

The Chain of Tribulation and Love

A thought question...

1 *What do you think most people hope to attain in their religion?*

This is a different question than what do *you* hope to attain in your religion. This is, what do you think the world of religion is seeking in their religion? For the purpose of this question let's disregard those religions that are looking to destroy anyone that is not a part of them.

So, obviously there will be different answers to this.

- 2** ● Some are sincere in their desire to do what the Bible says, just mislead
- Some have been deceived because they put their faith on man not God
- Some are looking to profit in this world instead of the next

These are just a couple, there are so, so many more. Social status, career, even money, anything and everything that can motivate people can become reasons to affiliate themselves with a religion.

What is interesting is that no one you might ask this question of ever answers...

3 *"To glory in tribulations"*

Now, truth be told, that was the mind of the Apostle Paul. Note what he says in...

Rom 5:3-5

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3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; **4** and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; **5** and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Paul states categorically that he takes great joy, exults, in tribulation. He understands that tribulation brings about growth, character, and hope, and this hope never disappoints. In this world we have many hopes. Hopes concerning how our lives will play out, the careers we have, our children, our family, and while these hopes are strong motivations to learn and to improve, this is not what Paul is talking about. Note verse 1-2...

Rom 5:1-2

5

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Paul speaks of those things that should be the motivation for our religion...

- 6** A) "Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"
- B) "Access by faith into this grace wherein we stand"
- C) "Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God"

What beautiful and comforting thoughts; Peace with God, being invited into a righteous relationship with Him in His presence through faith, and the joy of the Hope of eternal life. These are the lead-in for the passage we began with...

7 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

While this fourth idea doesn't surpass the other three, Paul seems to put it on a par with them.

8 *"We glory in tribulations also"*

The implication seems clear, that to glory in tribulation is an achievement that brings with it glory in the Lord.

Here then is where the question arises...

9 *"How can this be?"*

The answer, I think, can be found in our text. As we look at the thing Paul writes in **Rom 5:1-5**, I see a chain. 10 What we want to do in this lesson is look at the links of this chain and draw some lessons from it. As we look at what Paul says we see these things...

- 11
- 1) Tribulation
 - 2) Patience
 - 3) Character
 - 4) Hope
 - 5) Love

The order of these links is not necessarily this, there are obviously other ways to view it, but for the sake of this lesson, this is going to be our order. Now, the idea is that when the first link, tribulation, is connected with the last, the Love of God, then the chain is complete.

12 1) Tribulation

I guess the first thought is where does this tribulation come from? Since Paul obviously includes it as part of the chain of our religious motivation, is the source of this tribulation from God? Not according to what Christ says in...

John 16:33 13
33 "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

Christ is clear, tribulation is a part of this world and does not originate with God, because He says He has overcome it. Interesting dynamic there; tribulation originates from this world and yet the Christian is to rejoice in it. See what Peter says...

1 Peter 1:6 14
6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

The answer to how we are to rejoice in tribulation is found in the next verse in Peter...

1 Peter 1:7 15
7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Tribulation, or rather, our reaction to tribulation, is the proof of our faith. When the Christian perseveres in the face of the tribulation of this world, then they are proving their faith, just as Paul and so many others did...

Rev 7:13-14

16

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" **14** I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Our faith is tested and then perfected in our perseverance. Therein is the joy that is to be found in tribulation.

This brings us to our next link in the chain...

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2) Patience

As we have already seen whether or not tribulation works joy or grief in us, is dependent upon our reaction to it. Tribulation can either work to strengthen our faith or it can bring us low...

Rom 8:35

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35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

The point that is made here is that we can be separated from Christ, just not by anything there is in this world, except ourselves. Paul then emphasizes that very point...

Rom 8:38-39

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38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When we understand and believe the absolute truth of what God tells us through Paul here, we can then, and only then, we can begin to experience the joy of knowing that tribulation works within us Godly patience and endurance as we work towards a home in heaven.

There will be tribulation in our lives, you can count on that, unfortunately. When we respond to that tribulation with the patience that comes from the Word of God, we prove our faith and that builds our...

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3) Character

The Gospel has a lot of different things that are emphasized throughout it. Faith, love, commitment, trust; these are all things that the scriptures teach and emphasize as being crucial to the Christian in the growth of their character. The idea of character speaks to who we are, what we are. Not what we want others to see, but the deep down person that we are. That is our character, that is our essence, and that is what the Lord tells we will stand accountable for.

2 Cor 5:10

21

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Friends, we will be judged by what we do, who we are, our character. That is what Paul is saying in Rom. 6 when he describes baptism as a death, burial, and resurrection. We die to our old character, the one that lives in this world, and we are buried with Christ in that death, and then raised

into a newness of life, a new character that does not live in the world of sin, but commits to living for Christ in word and deed.

Therein is the growth process of our character. It would be wonderful if when baptized the transformation was instantaneous, but it isn't. It's a process, a growth that we must all go through.

1 Peter 2:1-3 22

1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, **2** like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, **3** if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Peter illustrates this for us in...

2 Peter 1:5-7 23

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; **6** And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; **7** And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

We often call these...

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"The Christian Virtues"

These are the some of the things, some of the virtues that Peter tells us we are to have in our lives. Think of these as the traits, the characteristics, that the child of God is to exhibit in their lives.

2 Peter 1:8-9 25

8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

Living a life as a Christian, with the characteristics proscribed by God is what we will be judged by. This is where the next link in the chain comes in...

26 4) Hope

Why bother? Why put up with the nonsense of this world? If there is nothing after this life, then what's the point of this life? That's hope; knowing that there is, in fact, something more when this is all done. Hope is expecting to receive the best of the next life as opposed to the worst. Paul sums up what we have been looking at in...

Titus 2:11-13 27

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, **12** instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, **13** looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,

God's grace sent Christ to die for us and gave His Word to guide us into Godliness so that we might live sensibly, righteously looking forward to hope that He promised to all that live faithfully and obediently.

In reality, the importance of hope is that is our hope that motivates us to live faithfully and obediently. If we don't have the hope of eternal life, then there is no need to live this life with character, Christian character.

Here then is the last link in Paul's chain...

28 5) Love

The connection between love and hope, or for that matter any of the things that we have talked about is undeniable and unmistakable. Love is the glue that binds, the Word that guides, the reason for commitment, and the blood that saves. It was because of love that God sent Christ to be our savior, **John 3:16**.

There are over 300 references to love in various contexts in the scriptures, over 200 of those in the New Testament.

For the rest of this lesson we want to give some thought to this idea of love.

1 John 4:8-10

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8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. **9** By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. **10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

While love is a commandment, it is also, and maybe most importantly, a response. If we don't love, God or man, then we don't understand or know love. Our love for God is founded in the fact that He sent His Son to die that we might live.

John says it very plainly...

1 John 4:19-20

30

19 We love, because He first loved us.

So, as we look at the chain that Paul illustrated, we see...

31

1) Tribulation - ***The tests of this world that teach us patience and application of God's Word***

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2) Patience - ***What tribulation generates when endurance is founded on the Word***

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3) Character - ***The natural outgrowth of spiritual patience***

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4) Hope - ***The manifestation of trust in God and the motivation for patience***

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5) Love - ***The foundation of faithful obedience and the source of salvation***

Paul's chain binds man to perfect love. Man's love that can only be made complete, or perfect, when it is founded in the love of God. When we base our love on the love of God then our Hope grows stronger, our character strengthens, our patience increases, and our endurance in the face of tribulation grows.

Notice what John says in...

1 John 4:18

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

This world brings fear. Fear of the problems of it. Fear of the past. Fear of the future. While we can't stop the problems this world brings, we can learn to deal with them in patience and endurance. We can't erase the past, but we can be forgiven. We can't predict the future but we can have an assurance of eternal life based on our hope that is founded in the love of God. We can perfect, make complete, our love by abiding in His.