

Be Still, My Soul

- † Rejoice in suffering. (vv.1-5)
- † Confident in Christ. (vv.6-11)

In the name of Jesus our Savior and Friend, dearly redeemed:

Most of us will never know someone who lost as much as Job in our First Reading. Possibly the oldest book in the Bible, Job may pre-date the Holy Spirit inspired Moses writing Genesis. Job's subject? *Why do good people suffer?* God said Job ***“was blameless and upright, a man who feared God and turned away from evil.”*** (EHV¹) So all through the book Job keeps asking God, “Why?” he had to suffer the loss of wealth, family, even his health. Worse yet, Job's three friends kept answering. Why? Because Job must have done something really bad for God to punish him. In the end, they all had to repent. Job for questioning God; Job's three friends for saying God only uses suffering for punishment. *Why do good people suffer?* God did not answer Job, but He does shed light on the question through Paul in Romans. Preach peace to yourself: **Be Still, My Soul.** In the triumph of the saints...

† Rejoice in suffering. (vv.1-5)

Paul spends the earlier chapters showing our desperate human condition, summarized like this: ***“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”*** (Romans 3:23f) The best religious athletes could only run hard and jump to their death, because all ***fall short of the glory of God.*** But God so freely loved all people, that Jesus ***“was handed over to death because of our trespasses and was raised to life because of our justification.”*** (Romans 4:25) Jesus' resurrection shouts God's acceptance of His sacrifice in our place.

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God.” As a boy, I was terrified that if I sinned or had bad thoughts or wasn't not sorry enough, I might lose God's kindness and heaven. But here the dear Holy Spirit says that ***by faith*** we have ***obtained access into this grace in which we stand.*** God set us on the cross of Christ by faith and keeps us standing steady and strong all the way to heaven. Jesus said on the cross, ***“It is finished.”*** Let your heart rest in good hope. **Be Still, My Soul!**

How can we ***“rejoice confidently in our sufferings”***? Look at what God accomplishes by using ***suffering*** to ***work down patient endurance...tested character...hope.*** Let me illustrate with a story repeated in many Christian families where we give all glory to God alone. Without enough work on Granddad's ranch, my older brother had to ride his bike seven miles to the resort where crews were laying sod for golf courses. The boss took one look at the scrawny kid and sent him home depressed. Mom's answer: *That's today. Go back again tomorrow.* ***Suffering*** was worked down into ***patient endurance*** of fourteen mile rides for three or four days until the boss said, “Weren't you here yesterday?” “Yes, and the day before.” “You really want to work.” “Yes, I do!” The privilege of ***tested character*** was granted as the boy proved he could lay sod with the best of them. And ***hope***? That's the eager expectation of good from God. The boss eventually hired Roc to design irrigation systems for his golf courses. When he became a big landscaper in the county, he hired our two younger brothers who now are pastors.

You see from earthly things as God provides our daily bread: ***“All things work together for the***

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good of those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28 EHV) *“Hope will not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.”* Yet God does not stop when our hearts are full of His love in Christ. He keeps pouring in the dear Holy Spirit through Word and sacrament until we overflow with love for others. Don’t be so nearsighted, dear Christians, to just get by. Ask God to help you live in Christ for others, to help them. Our brothers and sisters in the African American community and other minorities have suffered innocently in our cities. Don’t be like Job’s friends blaming them. Remember God’s mercy and pray for all to find joy and peace in Jesus to **Rejoice in suffering**. We have relief agencies in our fellowship that are overflowing with God’s love in Christ. **Be Still, My Soul**, and rise up...

† **Confident in Christ.** (vv.6-11)

Back to the example of Job. When did he finally start to come out of the depths of his despair in suffering? In the middle of the book, those words of Easter hope: *“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”* (Job 19:25–27 NIV84) Job was helpless, looking only for relief from God in Christ.

“For at the appointed time, while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly.” Not just for believers. *The ungodly* includes all of us by nature. *“It is rare indeed that someone will die for a righteous person. Perhaps someone might actually go so far as to die for a person who has been good to him. But God shows his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* That’s unconditional, self-sacrificing *agape*-love that only God can give. *“While we were still sinners”* – not after we straightened out our lives, not after joining a church, not after any contribution from us. *“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* More literally, *died in our place*.

Jesus substituted Himself under God’s wrath to keep us safe on the Day of Wrath, Judgment Day. The clock is ticking on earth’s little day. The last of God’s chosen ones will come to faith by God’s grace and then in an instant the last trumpet will sound. All the dead will be raised no matter how far their molecules were scattered over the seven seas. God who made them can gather them up again. Jesus’ verdict will finally come true as Jesus Christ Himself sits as Judge: *“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”* (Mark 16:16) **Be Confident in Christ.**

“Therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, it is even more certain that we will be saved from God’s wrath through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by his life.” That was Paul’s experience. As a flaming unbeliever he arrested Christian men and women in chains to suffer in prison and death like Stephen. (Acts 7) But while Paul was still His raging enemy, Christ Jesus appeared to convince Paul that Jesus did die and rise again as the only Savior from sin. God set aside His anger to save enemies like us, so that now *we have been reconciled*. We can say with confidence like Paul: *“I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither things present nor things to come, nor powerful forces, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:38f)

Christians can still rejoice through their tears, **Confident in Christ**. As one sister said when her father died, “How can I be so sad, yet so joyful he’s in heaven?” We *“go on rejoicing confidently in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received this reconciliation.”* Did Paul go on rejoicing? Read in the last of his thirteen New Testament epistles. Paul writing to Pastor Timothy from prison, facing a martyr’s death for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Is Paul bitter, resentful, fearful? No! Listen: *“That is why I am suffering these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know the one in whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.”* (2 Timothy 1:12) Experience has *convinced* us with Paul to **Rejoice in suffering, Confident in Christ**. God’s loving purpose produces God’s peace. **Be Still, My Soul!** Amen.

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