

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – April 4, 2020

The lord be with you.

Do you ever feel like you've hit the wall, the wall that point runners hit on a marathon, where they feel like they can't go on the body? supply of energy is running out, legs, feeling like jelly breathing is labored, and everything in their body feels like a conspiracy to quit.

A few months ago, my son read ran a 100k, that's 62 miles and he told me that right about the mil-20, mark that he hit the wall and red is thinking to himself. Well, I've got another 42 miles ago. For prayer requests, I'm getting... It sounds like the coronavirus pandemic has a lot of us feeling like we've hit the wall.

And so for the next few moments, I would like to read and to reflect on a very rich passage of scripture that helps me when I hit the wall.

It's in Romans chapter 5 verse 3, where the Apostle Paul after having reflected on being put right with God through faith and having peace with God and rejoicing in all of that means Paul says in verse 3, "but we also rejoice in our sufferings.

It's a curious phrase isn't it?

We rejoice in our sufferings. Why would Paul say something like that? It's some kind of masochist who gives up tight shoes for Lent. Paul says he is rejoicing in suffering, because he knows that suffering is producing something, suffering get something done in the life of a person who is following Jesus, he says, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance, the Greek word here for endurance as hoople mine that literally means to remain under. There's no cutting and running, there's no bailing out... You remain under you remain under the heat, you remain under the pressure remain under the trials, you keep going when the going is tough when you feel like you've hit the wall that's cool, man, that's endurance, that's hanging in there for life long distance run in Paul continues, we rejoice. Knowing that endurance produces character.

We talk quite a lot today about character and our need for people of character, we admire people of character, we pray to be people of character. But how does one go about getting a character?

Well listen to Paul, he says, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, it's a fascinating Greek word here, translated character to... It's a word that was associated with refining and purifying of gold. The fire burns out the impurities in the gold, so that the refiner gets pure gold, and that goal that came through the fire that was purified of all the impurities it was said to have character. That's the word here, and you might today be enduring fire, the fire of suffering, and you stay with it, you keep going. And so Paul says, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that our suffering produces

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endurance, and endurance produces character.

I think that's why in James 1, verses 2 and 3, that we are counseled. Whenever you face trials of any kind, considerate, nothing be joy because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance and led endurance have its full effect so that you may be mature and complete, lacking and nothing that's to be a person of character.

The German writer Goethe, said everybody wants to be somebody, but nobody wants to grow. Growth is painful, isn't it?

I certainly have found that to be true, it can be painful to grow and many people today are going through growing pains, but follow Paul's chain of logic here. He says, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

So, I hope I back in Verse 2, Paul defines what the Christians hope is it is knowing that we're going to share in the glory of God forever, so it's eyes on the finish line, we're going to share in God's glory. So here, Paul lays it out suffering producing endurance producing character producing hope, and that that's why some of the most hopeful people, I've ever known are people who have suffered profoundly people who have been through the fires, pulses and this hope does not disappoint, us because... And here is one of the biggest because it's in the Bible, Hope does not disappoint, us... Because God's love has been poured into our hearts to the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. That means you could not round up enough containers to hold the love of God that He's poured into your heart through the Holy Spirit. So we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know God is doing something in our lives that he's making something of us that is eternal.

You can put a big sign over your life, today that reads God at work.

I'd like for us to close out in prayer today, with that old palms down, palms up way of praying. And would you just take a moment with me to turn the palms of your hands downward? And in this, your symbolically expressing your desire to let go the burdens you're carrying your worries about the uncertainties of our times, your letting go of all of that into God's faithful hands as a Psalmist says, cast your cares upon God and He will sustain you, palms down, letting go letting go into God's faithful, and now let us turn palms upwards in this universal gesture of supplication, for God to fill our hands with that which we need for this day.

And now, I pray that prayer of the Apostle Paul in the same book of Romans, chapter 15, verse 13 may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, in believing so that you may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler on the pilgrim way. Thanks for listening, until next time...

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