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October 4, 2015

ROMANS 5:3-5

Romans Series: How God Changes People

[PRAYER] Lord, I am encouraged by what you're doing in the lives of the people in this fellowship and I'm thankful for the prayers that are being answered. We know that some folks are facing some rather difficult challenges and so we ask that you would provide answers to those requests – health problems, job problems, financial problems. We know that some of our kids are facing some challenges too and learning how to cope with disappointment, learning how to accept a no answer, learning how to be corrected, learning how to follow instructions. Lord, I ask that you would be working in all of our lives, children, young people, adults. That we grow in your grace and the understanding of who you are and how you work in our lives. I pray especially again for the children who are back in the children's program. That you would work in their hearts as those teachers work with those kids on their level. I also pray for the young people who are having a great time in their discipleship group and learning more about what it means to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Teach us that same thing, Lord, now. In Jesus' name, amen.

Christians handle problems differently than non-Christians. I want to spend some time talking about that a little bit today.

In order to drive you into this idea, I want you to think of three stressors that you might have in your life. Just think of them in your own mind. What kinds of things bother you? If you're a young person maybe it's your math teacher. That's your major stressor. Or maybe it's your parents you're having trouble with or an annoying brother. Those are stressors that you experience in your life. Or maybe as an adult you have some challenges when it comes to dealing with your finances or health issue. Or maybe there's a relationship where you're just up at night just having a hard time sleeping because of a teenage challenge with one of your teenagers. Or maybe there's a relationship with a husband and wife. Those are stressors that we experience in our lives. Those are problems that we experience.

I think the real answer for those, the thing that we need is hope. We need hope to deal with the pressures that we experience in life. We all need hope. That's God's solution. So today I want to talk about real hope, where that real hope comes from and how to deal with the difficult and challenging problems we're experiencing in our lives.

God has designed life so that we can grow under the pressure of the challenges if we respond in the right kind of way. You have a choice. You can respond well to it or respond poorly. If you respond well to it, good things can happen in the midst of that. That is our focus today.

But it's also a model for parenting. Because I would suggest that this passage we're going to look at in Romans 5:3-5 will help us as parents work with our children, to help them deal with the challenges that they face. In some cases we as parents need to create some of the challenges because they need some help. If we have a challenge in their life, sometimes they need a little bit of work to experience to know how to overcome that. We're going to see some answers in this passage today that will help us.

So please look with me to Romans 5:3-5. Let me read it for you first. It says, *Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

I'd like to take this passage of scripture, especially this particular verse, apart and look at the words in it. Because I think the words as we look at them in their original language will encourage you and give you some ideas about how to apply this to our own lives.

Let's start with the word *know*. It comes from the Greek word *oida* and it means to appreciate or to perceive something, to understand or be conscious of this. I think when we're in our problems, we're suffering, we've got some challenges that are happening, we are not conscious of God working. So Paul is saying we know, we perceive, the light bulb has gone on in our brains that says, "Oh, I get it." What's happening in my life is not just a bad thing that I need to be crying about and be upset about and be worrying about and anxious about, but rather this thing that's in my life is there so that...and we'll read the rest of the passage. I can grow from this somehow. That's the idea. I know it, I perceive it. Something's going on here and this is really helpful.

Now that's going to provide in some sense some hope because we see that God is bigger than problems that we have. And Paul is saying we know this. We perceive it. We get it. As Christians we think bigger than the little problem that we're experiencing at the moment. We think of the bigger context of what's happening. That's what he's saying. We know it, we perceive it, we appreciate it, we value it. All those things are tied into this word *know*.

The second word that I want you to see in that passage is the word *suffering*. It is the word *thlipsis*. Usually when you think of suffering you think of people who are being persecuted for their faith or you think of someone who is starving to death. You know that is suffering. And that is definitely suffering. This passage does apply to those people, but I would suggest that the suffering mentioned here is not just limited to those things. It's anything that would fit into those categories.

The word *thlipsis* in the Greek means distress. If you're in distress today about anything, this passage is for you. But it's not just that, it's pressure. If you're feeling pressure today, you're starting to feel overwhelmed, this passage is for you. If you have problems in your life (and we all have problems), then this passage is for us. The idea here is stress. Things that are going on.

Now when I'm teaching children and I'm working with them in my office and I'm counseling with a seven year old or a ten year old or a fifteen year old, and I'm talking about this passage, I

will describe it to them and I will say, “You can put whatever you want in that passage. You could say ‘annoying brother.’ That’s my suffering that I have to deal with is my annoying brother. You could deal with the fact that you have to do chores. That maybe having chores might be the suffering that you have to do. It might be the homework that you don’t like to do. That becomes the suffering that’s in that passage. It might be mom limiting you on the iPad. That is the pressure that is being placed there.”

So the point here, I don’t want you to think about suffering in terms of persecution and famine (although those are good things to think about). I want you to apply this to your life. What are the stressors in your life? Because whatever stressors are there, there’s a plan for them and God can use them in your life.

I work with children who have oppositional defiant disorder. I work with other kids who have obsessive-compulsive disorder. I work with kids who have the I-can’t-accept-no-without-whining-about-it disorder. I have kids who I-can’t-handle-my-cell-phone-without-getting-into-trouble disorder. I work with kids who have disrespect-for-parents-when-I-don’t-get-my-way disorder.

Do you see what I’m talking about here? There’s a way to deal with suffering and the pressures of life, and we need to be able to deal with those. They really have to do with our heart issues. So God wants us to give us the strength inside to match the external pressure that we experience in life.

Whatever that challenge is, we need to be able to address it. And many times we are not prepared to handle it, so God allows challenges in our lives or parents place challenges in children’s lives in order to do what’s going to happen, in order to produce the things that we’re going to talk about here. Kids experience suffering and that suffering is often the pressure of the things that are going on.

Now don’t put anger here. Anger is a reaction. In fact I would suggest that sometimes when you sees anger it’s an indication that the person doesn’t have the internal character to match the pressures from outside. They don’t know what to do, so they just get angry about it. I would suggest that it’s an indicator for us that if you get angry in a common way, you might want to say, “Maybe I need to respond differently to the pressures that are out there according to this passage so that I will be able to build something inside, so that I can handle the pressures that are out there instead of reacting with anger.”

So let’s go to the next word in the passage. The next word in the passage is *produces*. It means to work out. To work out. Now a lot of you workout. I can tell. I mean you’re buff and whatever.

Look, I’ve got to tell you. I’m going to give you an illustration of Debora. Debora is a bodybuilder. She’s preparing to go do her thing in November. She’s going to be competing as a bodybuilder next month. You go to her website, you can see her and what she does. She’s a trainer. She can help you work out. She can do 643 push-ups in eleven minutes. That is a lot of push-ups. That puts me to shame. But nothing like Dolores. Dolores is eighty years old. She’s

sitting right here. Dolores told me two weeks ago she can now do sixty push-ups. That's more than me! I'm telling you, these people know how to work out.

Now in the passage, that's what we're talking about, working out. When you go work out, you work out those muscles. Now we're talking about working out a different muscle here. We're talking about working out a heart muscle and we're strengthening it on the inside so that it can handle the pressures of life.

Let me take you to another verse of scriptures that uses the same word working out because it's the same thing that Paul is saying in Romans 5:3-5. Verses 1-2, remember, talk about salvation. And then he's talking about suffering. He goes right into that.

In the same way, Philippians 2:12 says, *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*

What you're doing under pressure when the pressure's coming into your life is that you're working out your salvation so that you have the strength to deal with the pressures that are out there. We all experience that. We experience them on the job, we experience them at home, and we need to have the character inside to match the pressure that exists out there.

Suffering is a work out. That's what it's saying here. And of course all of you who work out physically know that it's the suffering that builds the muscle. God is saying the very same thing that we know in our workout sessions, that in our hearts we work it out and it builds the muscles inside so that we can deal with the challenges. He's talking about working your salvation out into the various areas of your life.

So as Paul is taking us through Romans, he comes to a place now after he's talking about salvation, he says okay let's make this really practical. Let's talk about the pressures you have in life. Because God wants to work that out inside of your heart. It's a spiritual exercise. And spirituality is going to work out something.

Let's go to the next word in our passage and see what's going to work out. *Suffering produces* or works out *perseverance*. Now notice the word, the Greek word, is *hupomeno*, to remain under or without cracking. That's the idea. *Hupomeno* – *hupo* means under, like hypodermic. *Hupo*. Hypodermic is under the skin. This is *hupomeno*, which means to remain under. To remain under without cracking.

Can you remain under the pressure you're in without cracking? Only if you have the internal strength to deal with that. If you worked out your salvation in the midst of that salvation. That's what he's going to talk about here.

Now I want you to know not everyone benefits from stress. Christians can. Because Christians know that God is working inside of them to strengthen them so they can handle the pressure from without. But there are a lot of people who have some real challenges in this area. Many of them not Christians who don't have that internal strength of the Holy Spirit working in their life

and God wanting to do this difficult thing of working out inside of our hearts. When suffering, some people have the whine flu. And what we're saying is we can have that internal strength that God wants us to have in the midst of this.

Let me read you and show you another verse of scripture that uses, it's not the exact same word, but it's very similar word that helps us in this area of pressure in our lives. *No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out.* Oh good. I can get out of this mess. No, no. *A way out so that you can endure it.* The way out is the strength inside the heart so that you can endure it.

Now the word *endure* comes from a different *hupo* word, *hupophero*, which means to bear up under the pressure. *Hupomeno* is to remain under the pressure. This is the word *hupophero*, to bear up without cracking.

I would suggest that a lot of us lose it, break down, go bonkers, lose control, act out, feel overwhelmed. Whatever you want to put in there, that's what happens to us. God is saying I want to teach you, I want to show you how to bear up under the pressure.

You've got pressure. I hear some of the pressure you guys have and I go, "Whoa, man." I can't even comprehend the pressure that some people live under that go to this church. The trials that they experience, the challenges that they have. But I do know this: God doesn't give me the grace for your problems. He gives you the grace for your problems; He gives me the grace for mine. And so being able to live under that pressure is a really challenging thing I think.

I think it's very difficult for us to deal with pressure in our lives. This is I think what a lot of people say: "I'm a little stressed right now. Just turn around and leave quietly and no one gets hurt." That kind of response to the stress that we have is not what God is talking about here. God wants to teach us some very important things inside of our hearts.

Let me show you what this looks like in practical terms. Inside of your heart there are things that exist there, according to the Bible. Psalm 36:4 says to *delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.* So we know desires exist in the heart. When the king said to Nehemiah in the Old Testament, he said, "What is this *sadness* I see *in your heart*?" That indicates to us that emotions exist in the heart.

Now I would suggest that 90% of the problems that you and I, and our children, experience are because of emotions and desires that get out of control. Our emotions of anxiety starts to increase and take over our hearts. Our desires start to captivate us and lead us into places where we shouldn't be. So God wants to put a boundary around those. He wants to do something and that something He wants to do has to do with this word *character* that we're going to see next. It's that character that He's going to develop inside of us that's going to do something very important.

This is what it looks like and this is how I describe it to children. I say you have an arena in your heart. Every one of us do. An arena is where the action takes place. And Jesus said it's *out of the*

heart that the mouth speaks. So if you're saying something disrespectful to your mom, it's coming out of something inside of your heart. The arena of not getting what you want. Or being interrupted from your activity. Or having to deal with an annoying brother. Or whatever it might be. You've got that problem that you're trying to address. That's the arena inside of the heart. It happens in the heart first before it comes outside of the heart.

So when you're inside the heart, the arena is where the action takes place. That's where the basketball players play. That's where the ice skaters skate. It's where the boxers fight. In this case let's take the boxing analogy in the arena. You've got on the one side the temptation. The temptation is the annoying brother. When I'm tempted, I'm tempted to punch him, or speak disrespectfully to your parent, or whatever it could be. We start thinking negative thoughts. Whatever it might be, the temptation to go in the wrong direction and what God wants us to do is have a plan. A plan to address that. That plan, I would suggest, is this perseverance.

The big question is this: How do you preserve under the trial that you experience?

I would suggest that most of the work of a counselor is pointing people to God's word and then showing them how to do it. How do you take God's word and apply it to your life? When you're dealing with this challenging situation as a child or adult or young person – you've got a difficult class at school, you've got a bully bothering you at school – how, how, how do you do that? How do I persevere in the midst of that? What do I do? Does that mean that I just step back and be weak? Or is there a way for me to hang in there and do something, be more assertive in a situation? How do we apply that in our particular situation?

That is the arena inside of our heart that starts to build the character to put a handle around those emotions so that we can deal with the pressures that exist on the outside of us.

I was talking to a fourteen-year-old boy sometime back. He's in my office and he gets really angry with his brother and punches him. His brother is nine years old and his brother is annoying. In fact Mom says he is really annoying. He's certifiably annoying, this boy. Okay. He really is annoying. This isn't pretend annoying. He really is annoying. He's nine years old. But the fourteen year old has a real hard time with this and he gets angry with his brother.

So in the midst of our conversation, I'm alluding to this passage as I say to him this. I say, "I believe God placed this boy in your family for a reason."

"Like what?"

I said, "Probably for you."

"Why?!" he says.

"Because God wants you to develop something inside of you to be able to deal with this."

"What for?" he says.

I said, "Well here's what will happen. Someday maybe you'll work in an office where there's an annoying person and you'll say, 'I am so glad that I had an annoying brother and I learned how to relate to him effectively.' And so God does things inside of our hearts to strengthen us and prepare us for other things that are yet to happen." That's the idea that we're talking about here.

Now what is God trying to build? What is He doing inside of our hearts? What is He trying to strengthen?

God uses the word *character*. So if we go back to our passage in Romans 5:3-4, we see the word *character*. Now this is a specific word that I want you to understand. It's the word *dokimé* which is the idea of strength resulting from pressure. It's the result from going through a test. That you come out stronger in the end. That's the word *character* here. Strength resulting from pressure.

Now I want to give you a definition of a character, any character quality. This is a definition of it so it will help you to know how to develop this in your own heart. I would suggest that a character quality can be defined this way: A pattern of thinking and acting in response to a challenge.

Everybody has an arena in their hearts. We're all tempted in one way or another. And if we don't have the internal strength that God calls character to be able to deal with that, then we act out in a particular way. It could be anger episodes, it could be worrying about something, it could be lying or stealing because we just don't have the strength inside to be able to deal with the pressure that exists on the outside. And so that character quality is a pattern of thinking and acting in response to a challenge.

Let me show you a scripture that may be helpful to illustrate this. In Psalm 19:14 you've heard and probably emphasized the first part of this verse. It's the second part I want to draw your attention to. *May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.* It's the meditations of the heart that are very important because it happens there before it comes out into our lives.

What we say to ourselves in our hearts when we're feeling under pressure is very important. Because if your husband isn't doing what you want and you say, "Oh he doesn't love me," and so you go on that whole trip, then what happens is you end up with a problem in your relationships caused by the words you say to yourself inside of your heart. If you're a child who goes and has to sit in a break for a few minutes, and you say, "You never discipline my brother. You always pick on me," that meditation of the heart needs to be addressed. It's the meditation of the heart that often gets us into trouble.

Character is a pattern of thinking and acting in response to a challenge.

So many times we're working with children we're helping them know how to think, what they should say to themselves, how they should respond to particular challenges that they're facing. Because a person who has self-control inside the heart thinks and acts differently than the person who doesn't have self-control. The person who's patient thinks and acts differently than the person who's not patient. The person who's gracious, thinks and acts differently than the person who's not gracious.

So what character quality is God working on in your heart? What is it that He wants you to develop? Because it's going to require that you think differently and act differently in response to the challenges that you face. So if you identify the arena and you start working on this

character, God will reveal to you what you need to say differently to yourself and what you need to do differently in order to match that challenge. That's the work of the Holy Spirit inside of our lives. That's what salvation does when we work that salvation into the various activities of our lives.

This is very practical, I would suggest, that Paul has moved from being theoretical all the way and helping us understand how to come to Christ. Now he immediately goes into the pressures that we experience and how we need to address them. It's very touching, I think, for any of us to be able to address these things in our lives.

I believe as I work with children that all kids need therapy. I just believe that. All kids need therapy. But I think parents are the best therapists for their children if they have a good plan and they're working with their kids in order to help their kids change. That plan is the *hupomeno*, the ability to remain under the pressure and to be able to address that pressure in their lives.

Now I want you to look at the four words. We haven't yet talked about hope, but we will in a moment. There are four words there – suffering, perseverance, character, and hope. You can only change one of them. You can only control one of them. The other three happen.

Suffering comes into your life. You can't do anything about that. It's going to come into your life. Suffering is going to be there. Perseverance is the one you can change. Character is the result. Hope is the byproduct. But the focus in here is on that perseverance. Because we then are called to persevere, to hang in there, to deal with the challenges that we're facing in the midst of that. That's the task that we're working on.

This week I was working with a fifteen-year-old girl who's very anxious. She's a Christian and she's eager to talk to me because she wants help in her life to overcome her anxiety. This week I sent her away. We're going to talk about Philippians 4 which talks about anxiety, but I sent her away. Get a plan. Let's talk about a plan. Start working on a plan. Ask God to help you with a plan. But I want you to come back and tell me five specific things you're going to do or say when you start to feel these racing thoughts or the energy coming into your body. Let's move forward here. She's eager to go away. I'll meet with her this week and we'll continue on as I help her deal with anxiety.

This passage is so practical. I think it's strategic. As adults we do the same thing. I don't think the solution is anger management training. I think the solution is asking God for the character to deal with the pressures, identifying the arenas where we see acting out in anger and then allow God to build that character inside of us and then view life as the training ground, the place where we are now growing and God wants to do something very important inside of us. It's not easy.

I would suggest it looks like this sometimes in our hearts. God's taking us from point A and He's trying to get us to point B. But there's a lot of hurdles. There's a lot of problems. And if you're working with a child, you're trying to move that child from point A to point B, it is not easy because sometimes children resist.

But the pressure that we put on children, the suffering that we sometimes have to put on them is what is going to help them build the character inside of their hearts. So we don't allow that to go. We're teaching them and the most important thing we're doing is we're teaching them how. How are you going to do this? Whether it's dealing with someone that's annoying in the office or dealing with them at home, we're going to help kids know what this means in very practical ways. Because what we're doing is we're working out that salvation into a person's life, into their hearts, so that God is at work, God is doing some things. Now the child might not realize that, may not even like it, but that's okay. That's the job that parents have is to work with children to help empower them to move forward.

Well we need to talk about that last word. Let's talk about the word *hope*. It's the word *elpizo*. It's a beautiful word in scripture. In fact it's used before these verses and after these verses. In verse 2 it's used. It's also used in verse 5 later on. So it's used before and after these verses. But the word means a positive expectation, a confidence.

I believe this is a word that we all need in our lives. That God wants to do some significant things in our hearts and we need to realize that. And once we have that perspective, we have hope. We have confidence, not that I'll be able to handle the situation the next time it comes up. I have hope that God is in control. That God will not allow me to be tempted above that which I am able. That He'll give me the way out which is to be able to endure this. God will do that in my life. Very important this idea of hope, and so God emphasizes hope many times within His word so that we can understand what it looks like in very practical ways.

I love this passage in Romans 15:13, which I think is the key passage about hope in all of the Bible. In Romans 15:13 it says this: *May the God of hope (that's where hope comes from) fill you with all joy and peace (those are things we want – joy and peace) in believing, so that you will abound with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, the biggest asset that we have.*

If we're going to develop hope, if we're going to develop character, it's the Holy Spirit at work inside of our hearts. The Holy Spirit provides that for us. That's what we need is that hope that God wants to give us. It's not an easy thing that comes in our lives. But we can have hope in the fact that God is at work.

I'm sure that you have some of your favorite verses that deal with hope. Here's another one that I really like. Philippians 1:6 – *he who began a good work in you will bring to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.* We are in process. That's what the verse is saying.

This isn't something that happens instantly. He's working on us. He's building something in us. And so we have hope in that. You fail? Yeah. We fail. We fail a lot. Ah, we blew it again. But then we go back and we said, "God, would you show me how to think in this situation? Would you show me how to respond to this, Lord? I want to build a character necessary to meet the challenges that I'm living in right now." God can empower you to do that. He wants to do that.

Another of my favorite verses about hope is Jeremiah 29:11 which says – *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you*

hope and a future.” A beautiful thing that I think God empowers us with, wants to give us, wants us to enjoy, wants us to have in our lives.

Here’s another one that I like. Isaiah 40:31 says – *But they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.* Isaiah 40:31.

God wants to do some powerful things in our lives. He wants to do that and He provides us with this hope. But remember the hope comes not by itself. It comes from this other process. It starts with suffering. The pressures you’re in right now are the teacher that help you develop the character inside to expand and have what you need to face the challenges that you have in your life. Every one of us is different. We all need the character that God provides. What that does is it builds that character inside of us and then amazing things happen in our lives because God produces hope.

So often what I’ll be doing is I’m working with a child and as I work with that child and help them to grow, they start to develop hope and good things start happening. Let me tell you this story about Daniel.

Daniel was ten years old. He was a pitcher on a baseball team and he got angry a lot because when he threw bad pitches then he would get upset. So then Daniel is in my office because he wants to develop a plan at age ten to deal with his anger.

So the first thing I said to Daniel was, “I can’t give you a plan. I don’t have one.” And he’s looking at me really strange. I said, “But I’ll tell you what, I can help you develop one. So I want you to tell me what you’re going to think, the way you’re going to think, and the way you’re going to act when you respond to this problem. What’s the problem anyway? When you throw a bad pitch you get angry?”

He says, “No. It’s when I throw a bunch of pitches that are bad, then I get angry.” I said, “Okay. Well let’s develop a plan. What are you going to do?”

So he writes down and starts to list the things he’s going to do to develop ability to continue on the mound without getting so upset the coach has to take him out, he goes in the dugout, puts his sweatshirt over his head, and he has an episode (is what I call it). We have episodes, don’t we, sometimes in life.

So he started writing some things down of what he’s going to do, things he’s going to say. Sometimes when he throws a really bad pitch, he’s going to laugh it off. Other times he’s going to think about the next pitch instead of the one he just did. Sometimes he’s going to think about what he did wrong – he dropped his shoulder or what he did with his leg or something. He’s going to think about those things and that’s going to help him move forward.

So Daniel starts to practice the plan and starts to work on the plan in his life, and within a couple of weeks he’s doing really well. The coach is reporting back to me and telling me he’s doing great! In fact Daniel starts telling the other players, “You need to go see Dr. Turansky.” You know how it is in baseball. You swing and miss and the kids get angry. “You need to see Dr.

Turansky.” “You need to go see Dr. Turansky.” So it turned out that eventually we, Joanne and I, were invited to talk to the whole ball team and their parents about dealing with anger in children to help them move forward.

What happened in Daniel’s life? Daniel got hope because he learned how to build that character inside to be able to address the challenges. We all need that. And the most powerful way that happens is when we have God at work in our lives doing something very powerful.

There are some well-meaning teachers who say something like this: “You’ve got to work with your kids by the time they’re five to develop their self-esteem because it’s established by then.” Oh for crying out loud. What if your kid’s six? Is it too late?

There’s some well-meaning teachers who say, “You’ve got to work with your kids by the time they’re twelve to develop their value system because then they turn thirteen and they’re in the teenage years, and well...” Okay, okay. I think it’s good to develop a value system. But what if your child is thirteen? Is it too late?

You see that’s a very humanistic view of child development. But I believe in a God who changes people at any age. He changes a five year old, He changes a six year old, He changes a twelve year old, He changes a thirteen year old, He changes a twenty year old, a thirty year old. He even changes a fifty-eight year old like me.

And where does God work? He works in the heart of a person. He’s building inside of us what He wants to do and the key thing is we need to learn how to respond well. We need to do the *hupomeno*. Remain under the pressure without cracking. We do that with the power of the Holy Spirit. We do that by taking our salvation and working it out into our lives. God does amazing things in our lives.

It gives us a hope and then we’re eager. “I can hardly wait to tell you about this person. I can hardly wait to tell you what God has done in my life.” And then you have a message, a message of the power of God at work in our lives. That’s the message of salvation. It’s not just a theoretical message; it’s a very practical one that takes it down to each one of our lives, where we are right now.

Your top three stressors? You might want to consider those. What is God doing in your life right now to build in you the character to match the stress so that you don’t have to feel overwhelmed by all of it?

Let’s pray together.

[PRAYER] So Heavenly Father, we come before you now and thank you, first of all, that you protect us and don’t allow us to be tempted more than we are able. We thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit and salvation to reign in our hearts, to overcome even our own desires and emotions. Lord, we thank you for giving us the ability to grow and develop character under your leadership to meet the pressures of life. So now apply that to each one of our hearts in the way that only you can. In Jesus’ name, amen.