

Is Your Hope Half Empty or Half Full?
Rom 5:1-8

Growing up, I used to love to watch Seinfeld. George Costanza has to be one of the biggest whiners I know. Nothing seemed to go right in his life and he made sure it didn't. He would sabotage anything good just so he could be ready for the bad when it happened to him.

Move forward a generation and you see the same thing with Squidward from Spongebob. Always looking at the negative side of life.

We laugh at these guys because we usually know someone just like them. Some people just seem predisposed to look at the bad in life and never see any hope. If you know one of these people, you know that you never ask how their day is because it will just depress you. Guess what? Some Christians do the same thing! I can excuse the world, they don't know any better, but we Christians should. This morning, I want to remind us how good it is to be a Christian, even in the worst of times

PRAYER

I. The Producers

A. No pain, no gain

1. Most of us have heard the old weight lifting mantra, "no pain, no gain."
2. What they are saying is that you have to push your body past what it wants to do in order to build good muscle and definition.
3. Paul uses the analogy of disciplining our bodies in other passages like 1 Cor 9:25-27.
4. He points out that being a better Christian is like being an athlete.
5. It take effort and constant training to continue to grow in our faith.
6. It's the same with character.
7. James echoed this thought in Jas 1:24
8. The pain in our life shapes who we are.
9. How you respond to those times tells everyone who is in you.
10. Have you ever watched someone go through a traumatic experience and either stand amazed at how they came through it or sadly shook your head as they fell apart during it?
11. As a minister I have seen the good and bad of that statement many, many times.

B. Example from economy

1. If you watch politics or your retirement plans, you know the economy has a very large part to play in both of those areas.
2. In the world of economy, commerce revolves around the producers.
3. Some sectors produce a tangible product like cars.
4. Other sectors produce intangible products we call services.
5. In our text we see Paul talking about a spiritual economy.
6. In vs 3-4 he talks about the producers.

C. Our text gives us a list of things that produce something else

1. Romans 5:3–4 (ESV) — 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

2. Suffering produces perseverance

- a) I would be a lot happier if God could have used pleasantness to produce perseverance, but he didn't. He uses suffering.
- b) Whether we are Christians or not, we grow from how we deal with the negative experiences in life.
- c) The Christian has the advantage of knowing that the Holy Spirit is right there with us helping us deal with the pain of those trials and overcoming them.
- d) We can persevere through those hard times.
- e) Ever had a week where you wondered with dread if another thing could go wrong?
- f) You have a choice to make during those times. You can either get mad at the world and God, or you can trust him to get you through to the other side.
- g) That getting to the other side is perseverance.

3. Perseverance produces character

- a) When we can look at our trials and know that God will give us the strength to get through them, it develops character.
- b) Character is the definition of who we really are during those times.
- c) It's the resolve to overcome or at least not let the trial drag you down.

4. Character produces hope

- a) Here's where Christians really differ from the world.
- b) Everyone can gain character from trials, but only Christians can gain hope from them.
- c) Surviving painful times and learning to lean on God helps us get through the next tough time.
- d) Remember, the definition of hope is expectation.

e) We have the hope that God will once again help us get through whatever difficulty in life we are facing.

f) In talking with some of our older Christians, what I have learned from them is the fact that they don't get as bent out of shape and younger Christians do when things don't go as planned. They have

seen God help them through the hard times over the years and know now that God will continue to do so.

g) They have seen God's hope and aren't disappointed.

5. We are guaranteed a better life after this one, so anything this world throws at us needs to be put into perspective.

6. We're never going to enjoy trials, but we can rejoice because those trials are a reminder of how this world isn't as good as it gets, the next one is.

7. Every time we deal with a struggle reminds us of how great a promise God has given us by promising us his eternal love and all that comes with it.

8. Every time we overcome a hard time in life, our character and hope grow stronger.

II. The Product

A. Economy

1. As I mentioned earlier, producers produce a product.
2. Successful companies produce things that people want.
3. Really successful companies produce things that people need.
4. God provides what we so desperately need.

B. The product of Peace

1. I may hate the struggles I am going through.
2. I may feel overwhelmed by them.
3. But there is a knowledge I hold on to, that helps me get through the hard times.
4. In times of great or small struggles, Christians can have a peace in knowing it will get better.
5. It's that hope and the knowledge of the love of God that makes it possible to even imagine a light at the end of a very dark tunnel.

C. The product of Grace

1. Verse 2 talks about the product of grace.

2. Verses 6-8 explain exactly what that grace is.

3. "When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But

God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." (Romans 5:6-8, NLT)

4. It's incredible enough to know we can find peace in difficult times, but to know that God also gives us grace too should fill us with unbridled joy.

5. That's why Christians should rejoice.

a) The Greek word means to boast or publicly and loudly proclaim a satisfied contentment.

b) So, we are to boast in our suffering

c) We are to publicly show a satisfied contentment of our trust in God.

6. Paul uses the word rejoice 7 times in Romans and the word is used 73 times in the New Testament

7. We need peace and grace more than anything else... and God has produced them just for us.

8. So we rejoice in what he has done for us

D. The product of thankfulness

1. That passage is wrapped between 2 incredible statements that touch me every time I read them.

2. V6 starts with "while we were morally weak"

3. Another interpretation of the Greek means "utterly helpless in a spiritual sense."

a) When Rhyann was little she would always say "fix it daddy." And most of the time I could.

b) As she got older, the broken things got harder. Broken heart, broken friendships, broken spiritual things. I couldn't fix them anymore.

c) We can't change things, we can't find the answers any more. We can't fix it.

d) We are utterly helpless

e) We are not strong enough spiritually to fix our problem.

4. Vs 8 ends with "while we were still sinners"

- a) Before we realized how much we needed God.
- b) Before we were worthy enough for God to even mess with us.
- c) While we were still sinners.
- d) While we were broken and couldn't fix things.
- e) That's when God started caring for us.

5. The intangible product that comes from us is thankfulness!

6. A couple of years ago, we borrowed a large sum of money from Helene's parents to do some remodeling of our house. While we were visiting them this summer, they informed us that they were cancelling the loan. The relief and happiness we felt was unbelievable. We couldn't thank them enough for that gesture.

7. If you aren't thankful to God for what he has done for you, you don't understand what he's done.

- a) You don't realize how broken you were.
- b) You're in worse shape than humpty dumpty. No one can put you back together again...Except Jesus.

8. If you ARE thankful for what he's done for you; you can't help but praise Him.

- a) It's as natural as being released from a large debt.
- b) It's like being held hostage by someone who plans to execute you and you're rescued by our special forces. You can't say thank you enough.

E. Half empty grace

1. Okay, you get grace and peace and all that stuff, but it really doesn't change the fact that you live on the negative side of life.

2. Paul sort of addresses that attitude too. Look at verses 9-11

3. Romans 5:9-11 (ESV) — 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 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. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

4. Wrath of God is a pretty negative connotation.
5. Enemies of God is a pretty negative connotation.
6. Oh wait, "saved by him from the wrath of God."
7. "Reconciled by him while we were his enemies."
8. "Rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ."
9. Oops, sorry, no excuse to be negative Christians after all.

F. Conclusion

1. We can't escape the bad in life. Sin in the world insists that bad has to be.
2. But, even though we don't like it, those experiences shape our character.
3. God turned that bad that Satan brought into the world and used it to shape us into better Christians.
4. Those struggles are simply a reminder that we have something so much better to look forward to.
5. When life gets you down, rejoice; your silver lining is grace and peace.
6. When you look at life that way, your cup will always be half full rather than half empty.