

The Conforming Spirit: True Alignment with the Son

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[0 : 00] So we're now going to turn to our Bible reading. And Willie, our minister, is leading us in the month of August through Romans chapter 5. And this morning we're going to read once again the first 11 verses. So do grab a Bible. If you don't have one with you, we do have visitors' Bibles.

If you wave your hand, if you're not sure where they are, Duncan would love to bring one to you.

And turn up to Romans chapter 5, and we're going to read together from verse 1.

Paul writes, 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. Not only that, but 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.

[1 : 16] 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, in 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 Him we have now received reconciliation. Well, amen. This is God's Word.

And we'll return to it shortly. Well, do you turn with me, if you would, to Romans chapter 5. The first 11 verses that we are looking at together in these Sundays in August.

[2 : 33] An opportunity to focus somewhere right in the heart of this great epistle to the Romans. And a little passage that just packs in so much of the doctrine that's unfolded really throughout the whole letter.

It helps us just to clarify some of the guaranteed fruits to us as believers of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we're thinking today about the conforming Spirit, the Spirit of God who comes to us to conform us to the likeness of His Son, the Lord Jesus.

Now, what we've seen, I hope, already in this chapter is that the Christian faith is the absolute opposite of all human religion.

Religion is all about reaching up to God, to find God, to please God, to find acceptance with God. Whereas the Christian faith, by total contrast, is all about God reaching down to us, to reconcile us, to bring us to Himself, by Himself, through His grace.

As verse 11 here in Romans 5 tells us, Through our Lord Jesus Christ we have received reconciliation. So it's not about our religious doings at all.

[3 : 53] Look at verse 1. We're justified solely by faith. And that's shorthand for being counted right with God, righteous with God, solely by the gift of God's grace, which is received only into empty hands.

That's all faith is, the empty hands that receives God's gift of grace. It's put very fully there in Romans 3, verse 23. So it all comes from the hand of God Himself as a gift.

And that is why, therefore, it can be guaranteed to us. Because it's all the fruit, not of our works, not of our doings, but of our great Savior's grace.

And that means that we can be certain. We can be certain of what we have and that it won't fail us, not ever, if we just keep trusting our great Savior Himself.

I'm not sure if it's still the case, but once it certainly was that people used to go and buy their TVs, their fridges, their washing machines, and all the rest of it from John Lewis, because everybody knew that John Lewis gave you a better guarantee.

[5 : 02] It wasn't just longer, but it was hassle-free. None of this sending it all back to Amazon or phoning up a retailer and trying to get it back. John Lewis would just take responsibility and sort it all out.

Now, that is the kind of guarantee you actually need, isn't it? I spent fruitless emails back and forward in this last couple of days to a retailer that turns out to be in China that makes bags for our Hoover, except it wasn't actually for our Hoover, it was for a different Hoover.

And when we tried to put them on, they didn't fit. Well, there's no kind of guarantee in that. He's offered me 50% off. That's the best offer so far. But you need a guarantee that doesn't fail, don't you?

And the guarantee presented here in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ from our wonderful Savior is far, far, far better than any guarantee that this earth, even John Lewis and the like, can give us, because we can be utterly certain of its terms.

We have a certain status with God, guaranteed. We are declared righteous. That's what verse 1 says, justified. That is, we are guaranteed in the right with God.

[6 : 12] Our personal righteousness is guaranteed. We are righteous because we're righteous through our Savior alone, not through our pedigree, not through our performance, not through anything of ours.

And therefore, we're also guaranteed, as verse 2 says, and we saw last week, our continuous standing with God, constant, uninterrupted. We have permanent access into His grace.

We have permanent rejoicing in the hope of glory. Our personal relationship with God is guaranteed because, yes, we're guaranteed.

We are brought right. We are brought into His presence by grace alone, not because of our ongoing fruitfulness, our faithfulness, anything in us. We have entered the place of fellowship with God forever.

There's no going back. And that's why verse 2 talks about us standing permanently in that grace now and rejoicing in even more that is to come, the hope of the glory of God that's still to be fully revealed.

[7 : 18] We'll come to that in a couple of weeks' time in the evening. We're swapping to the evening with Romans next week, and Josh will be in the mornings. But today I want to focus very clearly on what Paul says to us here in verses 3 to 5, because along with the certain status that we have with God in Christ, and therefore the continuous standing that we have in fellowship with the Father, there's yet another fruit of our great Savior's grace, and that is that we have received from Him His Holy Spirit.

We've received the conforming Spirit of God, the one who is within us, the one who lives with us to bring us and our whole life experience into true alignment with God the Son Himself.

And what Paul teaches here very clearly, as he does in many other places in the New Testament, is that not only is our personal righteousness before God guaranteed, not only is our ongoing personal relationship with God guaranteed by His grace, but so also is our personal renewal guaranteed, because we are being renewed by the Spirit of God, our great Savior, by His grace alone, and not by our personal piety, not by our personal performance.

And that is so, so important. I want to focus this morning on three things that Paul teaches us in these verses. He speaks about our celebration, even in sufferings. He speaks very much about our comforter from the Savior.

And he speaks about the purpose, which is our conforming to the Son. Now, the first of these things does sound very jarring, doesn't it? Very strange that we should be celebrating in sufferings.

[9 : 01] Look at verse 3. More than that, says Paul, we rejoice. Footnote says we boast. You could say we celebrate confidently in our sufferings.

Our sufferings. That is, our present sufferings. That we may still face in this sinful world, in our fallen bodies. And in this still-suffering world.

Including, of course, persecution and hardship. That the New Testament promises, promises will come, in whatever form it will come, will come to all, all genuine believers in Christ.

Well, we're very conscious, aren't we, of our frailty. We're conscious of the suffering in our world, the fallenness of our world. We read in our news, don't we, about earthquakes, about droughts, about flooding, and all sorts of other, what we might call natural calamities.

But we also read about warfare and strife. Think of Gaza, think of Syria, think of Ukraine and other places. Plenty more. Doesn't the news sometimes just make us overwhelmed by the sheer misery in our world?

[10:11] Actually, we really shouldn't watch the news nearly as much as we do, because it's not really news. So much of it is propaganda feeding us, making us think in certain ways.

But we can't pretend these things away, can we? These things that are before us in the world, we've got to face reality. But rejoice, celebrate in sufferings?

Surely that can't be right. Can a Christian family who's been dispossessed, who's lost everything they have and turned into refugees in Syria, for example, in recent days, can they rejoice in that kind of suffering?

Can a Christian who's been imprisoned in Pakistan because they've been accused of blasphemy, can they rejoice in that suffering? Can a Christian here in Glasgow, perhaps some of us here, in the midst of family struggles, or battling against addictive forces in your life, or struggling with bodily weakness or sickness, or many other things that we face all the time that we find so hard that sap our energy, sap our morale, can we rejoice?

Can we celebrate these sufferings? What kind of strange masochism is Paul talking about here?

Well, let me say this, we do need to be careful, of course we must be careful, especially in the face of some major catastrophe, or in the face of some personal calamity that a Christian friend of ours, or a member of the church, might be facing there.

[11:45] There is no place at all, none, for crass and glib pronouncements about other people's sufferings. We've got to be very careful. Sometimes, sometimes Christians do that. We make glib comments, very hurtful comments, to people who are suffering.

Oh, the Lord's told me that great things will come out of this. Don't you doubt it. All things work together for good. Rejoice. And you say it to somebody who's in deep misery, with a cheery voice, and a glib sort of sound.

No, no, no, no. That's not how we should conduct ourselves at all. That kind of thing is quite rightly to be criticized. Just crass, isn't it? It's insensitive. And Paul tells us later on in Romans chapter 12, by the way, that we're to weep with those who weep.

Not to be crass and insensitive. We've got to be careful not to be inhuman with others who are suffering greatly. When we read the book of Job, let's just be clear, Job's comforters are not there as a model for us.

They're the antithesis of how we should be. So we've got to be careful. But at the same time, the Bible does teach us that especially when we think about our own lives, we come to think about the suffering perhaps we're facing, the struggles, the battles that we face.

[13:04] As I said, that may be very real. I'm sure it is for some of us right now here this morning. But when that is the case, we do have to listen to Christ's apostle when he's telling us about these sufferings.

Because the truth really is that only what Paul says here and elsewhere in his letters actually makes any sense at all of our experience of Christian sufferings.

and only what he says here can actually bring us encouragement when we face the kind of experience of real suffering. And there is encouragement. There's great encouragement here.

Because what he says is these very sufferings are marking out for us the road to glory. The greater glory.

He's talking about the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. You see, what he's telling us and what our Lord Jesus tells us is that there is only one road to that glory.

[14:07] And that road is the road that our Savior Jesus himself walked. And it's the road that he called all his true followers to walk likewise with him. And it's called the way of the cross.

It's the *via dolorosa*, the way of suffering. And therefore, Paul is telling us that suffering is the inevitable mark of those who walk truly with Jesus Christ in this world.

It's the hallmark of the child of God. Turn over to Romans chapter 8 and look at verses 16 and 17 because we want to see there what Paul says so clearly about the mark of the genuine child of God, the one who is truly possessed by the Holy Spirit of the Lord Jesus.

Romans 8 and verse 16. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. That is the Holy Spirit's work within us. And if children then heirs, heirs of God, fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

[15:18] Provided we suffer with him, you see, we will inherit glory with him. And that's why we can rejoice, Paul says, we can celebrate in suffering with Jesus and for Jesus because it is the mark of true family likeness.

But notice, and this is very important, it's not just that we're abandoned by God in our suffering now just to wait until Jesus comes for that glory.

No. There are some Christians who seem to think that. There are Christians I've heard even teaching that as if everything of the good of salvation is still far, far in the future. There's absolutely nothing of joy for us now until Jesus comes again.

But that is not so. We're not abandoned as orphans to fend for ourselves, to make good throughout this suffering until the Lord Jesus comes. What did Jesus say in the upper room?

I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. I will send you another comforter. Who? The Holy Spirit to dwell in you.

[16:22] And that's who Paul is talking about right here. That's the second thing, the comforter from the Savior. The comforter who is poured into our hearts from heaven.

And it is the Holy Spirit of our great Savior himself that Paul says in Romans 8, 16 that we just read is within us to bear witness that we truly are God's children.

The wonderful fact of our great Savior's grace is that we possess him. We possess the comforter sent from Jesus himself and he leads us home to glory.

And he will never leave us until he has. If you look back to Romans 5, you'll see that the Holy Spirit is absolutely key, isn't he, to this whole central section from verses 3 to 8.

Do you see the reason why Paul says we can celebrate confidently? Why we can celebrate rejoicing even in sufferings in the present time? It is because God's grace to us in Christ guarantees to us the presence of his Holy Spirit, his conforming spirit.

[17:28] And what he is doing in our life is shaping us now for that glory that is to come. He's in us. He is working renewal in us.

He is providing in us and working in us endurance and character and the hope that leads inexorably to glory.

And that renewal is guaranteed, he says, because we're being renewed by the spirit of our great Savior alone, not through our graft and our piety and our performance and our grit or anything else. The spirit is the comforter as Jesus said in that old sense of the word. He is the strengthener. He brings 40 strength to carry us to glory and he is using all our present sufferings to shape us for that and to fit us for that glory.

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

[18:37] We're walking in the same school of our Savior. Look at verse 5. It's central, isn't it, to this whole section which links the past grace in which we stand already with the glory of our full salvation that is still to come beyond the judgment in the resurrection life of Jesus.

We need to be very clear about this, don't we? The Apostle Paul, just like the Apostle Peter, is absolutely clear that we are not yet saved. We're not yet saved in the fullest sense.

Salvation is not yet. Look at verse 9. We shall be saved, future tense, from the wrath to come.

Verse 10, just the same, future tense.

We shall be saved at last in his life. It's still future, isn't it? But, it's guaranteed because of verse 5, because God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

It's the ministry of the comforter of the Holy Spirit in the Christian believer now that links that once and for all justifying work of Jesus on the cross in the past, links us with that, and also assures us that his work is real and effective for us now, so that we know that we're right with God, so that we are at peace with God.

[20 : 00] It's the Holy Spirit who brings us that great assurance. But it's also the same Holy Spirit who assures us that we shall still be brought home safe to glory, that we shall yet inherit our full salvation.

Because, as Paul says in Romans 8, is it verse 23, that the Holy Spirit is the first fruits of that salvation to come. it's the beginning. He is the taste of that which will one day be full.

Holy Spirit is the down payment. He's the guarantee of our inheritance until we take full possession of it. That's the language Paul uses in Ephesians chapter 1. It talks the same way in 2 Corinthians chapter 1.

Ephesians 1 verse 14. 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, notice, the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

Do you notice there he is speaking about every true believer in Christ, isn't he? When you hear the gospel and when you believe, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit.

[21 : 18] He is the one who is giving you a new birth. He is the one who is changing you. You cannot be a Christian believer without the Holy Spirit in your heart. So doesn't anyone ever, ever tell you that you may need some new experience of the Holy Spirit after you have trusted Christ as well as believing in Christ to give you the full experience of being a Christian?

That is not the Christian gospel. Actually, that's a demonic twisting of the biblical faith. That sort of teaching has done untold damage to so many people over the years.

Look down to Romans chapter 8 again. Let me emphasize this. Second half of verse 9. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Not at all. He is not a Christian at all. Not a half Christian. Not a sort of Christian. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ.

But by contrast, verse 11, if you are a believer, then the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, that is now, and he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal body through his Spirit who is dwelling in you.

[22 : 34] Do you see? It is the Spirit. It is the Comforter sent from the Savior who assures us that God's grace to us in Christ is real now, already, and he assures us that the glory we are called to is also real and guaranteed.

Now let me tell you, friends, there is no greater ministry in the world than that, is there? There is no greater gift that God could give you than that. The assurance that God's grace to you in Christ is real now and the assurance that your future is guaranteed.

That is the great ministry of the Holy Spirit. He assures fearful Christians, beleaguered Christians, that yes, they certainly are on the road to glory.

He tells us because he is leading us on that road to glory in the way of the cross, just like Jesus, he is telling us that that suffering is what leads to glory everlasting, as it did for our Lord Jesus Christ. That's why we can rejoice. That's why we can celebrate even in sufferings because, Paul is telling us, they are the evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts, fitting us for glory, making us true heirs of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[23 : 52] He is our comforter, he is our strengthener. He is the one who fills us with joy because through his renewing work in our lives, we are being conformed to the image of God's own Son, the Lord Jesus himself, our great Savior.

And we celebrate, therefore, even in suffering because the comforter sent from the Savior is conforming us into the likeness of God's Son, the Lord Jesus.

And that really is Paul's deepest focus here, that the Holy Spirit is the conforming Spirit, that he is conforming us to the Son of God himself, and that's his chief work.

He's shaping us in love to be conformed to the image of God's Son. Let me read verses three to five again. So important. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and 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. You see how the thread of his argument goes? Look carefully again.

[25 : 08] Verse three, suffering produces endurance and character, and through that, hope that we'll not put to shame. In other words, it won't be disappointed, it won't be unrealized, it won't be unfulfilled, it will certainly be realized.

Because, verse five, the Holy Spirit has been given to us, poured out by God's sheer grace. So the mark of the Holy Spirit filling a Christian believer is not ecstasy, says Paul, but suffering. Isn't that striking? It's so clear, it's right in front of us. That is why prosperity theology, so-called of all kinds, that says the mark of the Holy Spirit is glory in your life now, that is why it is so utterly wrong. That's why it's dangerous, demonic, because it is the opposite of what the true gospel of Christ actually tells us, the plain teaching of the New Testament. It is not glory now, it's suffering now, says Paul.

Wasn't that exactly what the Lord Jesus said to the devil in the wilderness? What did Satan say to Jesus? Here, I'll give you glory now, Jesus. Dominion over the whole earth.

[26 : 25] Just turn your back on that road that you're on, the road to the cross. Not that road, I'll give you glory now. And what did Jesus say? No. Glory to come, yes, but only through my suffering now, only through the road that leads to the cross and to the cross alone.

But again, notice here in Romans 5, it's not just suffering now and glory to come. What Paul tells us is something far more profound. It is suffering now that is shaping us now for that glory to come. As the Spirit conforms us to the Lord Jesus through our suffering, through our sharing in His experience. So first, look at verse 3, suffering produces endurance or patience.

Perhaps best, patient endurance. It's the same word that's used in Romans 8, verse 25, when Paul says we wait for the full glory of our resurrection bodies in hope. We wait with patient endurance. I wonder if you sometimes think to yourself, as I sometimes think to myself, will you make it? Will you make it to the end of the road as a Christian?

[27 : 39] Will I really be able not to fall away? Such a struggle, isn't it, sometimes? We feel so weak. We can be unsure of that. And God says, you see, that very struggle that you're experiencing that makes you say those things is actually the evidence of my spirit at work to make you endure.

The fact of your present struggle should actually reassure you that you will make it because it assures you that my spirit is at work in your heart, making you struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil and not give in.

I've got a relative who does not just triathlons, but even Ironman triathlons. I don't know if you know what that is, but you swim for two and a half miles then you cycle for just 112 miles and you finish it off with an allegedly run of 26 miles to do a marathon.

When she told me about that, I said, it shouldn't be called the Ironman, it should be called a crazy man. I remember saying to her, do you think you'll really make it? She was training for it. What she said was, she said, my coach has given me a coaching plan, it's a set exercise every day, and he guarantees to me that if I stick with that plan on that schedule, I will finish the race.

And so in fact she did because the suffering, the exercise of that plan produced endurance exactly as her coach promised. And so in the midst of all that grueling training where she's saying, will I make it?

[29 : 15] She could say, yes, I will because I'm suffering it. I can feel it in my muscles. These aches and pains are testimony to the fact that I'm on that road to final victory, to finish the race. And it's rather like that that Paul, what Paul is saying here, you see, we rejoice in our present suffering because we know that these are the things that are shaping us for glory in the path of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Suffering produces patient endurance. And secondly, he says, patient endurance produces character. That is, it produces tried and tested worth.

Real faith, the Bible tells us, is prone to be genuine, isn't it? It's shown to be genuine by fire that tests it. That's what Peter says in 1 Peter 1, do you remember?

Rather like an earthquake is what tests the real quality of buildings. Do you remember that enormous earthquake that hit Japan those years ago and shut down the nuclear reactor?

A huge earthquake and tsunami and so on. But I remember being very struck in the aftermath of that, that seeing all the pictures, all the buildings nearly were still standing because they were built properly to withstand earthquakes.

[30 : 28] But then do you remember that earthquake a few years ago in Turkey? What was the aftermath there? Collapsed buildings all over the place because it had been shown up, hadn't it, that so many of those buildings hadn't been built properly.

They'd been built all the cheap. It was a shoddy job. All looked the same until the earthquake came. That's the test, the real test. Well, think of a rugby team.

It may have lots of promise. It may seem to be a terrific team destined for great things, but the real test of that team isn't in warm-up games. It's going to be when they play the real world champions, isn't it?

And go to Murrayfield in the autumn for the autumn internationals. It's not going to be when Scotland play the United States that we really see where our team is at the top. It's when a few weeks later they play New Zealand.

I can tell you which way it's going to go. That's why I'm going to see the United States one. I want to see a chance of us winning. But you see, in just that way, patient endurance through trials, through suffering, it both produces real character, says Paul here, but also it proves.

[31 : 39] It proves it real. And you see, thirdly then, verse 4, character that is proven real, that produces hope, stronger and stronger, certain hope of glory.

You want assurance that you'll make it, won't you, says Paul? And so do I, but this is how God assures us, you see. This is how He's shaping us for glory as He is conforming us and as His conforming and comforting Spirit leads us through all of this and uses all of this to guarantee your arrival on the finish line.

It's what's being forged in us, you see, in the Spirit-filled, Spirit-led fires of affliction. That is what gives us this year an unshakable hope. It's very hard, isn't it, in the midst when you're struggling and battling and you feel you're suffering.

That is true, isn't it, in our experience. I remember somebody who was in the midst of deep pain and grief that were nursing their spouse through terminal illness and it was a grueling, hard, and very painful time.

But I remember her saying to me, in the midst of all of this I'm so thankful. And I said, why? And she said, well, because now I know, now I know I'll never fall away.

[33 : 05] I've always feared I might. But God has kept me through all this suffering, all this burden of pain and anguish and grief. And now I really know there's nothing, there's nothing that will keep me from reaching the end.

Isn't that a wonderful testimony? But it's so true, isn't it, in our own experience when we look back and we can see these things. It's true in our experience as a church.

Some of us can look back, and tell, can't we, of how times of suffering have produced endurance, produced character, and given us hope, given us more hope than ever of God's sovereign purpose of good and blessing for His people.

Suffering, says Paul, works hope that will never be put to shame. and that is all because the Holy Spirit has been given to us, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ who is conforming our lives into the pattern of His life.

He's leading us along with Him on the road to Calvary because that is the road to eternal glory. And we walk it in union with our great Savior Himself who's walked it before us.

[34 : 21] Do you see the double description of that road to glory as it's mapped out here in verses 2 to 4 from justification to the hope of glory? Look at verses 1 and 2.

You see, on the one hand, do you see, Paul says, the path is faith that leads to peace which brings access and the hope that we rejoice in.

Faith to peace to access and hope. But on the other hand, look at verses 3 and 4. It's suffering that produces endurance, that produces character, which produces the hope that we rejoice in.

It's very significant that, isn't it? Two different perspectives on that same road to glory. The one is the objective reality of the gospel of Christ.

And the other is what that actually does in our subjective experience. And these two things follow each other just 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.

[35 : 32] That's what Romans 8 verses 28 and 29 say. Let me just read those wonderful verses to us. those whom He foreknew, He also predestined.

Why? To be conformed to the image of His Son in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. Those whom He predestined, He also called.

Those whom He called, He also justifies. And those whom He justified, He also glorified. That is God's eternal decree, isn't it? For those He foreknew, He predestined that they should be conformed to the image of His Son.

But what it looks like as it's being worked out in time and in history in our personal lives is walking the way of the cross, the way of suffering.

And that is the proof that we are His. That's the proof that we are on that road to glory in His eternal counsels of grace. that we're being shaped into the pattern of the Lord Jesus Himself. That's where we see the reality.

[36 : 38] Hebrews chapter 5 tells us, doesn't it, that Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered and thus was made perfect, complete. He's not saying that Jesus was ever sinful, of course.

But He's saying that the radiance of His glory was forged through His faithful human life. Through a life that was led by the Holy Spirit who filled Him with all His fullness as He walked the road to Calvary.

And His risen life is now being wrought in us even now as we're united to Him by the Spirit of holiness as Paul calls the Holy Spirit in chapter 1 verse 4.

That's why Peter in the same way says that we're blessed when we suffer for Christ. Why?

Because the Spirit of glory, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus rests upon you.

that's why we rejoice as Paul. That's why we celebrate confidently even in our sufferings. Not because we're masochists. Suffering by itself is of no value.

[37 : 44] But sufferings that come because we follow the Lord Jesus Christ in a world that hates the Lord Jesus Christ. Suffering that comes because we follow the Lord Jesus Christ in bodies that are still rebelling naturally against His rule.

That's evidence that the Holy Spirit is within us. Working in us to conform us to the Son. Evidence of the Spirit who is and who will keep conforming us to the image of our wonderful Savior.

But I think that is a wonderfully encouraging thing. When you're hard pressed perhaps, you feel it on every side. You feel maybe you're about to go under. You feel the struggle is just so hard you just don't know if you can make it.

It's the evidence of the Holy Spirit conforming you against the world and the flesh and the devil and leading you in the way of our Savior. As we close, just turn briefly with me to Romans chapter 15 towards the end of the letter.

I want to see something very important. chapter 15 verse 4. Paul's urging the church in Rome to treasure, to feed on the Scriptures. Everything that had been written in the former days because he says it's for our instruction.

[39 : 03] It's been written, it's been preserved by the Holy Spirit of course as his inspired word. Do you see what he says again about how we will have real hope, real certainty of God's glory to come?

Look at verse 4. Paul says it comes through endurance, through 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, patient endurance, and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Do you see? Very important. God's conforming Spirit, the Spirit of our wonderful Savior Himself, the Spirit of holiness, the true human holiness of our perfect Redeemer Jesus.

He's shepherding His precious people whom He foreknew. He's shepherding them through this world to certain glory. And He's doing it as it were with His rod and His staff in each hand.

[40 : 06] On the one hand, the Spirit shapes us for glory as He leads us through suffering to produce real endurance. And on the other hand, as Paul says here, 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 may have hope. That is the chief ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives as Christians.

Let me say it again. to bring us great endurance through sufferings and great encouragement through the Scriptures so that we may have hope. That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit who's been poured into our hearts.

And we need both of those things, don't we? Because sufferings on their own will just perplex us often. But it's the Scriptures that give us insight and tells us this is the way of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the road to the glory. This is the way of the cross. He's leading you. That's what explains your sufferings. It's not something to deplore but it's something to celebrate and rejoice.

[41 : 15] But in the same way if it's just the Scriptures on their own if the Scriptures are completely removed from our lives if it's all just theory and theology and empty talk that can be barren.

But the Scriptures become real, don't they? They're proved real. That's what the Scriptures testify and tell us is actually proved in our lives and our experience as we're tested through suffering so that we do come forth as gold.

So friends, if only we can grasp this that in all these things, these very things that so often perplex us, that pain us, that may seem even at times to be punishing us, but no, in all these things the ministry of the Comforter sent from God our Savior is at work and He is at work conforming us to the image of God the Son to bring us to glory, to work in us that glory which is everlasting.

If we can see that and understand that and believe God's Word to us here in the Scriptures, we will have encouragement. we will have great hope and we'll be able even to celebrate, to rejoice even in suffering because we know that we're rejoicing in the presence and in the powerful working of His Holy Spirit, the conforming Spirit who gives us hope, who gives us hope that will not ever be put to shame.

And so we rejoice, says verse 3, in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put to shame.

[43 : 06] We'll never be disappointed because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us, given to us as a fruit, an everlasting fruit of our great Savior's grace.

Well, let's pray and may the Lord encourage us with these things. Our Father, we thank You for the wonderful promise of our Lord Jesus Christ that He would never leave us as orphans but send to us another Comforter.

And we thank and praise You for the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of holiness, the one who brings into our hearts, poured out from heaven, the life of our Lord Jesus Himself and leads us in His way, the way of the cross which is the way to certain and everlasting glory.

So help us, Lord. Help us, we pray, gladly to submit to Him, to walk with Him, to be led by Him and to be assured that we also through Your everlasting purpose will be, shall be conformed into the image of our great Savior.

And on the great day of His return, we shall not only see Him but we shall be like Him. Help us, we pray, to rejoice in these things today and every day for Christ's sake.

[44 : 44] Amen. Amen.