

Romans 12:12 - Hope In Hardship – 20 January 2013

Well, this morning, maybe some of you are invited here, because there is a topic, a subject that is close to your heart. Your friend, or your relative knows that you're going through some difficulties in life and invited you here to come and join us and we are grateful for that.

And this morning, I would like to speak, therefore, on a subject that maybe is particularly relevant to you. I am going to speak to you about hope in hardship. Suppose, you have an opportunity to meet God today and, you have an opportunity to ask Him, just one question, what would it be? What would be the one question, you want to ask your Creator, your Maker, one, just one question, what would it be?

In the United States, a nationwide survey was conducted as to the most popular question, people would like to ask God if they had an opportunity to meet Him and the question, is simply this, "God, why do the righteous suffer?" It's a great question, why do those who believe in You, suffer. Another pastor, writer, his name is Max Lucado, he wrote a book called, Max on life, basically, a series of questions by people and answers he would like to share with them from the Bible. And, during that interview, Max Lucado was asked, of all the questions you had to answer, which was the hardest question? Without skipping a beat, he said, the question was simply this, "Why will Christians suffer?"

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you know, this is maybe a question, in your heart this morning, why do we go through hardship. If I have already believed in Jesus, doesn't it mean that God will bless me and protect me and help me.

Why then, trials and tribulations, pain and suffering. Can I tell you something that may shock you? It is this. If you imagine, being a Christian equals God taking a cotton wool blanket to wrap you up, you are in for a big surprise. Because, as far as I know, as I read the Bible, believing in Jesus Christ, doesn't immunize you from pain and suffering, in fact believing in Jesus may mean that you will suffer even more than if you have not believed in Him.

I hope you will not get out and exit this place because there is something more to that. Believing in Jesus doesn't immunize you from pain, but believing in Jesus mean something to you as you go through pain and that is what we are going to look at today.

There is hope in hardship. 2008, January 1, that's about, 5 years ago, on 1st January, 2008, this was a very significant day in my life, it is not the day I got married, I got married way before that, but it was the day, my firstborn son, Shawn was brought into the world. I still remember that day, over the weekend, our church leadership, we were at, in Malaysia, having a prayer retreat and I got the call from my wife, she's about to deliver, she is 2 weeks early and we rushed back home, and I sat there for more than 24 hours, first time very hard to come out. I think, she took over 30 hours in the labor ward.

But, Shawn, our firstborn was finally delivered on 1 January, 2008, at 11 PM so, very easy to remember, 1, 1, 1, 1. I didn't buy 4D after that, by the way. (Laughter in the congregation).

But, that day, he was born, my life changed. I mean, I had great joy and delight, just seeing, that little bundle of joy. We were married for 8 years and this was our firstborn and so, Shawn was particularly dear to us. And, when he was born, I do not know about you, but as a parent, something, arises within my soul. Something exciting, I thought, wow, this is the, this, this boy, is precious, maybe he will be a future preacher, pastor and even this thought came to my mind, that he might be the future Prime Minister. (Laughter in the congregation). I don't know about you, but when your son is born, you have great hopes, you have great expectations, I thought, he may be a PM, president, for all I know.

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Shawn has always been a very special kid, he has this independent streak about him, I thought, he is born to be a leader. When you call him, he doesn't respond, he likes to do his own thing. Wah, leader material, (Laughter in the congregation), not easily swayed. I thought he has a very curious heart and, he is fascinated by lights, by fans and even the way he plays and enjoys his toys; his different. You know, usually, boys take the cars and they just roll it on the table, on the floor. But Shawn is unique, very unique. He turns the cars around and starts spinning the wheels all the time. He likes to explore, he likes to just crawl along the perimeters of a room. I thought, what is special, unique child, God has blessed me with.

When he was about 12 months old, this is the picture of Shawn, when he was about 12 months old, he looks cute and blur as anything. When he was 12 months old, we went to see our pediatrician, that's a routine checkup and we told her about the uniqueness of our son. While, he loves to play toys this way, he loves looking at lights, I thought he might be an engineer or what, looks like he is thinking about the mechanisms of the spinning, I thought about these things and as I shared, the

pediatrician said, "Hmm, have you ever heard about autism?" I have, but why are you telling me this? I am not autistic, my wife is not autistic, there is no one, in both of our families, even if you trace it to our cousins and uncles, there is no one, in the remotest of connections, whom we know have autism. She says, "Well, there are some interesting things about what you shared about your son, and I know, he still very young, he's only one year old, but, err, maybe you like to keep a watch out for that."

Now, I tossed that totally away from my mind, because, it cannot happen to us, it cannot happen to me, it cannot happen to Winnie and myself, because, there is no family history at all. 3 months later, when he was about 15 months old, we went to visit the pediatrician again and, same features persist. He is fixated with spinning movements, with the fans, with the lights. He has close to minimal or zero eye contact. He had not been able to hear a single sound. He moves, the perimeter of a room automatically. He doesn't point, he's not able to articulate what he wants, he moves your hands to get what he wants, but he will not tell you, he would not indicate that with the pointing of fingers. She said "He is 15 months old, these things should be present, but it's not, maybe it's time for you to think about the possibility that he may have something called autism." And, she began to arrange some appointments for us. I didn't want to wait, if it is real, I wanted to find out if it is true. So, on the very same day, I knew something about autism, but not enough. I mean, I went through medical school, but secret to all of you, medical school doesn't teach you everything at all. (Laughter in the congregation). And autism, is certainly one thing I didn't know about. We hear about it, but it is never covered in the curriculum.

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I knew, it was something about being weird, I knew it was something about being awkward, I knew it was something about being shut in and not being able to communicate and relate with the world. I knew it was something bad that people can't speak, there is no social interest, that's as far as I know, but, I've got to know more. So, on the very same day, myself, my wife, we went back home, we opened our laptops, we opened our computers and we began surfing the web, looking at all kinds of materials. We looked at official doctors diagnostic criteria, we looked at pictures, we watched videos on YouTube. And, what really clicked for us was, first of all, the diagnostic criteria, I mean, we are objective people, we didn't want to go by feelings, we want to go by facts, we went to the data, we look at the agnostic criteria and mentioned, things I have mentioned to you, zero eye contact, no reference, contact reference, no pointing reference, repetitive movements, inability to communicate.

And I looked at it, Shawn ticked all the boxes; it was classic. Then, I looked at the videos, I looked at videos of children with autism and I saw my son in these children. He was exactly like them. Shawn is my first point, I have no real experience with kids and when I saw that in him, I said this is, I continued to watch the videos, I hear about what the parents share, the parents in those videos would speak with tears in their eyes, because, they say, up to teenage years, my son is still not able to talk, my son is not able to be independent, you have to feed him, you have to take care of him, we can't leave him alone for a single moment, because, he may just run out of the house, crossed the road and get into an accident. For all these years, we have had not a holiday at all, there is no holiday for autism.

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Some say, my son has never hugged me, some say, your son may never be able to say, I love you. And as I saw those videos, both of us, independent terminals, tears began to flow down our eyes. I am not a guy that cries easily at all, but it was uncontrollable, both of us just bawling and wailing before our laptops, we were hugging each other, we were saying this is amazing, this is impossible, but this is what is facing us. I felt that day, that the world came crashing down on us. I was a Christian, I was even pastoring. But the world came crashing down on us, I felt that I was going on a freefall, I felt that this, this, this was just devastating, I was devastated. I couldn't preach for the next few weeks, I'm thankful for the pastors here who took over the pulpit, but I knew I was in no state of mind to preach God's people. It's not that I was, I was angry with God or bitter. I was curious, I was not sure, I was, maybe wondering why, but I believe I still kept the faith, I still believed in God but, it was just that sorrow that I felt in my heart. It was a hard time. Maybe, today, you're going through a hard time, maybe, today, your husband has cheated on you, you knew it. Or, maybe your son, has gone rebellious, or you had just come back from the doctor and he said to you, you have an incurable disease. Maybe your family is breaking up, you are a financial embarrassment and debt. Maybe, life has dealt you a hard blow and you are in pain, in grief, in sorrow, in misery, you feel vulnerable, you feel that life is crashing down on you, you feel that the mat has been pulled from under your feet, and you're going on the freefall.

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Maybe, this is the message you need and that's why, the Lord brought you here today. I want to tell you about a man, a man who went through so much, much more than you and I could ever, ever imagine. He was tortured, he was beaten, he was

betrayed, he was mistaken, he was forsaken, he went through the whole gamut of human suffering, he was left alone, vulnerable. And yet, this man, that I know off, continued to have that strength and poise and joy from the inside. He was not overcome by circumstances, but he overcame them all, he was truly victorious and triumphant in his life, through the deepest pain.

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I like you today, to meet this man. He's a man I adore, he's a man I respect. I like you to hear this man, I let you to hear from him and I hope, as we listen to his words, you will find comfort, you will find solution, you will find joy and hope, for your own life. So, this morning, let me present to you, this man, for you to hear.

Video plays

Five times, the Jews whipped me 39 strokes. I was beaten with rods, three times. I was stoned. Three times, I was shipwrecked, I was adrift at sea for a day and a night. In all my journeys, there is danger, from rivers, from robbers, from my own people, from Gentiles, in the cities, in the wilderness, at sea, from false brothers. In all my works, I had many sleepless nights, I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was cold and I was in the sun and apart from other things, I always think for the church. Who can say, they are weak, who can say they are unfairly treated, am I not weak, am I not unfairly treated. I am afflicted in every way.

But, I am not crushed, I'm not perplexed, but I am not driven to despair. I am persecuted, but I am not forsaken. I was strucked down, but I am not destroyed, for I do not lose heart. Though my out the self is wasting away, my inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light moment of affliction, it is preparing for me and eternal weight of glory, beyond all comparison. O Lord, I rejoice in You.

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You would have figured, this man is none other than, the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul, the apostle. His sufferings are chronicled for us, in 2Corinthians 11, chapter 4 and also in chapter 6. And, as you read his life, you will be amazed that this man was suffered far beyond our imagination, is someone who still has a steel and a joy that we all so crave for. And it is from this man that we hear this words, found in Romans 12, about how we can have hope in hardship. Paul says to us today, rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulations, be constant in prayer. If you today are suffering, pain and trials of your life, I want to, I want to by the grace of God, encourage you

from his words, that there is hope, there is joy in the midst of our pains and sufferings. And I truly appreciate these words from Paul, because it is not speaking like a theoretician, he is not speaking this as an academic, he's not sitting on the ivory tower, never having tasted pain and say, this is theoretically what you should do. No, he is someone who has been there, done that. He someone who has experienced, these pains, far beyond what we could imagine and he's almost like someone was found treasure in a distant land. He's found it, and he's come back and tell all of us today, you can have joy.

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Just yesterday, or just two days ago, I was with my son, I brought him to a Chinese class. Second week he's there, first week he was there with his mom and on the way there, er, he reminded me, of how last week, I brought him to the wrong way, by the wrong way. He says, daddy, do you remember the skinny staircase. Oops, I think, I do, son, do you remember the staircase you brought me up and it leads to a dead end. Yes, Shawn, yes, what about it? Daddy, why do you bring me up the wrong way. He doesn't let go of you, when you do something wrong. Um, because daddy didn't know. Then, daddy, why do you say it is the right way. And daddy, why did you say, when I said to you, it's the wrong way, you say, trust me, trust me. (Laughter in the congregation) I say, Shawn, because I've never been there before. Daddy, will we go the right way today. Yes, why? Because we have been there.

The little conversation, reminds me, Paul is not someone who leads us a blind alley. He would not be someone who leads us to a dead end. He is someone who's been there, it's been through the journey of extreme pain and sufferings and he has said, he has discovered, I can rejoice in hope, I can be patient in tribulation and I want you to know it.

This morning, let me share with you, about hope in hardship. Some simple observations, that will I hope, encourage your hearts, let's look at this verse again.

It says, rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, the constant in prayer, let me share with you, three simple truths, very simple.

1 . The Severity of Hardship

Number 1, let's see the severity of hardship. Let's find out, what kind of pain is Paul referring to. He says, for us to be patient in tribulation, so, under what kind of circumstances can we be patient, what kind of pain are you talking about, Paul? The

word, tribulation, is an interesting word, it is the word Thlipsis in the Greek which refers to a pressure, a crushing and the word tribulations, is used in the Bible to describe times of extreme affliction, pain, in great famines and most of all, the word thlipsis, is used to describe the great tribulation. For those of you, who are Christians for some time, you know that the Bible prophesies that soon enough, that there will be a time of great tribulation the world has never known. A great time of pain and suffering and that word thlipsis is the word used here in Romans 12:12.

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So, Paul is saying, there will be a time of great pain, not just minor discomfort and inconveniences, it is a time of great suffering, pressure, crushing, tearing apart.

This English word, tribulation, is taken from the Latin word, tribulum. This is a picture of the word tribulum. A tribulum, is a board, under which you have sharp objects embedded into it and the purpose of a tribulum is to used to separate the husks of wheat from the grains. So, what is done, is shown in the next picture, where this tribulum, is a board that you placed upon the wheat and then, a man would stand on it to add weight and pressure and then, the oxen will pull it, so as the tribulum, travels over the wheat, it crushes it, it smashes it, so that the wheat husk and the grain is separated out. That is a tribulum, designed to break up, designed to crush, designed to destroy.

Paul, says to you today, you, as you go through the tribulum, the pressures, the crushes of your life, you can be patient through it. On the one hand, this is scary because, it means, you can and you may face extreme pains and pressures of life. On the other hand, this is an exciting message, because, Paul is saying, there is a power, there is a joy, that can transcend even the deepest pain. To me, it is exciting and that's why I think, let's keep pressing on and find out what Paul is saying, how come, that in the deepest of pain I can have joy because, some of us think that when the Bible says rejoice, it means, don't think about your pain, minimize it, deny it. No, no, no, the Bible doesn't say, deny your pains, deny your sorrows, deny your sufferings, they are real, they are strong, they are powerful, but the Bible is saying, they say kind of a power and joy, that is even greater than that. The severity, but let's move and look at secondly, the support of hardship.

2. The Support of Hardship.

Paul says, in this kind of situation, there is something you need to do as a form of support for yourself. He says it in the next word, be constant in prayer. In times of

pain, you have got to pray, you have got to pray to God and He is your support, you have got to look to Him, you have got to pray. You say, pastor, why do I pray? All of us know that in pain, we should pray, but the question is this, why do you pray?

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Sometimes, we take it almost as a superstitious thing, we pray and we think that things will be fine. So, why do you pray? Some people believe, if I pray, God of the heavens will hear me and He will remove all my difficulties. He will open the way, He will release the affliction, He will remove the people that cause hurt to my life, He will change my circumstance so that my path will now be an easy one again. So I pray to God, that He will change what is outside of my life. Can this happen? Sure it can? Yes, He may. But, is this what happens every single time you pray? Answer, no.

The Bible doesn't actually doesn't promise anyone of us that God will remove all the pains of your life, it doesn't. The Bible never promises you, that you will go through life like a bed of roses, the Bible doesn't say that when you are in great pain, He will now always make it easy for you, it doesn't say so. And certainly, that's not the truth that is depicted in Romans 12:12. Some of you, say, pastor, don't you remember Philippians 4:6, be careful for nothing, be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. You see, pastor, we need to pray, and God knows our needs and He will answer our prayers, remove the problem. Pastor, wait, wait, wait, wait. It's great that you remember Philippians 4:6, but that's not how it ends, right. Philippians 4:6, let me say this again, with the promise of God at the end.

Be careful, be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God and the, promise comes here, and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. What is the promise of God? That problems would be removed? The life becomes easy? That you are no more suffer pain and sorrow? No, the promise is this, that as you go through the pain, there is a peace that what? Surpasses all understanding. Because, it is bewildering to the world, the world's mechanism of coping with trials is to get me out of this. It is escapism. But the biblical answer is not escapism, the biblical answer is you, as you go through the pain, have a different peace that the world doesn't know, a peace in the midst of stress and conflict and turmoil.

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So, why do you pray? You don't pray, simply to ask God to remove trials, you may, I am not saying you don't. If you are sick, there is nothing wrong with praying, God, heal me. When a child is rebellious, there is nothing wrong with saying, Lord, please turn my son around, if your wife, has, has separated from you, because of her sins, it doesn't that you can't pray, you can, you should. But, there is a different prayer that is mentioned here and there is the different pray you should pray as you go through trials. You see, Romans 12:12 is not saying, get out of this trial. The word that is highlighted in red, is the word, patience. It says, backed up under the tribulation. So, don't escape out of this tribulum, but, stay there. Remain under the tribulation and as you remain under, there is the kind of joy that you still can have, even when it is crushing you on the outside. So, the reason to rejoice is not as in the 1st point, it is nothing, minimize the pain. The reason for rejoicing is also not in the 2nd point, oh, it would get better tomorrow. You know that phrase (pastor quotes a Chinese phrase that means the next day will be a much better day). You all sing that song, (pastor names a Mandarin song entitled tomorrow would be even better), no, no, no, tomorrow may not be better.

Your family would still be breaking up tomorrow, your cancer may not get better, it may get worse tomorrow. Your debt may spiral deeper, tomorrow, life may deal with you a harder blow tomorrow. Yet, there is a joy underneath it.

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So, let me tell you the final point and this is the main point here,

3. The Secret in This Hardship

There is a secret for you to have hope, that is a secret for you to have joy in this hardship. You say, what is this? Again, looking at Romans 12:12, the secret is in the red. Just one word, just one word, it is not a difficult sermon today, just a simple word that I hope will encourage your hearts. Paul, who has experienced extreme pain, been there, done that comes back and tells you, the reason why you can rejoice, is not because the pain is minimal, not because he will get better tomorrow, but, there is something, there is something that would encourage your hearts today, that gives you a joy in the midst of pain and that is hope.

The Christian hope is that we birth within our souls, that strengthens us for the day.

You say, what is hope?, Let me tell you what hope is not first. Hope is not wishful thinking. The way we use hope in English, in modern day context, is nothing more than a wish. I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow, I hope, so and so, football club win the

match tomorrow. I hope I will not be sick tomorrow, it's nothing more than a wish, because, there is no certainty whatsoever. But the hope of the Bible, is a different thing. The hope of the Bible, is a confident expectation of all the good that God is going to bring into a life because of Jesus Christ. The hope of the Bible is a confident expectation of all the good, the Gospel brings into your life, is a confident expectation, a confident expectation that Jesus will come back for you, a confident expectation that though you are tortured on the outside, one day, in your body will be glorified with Jesus, a confident expectation today you will share in the glory, a confident expectation that He will allow you to be heirs and coheirs of all that Jesus possess, it is a certainty that brings you great encouragement within your hearts, that's what hope is. That, it is hope that holds your life together.

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I felt my life was breaking apart when Shawn was diagnosed with autism, I felt I had just lost my son, I felt that the Shawn that I knew who could be a prime minister, president, died that day. On the very day, I was watching the YouTube videos, I literally felt that Shawn died, he is no more the same boy, he is a totally different person, I felt he was a stranger to me, I never knew him like that. I felt life was just disintegrating and breaking apart.

Your life may be breaking apart, but what holds it together, is hope, because, there is nothing more painful than to realize in pain God forsake you, there's nothing more lonely, nothing more scary, nothing more troubling than in pain, you feel that God has forsaken you. But what holds you together is when you look at the Gospel, you look at what Jesus has done and it now fills you with hope because you know, Jesus is not forsaking you. You know, He is coming for you again and even though you go through the trials and the valleys of life, it is not the end. He is coming for you and all the shame and sufferings and wrongs you suffer, will all be disappeared one day where there will be no more sorrow, no more tears, you be glorified, and that hope strengthens you for today. It's that hope that keeps you together. And herein, is the paradox of the Christian life, herein is the mystery of the Christian life, a Christian, is a mystery to the world, you know. If you really live the Gospel, if you really have the Gospel, work out in your life, your life will be an enigma, will be a mystery to the world, because, even in the deepest pain, you can rejoice. I am saying this to you, as a Christian, if you're going through great pain and you are someone who has hope, you will be this, you will be both sorrowful and rejoicing. You say Ha! It is weird. No, it is not weird if you live the Gospel. You will be both sorrowful, both, all right, it is not either or, both sorrowful and rejoicing.

You see, there are some Christians today, who don't understand this and they therefore, deny their emotions. What I mean is this, when they go through great pains, they stoically put up a front and says, no, I am okay, I am not hurt, it doesn't disturb you at the least bit, I am not sorrowful at all. You know what, that's unnatural and in fact, I don't see it in the Bible. If you have a miscarriage, don't tell me you don't sorrow. If your wife just met a traffic accident, don't tell me you don't sorrow. If your husband cheated on you, don't tell me you don't sorrow. You are weird if you don't have sorrow and yet, there are plenty of Christians walking around weird. Weird, your, your child just was in a serious disease and you say, no lah, nothing lah, I am okay. My wife wants to divorce me, no problem lah. (Laughter in the congregation). I'm okay. You are not real, you are not real, you're just, you are just minimizing the issue, dumping it to one side, you are not really dealing with it. But the Christian, have both sorrow and joy. He sorrows about the matter because that matter, really matters to him. If something is dear to you, when you lose it, it matters to you, it does. But the difference is this, you are not overwhelmed, you are not devastated. In the language of apostle Paul, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. He is not a masochist alright. He says, Wah, whip me, whip me, I love to be whipped. No, no, no, he's not. It's painful, while his pain is in one sense, there is a rising power within him that says, I am rejoicing in the Lord. Herein, is the mystery of the Christian. The world doesn't know this. To the world, the only way you can have joy is when you remove the pain from the outside; there is no other way, you see. But for a Christian, you can have joy, a power on the inside, because, God through the Gospel gives you hope.

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My friends, as you go through the pains of your life, this is what you need to look at, you need to look at the Gospel, you need to look at how Jesus gave His life for you and as you the Holy Spirit to work the Gospel into your heart, you are rooted in His love and you have great hope for tomorrow and as you look at the glorious future God has for you, He is with you, through your deepest pain, in the past and in the future, you are secure, you can have security in your present. You can know that He is not forsaking you, but He is working out His glorious purposes through you. A glorious response, Paul says 2 Corinthians is this

For this light momentary affliction, he is afflicted, but he says, it is light.

By the way, I don't think what the experience was light, but, it was light and it was momentary in comparison with the eternal weight of glory that is to come

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory
beyond all comparison
(2 Corinthians 4:17 ESV)

So, here is a man who sorrows, yet, have great hope and therefore, joy. Joy, because it is working out a great glory for me, I know I am pain, but God is for me, with me and He is working something beautiful in and through my life. What glory, his eyes, fixed towards that hope. Therefore, he says to you, rejoice, saying. Now, this is not a difficult concept. All of you, who are married and all of you who have children, especially, all our mothers here, you will totally understand this, don't you. When you are in the labor ward, it is extremely painful unless you cheat and put epidural lah. But otherwise, as you go through the labor process, it is extremely painful, you hear, aaaah, aaah, aah ! I used to work in the labor ward and I see people deliver, and you that someone is delivering when you are woken up in the middle of the night, uugh, uugh aah. And it is extremely painful. I have not experienced it myself (Laughter in the congregation). But I can be confident in saying, it is probably one of the most intense pain, physical pain, any human being can experience, great pain. But, you know something, every woman checked into the labor ward willingly. And they checked into the labor ward happily. It's weird, you know, you are going through great pain,(laughing) I am going to deliver, you are very happy, you are excited about it. You say, why, are you weird? No, I am sorrowful, yet always, rejoicing. I know, it is going to be painful but I'm looking at what is to come, the good that should come, the little darling that should come, he is worth it.

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And as we see out pain in that light, it's painful, I wish I don't have to go through it, but if I have to, I will and I am rejoicing because of the good that should come, the darling of my soul, the lover of my soul that should come, Jesus and how, I would be glorified with Him, I will be heirs and coheirs with Him I will be with God henceforth, for evermore and in that, I rejoice. Pain, doesn't make sense until you see it in the light of God.

Asaph, the man who wrote Psalms 73, he begins his Psalms, with a lament, why, why is this happening and he says, only when I entered the sanctuary of God, then, I understand. You will not understand, until you come to a living relationship with Jesus and you see Him in the light of Scriptures and you see that He is working out, His purposes, His glory in and through your life.

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I remember that time when I entered the sanctuary of God, not here, not in GCW, not in SCGS days, but in my tiny little room at home. I was with my son,, he was playing his toys, on his own, couldn't communicate with him, he wouldn't listen, there was no way I could get through him and there, on that day, I remember, opening the hymnal, the song book, and I began to worship and sing unto the Lord. And as I sing, tears begin to flow down my eyes, because I was singing, In His Time, He makes all things beautiful, in His time. It didn't look beautiful then. I think his mind was all messed up, Shawn's mind, it was messy, is not beautiful, but I know, I have a hope, He is working something beautiful in our family and the glory that should come, was such a strange mixture within my soul, the tears that flowed, was tears of sorrow and tears of joy, maybe one eye sorrow and one eye joy. But, this is the mystery of the Christian, sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.

The secret to hardship in your life today is hope, a confident assurance, a confident expectation of all the good, that will come in the Son, Jesus. Question, how can you get this hope in your heart? Is not theoretical, folks, it's not theoretical, this hope must be living within your hearts, this hope must be within your soul, how do you get this hope within us. Two simple things, found in the Scriptures, that I found, that could help you today. In Romans 15:4, it says

.....through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
(Romans 15:4 ESV)

Hope is not found in man's words, hope is found in God's Word, hope is found in what He has said and because, God never lies, it is impossible for God to lie, in the light of His truthfulness, in the light of His faithfulness and what He has promised through the Gospel of Jesus, I have hope. He says, whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have everlasting life, He says, He works all things together for good to them that love God, He says He is for us and in the Gospel, I have great hope. In the Scriptures, I see Jesus, how He came and how He gave His life on the cross and how I read of my Savior, not just someone who is far away from us but our compassionate High Priest, He was touched in every point like as we are, He went through the gamut of human suffering, He understands us and in the light of the Savior that I have, I have hope, because He loves me, He knows me, He is for me through Scriptures.

Let me tell you something when you go through pain, the natural instinct of man, is that we run away from the Bible. You are so discouraged, you are so downtrodden that we would not have strength to pick up the Bible and to read it meaningfully, but this is exactly what the devil wants you to do, run away from the Scriptures. But when you go through the Scriptures, you realize through the encouragement of Scriptures, you will have hope. That's why, when you go through pain, when you read the Bible there is something that happens within your soul, because you are seeing the Gospel in the Scriptures. A 2nd thing that the Bible says that will help that hope to arise within you, is found in verse 13 where it says

.....so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.
(Romans 15:13 ESV)

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It is the work of the Holy Spirit that takes the Living Word and plunged it deep within your hearts. You didn't do it, you can't, it's got to be the work of God, it's got to be the work of the Holy Spirit and therefore, in times of pain, kneel before the Lord, open the Scriptures, look into the Bible, to see the Gospel, see Jesus and how it is for you and pray, dear Spirit of the Living God, take this reality, and plunged it deep within my soul that through the power of the Holy Spirit, I might have hope, that as I go through the valleys of the shadow of death, I am not crushed, I am not overwhelmed. I may be sorrowful, but I have that in a living power of rejoicing. Can I say this phrase to you, Knees down and your chins will go up, because, as you go knees down, as you pray, hope arises and your chins will go up.

So, let's tie all that together. The Bible says, rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, the constant in prayer, be devoted to prayer, that's what the Word means. Don't just pray once in a while, keep praying and doing just pray that God remove the problem, but pray, God, if the problem, the tribulation should stay, oh, work in my heart, the rising of hope. You see, that's why, Paul who has been there, done that, comes back and tells you, how you link prayer and hope and joy together. They are not random words, there is a flow of thoughts that someone who has been there and done that, have come to help you. Friends, made these words encourage your hearts. I pray for a church, a people that are so radically transformed by the power of the Gospel, hope, that when we go through the hardships of life, we react like the world doesn't understand. They look at you in your deepest pain, as your family breaks up, as you go through sicknesses and illnesses and you go through catastrophe of life, they see the way that you are sorrowful, yet rejoicing. They see that you're going through great

pain but they see that you have a hope and the confidence in the God you worship and that makes God glorious. The Gospel, changes your life, the Gospel changes everything. It changes the way you respond to trials and the way we react to the difficulties of life is going to enable us to be like a city set upon the hill, shining bright in the world that is dark and desperate. And when they see that you have something that they don't have, that you have a security and an assurance that they don't have, they come and ask you, what is your secret, and you say to them, it is Jesus, He is my hope, He died for me, He loves me and I know, He is for me, He will be back for me one day and from the past to the future, today, I know He is working out and eternal weight of glory in my life and though, I am sorrowful on the outside, I am rejoicing as well on the inside. The Gospel, through your life, glorifies God. This morning, come back to the Gospel, come back to Jesus, come back to what He has done for you, He changes everything. There is hope in hardship, may the good Lord, bless His Word.

Let's bow, for a word of prayer. There is a hope that burns within our souls, that gives us strength for each new day, a hope that the world doesn't understand, a hope that God wants you to experience today, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I know I speak today, to hurting people, everybody hurts somewhere. You are either, going through a trial today, or you will be going into a trial tomorrow, or you have just emerged from a trial yesterday. But life is full of trials and the way, God wants His people to respond is not escapism, but strength and power and joy that comes from Him, a joy that the world doesn't know the joy that only God can give and He is bringing that into your life, through Jesus His Son. This morning, come to the cross and pray, God, work out that hope in my flagging soul. May the flame of hope be lit and burst into life. God help me that I may live that life that shines as a testimony, through the deepest suffering.

Maybe today, you are angry with God, and resentful for what He has done. My friends, He has not forsaken you, He never forsakes you. If He loves you while we were yet sinners, He will not protect you that now you are his son. Look at the hope in Jesus. Maybe, you are here as a guest, you are here first time, you do not know Jesus and really, I say to you, you have no hope, because, I think, all the hope is found only in Jesus. Can I encourage you, this morning, to fly to Jesus Christ, to turn from your sins, to recognize that you need Jesus, He holds your life together. I pray today, you will not go through life alone but that God, through His Son, will be alive in you. So, Father, this morning, we are greatly humbled, before Your presence and at the very same time, rejoicing before Your presence, because, it is so clear that Jesus, Your Son is sacrificed to give us this wonderful life, a life that bamboozles the world, a life that is

amazing and divine. May the reality of the hope of the Gospel, so radically change us that we will glorify You. So Lord, bless every heart, may Your Word be like the balm to our souls, comfort each one and I pray again, for those was still outside of the kingdom, made this day be the day, they turn from sin and believe in Jesus. God, by Your Holy Spirit, take these words, plunged it deep within our souls, make us more like Your Son, make us come to Jesus, we pray all this now in Jesus name, Amen