

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Romans 5: 3-4

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. Let's continue to read Romans Chapter 5. We will read verses 3-4 today.

The effect of justification by faith brings peace between redeemed sinners and God, enabling them to continually stand in the realm of grace through faith, joyfully hoping for God's glory. Yesterday, we mentioned that the phrase "joyfully" in the Greek original is a verb, which can be translated into English as "rejoice," "boast," or "celebrate," meaning joy, boasting, or celebrating. Paul particularly loved using this word, employing it three times in the short passage of Romans 5:1-11: in verses 2, 3, and 11. Personally, I think "boast" is the best translation—boasting in our hope. What is our hope? It is that God's glory will be manifested in us.

In Christianity, the first question of the Westminster Catechism is well-known: the chief purpose of man is to glorify God. The common understanding is to be a good person and do good deeds to bring glory to God. This understanding is not wrong, but it is neither lofty enough nor entirely accurate. First, no matter how well we perform, we cannot add to God's glory. Second, if we are honest with ourselves, we often experience more failures than victories. Does this mean we cannot glorify God when we fall into difficulties and fail? In fact, true glory is when God is manifested in us, especially when we are in affliction, which is precisely the time we can glorify God.

The apostle Paul continually served among the Gentiles, establishing many churches. He experienced times of great prominence, but by the time of his martyrdom, the churches in Asia had abandoned him, and only Luke remained by his side. Thus, Paul specifically wrote to Timothy, hoping he would bring Mark and the cloak and parchments he left in Troas. This apostle, once greatly used by God, faced a somewhat desolate end; he didn't even have a cloak to shield him from the

cold and had to ask Timothy to bring it. But Paul felt differently. His boasting was not in his work or its influence; his boasting was entirely in God.

Therefore, in 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Paul said: “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” Paul, facing great affliction and imminent martyrdom, was certain that a crown of righteousness was reserved for him, enabling him to face martyrdom joyfully. Paul followed God throughout his life, knowing that the path to glory is a path of affliction. Thus, he specifically used Romans 5:3-5a to tell us the lessons we must learn on the path to glory.

Verse 3: “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance.”

The previous verse spoke of hoping for God’s glory to be manifested in us; this verse begins with “not only that.” This means we do not only rejoice and boast when God’s glory is manifested in us, but in the process of reaching that glory, we encounter many tribulations, and in these tribulations, we should also joyfully boast.

Paul could say this entirely from the conclusion of his own experiences. In Acts 16:16-34, when Paul and Silas first arrived in Philippi, their first stop in Europe, Philippi was a garrison city populated mostly by Roman soldiers and their families. They struggled to find a way to preach the gospel, and God allowed them to face tribulation, being unjustly imprisoned. Acts 16:25 says, “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” In tribulation, Paul did not pray for deliverance but prayed and sang hymns loudly at midnight, praising God. Because of their praise, the earth shook greatly, and the prison doors opened. Paul did not leave but used the opportunity to preach the gospel to the jailer, who was about to kill himself, leading to the establishment

of the Philippian church. Thus, Paul's statement about glorying in tribulations comes entirely from his own experience.

The Greek word for tribulation, "thlipsis", emphasizes internal pressure, making one feel confined with no way out. External tribulations may injure our bodies, and those wounds may heal over time, but internal pressure and the sense of no escape keep one in a prolonged state of anxiety and hopelessness—this is true tribulation. Paul tells us to joyfully endure such tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance.

Here, we must see the difference between human life and God's life. Human life is limited and temporary; when the heart faces torment and feels trapped, people try every means to escape, resulting in scars or even developing a hardened callus. I believe saints have seen those who suffer long-term become hardened and indifferent. But God's life is different—eternal, infinite, and full of power.

When a saint faces prolonged internal torment, the eternal life in their spirit begins to operate and grow; through these tribulations, perseverance is produced. The Greek word for perseverance, "hupomone", is composed of two parts: "hupo", meaning "under," and "mone", meaning "remain" or "abide." In English, it is often translated as "endure," and in Chinese, it means dwelling long in tribulation. This means allowing tribulation to bring about the operation and growth of life, enabling us to joyfully remain in tribulation without asking God to remove it. We must recognize that life's lessons are not cheap; prolonged internal pressure and torment are necessary nutrients. Every servant greatly used by God is placed in prolonged pressure, allowing their spiritual life to operate, grow, and mature.

Brother Lawrence, one of the most respected saints in 17th-century Catholicism, could not become a monk due to his lowly background but resolved to serve God. He was assigned to cook for the monks in a monastery. Amid the noisy clatter of pots and pans, this environment could not prevent the serene rest he found in God's presence. His book, **The Practice of the Presence of God**, has helped thousands of saints. Tribulation produces perseverance, meaning we joyfully

remain in the environment God has assigned, faithfully fulfilling our duties, and giving thanks in all things during this process.

Dear brothers and sisters, the environment God has assigned to you may be an unreasonable spouse, a disobedient child, a difficult mother-in-law, or a boss who often takes credit for your work. If you focus on escaping this environment, you miss the purpose of the environment God tailored for you. You must return to your spirit to draw on the supply of life, helping you willingly remain in this environment. Over time—not a week or a month, but often years—you will produce perseverance, finding rest and joy in that environment.

Verse 4: “and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

Perseverance produces character. The Greek word for character is *dokime*, meaning approved character, that is, a character that has been tested and proven. The Chinese term for “character” (often translated as “maturity” or “experience”) suggests worldly shrewdness or even a hint of cunning, but that is not the meaning here. In Scripture, spiritual character is a quality that, having been tested, makes a person pleasant to be around. A person who can remain joyful and at rest under prolonged tribulation and pressure will certainly exude a beautiful character that feels comfortable and smooth to others. It is like refining gold: in a high-temperature environment, impurities rise to the surface, and once skimmed off, pure gold remains. A person’s character, refined through testing, has the impurities of the old self—such as selfishness, ambition, and lust—removed, leaving behind an approved character.

For Christians, spiritual character is a quality of consistency between the inner and outer life. Many people say one thing but do another. However, a spiritually approved saint is sincere; what they say aligns with what they do. Their old self is continually removed by God, and they become one with Christ. They do not serve in religion but supply Christ; they do not serve in the natural man but supply life; they do not serve in zeal but supply ministry. Their fellowship with others is full of anointing, making them pleasant to be around.

Character produces hope. A Christian's hope is not a fanciful dream but something that grows gradually. When an approved saint is full of Christ's virtues, at Christ's return, these virtues will become the glory manifested in them—this is their hope of glory. Colossians 1:27 says, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." This means Christ must grow in each of us. In Romans 4:18-21, Paul cites Abraham's example: "who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, 'So shall your descendants be.' And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform." Ultimately, Abraham produced Isaac, a type of Christ, and the same applies to us. God, who calls things that do not exist into being, will produce Christ in every saint, and Christ will become our hope of glory.

Let us pray together: Lord, we offer thanks and worship for the daily environment You have assigned to us. Your wisdom is higher than ours, Your thoughts higher than ours, and what You prepare for us is the very best. Help us joyfully remain in our tribulations, letting tribulation produce perseverance, perseverance produce approved character, and approved character produce hope. How You long to produce the virtues of Jesus Christ in us, and this process requires tribulation. Thus, grant us special mercy and grace in tribulation. Help us fix our eyes on Christ, knowing He is the author and finisher of our faith. When we lose hope, enable us to hold fast to Your promise in us—that Christ will be our hope of glory. Bless my daily life. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.