

The Conforming Spirit of God

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Date: 02 February 2014

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[0 : 00] We continue with our series in Romans chapter 5. If you would turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 5, which you will find in page 942 of the Pew Bible.

I'm going to read from chapter 5, verse 1 through to verse 11. But as we see, chapter 5 begins with the word, therefore, which takes us back into an argument that Paul has been building on since chapter 3.

So before we come to chapter 5, I just want to read two verses in chapter 3, beginning in verse 20 of chapter 3. Let us hear then the word of God.

For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

[1 : 34] More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that sufferings produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person, one would dare even to die.

But God shows his love for us, and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since therefore, we have now been justified by his blood.

Much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Amen.

[2 : 48] And may God add his blessing to this, the reading of his word. We'll turn, if you would, to Romans chapter 5.

And we're continuing our study on these first 11 verses of the chapter, page 942, I think, if you have one of the church Bibles. and we've been calling this the fruit of a great Savior's grace.

And we come tonight to the third of these fruits, which I'm calling the gift of the conforming Spirit of God. One of the things that we've seen this chapter shows us so very clearly is that Christian faith is the very opposite of all human religion.

Religion is all about reaching up to please God, to seek for acceptance with God. But Christianity is the very opposite. It's all about God reaching down to reconcile himself with sinful human beings.

That's what verse 11 of Romans 5 says. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have received reconciliation. It's not about religion. It's not about our doing at all.

[4 : 17] Verse 1 says, we are justified solely by faith. That's shorthand for being counted right with God, righteous with God, solely by the gift of God's grace received by our empty hands of faith.

It all comes from the hand of God himself to us as a free gift, as Romans chapter 3 verse 23 puts it. And therefore, because of that, it is all guaranteed to us.

Because it's not the fruit of our work. It is the fruit of our great Savior's grace. And that means that we can be certain of what we have. It means that we can know that it will never fail us, not ever, if we keep on trusting our wonderful Savior.

Many of you I know have great trust in John Lewis. John Lewis is one of the few retailers that seem to be beating the recession. And many people will go and buy their cookers, their fridges, their TVs, all the rest of it from John Lewis.

Why? Because they know they get a better guarantee. It's longer. It's better. And if there's any trouble, you just take it back and it's their responsibility.

[5 : 36] You don't have to send it away in the post back to Amazon, even though you got a pound cheaper from them. It's all done right there in front of you. But the guaranteed grace of our wonderful Savior far, far surpasses even the best guarantee that you'll find anywhere on this earth.

We can be certain. We have a certain status with God. We are declared righteous or justified, as verse 1 says. We are in the right with God.

Guaranteed. Our personal righteousness is guaranteed because we're righteous through our great Savior alone. And not at all through our own religious pedigree, our own religious performance. And we are therefore guaranteed a continuous standing with God, says verse 2. Constant and uninterrupted. We have permanent access into his grace.

Permanent rejoicing in the hope of glory. Our personal relationship with God is guaranteed because we are reconciled by our great Savior alone.

[6 : 52] By grace. Not by our own faithfulness. And certainly not by our own fruitfulness. We've entered forever into the place of fellowship.

We've gone through the door, which is our Savior, Jesus Christ. And there's no door of exit. It's certain. So verse 2 says, We stand permanently in that grace now.

And we rejoice in even more that is to come. The hope of the glory of God that is still to be fully revealed to us. Now we'll come back to that in a week or two's time.

But tonight I want to focus on what Paul goes on to speak about in verses 3 to 5. Because along with the certain status that we have with God and the continuous standing, the access that we have with him, another fruit of our great Savior's grace is that we have received, says Paul, through him, the Holy Spirit.

The conforming Spirit of God. And he is a great and wonderful fruit of God's grace to us through our wonderful Savior.

[8 : 06] And what Paul teaches us here, as well as, of course, in many other places in the New Testament, is that our personal renewal is also guaranteed because we are being renewed by the Spirit of our great Savior alone.

By his grace and not by our own piety or our own performance. So I want to focus tonight on these verses and what Paul is saying to us here about our celebration in sufferings, about our comforter from the Savior, and about our conforming to the Son.

Now the first of these sounds very strange, maybe even very jarring to our ears. Our celebration in sufferings. Look at verse 3. More than that, says Paul, we rejoice or we boast or we could say we celebrate confidently in our sufferings.

He means our present sufferings. The many things that we still face in these sinful fallen bodies of ours. And in this sinful fallen world of ours.

Including, of course, persecution and hardship. All of these things that the New Testament promises. Promises will come in whatever form to all genuine followers of Jesus.

[9 : 32] We are very conscious, aren't we, of the frailty and of the fallenness of our world. Just today in the news we're hearing about earthquakes.

We're hearing about droughts in some places and floods in other places. All kinds of things that we would call, I suppose, natural calamities. But the world is also full of many human calamities.

There's warfare all around the world. There's strife. We're just hearing about Bangkok. The Central African Republic. Syria. Egypt. Many, many other places.

And plenty more. I wonder if, like me, sometimes you just find that the news makes you feel overwhelmed by it all. It's a new thing, isn't it, of our age that within an instant, all the terrible happenings of the world are suddenly fed into us almost instantly.

Previous generations, I suppose, had weeks, maybe months before they heard about some of these things. I'm sure that's one factor that adds to our stress in modern life. We're bombarded with some of these dreadful things.

[10 : 39] The suffering of our world can be quite overwhelming at times. And it's important, isn't it, that as Christians we don't try and pretend these things away.

We can't do that if we're honest. We have to face up to these things. But rejoicing, celebrating in sufferings.

Surely not. Surely that can't be. Surely that is perverse. Can a Christian family who have lost everything in Syria and been dispossessed, can they rejoice in such suffering?

Can a Christian who's imprisoned in Pakistan under threat of the death sentence because supposedly they have committed blasphemy, can they rejoice in that suffering? How can a Christian here in Glasgow in the midst of family struggles?

Or battling against maybe addictive forces? Or struggling with some kind of bodily weakness or sickness? Or the many, many other things in life that we find so hard and that we struggle with that sap our energy, that sap our morale.

[11 : 56] Can we really rejoice? Can we rejoice and celebrate these things? What kind of strange masochism are you talking about, Paul? Well, we do need to be careful.

Of course we do. Especially in the face of some kind of major catastrophe. And especially in the face of personal calamities that some of our friends or our Christian families might be suffering. Sometimes Christians are not wise. Sometimes they're very crass and they're very glib in the pronouncements they make at these sorts of times.

You know, the kind of thing, oh, don't worry about what's happened to you. God's told me that something wonderful is going to happen out of all of this. Something's going to come out of this that will be marvelous. Don't you doubt it. All things work together for good.

A big smile and a slap on the back. That's not, not, not the way to conduct ourselves as Christians. Do not misunderstand.

[13 : 02] Not ever. And that kind of thing is rightly criticized by others and people who are not Christians. Rightly so. It's just crass. It's just insensitive. Paul tells us in this very letter, doesn't he?

In chapter 12. What are we to do? Weep with those who weep. Weep with those who weep. We must be careful not to be inhuman with others who are suffering greatly.

Job's comforters, by the way, are not our example. That's not why the book of Job is in our Bible. Many Christians don't seem to realize that. We've got to be careful.

But at the same time, the Bible does teach us, and we must also, when we think about our own lives particularly, and when we try to come to terms with the struggles and the suffering that we will face in life, and maybe some of us are facing some of these things right now in their lives, we must also listen to what Christ's apostle is telling us about these sufferings.

Because, friends, the truth is that only what the apostle Paul tells us here can make any sense at all of the experience of Christian suffering.

[14 : 22] And only what he says here can bring us any encouragement in these experiences when they come to us. And there is encouragement. I want you to know that. There is great encouragement.

Because Paul says that these very sufferings mark out the road to glory. Mark out the road to the greater glory of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

See, there's only one road to that glory. And it's the road traveled by Jesus himself. It's the road that our Lord Jesus himself called everyone who would be a disciple of his to walk on likewise.

It's a road that is called the way of the cross. Therefore, suffering is the inevitable mark of those who are walking on the road with Jesus.

It's the hallmark of the true child of God. That's what the gospel teaches us. Turn over page 2, Romans chapter 8, verses 16 and 17.

[15 : 31] And you can see there just how clearly Paul tells us that the mark of a genuine child of God, that the mark of someone possessed truly by the spirit of the risen Lord Jesus, is the mark of suffering.

Romans 8, verse 16. The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him, in order that we may also be glorified with him.

You see, that's why Paul can say that we rejoice, that we celebrate in the suffering with Jesus and for Jesus, because it's the true mark of the family likeness of Jesus.

But notice, and this is very important, it's not that Paul says we're just abandoned in our suffering now until Jesus comes. That is what some Christians seem to think and even teach.

[16 : 41] As though every good in our salvation was still all completely in the future and not yet. But there's nothing for us now in this life until Jesus comes again. But that is not so.

We're not abandoned as orphans. We're not left to fend for ourselves and just make do the best we can until the glory of Christ comes. What did Jesus say? I will not leave you as orphans.

We're looking at that on Wednesday evening, in the upper room. I will send you, says Jesus, another comforter, the Holy Spirit, to dwell in you.

And that is what Paul is talking about right here in Romans chapter 5. The comforter from the Savior. The Holy Spirit who's poured out from heaven. He is the spirit of our great Savior himself, who Paul says here in Romans 8, is within us to bear testimony that we are God's true children. The wonderful fruit of our great Savior's grace is that we possess him. The Spirit. The comforter sent from Jesus himself, sent to us, to lead us home to that glory with him.

[17 : 56] And if you look back to Romans chapter 5, you'll see that the Holy Spirit is the key to the whole of this central section here in verses 3 to 8. You see the reason why Paul says we can celebrate confidently.

Why he says we can rejoice even in our sufferings. It's because, he says, God's grace to us in Christ guarantees us the presence of his Holy Spirit.

His conforming Spirit who is shaping us now for that glory that is to come. He is in us working our renewal.

He's producing in us endurance, says Paul, and character and hope that leads inevitably to glory. And that renewal is guaranteed because we are being renewed by the Spirit of our great Savior himself and him alone.

Not by our performance, not by our special piety. Jesus called the Spirit the comforter. He meant that in the old sense of that word, bringing forte, bringing strength to carry us to glory.

[19 : 12] And you see what the Holy Spirit of Jesus is doing is that he is using all these present sufferings to shape us and to fit us for glory.

But that glory is not in doubt. It's guaranteed to us precisely because we are being conformed by the Spirit of Jesus himself into the image of Jesus himself.

And we are being forged in the very same school as Jesus himself. Look at verse 5.

It's really central to this whole section that links the past grace in which we stand already with the glory and the full salvation which is still to come beyond the day of judgment in the resurrection life of Jesus.

See, Paul is just like Peter, as we saw in his letter. We're not yet saved in that sense. Our full salvation is not yet. Verse 9 is very clear on that, as is verse 10.

[20 : 09] Look at verse 9. We shall be saved from God's wrath in the judgment to come. It's the future. Verse 10. We shall be saved in his life.

That is still future. But it's guaranteed because, look at verse 5, because God's love has been poured into our hearts already by the Holy Spirit.

It's the ministry of the Comforter, the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Christian believer now that links the once and for all justifying work of Jesus on the cross in the past and both assures us that that work is real and effective in our lives now so that we know God and we know we do have peace with him and also that assures us that we shall at last be brought safe home to glory, that we shall at last receive that full salvation that's promised.

Because the Holy Spirit is the first fruit of that full salvation. It's the language Paul uses in Romans 8 verse 23. He is the down payment, if you like.

He's the guarantee of the inheritance until we're in full possession of it. We'll be in full possession of it when our bodies are raised and there'll be no more doubt.

[21 : 33] We have bodies that will live forever like our Lord Jesus Christ. But the Holy Spirit is until then the guarantee. Paul uses the same language exactly in Ephesians chapter 1 and in 2 Corinthians chapter 1.

Read it later. But he says in Ephesians, When you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.

Notice he is speaking about every true believer in Jesus Christ here. When you hear the gospel and when you believe it, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit.

It's the Holy Spirit who gives you new birth. It's the Holy Spirit who changes your life. It's the Holy Spirit who makes you a Christian believer. You can't be a Christian believer without the Holy Spirit in your heart.

Don't let anyone ever tell you that somehow you need some new and different experience of the Holy Spirit as well as believing in Christ, as well as trusting in Christ.

[22 : 44] That is not the Christian gospel. That's a demonic twisting of biblical faith. And that kind of thing has done terrible damage to many people over the years.

Look down at Romans chapter 8 verse 9 in case you don't believe me. This is such an important verse, the second half of Romans 8 verse 9. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Do you get that? Is that clear? Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ is not a sub-Christian Christian. He's not a Christian at all. Not a Christian.

But if you are a believer, look at verse 11. The Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you. He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

It's the Spirit, the Comforter sent from the Savior who assures us that God's grace to us in Christ is real now. And he assures us also of the glory that we are called to and that that is real and guaranteed to us.

[24 : 03] Friends, let me tell you there is no greater ministry in the whole world than that ministry of the Holy Spirit. The great ministry of the Spirit of God in the human heart is that he assures fearful, beleaguered Christian people that yes, they are disciples of Jesus.

That yes, they are on the road to glory, even when it seems that they're on the road to ruin.

Because he is leading them on that road to glory.

Because he's leading them in the way of the cross, just like Jesus. Through suffering that leads to glory everlasting. And that's why Paul says, you see, that we can rejoice even in sufferings.

Because these things are the evidence of the work of God's Holy Spirit in our lives. Evidence that he is fitting us for glory as true heirs of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is our Comforter. He's our Strengtheners. He's the one who fills us with joy because through his renewing work in our lives, we are being conformed into the image of God's Son.

[25 : 24] Into the image of our wonderful Savior himself. And Paul says, we celebrate even in suffering. Because the Comforter sent from the Savior is conforming us into the likeness of the Son.

And that's Paul's deepest focus here in these verses. Thirdly, that the Holy Spirit is the conforming Spirit. Conforming us to God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's his chief work. He's shaping us in love to be conformed into the image of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen to verses 3 to 5 again. We rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance. And endurance produces character.

And character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame. Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who's been given to us.

[26 : 32] Do you see the thread of Paul's argument? Look again. Verse 3. Suffering produces endurance and character. And through that hope that will not be put to shame.

Verse 5. In other words, it will not be disappointed. It will never be unrealized. It will never be unfulfilled. It will certainly be realized. Because, verse 5.

Because the Holy Spirit has been given to us. Poured out by God's sheer grace. Purpose. Guarantees our hope.

So according to Paul, the mark of the Holy Spirit filling a Christian believer is not ecstasy. It's suffering. very clear isn't it right in front of us here that's why you see prosperity theology of all kinds the kind of theology that says the mark of the Holy Spirit in your life is glory now that's why it is all utterly wrong it's downright dangerous it's downright demonic because it's the very opposite of what the New Testament gospel plainly teaches you can see that with your own eyes it is not glory now it's suffering now says Romans 5 verse 3 that's just what Jesus himself said to the devil in the wilderness do you remember?

Satan said here Jesus I'll give you glory now dominion over the whole earth you only have to do one thing abandon that road to the cross abandon that road to suffering but Jesus said no glory to come yes but only only through suffering now only through this road the road to the cross but notice

here in Romans 5 it's not just suffering now and glory to come Paul says it is suffering now shaping us now for that glory to come as the Spirit as the Spirit conforms us to the Lord Jesus Christ through our sufferings first verse 3 suffering produces endurance or patience some versions say or perhaps best patient endurance it's the same word as in chapter 8 verse 25 where Paul says that we wait for the full glory of our resurrection bodies in hope we wait he says with patient endurance you sometimes think to yourself will I really ever make it to the end of the road in the Christian life will I really be able not to fall away will I stand at the last such a struggle

[29 : 27] I feel so weak I feel so unsure that I'm going to make it do you think that is it only me but God says you see that very struggle is the evidence of my Spirit at work in you to make you endure suffering works endurance and the fact of your present struggles if that's you should reassure you that you will make it because my Spirit is at work in you that's what God is saying to you I think I've mentioned before about a relative of mine who does these triathlons and once did one of these Ironman triathlons where you swim two and a half miles and then cycle 112 miles and then run a marathon at the end just for good measure I always joke with her she should call it the crazy man not the Ironman but I remember saying to her do you really think you'll make it and she said well I've got a coaching plan and there's a set exercise every day and my coach guarantees that if I stick with him and his schedule then I'll make it

I'll finish the race and she did and she did because that suffering produced endurance exactly as her coach promised so in the midst of all that grueling training when no doubt she was saying to herself will I make this will I make it she could say to herself well I know I will all these aches and pains in my muscles are testimony to the truth these aches and pains are promising final victory and you see Paul is saying in just the same way we rejoice in our present sufferings because we know that these things are shaping us for victory suffering produces patient endurance endurance and second he said patient endurance produces character that is tried and tested worth real faith the Bible tells us is tried and tested by fire that's what we learned in 1 Peter chapter 1 do you remember it's an earthquake isn't it when it happens that tests the real quality of the buildings we saw that just was it last year when there was the earthquake and the tsunami in Japan there was terrible devastation where the wave hit but all over Japan where the earthquake was strong there were many many many buildings still standing great skyscrapers and all sorts of things because they'd been properly built to withstand earthquakes but do you remember a few years ago there was a big earthquake like that in Turkey and it was very very different all over that country the buildings were just collapsed everywhere because well the builders had been shoddy they hadn't been building to withstand the day of reckoning it's the same with any sports team like a rugby team any team might have a lot of promise but the big test is when you're up against the champions that's what's going to show if your team really has got character and patient endurance I'm obviously not talking about the Scottish rugby team that's obvious mind you even the Irish don't you snigger even the Irish when they were against the world champions didn't come out shining did they sorry I couldn't resist that but just so do you see patient endurance comes through trial and suffering and patient endurance produces real character and also proves that real character and thirdly in verse 4 you see Paul says character produces hope stronger and stronger certain hope of glory you want assurance that your faith will make it says Paul well so do I but this is how God assures us this is how he's shaping us for glory this is how he is conforming us as his conforming and comforting spirit leads us through all of this and uses all of this to guarantee our arrival at the finish line of victory it's what's being forged in us in the spirit filled and spirit led fires of affliction in our lives that gives us in the end unshakable hope it's very hard isn't it it's very hard when you're in the midst of the fires of affliction in life whatever those fires might be for you and yet so often it is true in our experience that it is through these fires that our certain hope is strengthened and made real

I remember somebody telling me just some years ago while they were in the midst of very great pain and grief nursing their spouse through a terminal illness of cancer and they said to me do you know in the midst of this I'm so thankful because now I know that I'm never going to fall away from Christ I always feared that I might but you see God has kept me through all this suffering so desperate and so deep and all this burden of pain and anguish and grief and he's kept me and he's keeping me and now I know that he'll be able to keep me through anything it's a wonderful testimony isn't it but so often that's true in our experience I've often felt that's true of us as a fellowship over this past year that all we've gone through as a church has produced endurance and

character and it's given us hasn't it hope more than ever of God's sovereign purpose for good in blessing us and given us so much joy in that well it has for me suffering says Paul works hope that will never be put to shame never be disappointed because the Holy Spirit has been given to us the Spirit of the Lord Jesus conforming us to his pattern and leading us with him on the road to eternal glory the road to eternal union with Christ our Savior himself which is the road to Calvary in this world do you see the double description that Paul gives us in these verses of that road to glory as it's mapped out in verses 2 to 4 from justification to the hope of glory on the one hand look at verses 1 and 2 you see he says the path is faith that leads to peace which brings access to God and the hope that we rejoice in but on the other hand verse 3 you see it's suffering that produces endurance that produces character which produces that hope two different perspectives on the same road to glory one's the objective reality of the gospel of Christ but the other is what that looks like in our subjective experience of life and as somebody said they follow each other as cause and effect these things are our real experience precisely because we are being shaped in God's love to be conformed to the image of his son as chapter 8 verse 29 tells us that's what

God's eternal decree for those that he foreknew for those that he predestined to be conformed into the image of his son that's what that decree looks like in time and space and history in our lives as it's happening according to God's eternal purposes of grace for your life it's the proof that we're his that we're on the road to glory that we're being shaped into the pattern of our Lord Jesus he learned obedience through what he suffered says Hebrews 5 and thus he was made perfect not that Jesus was ever sinful but that the radiance of his glory was forged through his faithful human life as he was led by the Holy Spirit who filled him with all fullness and his risen life you see is now being wrought in us even now as we're united to him by the Spirit of holiness that's why Peter 2 says that we're blessed when we suffer why because the Spirit of glory rests upon you he says the Holy Spirit of our Lord Jesus himself that's why we rejoice that's why we can celebrate confidently even in our sufferings not because we're masochists oh there's no value in suffering for its own sake but sufferings that come because we follow the Lord Jesus in a world that hates him and in bodies that still resist his rule that is evidence of his Spirit at work in us to bring us to glory it's evidence of the Spirit who is and will keep on conforming us into the image of our wonderful

[39 : 45] Savior I think that's a wonderfully encouraging thing for us to know when you're hard pressed on every side when you feel as if you're about to go under when you feel as though the struggle is just so hard you wonder if you can continue a day longer it's the evidence that your hope is certain because the Holy Spirit has been poured into your heart as we come to a close just turn over with me would you to chapter 15 in verse 4 I want you to see something very important here Paul is urging the church in Rome to treasure the scriptures everything that's been written in former days for our instruction written by the Holy Spirit of course and preserved by the Holy Spirit for us today do you see what he says again about how we will have real hope real certainty of God's glory to come it comes as Paul in verse 4 through endurance the patient endurance that comes from suffering as we've seen and through the encouragement of the scriptures for whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope you see

God's conforming spirit the spirit of our wonderful savior himself the spirit of holiness the true human holiness of our perfect redeemer he is shepherding his people whom he foreknew shepherding all of us through this world to certain glory as it were with his rod in one hand and his staff in the other on the one hand Paul says that he shapes us for glory as he leads us through sufferings to produce in us real endurance on the other he says here that he shapes us for glory as he leads us to the scriptures to produce in us real encouragement to bring us great endurance through sufferings and great encouragement through the scriptures so that we might have hope that is the chief ministry of the Holy Spirit to us in our lives as Christians and we need both of those don't we sufferings on their own will just perplex us but the scriptures give us light to show us that this is the way of our

Lord Jesus Christ and this is the road to glory which is the road to the cross for every true disciple at the same time the scriptures if they were just on their own if they were totally removed from our lives and our experience well it would just be theory and theology and empty talk but it becomes real doesn't it it's proved real that's what the scriptures testify to us are worked out in the flesh in our lives in our real experiences we're tested so that as the Bible says we will come forth as gold friends if only we can grasp this that in all these things that so often perplex us and pain us and may even

at times seem to be punishing us from God God in all these things the ministry of the comforter sent from God our Savior is at work conforming us into the likeness of God the Son so that we can celebrate even in these sufferings rejoicing in the presence and in the powerful working of the Holy Spirit the conforming Spirit who gives us hope that will never be put to shame and so says Paul we rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us let's pray heavenly Father amid our great perplexities and often in the darkness of our pain we find it so hard to see the light of your truth open the heavens we pray and may this word of comfort and of great encouragement work in us endurance and character and hope for Jesus Christ our Savior's sake Amen for Sister