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Light On Our Path



*Messages by Pastor Paul Aasman
on the book of Romans
at the Streetlight Christian Church
in the 6:30 p.m. services of October 2007*

October 14, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

Romans 4:17 “As it is written: ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’ He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed - the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.”

Faith That Saves

Reading: Romans 4
Text: Romans 4:17

Every person experiences disappointment, frustration, loss of hope and despair. Every person has his own measure of disease, injury and disability to deal with. In one way or another, everyone knows what it feels like to be depressed and hopeless.

So the fact that you suffer is not strange. The question is, how do you deal with your suffering?

In Romans 4, we read about a man who suffered a lot: Abraham. But he was not alone. The people of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah suffered too - just like everyone else in this cursed world.

How did they cope? “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” They tried to grab as much pleasure as they could, regardless of whether it was right or wrong. And they acquired a taste for what was wrong - they preferred what was wrong, and pretty soon, they were unable to enjoy what was right. God gave

them over to their sinful desires and they were enslaved by it. Desperately seeking escape from a hopeless, frustrating, hard life, they become hopelessly and frustratingly enslaved to the devil.

Abraham also experienced disappointment, frustration, and sometimes he even began to lose hope in God’s promises. He and his wife Sarah suffered a lot. God had promised Abraham many children, and they would inherit the whole earth (vs 13 and 18).

But the years passed, and they had no children. Sarah began to get old and they really began to wonder. Finally, both Abraham and Sarah were so old that it had become physically impossible to have children. As Paul says in verse 19, “*he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead.*”

Yet Abraham believed in God. If he didn’t believe, he might as well do as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah did - grab hold on whatever pleasure he could still lay hands on. Abraham was a man just like you and me, and his flesh urged him to do that.

But he did not. Instead he trusted in God. Paul says in verse 20-21, “*he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*” He coped with his suffering by believing in God. But why did he believe? Because he knew that God was able to, as

our text says, call into existence things that do not exist. He knew the story of Genesis 1. God said, “*Let there be light*”, and though light did not even exist, yet it obeyed. So powerful is the word of God. And God’s promises are as powerful as his commands.

Abraham believed that God was able to give life to the dead - even if they were dead in themselves, yet God could give them life! There is hope for you, my friends. It does not matter how hopeless it looks for you, it does not matter how lost in sin you might be right now, nor does it matter that your guilt seems too great to ever forgive - God can overcome. He gives life to the dead. His promise to you is as powerful as his command.

And he has proven it once and for all through his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ died a just death, a death under the guilt of all our sins. Yet so great was his love and the power of his righteousness, that death could not hold him. He rose from the dead.

All we need to do is believe in God - who gives life to you and me.

Believe in him. It is all God requires of you. Nothing else. Let him be glorified in you by giving you life, and calling into existence things you had never thought you could have again: solid hope, real joy, deep meaning, holiness of life.

October 21, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

Romans 5:3-5 “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

Faith Fitness

Reading: Romans 5:1-11
Text: Romans 5:3-5

Paul talks here about the hope of the glory of the Lord.

What are some of the things you hope for when the glory comes? We hope for a world where there is no pain anymore, where we are healed of our diseases and disabilities, where injustice does not happen. Of course we rejoice in our hope of the glory of God.

But now we have tears. We live in a fallen world. What are we to think about the troubles we suffer? Do we just need to endure the bitterness until the future hope comes true?

No, says Paul, we rejoice in our future hope, but we also rejoice in what we have right now - also the sufferings we have right now, even especially the sufferings.

Some people would say: There is enough people who burn, stab, cut or poison themselves because they get pleasure from feeling pain: “I suffer therefore I am.” That is not what Paul is talking about. He does not mean that we rejoice in the suffering

itself, but in what it produces in us. It exercises our flabby faith. Suffering is a faith workout; it is God's faith-fitness program, and God has every one of us on a program, a training regiment that is just right for you.

Listen to the way Paul talks about it: When you suffer and run to God for help, then your faith becomes stronger. That is why Paul says, "suffering produces perseverance." To persevere means to keep going even when it's tough, like a runner who is on the last mile of a ten-mile run - he feels pain, but he keeps running; he will even try to run harder, though it hurts him more. And the more a runner does it, then the farther and faster he can run. He is developing endurance or perseverance.

When we learn to persevere in the face of suffering, then, says Paul, we develop something else too: character. You've heard before about things that build character. When my children complain about some problem they are facing and cannot escape, then I tell them: That's character building. People who live in poverty, who live with constant trouble, fear and uncertainty, they have to live by faith - their faith tends to have lots of character. - Those who live in need, have to be closer to the Lord. But those who have everything can more easily fool themselves into thinking that they don't need God, and they can take care of themselves. But when we suffer, we discover how weak we are and how much

we depend on God. God does that for us so that we might exercise our flabby faith and build character in our faith.

And the result of all this is that we learn to rely all the more on the future hope, the day when Jesus returns, and all our troubles will be over. We rejoice in our suffering because it keeps alive our hope for the future. We rejoice in our suffering because it prevents us from falling in love with this world.

We hope only because God builds faith in us through suffering. Without fit faith, nobody will see God. So don't complain too much when you suffer. Let us help each other bear our burdens, but let us also rejoice that God cares enough about you and me to keep our faith alive.

God bless you, my brothers and sisters, dear friends as you suffer. God bless you in it to endure, and may you even learn to rejoice because of it.