



## Joy In Suffering

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1. Focus on others.
2. Understand suffering.
3. Trust God.

When Paul traveled on his first missionary journey, he experienced many joys as well as many sorrows. Through prayer and fasting, the Holy Spirit told the leaders of the church in Antioch to "set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). Being commended by the church, Barnabas and Paul set sail across the Mediterranean Sea on their journey to share the gospel of Christ with a world that had never heard of Him before. They eventually landed in Pamphylia, where they preached the gospel in Psidian Antioch. They traveled north and reached Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. As Paul went to these places, it was filled with both joys as well as with difficulties. The apostle Paul saw the Lord work in wondrous ways. He saw many people saved from their sins (Acts 13:48). He saw these people "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52). He saw churches established (Acts 14:23). He saw elders appointed in each of these churches (Acts 14:23). He saw the "word of the Lord ... spread" in great ways (Acts 13:49). One can only imagine the great joy that such things brought to the apostle Paul's heart.

But, such ministry came at a cost. In Psidian Antioch, Paul came into the synagogue to preach to the Jewish people, who were initially eager for him to return on the next Sabbath to speak these same things. But when the Jews saw a crowd of Gentiles coming "to hear the word of the Lord," the Jews turned upon him (Acts 13:45). "The Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of the district" (Acts 13:50). So, Paul traveled on to the next city, Iconium, where they preached in the synagogue. Again, much the same thing happened: Jews as well as Gentiles believed their message of Christ. But, "the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against [Paul and Barnabas]" (Acts 14:2). Eventually, they fled for their own safety (Acts 14:6) to the city of Lystra. When they arrived at Lystra, the Jews from Psidian Antioch heard about it and came and "won over the crowds [and] ... stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead" (Acts 14:19). But Paul survived. He and Barnabas went on to Derbe, where they "made many disciples" (Acts 14:21).

This is a good picture of Christian ministry. It has great joys. It also has great sorrows as well.

I have known the joys of ministry. I can tell you from first hand experience that the words of the apostle John are very true to my experience. He said, "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth" (3 John 4). In fact, visiting us today is a dear friend of ours, whom we saw grow in the Lord in great ways while among us in DeKalb. She has since moved off to Texas, where her job took her. But, has come this weekend to visit us. She is the joy of the ministry for us. We see her having gone out of our ministry, continuing in the truth and being faithful to her Lord, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. I have also known the sorrows of ministry. Some of the greatest heartbreaks that I have experienced have come through the trials and tribulations of Christian ministry.

These experiences aren't merely the destiny of those in full-time Christian ministry. They are the experiences for all who name the name of Christ. Those who received the gospel for the first time rejoiced greatly at hearing that salvation had come to them (Acts 13:48). Likewise, the gospel ought to take deep root in your life and continuously give you great joy. Great joy also comes when you have an opportunity to make an impact spiritually upon the lives of others. The happiest place on earth is a fruitful church, where believers are continually finding their joy in fullness of Christ, and where believers are giving themselves in sacrificial service of others, building them up in the Lord (Eph. 4:16). But, such happiness and joy may come with a price as well. Before Paul returned home from his first missionary journey, he visited each of the churches that he had founded one last time to give them some final instruction. He sought to strengthen and encourage the souls of the disciples by urging them "to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22). He told them, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). In other words, the Christian life is filled with joys as well as trials.

We see both of these things come together in our text this morning, as Paul describes his ministry. It was my plan to get through verse 24-29 this morning, but I found my study in verse 24 to be too rich. So, we will make it only through one verse. Colossians 1:24: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions."

My message this morning is entitled, "Joy in Suffering." It comes from the first six words of our text. Ponder well those first six words that Paul writes. "Now I rejoice in my sufferings." At first glance, these words might appear to be strange. Seemingly they don't quite go together. Joy and suffering. Are there any among you suffering today? Are you rejoicing in your sufferings? It is possible, you know. It is not out of the realm of your grasp. In fact, James commands us to do this very thing. He says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials" (James 1:2). When trials come, there ought to be nothing but joy that flows from your heart.

I know that my failure is often to look back at the trials that I have experienced and rejoice only after they have finished. When reflecting on those trials, I have often concluded by thinking, "Those trials have taught me much." Or, "I have been humbled by those difficulties." Or, "The Lord has helped me to see how much I need to trust Him." But, James tells us to rejoice in the midst of the trial, while it is going on! This is exactly what Paul's perspective was. He said, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings" (verse 24). The verb that Paul used here is in the present tense, which means that it was his continual action. You can easily understand these words, "I (am continually) rejoicing in my sufferings" (verse 24). When you have a proper perspective of life, you can actually have joy in your suffering. Paul's example proves it. In the midst of his ministerial tribulations, he said, "I (am continually) rejoicing in my sufferings" (verse 24).

"But Steve," you say, "you don't understand. You don't understand how deep the wounds are and how severe the pain is. Surely nobody has faced it as bad as I have got it now." Let's think about this for a minute. Let's consider the situation Paul was in. He was in a Roman prison for preaching the gospel. He was awaiting trial. Yet, he had joy in his sufferings. While he was in prison, he expressed his joy. "Now (while imprisoned) I (am continually) rejoicing in my sufferings" (verse 24).

"But Steve," you say, "Paul was unique. He was especially blessed by God. Jesus, Himself, appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus." Well, have you considered the plight of the apostles who were boldly proclaiming Christ? They also were imprisoned for their "crimes." They stood before the highest religious counsel of the day and were rebuked for their actions. Before being released from prison, they were flogged (Acts 5:40). That is, they were stripped down to their underwear. They were tied to a post. A Roman soldier took a short whip in his hand in which small iron balls or sharp pieces of bone were tied in these whips at intervals. With this whip, he slashed the back of these apostles, producing severe lacerations in their backs. Such a punishment wasn't life-threatening, but it did produce great pain and agony. The apostles "went on their way ... rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).

"But Steve," you say, "those who were flogged were apostles. They were also unique. They had seen the risen Christ. They were especially anointed by Him." Well, have you considered the early Christians to whom the epistle to the Hebrews was written? The writer said, "But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one" (Hebrews 10:32-34). We don't know what all of their sufferings entailed. But, we do know that they were shamed publicly for their following after Christ. We also know that they had their property taken away from them without reason. And they accepted it joyfully (verse 33)!

You may well be able to come up with many other excuses for not being joyful in your trials. But please realize that when trials come upon your life, you have a choice in the way in which you will respond to them. You can respond in joy, or you can respond in sorrow and self-pity. You can embrace the suffering as good for you, or you can complain about your difficulties and do anything you can to escape from them. You can be strengthened in your faith, or you can be hardened in your heart, doubting the goodness of God. How do you respond to the trials that come upon your life? Do they make you better? Or, do they make you bitter? I trust that all of you want to respond rightly to suffering that comes upon you. How is it that James could tell all of us to "consider it all joy ... when you encounter various trials" (James 1:2). It is the aim of this message to teach you how to have joy in suffering.

How can we have joy in suffering? The first way that I want to point out is to, ...

## 1. Focus on others.

Look once again at what Paul wrote. "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake." Now, think about this for a moment: Paul saw his sufferings in prison for the sake of those in Colossae, whom he had never met! How can that be? How can Paul's suffering be beneficial for those whom he had never met, nor perhaps, would ever meet? This isn't the only time Paul ever said anything like this. Writing to those in Corinth, Paul said, (2 Cor. 1:6) "If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation." What an amazing thing. Paul saw his sufferings as it relates to the comfort of others. Paul saw his sufferings as it relates to the salvation of others. Paul saw the eternal salvation of the souls of others were connected to how he handled the suffering that came his way. How can this be? How can the suffering of one be connected with the salvation of another? The greater context of this verse helps to explain it. Paul wrote, ...

### 2 Corinthians 1:5-6

Just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or, if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer.

Let me try to summarize these things. Paul says that sufferings of Christ were abundant in his life. If you know the life of Paul, you know this to be true. He was imprisoned numerous times (2 Cor. 11:23). He was "beaten times without number" (2 Cor. 11:23). He was stoned by the Jews and left for dead (Acts 14:19). He brushed with death on many occasions (2 Cor. 11:23-27). But, just as his sufferings were in abundance, so also were the comforts of Christ in abundance as well. When God's people suffer, He gives them the strength to endure the sufferings. Again, this was true in the life of Paul. He was suffering greatly with what he called "a thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7). Whether it was a sickness or a person, we don't know. But, we do know that it was bad enough to beg the Lord three times to remove it. But, God refused to do so saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). In other words, when God's people suffer, He gives them the strength to endure the sufferings. And when being strengthened to endure the sufferings, others see it and are encouraged also to endure other sufferings.

A great illustration of this comes in Paul's letter to the Philippians. This letter to the Philippians actually was written at the same time that Colossians was written. While in prison, he wrote four letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. These letters are rightly known as "the prison epistles."

### Philippians 1:12-14

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren,

trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. Since this is what was happening at the very time that he was writing Philippians, I believe that this is what Paul was referring to. His sufferings actually caused the church to grow and prosper. In this, he could rejoice! And rejoice he did! (Phil. 1:18).

I know that this type of thing has taken place in my life. For the most part, I feel as if I have been on the receiving end of the majority of these blessings. As a pastor, I have counseled with people going through very, very difficult things. They have gone through things that I can only dream of enduring. I'm talking about things like being neglected as children, having marital problems, or facing financial difficulties. But, as they have responded in faith, and have been comforted by the LORD in their afflictions, and continue firm in their faith, I have been greatly encouraged. I have come to understand that the same God who strengthens them will be able to strengthen me in the day when my afflictions come. And thus, my heart has been strengthened to endure until the end, when I will ultimately be saved from my sin and this sin-cursed world.

As you have rubbed shoulders with these types of people, it has to have made an impact on your life. I remember one time at Flocks (home Bible studies that we have), listening to the testimony of one of those in attendance. I was blown away by the trust in the Lord that this person had in the midst of incredibly difficult circumstances. Hearing of these difficulties, we had an opportunity as a Flock to pray for the whole situation. As we prayed around the room, we probably prayed for nearly 30 minutes. That is the Christian life, sharing our burdens with one another and praying and helping others in their difficulties. As others stand firm, it encourages us. As we stand firm, it encouraged others.

But, I know, as a pastor of a church, that it works the other way as well. Various trials and difficulties will come upon my life with the design that the Lord will uphold me through them. Thereby, you all will be encouraged to trust in Christ, who is able to sustain us through our suffering. The primary context of verse 24 is the impact of the suffering of a spiritual leader.

Please know, church family, that you will constantly be on one side or the other of these matters. You will either be suffering, so as to be an encouragement to others as you receive comfort from the Lord. Of, you will be watching others being comforted by the Lord, and so being encouraged to press on in your faith. So, when you encounter sufferings like this, suffer with others in mind, as Paul did, and you will have joy in your sufferings.

How can we have joy in suffering?

## 2. Understand suffering.

Look again at verse 24. "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." Notice closely what Paul said. He said that his sufferings were "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." Were the sufferings of Christ insufficient? Absolutely not! Paul's main point from the previous context (verses 15-23) was to show how sufficient is the person and work of Christ. There is absolutely nothing deficient in the character of Christ. He is almighty God, creator and sustainer of the universe! There is absolutely nothing deficient in the work of Christ. Upon the cross, He completely accomplished our redemption. We are justified before God on the basis of faith alone in His atoning work (that's the point of verse 23). Such has been the point of my messages the past two weeks: Christ's death upon the cross was entirely sufficient for our salvation.

And so, what is lacking in Christ's afflictions? The context here demonstrates that it has something to do with the church. Paul closely links his sufferings with the church. Paul said that the sufferings in his flesh were "on behalf of His body, which is the church." So, there is a connection between the sufferings of Paul and the church and Christ. When Paul suffered, he did so as a member of the body of Christ, the church. And when the church suffers, we know that Christ suffers right along side of it. Remember on the road to Damascus, when Paul was on His way to persecute Christians? He was struck blind by a bright light (Acts 9:3). Soon after his blinding a voice came from heaven saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4). When Paul asked who was speaking, the voice said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5). To persecute the church is to persecute Jesus.

And so, what is lacking in Christ's afflictions? Christ's afflictions aren't yet finished. He has more to endure. To be sure, His earthly sufferings are finished. Upon the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). That is to say, that His atoning work was finished. With His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension into heaven, Christ's earthly sufferings were finished. However, His afflictions aren't over. As the church, His body, is afflicted with various trials and suffering and pain, He still experiences affliction while in heaven. "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; If one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). Since Christ is the head of the church, he joins in both the suffering as well as in the joy. We know of the joy of heaven when one sinner repents (Luke 15:7, 10). Colossians 1:24 is teaching the flip side of the coin. There is suffering in heaven when the body of Christ suffers on earth. We can easily deduce this from other passages of Scripture as well. Think with me about the role of Jesus Christ as high priest. The book of Hebrews tell us that Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God, praying constantly for us as the great and only high priest that we will ever need (Heb. 8:1). Why is He praying for us? Because we have real needs due to the sufferings that we are experiencing. We are His body. He feels the pain. His afflictions aren't yet finished.

In Paul's earthly suffering, he was "filling up" the afflictions of Christ. Paul was playing his part in bringing them to an end. It's as if Christ has a heavenly cup of suffering to endure. Every time we suffer for Christ's sake, it fills up a little more and a little more. Jesus told the Pharisees that in their sin, they were filling up the measure of the guilt of their sins (Matt. 23:32). Paul used this imagery in 1 Thessalonians 2 of the Jews who "both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove" out Paul from Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:15). He said that they "always fill up the measure of their sins" (1 Thess. 2:16). These are all talking about the same cup. Their sins of hostility to Christ while he was upon the earth were bad enough. But now, they sin against His representative upon the earth: the church. It continues to fill up, until one day, it is poured out upon them all in judgment.

Here in Rockford, we have a large water park called Magic Waters. It opened up recently for the summer. I remember going there a few years ago. They have this giant cup that holds 1,000 gallons of water and sits 20 feet above the ground. It fills slowly and every 20 minutes or so, it tips out and absolutely drenches those who are standing below the water. This somewhat of a picture of what will happen one day, when Christ's afflictions are completed through the church. Until then, the sufferings of the church for Christ's sake slowly fills this cup that will one day pour over upon those who have afflicted Christ.

Before I was a pastor, I worked in the computer world in corporate America. Over the period of time, I had opportunity to witness to several of my co-workers. But, they didn't receive my message too well. In fact, they didn't like my message at all. They began to ridicule me for my faith. At one point, things got bad enough that my boss, who was not a Christian, had a conversation with those who were treating me poorly. This conversation was held unbeknown to me, and he told them to stop the ridicule and seek for harmony within the department. As such people ridiculed me, they were really filling up the cup of wrath that will be poured out upon them unless they repent, as I called them to do.

This isn't such a pleasant thing to ponder. But, it will give you joy in suffering for Christ if you realize that your suffering has a purpose in the plan of God. Vengeance is the Lord's. He will make it right someday. The path to victory in the church is not the way of the world. The world comes in swords and power and might, as those they follow came. But, the church comes in meekness and humility and suffering, as the One we follow came. When Jesus stood before Pilate He said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." (John 18:36)

Perhaps you remember a few months ago, when a Danish newspaper published some cartoon, which depicted Muhammad. Many Muslims were enraged at these cartoons, which they consider to be an abomination. Many protests were held all across the world. People were killed because of these cartoons. That's how the world fights. When something they want is violated, they turn to loud protests and even violence. But, the church is different. I read an article by John Piper that did an excellent job of describing the difference between Islam and Christianity. Piper wrote, ...

What we saw this past week in the Islamic demonstrations over the Danish cartoons of Muhammad was another vivid depiction of the difference between Muhammad and Christ, and what it means to follow each. Not all Muslims approve the violence. But a deep lesson remains: The work of Muhammad is based on being honored and the work of Christ is based on being insulted. This produces two very different reactions to mockery.

If Christ had not been insulted, there would be no salvation. This was his saving work: to be insulted and die to rescue sinners from the wrath of God. Already in the Psalms the path of mockery was promised: "All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads" (Psalm 22:7). "He was despised and rejected by men . . . as one from whom men hide their faces . . . and we esteemed him not" (Isaiah 53:3).

When it actually happened it was worse than expected. "They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head. . . . And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they spit on him" (Matthew 27:28-30). His response to all this was patient endurance. This was the work he came to do. "Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

This was not true of Muhammad. And Muslims do not believe it is true of Jesus. Most Muslims have been taught that Jesus was not crucified. One Sunni Muslim writes, "Muslims believe that Allah saved the Messiah from the ignominy of crucifixion."<sup>1</sup> Another adds, "We honor [Jesus] more than you [Christians] do. . . . We refuse to believe that God would permit him to suffer death on the cross."<sup>2</sup> An essential Muslim impulse is to avoid the "ignominy" of the cross.

That's the most basic difference between Christ and Muhammad and between a Muslim and a follower of Christ. For Christ, enduring the mockery of the cross was the essence of his mission. And for a true follower of Christ enduring suffering patiently for the glory of Christ is the essence of obedience. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account" (Matthew 5:11). During his life on earth Jesus was called a bastard (John 8:41), a drunkard (Matthew 11:19), a blasphemer (Matthew 26:65), a devil (Matthew 10:25); and he promised his followers the same: "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household" (Matthew 10:25).

The caricature and mockery of Christ has continued to this day. Martin Scorsese portrayed Jesus in *The Last Temptation of Christ* as wracked with doubt and beset with sexual lust. Andres Serrano was funded by the National Endowment for the Arts to portray Jesus on a cross sunk in a bottle of urine. The *Da Vinci Code* portrays Jesus as a mere mortal who married and fathered children.

How should his followers respond? On the one hand, we are grieved and angered. On the other hand, we identify with Christ, and embrace his suffering, and rejoice in our afflictions, and say with the apostle Paul that vengeance belongs to the Lord, let us love our enemies and win them with the gospel. If Christ did his work by being insulted, we must do ours likewise. [\[1\]](#)

We follow a suffering Savior, which means that we will suffer as well. Let's embrace our suffering with joy, as Jesus did, when He willingly took up His cross. Let's embrace our suffering with joy, as Paul did.

What is it that gave Paul and the apostles the strength to rejoice in their sufferings? How can we have joy in suffering?

### 3. Trust God.

I pull this from the end of verse 23 as well as the first part of verse 25. In verse 23, Paul says that he "was made a minister" [of the gospel of Christ]. In verse 25, Paul writes that he "was made a minister" [of the church]. Paul saw the sovereign hand of God in everything that took place in His life. He was made a minister of Christ. Paul didn't sign up for the ministry. He didn't attend seminary because he wanted to be a pastor. Should the truth be known, he was actually running away from the Lord when he was called. I've already mentioned his call to ministry on the road to Damascus. He was chosen by the Lord to be in ministry, and not the other way around.

When Paul received his call to the ministry, Jesus told him (through Ananias, who was to deliver this message), "I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16). From the start, Paul knew that Jesus knew that he would suffer much for the name of Jesus. When you trace through the ministry of Paul, you see him suffering every place that he went. I believe that the foundational truth that kept him going was that he knew that God was in sovereign control of all things. He knew that God had called him into the ministry. He knew that God had called him to suffer. He knew that God's hand was upon him in his imprisonment. He knew that God could lift the afflictions

whenever he wanted to. In other words, Paul knew that the suffering that came upon him came with divine purpose.

Earlier, I read from 2 Corinthians 1:6, "If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation." Do you see the divine intentionality in this passage? God brings affliction to His servants to comfort and secure other Christians. This is nothing less than a sovereign hand that upholds and strengthens in difficulties. This is where you will find comfort in the day of your trial: God is in control of the suffering and has a purpose for it. <sup>[2]</sup>

We quote Romans 8:28 so often that I'm afraid that it will wear itself out someday. But such truth is essential if you would ever have join in suffering. Romans 8:28 says, "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Notice again, the intentionality in these words. God causes all things in our lives: both good and bad. Isaiah 45:6b-7 says, "I am the LORD, and there is no other, The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these."

He does it all for a purpose. It's all for good. Oh, it may not seem good at the moment. It may not seem good for years. But, I guarantee you, that if you love God, and if you are called according to His purpose, all things in your life will work together for good. There will be no standing before the throne of God saying, well, I guess that didn't work out very well, did it. No, God is sovereignly working all things after the counsel of His own will, for our good and His glory.

I believe that this is right where Paul found his joy. God made him a minister. I believe that this is where need to find our joy, in the kind intention of God, to bring trials about for our good.

Our hymnology helps us here so much. Consider the hymn Day by Day, which is a prayer of trust in our heavenly Father's kindness and mercy in our trials, <sup>[3]</sup>

Day by day and with each passing moment,  
Strength I find to meet my trials here.  
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,  
I've no cause for worry or for fear.

He whose heart is kind beyond all measure  
Gives unto each day what He deems best--  
Lovingly, its part of pain and pleasure,  
Mingling toil with peace and rest.

Consider also, How Firm a Foundation, which is in the form of the Lord's words to us of comfort and assurance to sustain us through the midst of our sufferings, <sup>[4]</sup>

When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,  
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;  
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design  
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose;  
I will not, I will not desert to his foes.  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."

Those are hymns that anchor our souls in the sovereign goodness of God to carry us through the trials that we face. How could we not have joy in suffering, should this be the case?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on June 4, 2006 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] John Piper, "Fresh Words", 2/8/2006. [http://www.desiringgod.org/library/fresh\\_words/2006/020806.html](http://www.desiringgod.org/library/fresh_words/2006/020806.html)

[2] I am indebted to John Piper for these observations in chapter 19 of his excellent book on ministry, "Brothers, We are NOT Professionals." Chapter 19 is entitled, "Brothers, Our Affliction Is For Their Comfort."

[3] "Day by Day", Carolina Sandbell Berg.

[4] "How Firm a Foundation", Rippon's Collected Hymns