

Wednesday, March 11, 2015

Written by Lisa Slayton, president of Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation, and brought to you by the Metro-Urban Institute at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Scripture

Romans 5:1-11

1 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. 8 But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. 9 Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 11 But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Devotional

It is easy in this passage to focus only on the great hope that Paul writes of, the reconciliation back to God, because of what our Lord did for us on the cross. But, we often miss a very important response Paul calls us to—that we are to glory in our sufferings (v.3). In our western culture, we have a poor theology of suffering. We do everything we can to avoid it and if we cannot avoid it, we muscle our way through on our own strength or wallow in self pity and lose sight of God's promises. Either way, we are lost to our own self sufficiency and put fear or pride in place of "Glory." As we look forward to the day when we celebrate the risen Lord, let us not forget that we are called to glory— to feel the full weight—in our suffering in Christ's name. Surely if he suffered the ultimate cost to reclaim our righteous standing before God, then we can embrace and even steward the suffering we face in this life. It may be our most powerful witness for the gospel of grace to a watching world.

Prayer

Dear Lord, help me to embrace and glory in my sufferings. As I reflect on the ultimate cost you paid to bring your people back into right relationship, I am aware of the times when I am suffering—in relationships, in work, in family, in health— that you are working in me to produce something far

greater than my small mind can comprehend. So often, I want the hope and reconciliation without the suffering, and yet it is there that you do your best work in and through me. Please Lord, help me to feel the full weight of my suffering, knowing through it I will also find the ultimate hope, Jesus Christ. Amen.