

**Read: Romans 5:1-11**

## God Mercifully Works Suffering for Good

### **Romans 5:3-5,8 EHV**

Not only this, but we also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. And 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.... But God shows his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Do you like illusions? Illusions can be fun or frustrating. They trick your brain. For example, your brain thinks your eyes are seeing one image, when in reality, you are looking at the very opposite. It's a trick. One image may actually be two images. Or, what looks big may actually be little. Or, what looks little may actually be big. The illusion gets your brain to think the opposite of what you are seeing. Would you find that frustrating or fun?

When you hear the word *suffering*, does that sound like fun or would that be frustrating? Suffering hurts. Suffering is hard, not enjoyable or fun. Yet in God's Word, Paul tells us something that almost seems like an illusion. He says that suffering can be a blessing and that God can make suffering into a blessing.

How is that possible?! How can something bad, hard, or painful turn out to be something that helps us grow closer to Jesus? How can something bad, hard, or painful turn out to be something that helps us stay on the path to heaven? It all starts with Jesus. Jesus faced suffering, even though he did not deserve it. Jesus was innocent because he is the holy God. Yet Jesus faced suffering and even death for your sins and mine. It was no illusion. His suffering on the cross turned out to be our greatest blessing. Why? God loves each of us so very much that *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*.

Sometimes God allows us to suffer. Maybe your family is going through a tough time. Or someone becomes very sick or loses a job. Maybe we lose a loved one. Maybe someone made fun of you and made you feel miserable. Even in those times of suffering, God works a blessing. Jesus helps us to patiently endure that tough time. Jesus helps us to grow closer to him and others. Jesus helps us to put our trust and hope in him. Jesus turns our suffering into blessing. Why? Because he loves us so much. His own suffering turned out to be our greatest blessing. Surely Jesus can turn even our toughest times into times of blessing for us as he guides us on the way to heaven—and that is no illusion.

*The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.*

### **Questions for the Younger Children**

- Name one way that God has shown his love for you today.
- Name one way that Jesus' suffering on the cross was a blessing for you.

### **Questions for Elementary Age Children**

- How can God make suffering into a blessing?
- In 5:3, we are told that "suffering produces patient endurance." What does that mean?

### **Questions for Middle School and Above**

- Explain what makes Christ dying for us so impossibly rare.
- Knowing that God turns suffering into blessing for us, how does that impact your life as a child of God?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Dear Lord, when times are tough and I face suffering as your child, help me to trust that you will turn my suffering into blessing either in this life or in heaven with you. Amen.

### **Hymn: CW 428:3,4 – Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me**

God gives me my days of gladness,  
And I will Trust him still When he sends me sadness.  
God is good; his love attends me  
Day by day, Come what may, Guides me and defends me.

Since I know God never fails me,  
In his voice I'll rejoice When grim death assails me.  
Trusting in my Savior's merit,  
Safe at last, Troubles past, I shall heav'n inherit.