be done "according to the proportion of his faith." (NASB). While this could be interpreted in the same sense as 'measure of faith' in v. 3 (as in the amount of faith that God has given to each member), another interpretation would be, "in agreement to *the* (not his) faith." Meaning, that prophesying—communicating God's message to strengthen, encourage, and comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3)—is to be consistent with *the body of truth* already revealed: scripture and the apostolic witness. For this interpretation, "the faith" would be synonymous with "doctrine" as found in Galatians 1:23 and Jude 3, 20).

The other six gifts mentioned in this passage are: Serving (v.7a), this may denote a specific ministry of teaching or leading worship but is probably a general designation of various ministries (1 Corinthians 12:5). Teaching (v.7b), involves the transmission of Christian doctrine (2 Timothy 2:2). Encouraging (exhorting) (v.8) includes a broader range of speaking ministries. Giving (contributing), is to be done with generosity (Greek: "*en haploteti*", meaning "liberally") (2 Corinthians 8:2; 9:11, 13). Leading (can also be translated as "managing" or "administering" (Greek: "*proistamenos*" literally, "standing before," a similar word is used in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, "*proistamenous*," and is translated, "have charge over you"). This leading is to be done with diligence (Greek: "*en spoude*," meaning, "in eagerness," "earnestness"), as in not halfheartedly. Finally, showing mercy is to be done with cheerfulness (Greek: "*en hilaroteti*," meaning, "in gladness"), not with compunction. Three of these seven gifts are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (prophets, teachers, administration); two (prophets and pastor-teachers) are included in Ephesians 4:11; and two (administering and serving) are listed in 1 Peter 4:10-11. Whatever one's gift, he/she should exercise it faithfully as a stewardship from God.

Question/Reflect: As you reflect upon the gifts outlined here in Romans, which one do you believe God has given to you? Do you believe you have a gift that is not listed here? Are you using those gifts? Why/Why not? How can the church help you discover your gifts?

□ Day #4--Thursday, June 17th Read: Matthew 18:20; 1 John 1:6-7; Hebrews 10:24-25.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran Pastor and theologian during World War II. After his martyrdom at the hands of the Gestapo in 1945, Bonhoeffer continued his instruction to Christians throughout the world through his writings and personal faith in God during a very difficult time. In his book, *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer offers some insights into Christian community:

Christian community is like the Christian's sanctification. It is a gift of God, which we cannot claim. Only God knows the real state of our fellowship, our sanctification. What may appear weak and trifling to us may be great and glorious to God. Just as the Christian should not be constantly feeling his spiritual pulse, so, too, the Christian community has not been given to us by God for us to be constantly taking its temperature. The more thankfully we daily receive what is given to us, the more surely and steadily will fellowship increase and grow from day to day as God pleases. Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.

Question/Reflect: Christian community is God's gift to me. Prayer: *Thank you for your community Father. Where two or three are gathered, you are there! You have given us one another. Help me to honor the gift of another in my life. Amen.*

□ Day #5--Friday, June 18th Read: Romans 5:1-3

Paul begins a new section of his letter here at 5:1 (rather than at, for instance, 6:1). The “therefore” of v. 1 can also be translated as, “since,” a transitional statement from his earlier emphasis on “faith” (thirty-three occurrences in 1:18–4:25 as opposed to only three in chapters 5–8) to an emphasis on “life” (twenty-four times in chapters 5–8 as opposed to only two in 1:18–4:25). Echoing throughout chapters 5–8 is a question created by the tension between Paul’s teaching that a person is justified before God the minute that person believes and the biblical truth that a day of divine judgment must yet be faced. How do these two truths relate to one another? Can I be sure that my justification now will do any good on the Day of Judgment? To this question, Paul answers in this paragraph with an emphatic ‘Yes!’: We have “*peace with God*” (v.1) and “*hope of the glory of God*” (v.2b). This imperative will ultimately lead to the indicative that this hope “does not disappoint [us].” (v.5a) A good way to say it is this: “Peace with God” takes care of the past: God will no longer hold our sins against us. “Access to God” takes care of the present: we can come to Him at any time for the help we need. “Hope of the glory of God” takes care of the future: one day we shall share in His glory! Believers possess both the peace with God that has been achieved through the death and resurrection of Jesus (reconciliation, forgiveness) as well as the peace that comes through the grace of God working in and through us in our lives (redemption). This is one reason we can trust that no matter what may happen to us in this world; God is with us and will use even our hurts, habits, hang-ups, and failures (redemption) for our spiritual maturity.

This is the hope that leads to the affirmation that as disciples, we can “exult (rejoice) in our tribulations...” The word “tribulations” (sufferings) is the Greek word, “*thilipsesin*” meaning, “afflictions, distresses, pressures.” Jesus’ brother, James, wrote along the same line: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds” (James 1:2). This is more than mere Stoic endurance of troubles, even though endurance or steadfastness is the first result as God deepens our relationship with Him through a process of learning and a maturity of soul. The end of the process (BTW, I really hate using mere words like, “process” and other descriptors, to describe truly painful and life-altering events. But, alas, it is all I/we have ☺), is hope. Back in v.3, the word “knowing,” is the Greek “*oida*,” which means “to know by intuition or perception.” When we face trials and transitions with Jesus working in us, we are able to persevere with a “knowing” that cannot always be described with words. We simply “know” that God is with us. Perseverance (Greek: “*hypomonēn*,” translates as “steadfastness,” is the ability to remain under difficulties without giving in or up. (Romans 15:5-6; James 1:3-4). Only a believer who has faced distress can develop steadfastness. Jesus himself said: “In this world you will have trouble.” (John 16:33). However, for the disciple of Jesus, trials and troubles work *for* him/her and not *against* him/her. No amount of suffering can separate us from the Lord (Romans 8:35–39); instead, trials bring us closer to the Lord and make us more like the Lord. This is the goal of discipleship.

Question/Reflect: How does justification change things in your relationship with God? How much of God’s peace and hope need to begin with a *feeling* and how much must begin with *head knowledge* and *conscious claiming* of peace and hope?

□ Day #6--Saturday, June 19th Read: Romans 5:4-5

Yesterday, we began the study of how our losses and trials lead to a deeper spiritual maturity. Our tribulations bring perseverance. Verses 5b–8 set Christian hope (5a) on the unshakable foundation of God’s love for us in Christ. When we face troubles, we turn to Jesus who gives us hope. The hope Jesus gives keeps us moving forward with Jesus. We keep “fighting the good fight!” Perseverance in turn produces character. Character (Greek: “*dokimēn*” literally, “proof,”) has here the idea of “proven character,” which in turn results in hope. The disciple’s hope, since it is centered in God and His promises, “does not disappoint us...” “Disappoint” here means “put to shame because of disappointment” in unfulfilled promises.

This affirmation concerning hope in God is a reflection of Psalm 25:3, 20-21, Romans 9:33; and 1 Peter 2:6). The reason this hope (resulting finally from tribulations) does not disappoint is that God has poured out His love into our hearts by (better, “through.” The Greek word here, “*dia*” typically means “*through*.” Also, it is here with the genitive [possessive] the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the divine Agent through which God gives the disciple His love. This reality of divine love in a disciple’s heart provides the assurance, even the guarantee that the disciple’s hope in God and His promise of glory is not misplaced and will not fail. This ministry of the Holy Spirit is related to His presence in believers as the seal of God (Ephesians 4:30) and as the “down payment” of their inheritance in glory (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14). Later Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit Himself has been poured out in believers (Titus 3:6).

In Galatians 5:22-23 there is the list of the “fruits of the Spirit.” In the Romans text, note how the first three of the “fruits of the Spirit” are experienced: love (Romans 5:5), joy (rejoice) (Romans 5:2), and peace (Romans 5:1). The life of a disciple is from beginning to end a work of God. God proved His love by sending Jesus to die for us. Now that we are His children, His disciples, most certainly God will continue to love us! It is the inner experience of this love through the Spirit that sustains us as we go through loss and change. As Christians, we can even declare that through these very losses and changes, God matures the soul; we become more human, more Christ-like. We become the people we were originally created to be: men and women who walk daily with God, dependent upon God and trusting God for all one’s needs.



Question/Reflect: Can you remember a time/situation where God deepened your faith through trials? How should Christians look upon suffering and stress? Upon disappointment?

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