

Finding Hope in Adversity – Ian France – 27.8.2023



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Scripture

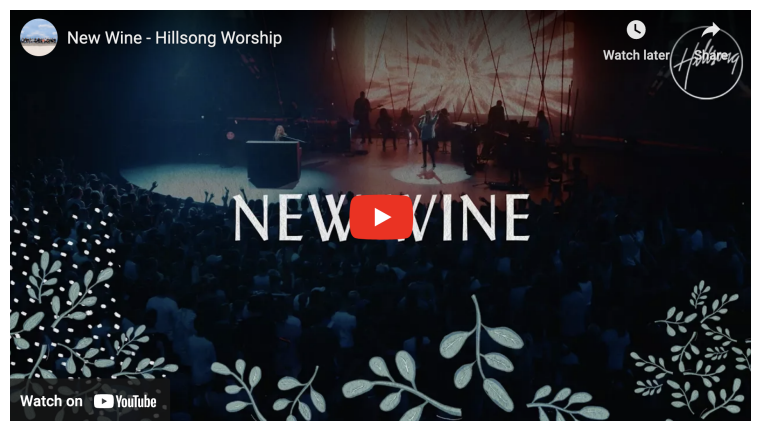
Romans 5:1-5

Open your mind and heart as you read the passage of Scripture aloud and then again quietly to yourself. Listen for God's word to you.

Spend some time in worship.

Observation

When writing about Romans 5, Martin Luther said *'In the whole Bible there is hardly another chapter which can equal this triumphant text'* Paul has been saying to the Roman believers that the only way to salvation is by grace through faith. Now he goes on to elaborate on the benefits such a way of life brings. The first benefit is peace with God through Jesus Christ. The separation that was the result of sin has been closed by Jesus' death on the cross.



New Wine - Hillsong Worship

The second benefit is that we have God's undeserved grace by faith. Because of Jesus, we do not have to prove we are worthy of His love; God is available to us at all times. We can testify to His goodness. The use of the present tense in these verses indicates that this is a permanent position. As a result Paul urges his readers to rejoice in triumphant confidence. When Paul writes of hope he never means something that might happen with luck, as the word is often used today. Paul uses the word hope in the sense of a jubilant certainty as he encourages his readers to believe in the abundance of grace.

But Paul understands that life is not all pleasant. He acknowledges there will be tribulations – not just setbacks or hiccups but serious challenges that everyone will have to face at some stage in their lives. But even here, he says, we can rejoice. God uses tribulation in an amazing way. He knows how much we can stand. He uses it, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to benefit those who believe in Him to grow believers in faith, wisdom, humility etc. Paul describes the progression of growth. Perseverance in tribulation leads to a more committed character; which in turn leads to a stronger hope that will never be disappointed.

This will be the experience of every believer who has ever felt the love of God poured out for them through the Holy Spirit. It is necessary to live in the presence of the Holy Spirit and to walk in the will of God with Him to experience the fullness of God's love.

Icebreaker:

What are you hoping for at this moment in time? Is it a big hope or a little hope? Why are you hoping this? Are you hoping that this hope may come about (as in 'I hope so') or are you rejoicing and confident that it will?

Application.

- On a scale of 1-10 how would you measure your hope at this time? (1 being low, 10 being high.) Why do you respond in this way? Where do you need hope most in your life?
- What does hope look like in hard times?
- Where are you finding reasons to rejoice, even if times are hard for you at the moment? How can you rejoice when life is tough?
- What is the greatest challenge you have ever had to face – and how did you cope with it? How did it change you? Did you grow through it, or did you struggle and accept that you would not succeed? How do you feel about your response to it now?
- What happens if, instead of seeing an adversity, tribulation, challenge as a problem

we see it as a chance for God to develop our character? How does this question make you feel? What is your response to it? Does it change the way you perceive the challenges you are facing at the moment? If not now, do you think looking at them in this way could help you to persevere with them as the days go by? Why/why not?

- Read Romans 5:5 again. Then read John 16:33. Think back over your answers to the above questions. How do these verses change your perception of the tribulations you are facing now?
- How can the group help you with the struggles you have mentioned during this session?

Prayer

Spend a little while in silence. Then let each one tell God in a single sentence how knowing that Jesus is present in all your trials helps you. Pray for one another in regard to the issues that have been raised during your discussion time, and ask Him to make His presence felt as you face the challenges that lie ahead of you (or that you are experiencing now) Then pray in regard to any other needs of the group.

Service

Look for opportunities to give hope in your world this week. Ask God to show you where and how to do this. What difference does it make – to you – to others? Be prepared to share with the group next week what happened.

Bibliography

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/romans-5/>