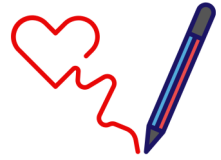


FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



From Suffering to Glory

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. (Romans 5:3-5)

When I read Romans 5:3-5, I wonder how many of us perceive suffering in this positive light. For example, if I wanted to develop endurance, I could sign up to run a half or full marathon. If I sought to cultivate good character, I might strive to imitate Christ's character and remain open to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. As for hope, my salvation already assures me of eternal life. So why, then, must we go through suffering to attain endurance, character, and hope?

There must be something unique about suffering, even though it often carries a negative connotation. My parents frequently remarked that their generation endured hardships better than the present one. They attributed this resilience to the suffering they endured, particularly during the war years. In contrast, life in modern Southeast Asia, with its relative peace and prosperity, offers fewer opportunities to face adversity. Consequently, many people today are less resilient.

The apostle Paul presents a progression: suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. This progression suggests that suffering stretches our limits. The Air Force has a slogan that says, "The sky is the limit." During my time in the Air Force, I experienced my limits being stretched after each training and exercise. Without those challenges, I would never have believed I could endure such

rigorous preparation. Similarly, God knows how much each of us can bear. As Paul explains, suffering is not meant to destroy us but to produce virtues within us.

Consider Rick and Kay Warren, authors of *The Purpose Driven Life*, who endured the devastating loss of their son, Matthew, to suicide. Instead of succumbing to despair, they leaned on their faith, allowing the experience to deepen their resilience in God's love. This tragedy inspired them to launch ministries focused on mental health, providing resources and hope to those struggling with similar challenges. Their hope rests in the promise of eternal life and in God's ability to bring redemption from suffering.

All the virtues cultivated through suffering lead us to a higher level of spiritual maturity. Suffering teaches us to rely on God rather than on our own strength. As we endure, our character is gradually transformed to reflect Christ, and our hope in God is secured on His unshakable foundation.

When faced with suffering, may the words of Romans 5:5 encourage us: ***“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.”***

Pastor Kelvin