

The Hard Part of Being Salt and Daylight to This World

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Let's turn to Romans 5: 1-5 where we read this from Apostle Paul, "5 Therefore, having been justified by faith, ^[a]we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we also have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and ^[b]we celebrate in hope of the glory of God.³ And not only *this*, but ^[c]we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;⁵ and 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. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)" How often do we read this piece of Scripture by picking and choosing certain parts to meditate on. We like verse one where Paul tells us we have been justified by faith when we put our trust in Jesus. This is the main reason chapter 5 is looked at is because of this piece of Scripture. Plus, Paul tells us we celebrate in hope of the glory of God. All of this sounds good and is truly great for a follower of Jesus Christ. The rest we like to forget because this is where it gets tough for many Christians. While we're celebrating being justified by faith (made right with God through Jesus His Son), we also celebrate in His glory, but then Paul adds onto this by saying we also celebrate in our tribulations. KJV has "glory in tribulations". The Greek term used here for "glory" means to rejoice, make boast (Strong's Concordance). We would use this term to rejoice in what we think as good things like getting an award or doing some kind of good deed. Paul uses this term to let the Church know that part of the Christians' character is to rejoice or boast over their tribulations which means rejoice over unhappiness or distress in life. Now, we have to read the whole sentence here. What Paul is saying here is that through these tribulations, the love of God will flow through us by the working of the Holy Spirit and we rejoice over that. These tribulations, even though we don't want to go through them, is an opportunity for Jesus' love to grow stronger and stronger. Paul saw this, but most Christians can't see this. Most of us want to live a pain free life – who doesn't? However, we must understand that through our tribulations, those around us can see for themselves God working through our life which brings Him glory if we have the same mind set

as Paul did through the Holy Spirit. Paul was allowing Jesus' divine nature flow through him, which helped him to have this crazy view of life. Think about that, even though I've given you Paul's view and reason why he said this, it's still crazy to hear. This is why it is so important for us to realize how important it is for us to be good salt and daylight for Jesus. Only through Jesus can someone see any good come out of tribulation. This is part of Jesus' divine nature. It's not part of the human nature. So, Paul's view on tribulation is part of being salt and daylight to this world. Let's narrow this down a little bit.

There are all kinds of tribulation like sickness, wars, and the list can go on and on. Let's look at something that Jesus, the Son of God, talks about that He wants His true followers to set the example and it can be found in Luke 6: 27-36 where we read this, ²⁷ "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who are abusive to you. ²⁹ Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your ^[a]cloak, do not withhold your ^[b]tunic from him either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand *it* back. ³¹ ^[c]Treat people the same way you want them to ^[d]treat you. ³² If you love those who love you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is *that* to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same *amount*. ³⁵ But love your enemies and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *people*. ³⁶ ^[e]Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)"

Part of tribulation of life is dealing with the common man. Again, tribulation is unhappiness, distress - something that tests your endurance and resolve (Collins Dictionary). You can also add our government to this list as well of those who cause us tribulation. Jesus starts right off here by telling us we are to "love" our enemies. Jesus uses the Greek term "agapao" for all the times He uses love in this chapter which means: the active love of God for His Son and his people and the active love His people are to have for God and each other (Strong's Concordance).

So, we must understand right away here that this love is not human love. We are to love our enemies as God loves His Son. Think about that for a moment. This is not humanly possible. We think just doing good deeds like giving a gift card to a homeless person is good enough. We are to love our enemies. Jesus tells us how it is. We are to pray for those who curse us, who hurt us, who slap us in the face. If someone demands our coat, we give them our shirt as well. Jesus adds more weight on this in verse 32 where He tells us do we think we deserve credit for loving those who love us? That's usually easier to do. Sinners love their own. For us to be good salt, we must love our enemies. Why, because Jesus loved His enemies on the cross and we are to carry our own cross daily. In other words, we are to live out the cross daily. We look at this as impossible. How can you love someone who has done great harm to you? We've been doing a study on Numbers during Wednesday night Bible study and I've seen how rebellious and hard-hearted Israel was toward God. Yet, God didn't give up on them. Why, because His love is so grand. His love keeps going where human love stops. As Christians, we need His Spirit to help us to live out His love daily so that we are the good salt and daylight we need to be. God's love is the biggest part of salt and daylight. Without His love, you can't love the Lord with all your strength and might. You can't love people. So, Jesus tells us to love our enemies and do good to them. Lend to them even if you think they won't repay. If this wasn't bad enough, Jesus adds salt to the already painful wound. Some weeks ago, I tried to be nice to someone. They took advantage of me and I got upset. Then I helped another person and that person was so ungrateful. Then, I got very mad. I told God I didn't want to help people anymore. People are so ungrateful today. When someone slams the door on your face, what do you do or think? When you hold a door for someone and they don't say thank you, what do you do or think? When you let someone go first at an intersection, even though you were the first one there and they don't wave a hand of thanks, what do you do or think? We may call them some names in our minds or show a face of disapproval. If it's a relative or a co-worker, we tell ourselves we have disowned them or we'll never have anything to do with them. We don't like ungrateful people. When I told the Lord I'm tired of helping ungrateful people, this chapter came to mind. That night, I

took a closer look and verse 35 popped out like a bullet out of a gun - for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *people*. So, the Lord was telling me the love I had for people was still very weak. I did not love the ungrateful. Last week, I was at another church and I came early so I could sit in the back. The Scripture for the sermon was from Luke that we read a few moments ago. Boy, I thought, the Lord is really working on me for some reason, and so as I lifted my eyes from the bulletin, I saw the person God had helped me to forgive who I worked with at Weis. I told the story before about working with someone who wanted my position as store manager and told lies and did evil things to me, but yet wanted off Sunday mornings to go to church. The Lord wanted me to forgive that person even though I didn't want to at the beginning. Well, there he stood after I saw that piece of Scripture in the bulletin. I didn't know he went to that church. Then, when the pastor got up to preach, he stated that was not the Scripture for the sermon, it was James 1 – a mistake. I think the Lord was making a point to me. I had limited His love toward people.

When we read Romans 5, we had stopped at verse 5. We'll now read verses 6-11 because it shines light on why we must show kindness to the ungrateful. Paul tells us this, ⁶When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.⁷ Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good.⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.⁹ And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation.¹⁰ For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son.¹¹ So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.(NLT – www.biblegateway.com)”

We were ungrateful before we allowed Jesus into our hearts. I was thinking about this, I wonder how many people reject Jesus daily. How many people reject the Holy Spirit when it puts conviction in someone's heart? I'm guessing it's thousands of people daily. In fact, I rejected that conviction a few times before I

allowed Jesus into my heart and mind. Jesus didn't stop the first time I rejected Him. I was ungrateful for that conviction – I'm thankful now for it. If Jesus was filled with human love, He would have stopped at my first rejection, but He didn't. Why, because He has, as Paul would call it, Great Love. This Great Love was demonstrated when God sent Jesus to die for us while we were still sinners and because of His blood, we can be made right with God. Jesus has saved us from God's judgment even when we were first ungrateful before we allowed Him in our hearts. So, now, I must allow the Holy Spirit to help me love those who are ungrateful when I show kindness to them. This may require some work, but through the Lord, all things are possible. Plus, I realize, for me to be good salt and daylight, I need to love the ungrateful so that others can be witness to that and it will give glory to the Lord. I finish with this. I had a meeting about three weeks ago at the park for Park Ambassadors. They are a group of volunteers who keep an eye on the parks and call in if they see anything bad. I did a PowerPoint presentation and at the end, I asked if anyone had any questions. One of the volunteers is very passionate about being nice to people and he is a good Park Ambassador. However, he became very upset about the growing lack of respect and trail etiquette. I've been biking on the Rail Trail for about 20 years and he was right. Trail etiquette is disappearing on the trail. I don't like biking on Saturdays because of that issue. So, he wanted to know what we can do about that. I told him we don't have the man power to sit on the trail and watch for people not being nice on the trails. I did say that he can set the example by continuing to use trail etiquette. At road and trail crosses, signs are posted for people to walk their bikes across. People don't obey the sign. However, I've noticed that when I do it, I see some of the bikers will do the same, either out of guilt or didn't know they were to do that. So, I gave that Park Ambassador that example. We may not like what is going on around us with people becoming meaner and more ungrateful, but we must continue to set the example of Jesus' love that was shown to us on the cross when we didn't deserve it. Let's ask Jesus to help us to love our enemies and to those who are ungrateful to us.

The Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996