

Romans, Part 24 11-27-22

As A Result – We Exult

Let me begin today by offering an apology. I have not one but two illustrations today that are rooted in the world of sports. I try to diversify, but I just don't have a lot of experience with sculpting or dance. I'm a sports guy. But, you may be glad to hear that they involve two different sports. Some diversity there. First, I start with football, which was my childhood athletic love. My original hero was Steve Spurrier, who long before he became a great coach, was the quarterback of the Florida Gators, only forty miles from my home. I never saw him play live. He was mostly a radio figure for me, but I wanted to be him, not just because he won the Heisman trophy as the nation's top player, but because he attempted, in those days anyway, to give glory to God. Steve was the son of a Presbyterian pastor. I actually met his mother some years later at our church and told her that her boy had been my childhood role model. Twenty years after Steve, another pastor's kid did the same thing. Danny Wuerffel, coached by Spurrier, won the Heisman and the national championship. He too gave glory to God in his great success. I once met Danny and told him he lived my dream – in his case, after I realized I would never live it. But the Florida quarterback some of you are most familiar with is this guy – Tim Tebow. Some consider him the greatest college player ever. Again, Heisman winner. National Champion. Known for verses on his face, for his famous prayerful kneel and for giving glory to God. In 2011 Tim's mother came to speak at the Women's Choice Network banquet here and I got to meet her. Once again, I told her that, as a child, I had dreamed of doing what her boy Timmy actually did. Football fame – glory to Jesus. She looked at me and asked, "how did that work out for you?" I will answer that question in a few minutes. But let's read today from our passage in Romans. We made it through 1.5 verses of Romans 5 last Sunday. Today, we will get through verse five I do believe. Romans 5:**1-5** *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

We focus first on that line – *we exult in hope of the glory of God*. Christians are exulters. They are people of joy and celebration and gladness. They may also mourn and weep about sin and human pain, but not without exulting in God. This is all connected to the gospel which Paul has been expounding since the middle of chapter three. It is a gospel of redemption and forgiveness, of righteousness and grace. Most recently, like in the first two verses here, we are reminded that we who believe are justified, to the end that we have peace with God, to the end that we have access into His holy and royal presence and blessing. So, what do we do with that great news? Lots of good answers to that, but the most obvious may be this one – we exult. Surely, we can exult in what has been done for us. But Paul is going to the next step and calling us to rejoice in what lies ahead for us – in the future, rooted in what has been done for us in the past by our Savior. All that the Lord has done for us, provides us with hope of future grace. What does he say we exult in? *Hope of the glory of God*. Hope is this confident assurance. It is faith directed toward the future and rooted in the promises. So many of Paul's phrases come to mind. I Corinthians 2:9 *Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him*. What awaits us as God's children? Hard to put in words, but it is going to be awesome and wonderful. It is something Paul calls *glory*. Who gets glory in heaven? Oh, yea, we know Jesus does. But here he has in mind the glory that the believer gets as well.

That word *glory* is, in the Greek, *doxo*. as in *doxology*, word of glory, or *orthodoxy*, straight or correct glory. It is a smaller portion of what Jesus himself gets. I John 3:2-3 *Now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. ³And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure*. Notice the language – this hope – The hope of seeing Christ as he is and being transformed to be like him. This is our future – this is our glory. We are given new bodies, we are exalted, we are made pure, we are elevated to bliss and to cosmic governance. Some think, when they read this, that our hope is for God to be glorified. That would be and is a wonderful hope, but honestly this is about our future glorification. We exult in that. The word *exult* is actually the same word for *boast*. We were told earlier in Romans that there is no room for boasting in the gospel. Paul means that there is no place to point out your own goodness, your own merits. We have none. But we do get to exult, we do get to boast. And that is okay because whose triumph and perfection do we boast

about? Not mine, but Christ's. We boast in what another has done and how that spills over onto us in spectacular and gracious ways.

Now then, my second sports illustration. This time recalling a name, none of you will recognize. My sport now is basketball. I grew up in the era of Boston Celtics dominance. They won eleven championships in thirteen years, the greatest dynasty in American pro sports history. Their stars were Bill Russell, John Havlicek, Sam Jones – Jones and Russell won a crazy 10 and 11 championships. No one who was not a Celtic comes close. Jordan won six. Kareem Abdul Jabbar won six. But in the list of all-time champions you will find this name – Jim Loscutoff. He won more than Jabbar, more than Kobe, more than LeBron and more than Michael. Who was he? He was a bench-warmer for the mighty Celtics. You had never heard of him. I had never heard of him. As pro players go, he was mediocre at best – but his career was replete with championship glory. But Loscutoff's glory is a picture of what you and I get. Loscutoff got glory because of his connection with Bill Russell. We get glory because of our connection with Jesus. It's nothing we do. It is all what He does. But He lets us get the ring and drink the champagne and wave to the cheering crowds anyway. Matthew 13:**43** *The righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.* In other words, the followers of Jesus will be radiant, glorious, but it is the glory of the moon – which only shines because it does what? It reflects the greater light, the light of the sun. So, we shall reflect the glory of Jesus, share in His glory but that reflected glory will be ours. And we get to exult, we get to boast – not with any pride, but with delight in our Champion. This is the end appointed for the elect of the Lord. This is where our salvation is going. We will see this again in our study of Romans because in chapter nine we will read this – 9:**23** (NLT) *He does this to make the riches of His glory shine even brighter on those to whom He shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory. 8:**30** these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.* This is where it all ends --- Christ's glory to be sure, but yours as well. Mine as well. We exult in hope of this glory.

One of my oft-mentioned regrets is about how few great hymns we have that focus us on the glory to come – what we may call *heaven*. There are only a handful that we sing, even though the subject provides so many magnificent themes. Our bodies will be perfected. Our hearts will be cleansed. Our knowledge will leap far ahead. Our friendships restored. We will see the Lord! These are things worth thinking about, worthy talking about and worth singing about. Let's try to do

more of that. Truly, friends, this world is magnificently disappointing. There is so little justice here. There is so much deception here. There is so much sadness here. These things will overwhelm and discourage us if we let the devil take our eyes off the promise. Don't let him. Keep reminding him and yourself and each other, how great we are going to have it when the Lord returns or we journey home. This last week I hope and expect you spent some time thanking the Lord for His many mercies, but did we stop to thank Him for what awaits us, for what is still ahead, for the feast that is to come which is so much more satisfying and enduring than anything you experienced this week? Elsewhere the apostle says to fix your mind on things above. That is my exhortation to us as well. Maybe today when you go home for lunch you can share around the table what you are looking forward to about the glory that awaits us.

Now, to finish off my Tim Tebow story. Pam Tebow, after hearing that my childhood dream was to do what her son did, asked me, *how did that work out for you?* And the answer? Very, very well. So, I quit football in ninth grade. I never became the famous athlete who gives glory to God. But I have had the unspeakable privilege of proclaiming Jesus for more than four decades. And that message relates to my dream. I had hoped to do great things and give glory to Jesus. But in reality, it works out the other way around. Jesus does great things and then gives glory to me because He draws me near and His glory spills out on all who love Him. See that? I think that is so very cool. Thankfully Jesus doesn't lose any glory when He shares with you and me, but we gain and so we exult. So, we boast in the death and reign of Christ our God.

Alright then – no more sports stories, but we do have an entire second major heading – right from our text. Point one – we exult in our hope for the glory of God. Point two – we exult in our tribulation. Well, that's different. The apostle would never suggest we seek out tribulation, but when we happen upon it what is to be our response? Do we grumble about our afflictions? No, we exult in them. Imagine how exasperating this must be for the devil. Consider how glorifying this is to our God, when suffering people still give Him thanks, still honor His name, still walk in humble obedience. And still rejoice!? Yea, that is what Paul says to do. This is the same guy who would write that we are to rejoice in the Lord always. Even when experiencing persecution? Even when going through trials? Absolutely! And again, the apostle supplies us with truth to undergird this commitment to be joyful warriors. He weaves this chain – tribulation leads to perseverance, perseverance links us to proven character and proven character only intensifies our hope and

increases our assurance. So, let's go back over that. Tribulation leads to perseverance, perseverance produces proven character, and proven character increases our hope and fortifies our confidence that glory awaits us.

Romans 5 tells us that our tribulations will make us better, stronger, purer. *Tribulation brings about perseverance and perseverance produces proven character.* Ask any mature believer about the seasons of life that led to the greatest spiritual growth. You will find half or more will point to a time of trial, of pain. This harmonizes with what the word of God says. Psalm 119:**71** *It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn your statutes.* In Zechariah, God says of His people, 13:**9** *Refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested.* And what does that process involve? Heat and pressure. Heat and pressure. Here in Pittsburgh we know steel – or we should – and what is it that tempers steel? It is fire. It purifies and makes stronger. My favorite Scripture on this is I Peter 1:**6b-7b** *Now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor* It's all there isn't it? Trials are tests that can result in a pure and proven faith, that can result in increased confidence, that can result in eternal glory and honor for our Savior and for his redeemed ones. The hymnwriter puts it like this; *When through fiery thy pathway shall lie, My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply; The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.*

I'm a little nervous now, making points like this because we now have a brother with a Ph.D. in Metallurgy in our church. I trust Matt Bender will alert me if I am off base on any of this. But, you get the point. Tribulation, hard times, when met with faith and humility, can lead to wonderful, enduring things. So, we don't just meet them with a stiff upper lip. We can actually rejoice. *Tribulation coming? Oh boy! A chance to grow. A chance to humble myself. A chance to stretch that faith muscle.* This is the attitude Paul is urging upon us. Why, he told the Philippians that they were singled out for special favor because of their suffering. Philippians 1:**29** (NLT) *You have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.* Can you say, "Oh boy!" You have any idea how annoyed the devil gets by this? I love it! And Jesus makes it really hard for the devil by alerting us to the opportunity we have to heap up for ourselves eternal rewards when we endure trials with grace and faithfulness. Especially when the trial involves persecution – the intentional targeting of believers. Matthew 5:**11-12** *Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all*

kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. So, again, we see hostility heading our way and we think, Oh, boy, a chance to grow my rewards in heaven! Indeed, I don't understand it much, but the word of God promises special glories, special riches in the eternal kingdom for those who faithfully endured much in this world.

The writer of Romans was not saying all this as an objective bystander, or a theoretician. He had plenty of opportunity to trust God in tribulation. Attacked, accused, thrown in prison, left for dead. Paul suffered more than almost any of us have or could have. But he is the one who offered this perspective. Romans 8:**18** *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* If true of Paul how much more of us. Our meager sufferings – some of which feel overwhelming in the moment – are little in comparison to the glory that awaits us. That says more about the glory than about the suffering. II Corinthians 4:**17-18** *For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, ¹⁸while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* Where should we have our focus? On those unseen, eternal realities. We want the central, greatest, most significant thing in our emotional orbit to be this – the love of Jesus the king. That is unseen but is the most real, the most-weighty, the eternal.

When tribulation has its good effect, and our souls are made strong so that our character is proven to be genuine through the testings we endure, then we walk in happy hope, confident that we are loved by the Almighty Sovereign of the universe. How do we know we are loved? Look at verse 5. **5b** *The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.* The ministry of the Spirit – first time mentioned in Romans and what is He doing? Telling us how we are loved by God. In Romans 8:**16** *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.* Jesus said, *my sheep hear my voice.* It is the same thing. How do I know I am loved by God? Two great answers in Romans 5. Verse 8 says we know because of what happened on the cross. We got three next Sunday. But, for today, we affirm this – we know we are loved because of what happens in our hearts. I can't prove it to you, but I know. I just do. And that is the gift of our Sovereign that enables us to exult in coming glory and even in present trials.

So, ponder this. As a result of the gospel, we exult. When? When we ponder the future and when we face the pains of the moment. This is all-season exulting. Great in the sun. Great in the snow. There for the sweet days and still there for the hard ones. The Lord has set us up for victory. Jonathan Edwards, who certainly suffered plenty himself, said this about our provisions, our reasons for exulting. *For Christians – their bad things will work for good (Romans 8:28), their good things (adoption, justification, redemption) cannot be taken away. Their best things (heaven) are yet to come.* We can look at the devil and tell him, *Heads I win, tails you lose.* We have the victory coming and going, in prosperity and affliction because the gospel is real, and true and glorious. It is ours for now and forever, and therefore, as a result, we?? As a result, we...exult! Let's close with some exultant worship after we pray.