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# Sufferings ... Character ... Hope ... Love Poured Out

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Free media and discipleship resources for pastors, leaders, and growing disciples.

# Sufferings ... Character ... Hope ... Love Poured Out

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## Day 34

*Let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardships produce patient and unswerving endurance. And endurance develops maturity of character. And character produces joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation. Such hope never disappoints or deludes or shames us, for God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5, AMPC)*

“Triumph in our troubles”? “Rejoice in our sufferings”? Why would we do that? When troubles strike—sickness, lawsuits, war, natural disaster, persecution, famine—they unsettle us. Our natural inclination is to avoid hardships, not rejoice in them.

Our souls want peace and rightness ... because we were designed for these things. And so we pray that our difficult circumstances would change, and sometimes they do. But, in the vulnerability of trials—when we do not understand and cannot control the suffering—we have the continual opportunity to trust God ... and find peace and rightness, not in circumstances, but in the assurance of our Father's love.

Please don't think for an instant that your problems are signs that God is displeased with you. Problems are not punishments. The enemy may use hardships to tempt you to think that God has forgotten you, but that is not true.

In suffering, we are tested. Do we want God only on our terms—for the “good” we desire? Or will we trust Him regardless of our trials? Will we cling to Him in assurance that, even though we may not understand the reason why He allows the suffering, He is working for the deep, eternal good of the people He loves?

Romans 8:28 says, “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” When I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, I clung to hope in that Scripture. “All things work together for good,” I told myself. “I will be healed.” “We will become a missionary family.” But my definition of “good” didn't happen; God had something deeper in mind.

God's definition of "good" is found in the next verse. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29).

And slowly I began to see: God works through difficulties and trials of every sort—through *all* things—so that we come to be "conformed to the image of His Son." "Good" is our character becoming like His. "Good" isn't the absence of external, stressful circumstances; it is the presence of internal rightness with God.

Whatever has happened or is happening, Jesus is right there with us in the midst of the storm. As a human being tested and tried in all ways even as we are, He relates to us in our suffering. Just as a good friend would suffer with you in your hardships, Jesus hurts with you. His heart overflows with empathy and compassion for you. He shares your pain.

Even if you cannot feel His nearness, He is with you. In the Old Testament, we read how Job, in all his sufferings—having lost children and earthly possessions, tortured with sickness and the false counsel of others—had no understanding of the reason for his afflictions and no assurance of the Lord's presence. Yet Job did not give up on God. I stand in awe of those I know today who, in the face of overwhelming trials, devoid of understanding and of God's felt presence, refuse to give up on God.

Hold on my friend. Hold on to the hope that does not disappoint. Believe in the good of God. In your suffering, He is molding your character to match His. He will pour His love into your heart. This is His promise to you—His beloved.

## **Ponder for a Moment**

Consider God's definition of "good" for your life and how it may differ from your own. Record your thoughts.

Can you think of a time when suffering resulted in your knowing God in a deeper way? If so, tell of that time.