

We Have An Anchor!

Lesson 7: Rejoicing In Hope



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

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Learn how you can rejoice in hope even when the storms and challenges of life are at their strongest

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW154

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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We Have an Anchor!

Rejoicing In Hope

We are not the only ones who are facing the fierce storms of life. We can see how most of the people who are around us respond to the various trials of life. For the most part, they are choosing to allow these storms to drive their lives. However, this does not have to be the case for the one who is a Christian, whose anchor is the hope of eternal life in Heaven through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 6:19).

No matter how strong the storms are howling or the current is pulling, the Christian who remains anchored in hope can rejoice in the trials! Although it seems to contradict itself at first, the Christian can actually find joy in the sufferings and trials he/she experiences on this earth. The reason this is possible is because even the trials of life will result in good for the one who is a Christian.

For instance, listen to James 1:2-4. “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

Then, listen to a similar statement made by Paul in Romans 5:1-5. “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured

out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

You see, there is a major difference in the joy of people who are Christians and people who are not Christians. Those who are not Christians claim to find happiness in the things of this life (i.e. their relationships, their wealth, earthly pleasures, etc.). However, when their lives are hit by the storms of life, their happiness is also destroyed. This is because their happiness was based on things that could be taken from them.

Yet, the joy of a Christian can increase even as the storms of life become fiercer! This is because the Christian’s joy is *not* based on anything that is earthly. So, even the fiercest storms of life cannot shake the Christian’s joy, as long as he/she remains anchored in hope.

Surely, we need to unlock the “secret” of how we can rejoice in hope – even when the storms and current of life are at their strongest! In order to consider this matter, we will be using Romans chapter 8 as our primary text. I believe that this chapter is one of the most encouraging and “heartening” chapters in all of the Bible.

In this lesson, we want to gain even more encouragement from the Scriptures so that we can be better equipped to face the storms and current of life. This encouragement should be hidden securely in our hearts in order that it might help us cling to the anchor of our hope during the difficult times of life and to help us not get swept away by the current.

No Condemnation In Jesus Christ

Even at the best life can possibly be, without Jesus Christ there is only the expectation to receive condemnation (a sentence of punishment). But, for those who come to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and put their focus on the spiritual things of God rather than the physical things of this world, there is no sentence of condemnation! Therefore, those who are Christians can face the storms of life

knowing that they do not have any sentence of condemnation on themselves.

Jesus Christ makes us free

Romans chapter 7 helps to understand the significance of Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 7 demonstrates the reality of our situations without Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ had not given Himself as the sacrifice for sin, we would be dependent upon law alone. And, Romans 7 demonstrates that sin takes advantage of the law and produces death in us when we violate God's law.

And, since we all sin and fall short of glorifying God (Romans 3:23), we would all find ourselves doing the things that we know is not the right thing to do. But, there would be no deliverance from the death produced by sin if we were dependent on the law of God alone. For, once we had committed sin, we could not do anything (by ourselves) to earn God's forgiveness – even if we never committed any other sin. So, we, like Paul, would be forced to conclude, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24).

But, there is an answer. His name is Jesus Christ! So, Paul says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1-4).

In Jesus Christ, we can go from being trapped in sin without spiritual life to being made free from sin and having spiritual life! We can go from being under the condemnatory punishment due to violating God's law to having no sentence of condemnation on us. The reason why is because Jesus Christ came to earth and gave His life to provide the ransom sacrifice for sin. In doing so, “He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law

might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

To be spiritually minded is life and peace

Only by Jesus Christ can we have the righteous requirement of law fulfilled in us. That is, God's law requires that we obey it. Whenever we commit sin, we can never be made righteous by ourselves – because we are lawbreakers. But, we now can be righteous through Jesus Christ. However, verse 4 also told us *who* would have the righteous requirement of law fulfilled in them. Paul said it would be fulfilled in those “who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” That is, we have to be focused on the things of God rather than the things of this world.

Romans 8:5-8 explains even further. “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

If you want there to be no condemnatory sentence of punishment on you, you must put all of your focus on the ways of God. For, being focused on the ways of this world results in spiritual death and remaining the enemy of God because such a person will not try to please God in all things. However, the one who is focused on the spiritual things of God will be trying to please God in everything.

Therefore, the one who is spiritually minded will enjoy life and peace through Jesus Christ. Rather than living with the knowledge of impending spiritual destruction, you will be able to live with the eager expectation of eternal life in Heaven. And, you will enjoy a peace with God that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:6-7).

God's Spirit dwells in us

Romans 8:9-11 continues, “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the

Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

Whenever we were living in sin, we were dead while we were living (spiritually dead while alive physically). Therefore, whenever we faced the storms of life, we were without the hopeful assurance of anything better than what we were currently experiencing. So, when there is no assurance of better days ahead, it is reasonable to be discouraged by the storms.

However, those who are serving God have God’s Spirit in them. This is because they have the word of God (which the Holy Spirit has revealed) living and working in their lives. And, this Spirit of God gives life! Rather than living in a spiritually dead condition while we are separated from God and from all of the wonderful spiritual blessings He offers, we can enjoy spiritual life by living for God – and face the storms and current of life with a completely new perspective!

What a transformation! As Christians, we can go from being dead in our sins, enemies of God, and having no hopeful assurance of anything better to having spiritual life, peace with God, and the confident assurance of eternal life in Heaven! Surely, the fact that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not put their minds on the things of the flesh, but rather on the things of God, will strengthen us as we face the storms and current of this life. Surely, we will not want to let go of this hope and go back into the ways of condemnation!

We Are Children Of God

We have went from being enemies of God to being children of God. Now, there is a significant difference in facing the storms and current of life when you are fighting against God and when you are

one of His children! This does not mean that the storms of life will be any less severe for children of God. In fact, they can be even more severe due to persecution. However, we can rejoice in these times because we know what our Heavenly Father has promised to give us!

We are not debtors to the flesh

Romans 8:12-13 says, “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

As we face the storms that try to drive our lives away from God or the current that tries to gradually pull us away from God, we must remember that we are not debtors according to the flesh. That is, we do not owe the flesh anything. Because we have listened to our own fleshly desires in the past, we have sinned against God, had a sentence of condemnation placed on us, and experienced spiritual death. So, when we face these storms and current of life, we should not think that we owe it to the flesh to do whatever is pleasing to it!

Instead, we owe God a life of commitment to serving Him. He is the one who has sacrificed Jesus Christ so that we can have the righteous requirement of law fulfilled in us. But, we must live with our focus on the spiritual things. We must be committed to following the words that have been revealed by the Spirit of God (in the pages of the Bible).

For, if we do this, God says that we will live! This spiritual life should be something that is greatly valued by each one of us. And, as we face the storms and current of life, and are tempted to put our own physical interests above God’s desires, we must remember what each one has given us! Christians must refuse to go back into debt for the flesh that has resulted in our own spiritual death! For, God has given us spiritual life!

We have been adopted as children of God

Not only has God given us spiritual life through Jesus Christ, but He has made us His own children. Romans 8:14-15 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For

you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’”

Whenever we lived according to the desires of the flesh, we were children of the devil (see John 8:44 and 1 John 3:10). As children of the devil, we were in bondage because of the sin that we committed. And, this resulted in great fear.

Just think about what it was like to live your life prior to becoming a Christian. You still faced the storms of life. But, whenever these storms would hit, you had nothing solid to hold on to. These storms completely shook your life and everything that you had hope in. This produced great anxiety and fear because there was nothing stable to get you through these difficult circumstances. And, even when things were going well in your earthly life, you were still living in fear because you knew that you were not prepared for your earthly life to end (and you always knew that you were just one heartbeat away from spending an eternity in the devil’s Hell)!

Now, recognize how much better your perspective on life is as a child of God. Those who are led by God’s Spirit (through the word of God) are children of God. So, if you are following God in all things, He has adopted you. But, He has not adopted you because of some great quality that you have. Rather, He adopted you because He loves you and wants to save you. He wants you to be safe. And, you can have full trust in your Heavenly Father!

So, whenever you face the storms of life and the current that is trying to pull you away from God, you can cry out, “Abba, Father” (an expression of deep trust that only a child can use in reference to his father)! Rather than fearing the storms that we face, we can face them with courage, being assured that our Heavenly Father will take care of us for as long as we live for Him!

We are heirs of God

Romans 8:16-17 says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

There is joint testimony that we are the children of God between the Spirit of God and our spirits. The Holy Spirit testifies concerning what God has required of us in order to be God’s children. Our spirits testify whether we are living according to those instructions. If we are, then our spirits testify with God’s Spirit that we have done what God requires for us to be His children. But, if we are not living in obedience to the things revealed by God’s Spirit in the word of God, we cannot rightly conclude that we are the children of God.

If we are truly God’s children, then we are heirs of God! As we discussed in lesson 5, we are set to receive an “inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:4-5).

This inheritance that will be given to those of us who are God’s children is unfathomable in its great beauty and splendor! As we considered in lesson 5, only the God who created all things and is ruler over all is capable of giving such a marvelous inheritance. It far surpasses anything that we could ever hope to receive on this earth. Still, God warns us that there will be suffering involved in living for Jesus Christ, as His children.

Our Hope Is Greater Than Our Sufferings

We now need to recognize the two realities that those who are children of God face (as we have seen up to this point in our study of Romans 8). We have no sentence of condemnation on us, since we are children of God. But, we also have the assurance of suffering. In fact, verse 17 said that we will only be heirs with Christ and be glorified with Him *if* we suffer with Him. So, as we face these two great realities, we must consider the truth that the hope we have as Christians is greater than any of the sufferings we will experience!

Incomparable glory awaits

Paul states, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). Essentially, Paul is saying that there is no comparison between the Christian’s suffering and joy. The only difficult part is in keeping our perspective in this regard. For, the sufferings are all being experienced now. But, the greatest joy that we will experience is waiting for us in Heaven.

Paul’s own life gives us perspective in this regard. Earlier in this series, we considered Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. He said, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Now, I want to put this in a little more context than we considered previously. Let’s listen to what Paul’s “light affliction” included. In 2 Corinthians 11:22-33, Paul says that he was “above measure” in stripes (beatings), in prisons “more frequently,” and “in deaths often.” He had received “forty stripes minus one” five times from the Jews. Three times he was beaten with rods. He was shipwrecked. He spent a night and day “in the deep.” He experienced frequent dangers in his journeys – including dangers of waters, of robbers, of his own countrymen, of the Gentiles, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, and among false brethren. He was weary and laboring. He was often without sleep. He experienced hunger and thirst. He was in cold and nakedness.

Yet, despite all that Paul went through, he said, “But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). You see, despite all the ways that Paul would suffer in his life for the cause of Jesus Christ, he was convinced that the glory that was reserved for him as a child of God would far surpass

them all! So, even when he was in prison for the sake of Christ, he could tell his Christian brothers and sisters, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).

Now, by any other measure, the sufferings that Paul experienced were far from “light.” But, when they were compared with the glory of the Heavenly home Paul was longing for, they were like a small bump in the road that leads to far better things. In fact, he said that these points of “light affliction” were working for “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Eager anticipation for something better

So, like Paul, whenever we experience the storms of this life, we should never lose sight of our Heavenly prize! We should never become so absorbed by our momentary sufferings to let go of our anchor – not even for a moment. Instead, we should be longing for deliverance from the sufferings we experience on this earth.

Romans 8:19-25 says, “For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.”

As God’s new creation, we long for the freedom from the corruption that began to be experienced on this earth after the sin in the Garden of Eden. We should be groaning through these trials of life with eager anticipation for our full adoption to be complete and we can be taken home to live forever with our Heavenly Father. And, if we are faithful to God, we will be glorified together with Jesus Christ (as seen in Romans 8:17).

This tremendous hope that we have saves us. And, although we do not currently experience this great deliverance, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. So, as we wait for this hope to become reality, the fact that we must persevere means that things will not always be easy for us. There are things that we will have to endure. But, our hope saves us through all of these times and from the current of life that tries to pull us away from God if we refuse to let go of it!

We have help from the Holy Spirit

Thankfully, we are not alone as we face these difficult times. Romans 8:26-27 says, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

Now, I do not know all about how this intercession of the Holy Spirit works. But, I do know that it works for the benefit of those who are children of God! Certainly, there are times in our lives and in our sufferings that we struggle to know how we ought to pray or what we ought to pray for.

Fortunately, the Holy Spirit is there to help! God knows our hearts and the Holy Spirit, evidently, helps to communicate that to God when we pray. So, regardless of what is all involved in this work of the Holy Spirit, it should be very comforting to know that those who are children of God have this great help in prayer, as we recognize that the prayers of the righteous are powerful (James 5:16)!

All things work together for good

Then, here is further comfort for those who are Christians: The assurance that everything will work out for the good. Romans 8:28-30 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 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. Moreover whom He predestined, these He

also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Though we experience sufferings on this earth, we can rejoice in knowing that “all things work together for good.” But, we must begin by recognizing who this promise is made to. It is *only* made to those who are Christians – those who love God and are called by the gospel according to God’s eternal purpose of salvation through Jesus Christ! For, God has determined that only those who are in Christ Jesus will be forgiven of their sins and glorified in Heaven with Jesus.

So, these who are Christians should take comfort in the promise that all things work together for good. But, does this mean that every hardship we face on this earth will work out for our physical good? For instance, does this mean that if you lose your job God promises you will have a better one? Absolutely not! In fact, the Scriptures demonstrate (by Paul and others) that many Christians suffered throughout their earthly lives without seeing their physical situations improve. Some even died for Jesus Christ!

Instead, this is a spiritual promise that provides a tremendous amount of comfort. No matter what situations we face on this earth, we know that they will work out to our spiritual benefit if we are faithful to God. There are two ways for us to consider this.

First, all things will work out for our spiritual benefit in the sense that those who are faithful to the Lord will be strengthened as the result of their hardships. This is just as we saw in James 1:2-4 and Romans 5:1-5. Whenever we faithfully endure the trying of our faiths, we grow in faith, learn how to persevere, build character that pleases God, and increase in our hope! Therefore, we can rejoice whenever we experience these hard times because we know that we will get stronger by enduring them.

Second, all things will work out for our spiritual benefit in the sense that Heaven will be the eternal home of those who are faithful to the Lord. No matter what struggles we face on this earth, it will all be okay in the end. In fact, it will be more than just *okay*. It will be great! At the end of the way is a

crown of righteousness that is laid up for us in Heaven.

Therefore, as the apostle Paul contemplated his own impending death (which secular history tells us came by being beheaded for the cause of Christ under persecution by the Roman empire), consider some of the final words he wrote, in 2 Timothy 4:6-8. “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

We Are More Than Conquerors

Although many people in this world look at the lives of Christians and think we are missing out, those who are Christians are the only ones who truly have reason to rejoice in this life! For, we are the ones who will be more than conquerors – even over death! All others will be defeated by the enemy of death, and then will receive eternal punishment in Hell because of their sins. Only the Christian has all things work together for good.

Who can be against us?

Romans 8:31-34 says, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

Listen to the hope-filled words of Paul! God is for us, therefore it is insignificant as to who is against us. God did not spare His own Son, but sacrificed Him for us. Surely, then, He will also freely give us all of the things He has promised to

those who are His children. No one is able to bring a charge against us that will override God's judgment and mercy toward us. For, God is the one who justifies those who are His children. Furthermore, no one can condemn us because it is Christ who died for us and makes intercession for us at the right hand of God!

What tremendous comfort as we face the storms and current of life! Nothing is such a powerful force against us that it can ruin the hope that we have as children of God. So, we can face all of the trials of life with great joy, rejoicing in the hope of everlasting life in Heaven!

Who can separate us from the love of God?

Romans 8:35-39 continues, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The love of God and Christ has saved each one of us who are His children. Therefore, we should consider whether any of the things we face can separate us from God's love. Think through everything that Paul mentions in this text for just a moment.

Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword separate you from God's love? That is, are any of the sufferings we experience in life so difficult that they press against us and force us to be eternally lost? What about persecution? What about being destitute and naked? What about being executed for having faith in Christ?

Paul says that even though there were Christians who were being executed like sheep that are led to the slaughter, they were “more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” That is, they were overwhelming victors in Christ Jesus! They

were not defeated by the things they faced. And, they were not just barely victorious over those things. Instead, they were overwhelmingly victorious! It wasn't even close!

Surely, if none of these things can separate us from the love of God, nothing will be able to! So, Paul concludes that there is nothing and no one who is *able* "to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." No powerful government. No army. Nothing that is present. Nothing that is looming in the future. No angel. Nothing! Period.

The only thing that can separate us from the love God and the hope that we have in Christ Jesus is *us*! Nothing and no one is powerful or influential enough to destroy us by themselves. But, if we choose not to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, we will be destroyed and lose our hope. Therefore, Jude exhorted his fellow Christians, "keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life" (Jude 1:21)!

If we will remain faithful to Jesus Christ through all the storms and the current of life, we are assured of eternal salvation in Heaven! For instance, listen to what Jesus told Christians in the city of Smyrna who were about to experience persecution. "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10)!

Conclusion

If we will be faithful to Jesus Christ through all the storms and trials of life, we have glory waiting for us that is incomprehensible! So, although we groan through these storms and current of life, we live our lives rejoicing in the hope of everlasting life in Heaven. And, we are convinced that no matter what we are faced with on this earth, God is stronger – and we know that He has promised everything works together for our spiritual good!

Study Questions

What is the difference between the happiness of the world and the joy of a Christian?

1. No Condemnation In Jesus Christ

How has Jesus Christ made us free?

Why is it essential to be spiritually minded?

What happens when God's Spirit dwells in us?

2. We Are Children Of God

Why are we not debtors to the flesh?

How have we become children of God?

What are we set to receive as children of God?

3. Our Hope Is Greater Than Our Sufferings

How does the glory waiting compare with the present sufferings?

What should our anticipation be?

What help does the Holy Spirit provide?

How does everything work together for good?

4. We Are More Than Conquerors

Who can be against us?

Who can separate us from the love of God?