

8-17-25 Message

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SPEAKERS

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What we've been talking about is suffering, which probably falls more on the boring side, but we have kind of been through last couple of weeks. We had to set things up that first week. As far as, why do bad things happen? We talked about a number of reasons, sin, a cursed creation, as well as there's the god of this world, Satan and his evil system. And of course, we're even told that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers and rulers of darkness. In Ephesians, 6:12, we're told that our weapons of warfare are not carnal and to take every thought obedient to Christ in Second Corinthians, 10, four and five. So there really is a spiritual battle, and then we're still carrying around our flesh. You know, in some place in Scripture, it's called the old man. It's called the flesh. We still have that part that's in us, all those things working together. This shouldn't surprise us, that bad things happen, and we reap and sow in this life. Sometimes there's consequences for the things that we do. But I'm thankful that we finished that by looking at Romans five, seven and eight, when we looked at the fact that for scarcely for a righteous man, will one die. Yet peradventure, for adventure, for a good man, some would even dare to die, But God commendeth his love toward us, and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And the real question we ended that week with was, why did the best thing happen to bad people, really? I mean, it was love. Is God demonstrating His love? Because we are not good people, and Scripture is pretty clear about that. And then last week, we looked at how suffering is not something that's even abnormal, especially from a persecution standpoint. We looked at a lot of Scripture references last week, and even Paul giving this charge to young Timothy in Second Timothy 3:12 he says, persecutions, afflictions which came unto me at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, what persecutions I endured. But out of them all, the Lord delivered me. And then he says this, yea and all that will live godly in Christ, Jesus shall suffer persecution. And so this week, we're going to kind of talk about, then, what is the response? Is it just to sit in depression and like, well, I guess I'm just going to suffer and accept it, or just deal with it. You know, I appreciate how pastor was always good about saying, well, people need hope. And I want to give you some of that today. Want to start by thinking about in the midst of all these verses where Paul says suffering afflictions, and he's mentioned all these things, he was like man that was a rough life, yet also, Paul was constantly talking about a few other things, like, for one, being thankful. We talked about this few weeks ago, so I won't spend too much of our time today, but if you want to go back and look, you can find it. It was we're talking about the will of God, and we spent a week talking about how it's God's will

that we are thankful. In fact, the word that I guess, the word from Scripture we're looking at that day was first, Thessalonians, 5:17 and 18. It says, Pray without ceasing. In everything, give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ, Jesus, concerning you. And that's in the midst of all the suffering, right and even. Ephesians, 5:20 says, Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we know Paul was thankful. And you can go back and listen to that. But there's a couple other words I want to use today that usually when we are dealing with the sufferings and the struggles and the afflictions of this life, it's a couple of words we're really looking for. And the first one is hope, the constant use of hope in the midst of suffering and in afflictions by the Apostle Paul. I remember when I was, Oh, wow. That's probably about 1520, years ago by now. But I remember in a sales meeting I had a pretty challenging sales manager, and we had this really embarrassing time where everybody was kind of sitting around, and we had to tell him what we were going to close that month. Where's my sales people in the rooms? Hey, any of you guys in there? Okay, so it's one thing to be able to send in a forecast. It's another thing amongst all your peers to sit there and say, I'm going to close this. Just my pledge is, I'm going to close this this month. And I was young to the industry, and he got around to me, and I said, Well, I hope I close x, x, x, or whatever the deals were. And he looks at me in front of everybody, and he goes, hope is not a strategy. And I was like, I said, I hope my strategy works. And I got he had got kicked out of the meeting. That was the only time that happened. He's like, Go, get out of here. And I'm like, Okay. I was like, Well, I hope I didn't just lose my job. But anyway, so we hope is an interesting thing, because. Maybe in a sales strategy, we're like, we want strategy, not hope, but for the believer today, hope means everything. Let's talk a little bit about this a definition of hope, and we're going to define some terms here. It means a desire of some good accompanied with at least a slight expectation of obtaining it, or a belief that it is obtainable. Hope differs from wish and desire in this that it implies some expectation of obtaining the good desired. It also involves having confidence in a future event, the highest degree of well founded expectation of good, a hope founded on God's gracious promises. It also is that which gives hope. He that which furnishes a ground of expectation or promises desired good or an opinion or belief not amounting to certainty, but grounded on substantial evidence. The Christian indulges a hope that his sins are pardoned. It's interesting that the end of that said that the Christian hopes that his sins will be pardoned. Well, we today, we know that our sins have been thanks to the finished work of the Cross, but if you're not a believer, you don't have that hope. In fact, Ephesians 2:12 as depressing as it's going to sound, is more of where you're at if you're sitting here today and you've not placed your faith in the finished work of the Cross and the shed blood of Jesus Christ and the death, burial and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins. In fact, Ephesians 2:12 says this, as Paul is addressing the situation to for the Gentiles who were prior their prior relationship with God before the gospel, it says that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world, the one group of people on this planet who should never feel hopeless is the child of God. It doesn't mean that we're going to be exempt from difficulties in this life, but we have the hope that the world doesn't have, and we're going to look at that. Look at that here for a few minutes in Romans 15:4, and we're going to do a little bit of workout and a lot of Paul's scriptures today. But Romans 15:4 says whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures. Remember that phrase, might have hope. And maybe part of the reason that we as believers really can't show the world the hope that we have is because we're not in the Scripture. So we don't know the hope that we have. It is hard work. I was just, I was just telling the teens, and I'll say the same thing to you, that if you are dependent upon what I can give you on a Sunday morning for your growth, you're going to be sadly disappointed. There's 168 hours in the week if you're waiting for me to give you something for 30 minutes, and you're going to let the world have the other 167 hours and 30 minutes. Who's going to win? You're

going to find hope, not from what I say, but from you going and studying the Scriptures. And we have to do that. But more importantly, than just studying the scriptures, it's understanding the scriptures specifically rightly divided what is for us today in this dispensation of grace. Check out some of these verses about hope. Romans 8:24, and 25 says we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope for what a man sees it. Why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then we do with patience, wait for it. So we are saved by hope in Titus one two, in hope of eternal life. Which God that cannot lie promised before the world began? This hope is in salvation is in eternal life. Are you seeing this pattern? Colossians, 1:23 if you continue in the faith, grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you have heard and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I Paul am made a minister in First Thessalonians, five, eight. Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love for a helmet the hope of salvation. Every one of these passages here says the believers, hope is in salvation. Election and eternity. It's in the Gospel. It's not in the election, it's not in the local governments. It's not in doing better. It's not in getting out of debt, although it's a great idea. It's not about a health diagnosis, our hope from scripture, not my words, over and over again here, saved by hope, hope of eternal life, hope of the Gospel, hope of salvation. If we're feeling hopeless, it's because we're looking for hope in the wrong places, because it's there and we've been given it, and we'd see this idea of salvation, hope and eternity, and it makes sense, right? And here's some reasons why hope, looking at eternity makes sense. And the first one is, it's where Christ is. Of course, that's where our hope should be. I love this in Colossians, three, one through four. This is Paul speaking. He says, If ye then be risen with Christ. Seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. That's our danger spot. When we look for hope on things on the earth. He says you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory. Not only that, when we're thinking about our hope being in eternity, right, we're also thinking about this, that it's where our spiritual blessings are, right? In Ephesians, one, three, it says, Blessed be the God and Father Our Lord Jesus, Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. In Christ, Romans, 8:32, He that spared not his own Son but delivered Him up for us all. How shall he not with Him also freely give us all things. And then there's this hope of glorification. You know, we talked earlier about carrying around this flesh, this old man. Well, guess what? That's going to go away. We got this hope, Titus 2:13 looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ a little bit more. And this is in Philippians 3:21, that says, Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself? The believer has a hope that lasts. It's not what the world would understand, and it's what is going to be one of those anchor points to get you through the difficult things in this life, but only if placed in the right place. It's not hope in anything else other than God. So Paul not only had hope to get through those difficult things, and you see him writing about hope all the time, but also Paul chose joy. So we know the thankfulness, but we didn't spend a lot of time there. You can go back and listen to that message. Talks about hope. Also we have joy. Here's a great quote from John MacArthur. Just recently went home to be with the Lord. He says, most people define happiness as an attitude of satisfaction or delight based on positive circumstances, largely beyond their control. Happiness therefore cannot be planned or programmed, much less guaranteed. It is experienced only if and when circumstances are favorable. It is therefore elusive and uncertain. And I just wonder if happiness isn't a false God being pursued on this earth today. It got really quiet. I say that every week, because sometimes you guys need me to wake you up a little bit. We weren't promised a happy life, and what he was just saying, happiness is based on circumstances, but you're not guaranteed the best of circumstances, but joy is a different animal altogether. And Paul was saying, whether it be rejoice, rejoicing or joy, he was

constantly focused on something different than happiness, and it was joy, and it was joy in the Lord, not his circumstances. And so let's look at a little bit of this. First of all, joy, Galatians, 5:22, it's a fruit of the Spirit. In fact, it's the second one mentioned. So the more that we are in the Word of God, the more that the spirit is activated in control in our life. It produces that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. Long suffering, gentleness, goodness and faith. And 23 we'll extend those a little bit, but we want to focus on Joy right now. Romans 15:13, says, The God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Here we even got a verse where joy and hope are in the same verse, because they're connected, and you find peace as the result First Thessalonians, one six, and ye became followers of us and the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, how with joy of the Holy Ghost, I know in some of my roughest times in life, the only thing that brought me joy was the Word of God. I mean, there was times in my life where I found myself face down on the ground, I like, turn the TV off, and I was alone, and I just got in the Word of God, and there was the peace of God that passes all understanding that just filled my heart. I remember like sometimes hours doing that because I had made such a mess in my life, and I knew I could not turn anywhere else. And I'm like people I would see, you know, at Konica Minolta would be like you had such joy in your heart, and they didn't know how fractured I really was, but what they were seeing was what the Word of God was producing in me and the Holy Spirit. They sensed this joy that was a direct result from spending time with God. Romans 14:17, says, The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but in righteousness. Is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Not good circumstances, but joy in the Holy Ghost. Romans 5:11, Not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Romans, 12:12, through 21 is kind of that passage where, when you really angry and somebody is pulled over in front of you on the interstate, and you need to cool off, you need to open your Bible and read right? But it starts out in verse 12, saying, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing, instant in prayer. There you have, rejoice in hope, both in the same verse, passage of me and my wife memorized, and we challenged the youth group a couple weeks ago as Philippians four, four through nine. But verse four says, Rejoice in the Lord alway and again I say rejoice. And he said that while he was in prison. You know, you think about all the difficulties that Paul had, yet somehow he found hope, somehow he had joy, somehow he was thankful, somehow he had peace in the midst of all that. That shows me that we, too can have those things in the midst of whatever we're going through today. But my thing is, I think we get so much in the way and focus so much on ourself. When the answers are within prayer, the word of God and what He has for us, we have the very holy Spirit inside of us. Now here's some verses that are just in random places in Scripture, they're specifically about tribulation and sorrow when it comes to this joy. James one two, my brethren count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations. Even Peter says this in first. Peter one six, wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations. Second Corinthians, 6:10, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, sorrow, always rejoicing as poor, yet making many rich as having nothing and yet possessing all things. I was even reading in the one year Bible today and Psalm 35 but those who also do that, you ran across this as well. But 35 nine said, my soul shall be joyful in the Lord. It shall rejoice in his salvation. How did Paul do it? I mean, I can hear these words. I'm going to go home. And you know what? The struggle is still going to be there. How do I do it? I mean, this is where you're like now. I need you to encourage me. Well, really, what you need is the Word of God to do that. And that's what I'm hoping to share with you here, that Paul did all of this, not in his own strength, and that's the problem. You really want the answer to how Paul was able to get through all of that with joy, hope, peace, thankfulness, it was God's strength, not Paul's second Corinthians 12 and seven and eight starts dealing with this idea of a thorn in the flesh that. We don't know what this is. There's a lot of commentators who speculate maybe it had to do with eyesight, a long list of things he went through in Second Corinthians, 11:23,

through 30. Any of those could have caused some sort of affliction. But he had a thorn that was given to him, a messenger of Satan, to buffet him, and three times he begged the Lord remove it from me, and I think there's probably in a room this size and watching online, I think we've all asked God to take away the pain, take away the thorns in our lives. Paul was no different. He was a human but his response, I think it's a little different than the way we normally respond. In verse nine, he got a response from God, and this is what it was sure Paul, I'll take away the thorn. There may be some wacky translation that ends up putting that in there someday, but I'm saying this right now. That is not what happened. That is not what the Word of God said. In fact, God said, My grace is sufficient for thee. And then he says, My strength not yours, Paul, my strength is made perfect in your weakness. And I think a lot of people need to hear that today, we are weak, we are beaten up, we are going through difficult things, and it is not your strength that's going to get you through it. He says, My strength is made perfect in weakness. Now what's interesting is the next verse wasn't a fourth, plea for the thorn to be removed. It wasn't a fourth, it wasn't a fifth, it wasn't a sixth. The very thing that brought him to his knees and begged God for all of a sudden that request was gone. Instead, this is what he says, Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities. Oh, time out. How, in one fell swoop you go from God, take this from me, please to hey, I take pleasure in this. I wasn't Paul. That was the strength of God. And when we understand there's a purpose, and we understand that we're not alone and we're not forsaken, and that God is with us, we can say, hey, you know what? This is making me more like Christ, I can take pleasure in this. Knowing that God's in control doesn't mean I ever have to celebrate a bad health diagnosis, but my me knowing that God's grace is sufficient even in my weakness, His strength is made perfect in my weakness. Paul would later say that that I take pleasure in this, that the power of Christ may rest upon me, his focus was some place else, on Christ, instead of his thorn. And I think we can learn a lot from that. Philippians 4:13 says, I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me. And I know it's football season, we're going to see banners held up, and people love to kind of quote this and everything. But really, if you understand what Scripture is teaching in the previous verses, it had everything to do with Christ's strength, getting him through very difficult circumstances, because the three previous verses are dealing with contentment and contentment when you basically have nowhere to look he says, I've learned how to be I've learned how to suffer need. I've also learned how to abound. He says, but I've been instructed to be content. And then the very next verse, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Philippians, 2:13 says it is God which worketh in you both to will and do of His good pleasure. Philippians, one six, Being confident of this very thing that he which begun a good work in you will perform until the day of Jesus Christ. Little shameless plug, if you love. Philippians, I'm going to be starting verse by verse expository teaching. This is September 10 in this very room, so on Wednesdays. So that way you can take your kids to reading boot camp, and you can take them to the youth group in junior high. And then I'm going to give you an in depth verse by verse teaching. And we're going to go through the book of Philippians shameless plug. Anyway, put it in your calendars even first, Thessalonians 5:24, says Faithful is He who calls you who will also do it? You notice the oldest being on God, all the emphasis on God's strength and God's power through all these verses. And you can even mention Ephesians 3:20, here in a minute. So I think I have that one here at the very end. But Paul, it was about a big picture. And want to be able to wrap this up in it with a couple of verses here. And the first thing is the big picture for Paul, in light of all that and God's strength and having hope and being able to have peace and able to have joy and thankfulness through difficult times, it took a big picture viewpoint, and that he talks about this in Second Corinthians, 4:17, through 18. He says, our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, While we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. He focused on the fact that whatever was going on, he even called it light affliction. He said it is temporary. It is

momentary. It is not eternal. Whatever you are going through, it is just that it is temporal and it is not eternal. It is good to remind ourselves of that from time to time, it will not be with you for all eternity. But he says, Even here, it's doing something in you. Sometimes it's that patience that's being developed. Sometimes it furthers the gospel, because it's your response to whatever is going through in your life. And people see that you stayed the course. People see that you praise God through the difficulties, and they ask you, how'd you do it? And it led to the furtherance of the gospel. How many times did Paul say that I'm in affliction, I'm in bonds for the gospel sake. Or hey, I thank God because of the furtherance of the gospel, and maybe whatever you're going through can lead to the furtherance of the gospel in someone else's life. Romans 8:18, says, I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Well, amen, for that not worthy to be compared. It gives the idea that the sufferings this present time are so inferior compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us. Maybe our mindsets in the wrong place. God never told Paul that he was forsaken, that he had just deal with it alone. There's even a time where Paul said, everybody has forsaken me, nevertheless, the Lord stood with me. You are not alone to whatever you're going through. God is with you. You're sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. You have the word of God, you have prayer and you have eternity to look forward to. You have the hope of the Gospel and the hope of eternity. I remember at Emmanuel try to wrap this up the next minute or two, when I always get the two boys mixed up. I believe it was Evan West is the one who had the brain tumor at a manual. And every time I would see Jeff West, you would never know what was going on in his life. He still was smiling. Had so much joy. And here I am, probably 30 years I'm guessing probably Oh, my God, 30 me, 20 years later, I'm still remembering the joy he had in his life in the midst of wondering if his son's going to make it. And I've never forgotten that about even when I still see Jeff West today, he's the same guy. He just has so much joy and a big smile on his face. Somebody needs to send him this message. Just tell him I said something about him. There's a great quote from Jim Elliot says he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose, and he would eventually lose his life. And he but that quote is so important, if you're here and you're you're listening, and you are a child of God, you've placed your faith and the death, burial and resurrection alone and that shed blood of Jesus, Jesus Christ on that cross to to pay for all your sins. If you are a child of God today, you have hope. If you are not the none of the stuff that I said today matters until you are a child of God, and you can do that right now in your seat. You can receive what I just shared, that gospel. You can receive it right now and put your faith in that alone right where you're sitting. And the Bible says that you are saved, and you now have that hope. Please don't leave here in a no hope situation, because God has already taken care of it for you. You can have that hope that we just spent the last 30 minutes talking about, if you're struggling today, I hope that today was an encouragement to you. Maybe you've been trying this in your own strength. Maybe you've been so focused on what's going on, you haven't even been in the Word of God, you haven't been studying it. And maybe today you'd find maybe the fact that in the Scriptures where you're going to find your hope, find your hope in prayer and in the Holy Spirit moving inside you, that's where you're going to find your hope, your joy, your thankfulness, your peace. And so maybe you can plug back in to the Word of God and not leave it just to those who are teaching on a Sunday morning or a Wednesday night, but start owning that study time for you on a daily basis, remember this, that it's not our strength, but it's the very power that raised Christ from the dead that is in us. That's what talks about in Ephesians, 3:20 so what are we putting our faith in? We trust him for salvation. But we're like, oh. We've got this life. Thank you for salvation, and let's hook up again in eternity. The very power that raised Christ from the dead is inside you. So it doesn't matter what else is going on in your life. That still is the truth, and that still is the case. I hope that was encouragement today. You can have hope. You can have joy, right? You can be thankful in anything that you're going on, that's

going on in your life, and that this is all just temporary. Keep your eyes focused on the permanent, eternal, where we will be with Christ for all eternity, where all of our spiritual blessings are.