

02-10-23b Revelation

And now to resume our study in Revelation chapter 3, verses 10 through 12, especially verse 12, where the Lord Jesus talks about the Philadelphian believers in the sense that by keeping the word of his patience, they will be kept from the hour of trial. He says, he encourages them to hold fast to what they have so that no one will take their crown. It's fascinating to study the concept of inheritance and reward in the kingdom that comes and in the eternal future because we severely underestimate the impact that our decisions and our priorities and the way we live in our day-to-day goings-on here affects that future.

We have no concept. If you haven't already done so, I urge you to go up on the web to space.com and search around. You have to look a little bit, but you will find, I think it's under wallpaper or something, but there is a collection or go to nasa.gov or some place but find a collection of pictures that have come from the Hubble Space Telescope and look at the glory of God's universe.

Look at the galaxies and the nebulae and the star systems and the close-ups of our planets and read some of the statistics of how many billions of light years are involved in terms of distance and magnitude and age of these. How long ago the light had to have originated to have traveled that distance. At those levels of space and geography, 186,000 miles per second is just almost painstakingly slow.

There is light. It boggles the mind to stand outside on a clear night and look up at the stars and the little twinkling light that you see that goes through the lens of your eye and strikes your retina left that star long, long ago and those photons winded their way through space for generations and generations and eons and millennia after millennia after millennium just to get here. I used to think about this driving through rural Oklahoma going back and forth between my parents home in Fort Sill and as I would see the umpteenth bug splatter on my windshield in the middle of the night, I would think this bug has been living for days, perhaps weeks flying all around happily doing his thing and he had a rendezvous with destiny because here in the middle of the night as I fly along at 70 miles an hour he just happened to be right there to splatter himself on my windshield.

If I had left five seconds later I would have missed him. If he had left five seconds later he would have missed me but in the vast inner workings and hidden mechanisms of the great side aerial movement of time and space and here he just flew and it was a rendezvous you could never predict it, you could never plan it, you could never orchestrate it to make it happen but he just happened to be at exactly the right height, exactly the right place over just exactly the right lane of the highway and I took just long enough filling up gas at the last station that as I come buzzing through I splattered him all over my windshield. Well here you are outside your domicile, you look up into the night sky and that little bright twinkle that you see those photons wended their way over the eons to get here to earth and you managed to get out there and catch him.

It's awesome, it's mind boggling to think of the magnitude of the universe which by extension gives us just a hint, just the barest touch of the hem of the garment of the magnitude of the God who created us and who saved us and who calls us to his plan and his purpose. In fact go with me over to the Psalms. Turn over to Psalm 8. If you think I'm a little wacky here, I'm not the first one to have this thought.

Psalm 8 verse 1, Oh Lord our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth who have displayed your splendor above the heavens. From the mouth of infants and nursing babes you have established strength, you have ordained strength because of your adversaries to make the enemy and the vengeful foe cease. You know who the babes are right? That's us.

In the universe of God's creation compared to the power and the strength and the capabilities of the preceding civilization, the angelic hosts, we are mere babes and infants. We have been created lower than the angels but God has chosen through the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, to manifest his strength in weakness. And where do we get that strength? God has ordained that it's out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants.

You have ordained strength because of your enemies. Who are God's enemies? It's Satan and the fallen angels primarily and because of them to answer their objections, to counter their strategies and their contentions, God created us. And in the mouths of babes and nursing infants, notice these are infants who are taking nourishment, God has ordained strength so that he can silence his enemy.

He says in verse 3, when I consider the work of the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him? And when you start looking at those pictures and see the expanse of the galaxies and our rather small ordinary galaxy in one spiral arm and our small to medium sized star about which our seemingly insignificant little planet revolves, what is man that God is mindful of us or the son of man that he has visited us? You have made him a little lower than the angels but you have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands. Did you know that our ultimate destiny, what God has called us to, we talked about the difference between position and the potential that that position creates and actually seizing and laying hold of it.

The potential that we have because of our position in Christ is to rule over the works of God's hands. And I am here to tell you the works of God's hands go way beyond this planet. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love him.

We are going to be jaw droppingly astonished when we get into the eternal future and find out what privileges are going to be ours if we are faithful, if we recognize our calling. You wouldn't think that in the ordinary mundane tasks of life, taking care of the kids, driving to and fro, being

faithful in work, performing our duties, being patriotic red-blooded American citizens, being loyal to the Lord God, being loyal and faithful to one another, loving one another, trying to grow in grace, trying to ask and seek and knock. We think, well, it's ordinary, it's mundane, it's so unnotable as to be passed over and forgotten.

But the Bible says God is not unrighteous to forget. There is just no way to express or comprehend what God is going to do with those who are found faithful. But you'll get just a slight inkling, if your mind works like mine does, when you look at those pictures and you see the universe that God has scattered around us.

The next question that comes into your mind is, well, out of all of these galaxies and all of these uncountable billions of stars, is there life out there? Is there another planet? Did Christ die for another race and all of that? And my suggestion to you is, no. We are the only inhabited planet and this is the only place where God became man and died. Why then all of the galaxies? Why then all of the uncountable stars? I think there are a couple of answers to that.

It's the way that God chose to mechanically produce the elements and things that are necessary for our creation. But beyond that, I think there is an element that goes back to the angelic creation. The stars are associated with the angels.

Over in Job, God says, where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth and the stars rejoiced and the sons of joy and so forth, they are associated throughout the scripture. Even here, the moon and the stars which you have ordained are an oblique reference to the angelic creation, the higher order of sentient creation that we follow after. As is so often the pattern in the Bible, we are the younger son, we are the Johnny come lately, we are the Jacob to the angels Esau, we are the Isaac to the angels Ishmael, we are the Abel slash Seth to Cain, we are the Gentiles to the Jews, we are the ones who came after and seem to be less and yet God has that theme of reversal where the last shall be first and the first shall be last, the elder shall serve the younger and there is a day coming when angels will serve men.

Even as they do now with the Lord Jesus Christ who is fully human seated at the right hand of the Father. But the point here is, there is so much on the line, we see it by faith, we acknowledge it by faith, we change our priorities, we shift our values, we set our goals in the light of what the Word of God tells us. It is an unseen reality.

I can't give you any proof, I can only give you evidence. We can look at the evidence that God has given us in His Word, through His Spirit, in creation and if we have an ear to hear, we will hear. If we have a pliant heart, if we have soil that will receive the seed and nurture it and let it grow and sink its roots in deep, if we will become that tree planted by the rivers of water that gives forth its fruit in its season, the results, the rewards from God, the opportunities from God in the future are incalculable, unimaginable, incommunicable.

They are so beyond our, how can you explain to an ant about a skyscraper? How can you explain

to an earthworm about human civilization? It is an order of magnitude beyond what we could even conceive. That's what the Bible tells us. But we know that it's there, we know that it's real, we know that it depends and is determined by God and God's promise.

And if we take God at His Word, then we will endeavor to be found faithful, we will endeavor to persevere, to endure whatever it is that is placed upon us. If we are in the church at Smyrna and he says, I'm going to let Satan imprison you for ten days, that's our opportunity, that's our potential and God will turn that cursing to blessing. If we're in the Philadelphian church, we've already passed some of our tests and the door opens, we'll walk right through.

But we understand what that hupo mone is. We've seen it in the Psalms, we've seen it in Psalm 27, 14, we've seen it in other Old Testament passages such as Micah. Of course Isaiah 40 verse 31 is for many people among their favorite verses, it certainly is for me.

They who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. That is waiting on the Lord. And it's one of the hardest things.

Has there ever been a society that encouraged not waiting more than the society we have now, the culture that we have now? We have the microwave culture. I want it hot and I want it now. I want my problems to be like a show on TV.

They crop up and get solved all within, what, 38 minutes and then you got another 22 minutes of commercials, so it all takes place in an hour. We have a problem, we want a pill. We get an ache, we want the doctor to fix it.

We have a pain, we want it to be remedied. We get a dent in the car, we want it pulled and patched and fixed. We are in the mood for instantaneous gratification.

If we're unhappy, if we're in pain, we want it fixed and we want it fixed now. If my feeling falls out, I'll be down there knocking on Dan's door. And obviously there's nothing intrinsically evil about that, but when we tend to think in those short-term solution modes, what happens when we're in a test that requires patience, not just momentary faith, not just occasional faith, but that fraction of faith over time, that's the virtue that God is looking for.

Not just someone who'll splash the blood on the lintel, but someone who will look the giants in the eye and say, we can take this, God will be with us. We can seize and lay hold of this land. You remember the people on the far side of the Jordan had not seen the land.

The spies brought back the poles with the giant vines full of grapes and the descriptions, but they got it through a messenger, didn't they? They were told about the land and they were told about the challenges and they had to choose. They had to decide, will we go up? Will we cross over? Their heart failed within them. Remember, this is just a few months out of Egypt.

They could have gone into the land and avoided the 40 years of wandering and dropping and waiting for their children to rise up and seize the inheritance for themselves. We, likewise, are told about the land, that heavenly land of promise, the place where our spiritual blessings are laid up, where our citizenship is, where our future lies. The songs have a lot to say if you understand them correctly.

Remember the song on Jordan's stormy banks, I stand and cast a wistful eye on Canaan's fair and happy land where my possessions lie. I am bound for the promised land. Who will come and go with me? I am bound for the promised land.

People tend to think of Jordan, it's become a symbol for crossing over in debt. The Bible says, we're on the banks of stormy Jordan now. We're on the banks now.

You don't have to die to cross Jordan, you have to have patience to cross Jordan. You've got to have faith over time to cross Jordan. Our theological dictionary of the New Testament goes on in the New Testament usages of *hupomone* to say, *hupomone* is naturally a basic attitude of New Testament believers in view of the eschatological orientation of their faith.

That's a fancy way of saying, Christianity is a faith that looks ahead. Eschatology is prophecy, future things. Over against the hostile world, they wait confidently for the fulfillment of the kingdom and their own salvation.

The full extent of our salvation has not yet been realized, has not yet been revealed. We tend to think, well, I'm saved and I know that I am, and we are, but a lot of that is positional truth. We have not yet been delivered from a fallen world.

We have not yet been delivered from a fallen nature. We have not yet been delivered from the body of this death in the physical sense. Much of our salvation is yet future.

So much so that you have Armstrongism, there is an interesting offshoot of Christianity. Herbert W. Armstrong put almost all of salvation in the future. I don't have time to go down his little rabbit trail, but that will leave you scratching your head if you read much of that.

But essentially, if you want to understand what Armstrongism is, his idea is that all of salvation is in the future. You don't have any salvation now, it's all ahead. Anyway, over against the hostile world, believers wait confidently for the fulfillment of the kingdom and their own salvation, yet the New Testament does not describe them in the Old Testament phrase as those who wait on the Lord or wait for God, possibly because of the concentration on faith and hope.

The term *hupomenane* is mostly used in the absolute for to endure, and only rarely to wait on. Now why do you suppose that is? The man doesn't come out and say it here, but God has come, hasn't he? We're not waiting on him anymore. Now we're looking in retrospect rather than prospect.

Old Testament believers were waiting on the Lord, waiting on his deliverance, looking to the future. Our deliverance has come. Our Savior is seated at the right hand of the majesty on high.

We have the resources. We have the power. We have the Holy Spirit.

We have the completed canon of scripture and the word of God to be the object of our faith. We are not waiting on a future deliverance. We are enduring, making use of our present deliverance.

And that's why the word shifts its emphasis in the New Testament. So Jesus in Luke chapter 8, talking about the parable of the soils, the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart and hold it fast and bear fruit with hupomenane, bear fruit with patience, with patient endurance. How many times have we thought about that parable of the soils? The seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word with an honest and good heart and hold it fast and bear fruit with patient endurance, with hupomenane.

Mark 13, verse 13, Jesus is talking to the disciples, telling them about their future ministry of witness. He says, you will be hated by all because of my name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. This is, as we know, not saved from the lake of fire, this is deliverance in the sense of vindication, of compensation, of recompense, of the walking through the open door.

In Luke chapter 21, Jesus is also, it's a reference to the same type of message that Jesus was delivering. He says, Luke 21, verse 16, you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all because of my name, yet not a hair of your head will perish.

By your endurance you will gain your lives. By your endurance you will gain your lives. It's the opposite of gaining the whole world and losing your life, losing your soul.

Where are you investing and hoping in this life only? Paul says, if we hope in this life only, we are of all men most miserable. It is the resurrection that is the foundation of our hope. It is the promises of God for the future.

Why are we dwelling on this a little bit? Because we all know that it's one thing to look at things in scripture and talk about spiritual truths. It's something else to get up from here and close our Bibles and set them down and then go about our business. And how do we hold fast? How do we have this hupoemone? It sounds great and I'm all for it and I want the fruits of it and I want to please God.

How do I do that? Do I just grit my teeth and generate this patient endurance? Do I just say, well I'll just have a bulldog attitude, I'll sink my teeth into the ankle bone of some nearby person and just hang on for dear life. What is the means by which we express and develop and persevere in perseverance, endure in patient endurance? One of the keys, and probably the key from scripture here is looking past. We talked about looking at the Savior, looking at the Lord.

Remember, looking at Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. That in a nutshell is our example. Looking unto Jesus, He is the author, He is the originator and He is also the completer.

He is the beginner and the ender of our faith. He is the first and the last. He is the start and the finish, the author and finisher of our faith.

When we look at Him, what do we see? We see that He accomplished the work of the cross and received His reward from the Father by doing what? Keeping His eyes on the joy that was set before Him. There have been some disparaging attitudes toward blessing and reward for believers that people say, well, that is kind of a carrot on the stick mentality. You are just after what God can give you.

It misses the point because the rewards that come from God are valuable because they come from God. It isn't, well, I would like an upgrade to my mansion and I would like a wing built on and I would like an extra platoon of servants to pluck the julep to make my mint tea from and I would like this set and the other kinds of comfort I want. What is it? Twenty-four maidens peeling grapes and satisfying my every whim.

In Islam they tell the suicide bombers that they are going to have all these virgins surrounding them in Valhalla or wherever they go. That isn't it at all. The rewards that come from God are valuable because of who they come from.

I have recently been in the periphery of people who passed away and had various possessions. Some possessions were very valuable. Other possessions had no intrinsic value whatsoever.

You probably would pass them by in a junk store. But they are valuable to people who were friends or people who were relatives because there is a story connected with it. There is an experience, a shared, oh, we were over at such and such a store and saw this and here is this person that is noted for having all this expensive pottery and all this expensive jewelry and all these expensive things and they saw this little bauble and just had to have it and got it and we laughed about it and now they are gone and here is this little bauble and it means something because of its significance and because of who it belonged to and that it represents a shared experience.

I have a rock in my drawer with a red mark on it that came from my daughter. There is not a person in the world that would look at that and think it had any value whatsoever, but it has value to me because it is part of a shared experience with my younger daughter and I keep it and it makes me smile every time I look at it. That is the kind of reward that comes from God.

It represents something in our relationship. It represents shared experience and love and if you don't value that, you don't love God. If you love someone, you value the things that tie you to

them and express and are mementos and reminders of your intimate relationship and that is the kind of blessing and reward that comes from God.

It is not just booty. It is not just plunder and spoil like Akin hid in his tent. These are gifts and privileges that come from God because they mean something and if God means something to you, then gifts from God are going to mean something to you and they are going to be a motivation, not for the gift itself, but for the approval that that gift represents.

We have talked before about in the military, the piece of ribbon you put on your chest is worth a few cents, but the award that it represents and symbolizes the approval of a grateful nation or of a happy CO or however it is you came across your ribbon or your medal, that is the meaning behind it. It represents a job well done, a lot of hard, back-breaking, bloodshot eye type of work to get something accomplished that was worthwhile and someone says, I want to commemorate that. I want to recognize that and I am giving you this worthless little piece of tin and ribbon.

It is what it represents and that is what blessing and reward represents. So, how do we get at this hupomone? How do we become people who are characterized like the Philadelphians by keeping and guarding the word of Christ's patience? By the way, what we are talking about, this is the word, this is the logos of Christ's patience. Where did Christ's patience come from? What is the kind of patience that we should have? It is the patience of Christ.

How do we learn about that? We go to the logos, we go to the word. How did Christ endure the cross and despise the shame? For the joy that was set before him. If it is okay for the Lord Jesus to look at the joy of being seated above everything that has ever been named and created at the Father's right hand, then it is okay for me to look forward and to hope for the approval of God that will be expressed in blessing and in reward and in opportunity, the right to the tree of life, the right to enter the gates of the new Jerusalem, to have God's name written on me somewhere, to have him hand me the white stone with a new name written on it that no one knows except the two of us, to partake of the hidden manna, to walk with Christ in white.

None of these, you would think, would have intrinsic value unless you value the Savior, unless you value the approval of God and then they are priceless and worth sacrificing everything for. How could you get wrapped up in an earthly endeavor, an earthly accomplishment, an earthly treasure, an earthly security, when there is the potential to have these things. The Lord Jesus Christ died to give us the ability to lay hold of these.

What is the word of his patience that we are to keep? Well, this is it. Look ahead to the joy that is set before us. Look at the grand scope of God's plan.

It isn't small it isn't the watercolors you see in a children's illustrated Bible. It is as magnificent and as full of magnitude and beyond as the universe. It is as big as God is.

It's huge. Do you wonder why people are going to weep and wail and gnash their teeth at the

judgment? Pray God that we are not among that number. The reason is because when we stand in a position to see and prospect what God has prepared for those who love him, to miss that is going to put people into abject despair and misery.

To think, I had a shot at that and I didn't pay any attention. I didn't hear the message. I didn't wake up.

I didn't make any effort to pursue. People of strong character and great accomplishment are going to be crying their eyes out. They are going to be lifting their voices in a wail.

They are going to be grinding their teeth saying, what is the matter with me that I didn't lay hold of these wonderful things from God? Well, we have a chance ahead of time to avoid that fate. Let's learn from the mistakes of others. Let's learn from the parable of the rich man in Luke 16 who invested himself all in this world.

And let's learn from Lazarus who had nothing in this world and endured a less than ideal existence, the sores, the dogs, the abuse, the disdain, the going without. But he had his eyes on the prize. Hebrews in chapter 11 talks about the heroes.

All these died in fate, not having received the promises. They dwelt in tents waiting for a city whose founder and builder is God. Why build a city in this world when you can live in a city that God founded and built in the next? That's the word of his patience.

That's looking ahead to the joy that is set before us. How do we persevere? How do we lay hold? How do we keep hold of the crown? Don't get enmeshed. Don't get distracted.

Don't be dragged down into the mundane and the temporary and the short term. Don't let instant gratification overwhelm your view of the joy that is set before you. Don't lose sight of the gates of Jerusalem looking at your own front door or your own back door.

Drawing again from the Theological Dictionary, this is one of the best articles in their whole, however many volumes it is. I've got the books scattered across an entire shelf in my library, and some of it isn't worth the paper it's printed on, but others are really good. I really love the article, as you can tell, on Huppo Mone.

He talks about 2 Thessalonians 3 and verse 5, which I had written down here to go to anyway. 2 Thessalonians 3 and verse 5. Paul says, in fact, he says, in verse 5, Paul says, in verse 5, Paul says, and I go up to the beginning of that chapter, 2 Thessalonians 3, Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you, and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men, for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

Once again, he puts us in mind of the synagogue of Satan that was present in some of these towns. We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing, and will continue to

do, what we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

And the steadfastness of Christ there, that's how the New American Standard translates it. New King James says, into the patience of Christ, and it's our word. May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and persevere. Hold the fort. Hold the line.

Don't fall back unto perdition. Remember the scripture, we are not, we are convinced of better things of you, brethren. We are not of those who fall back unto perdition.

I think that's in Hebrews 6, verse 9. Beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you. Yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward his name, in that you have ministered to the saints.

You didn't disrespect the body of Christ. You ministered to the saints. You have ministered and you do minister.

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end. Don't be a flash in the pan. Don't be the plant that sprung up in a day but the sun hit it and it wilted.

That you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and hope inherit the promises. It's not faith alone. You have what we fondly and in a fraternal fashion call the doctrinal crowd.

A lot of us have come from that emphasis of teaching and well, I've got doctrine and doctrine in my soul and it's the word of God, alive and powerful. I'm going to have faith in the word of God. That's a great beginning point.

But faith alone is insufficient. Knowledge of the word of God alone is insufficient. It has to have some outworking.

All intake and no outgo makes Jack constipated. You've got to have more than just intake of doctrine or intake of the word of God. There's nothing wrong with that.

And in many cases it's a self-correcting problem because the word of God itself, if you listen to it, will tell you don't sit here and soak and sour. But notice it is not faith alone that causes us to inherit the promises. It's not the splash of the blood on the doorpost.

This puts to rest the argument people put forward that all believers are overcomers. Well if you've

had that momentary occasion of faith to trust Christ as your savior, all things are yours in Christ. You have all of the overcomer blessings coming your way just by union with Christ.

No you don't. That was an occasion. That's an aorist tense faith.

That's a point in time faith. And you're saved eternally and you'll never be separated from Christ. You'll never be separated from the love of God.

But that's not how you inherit promises. That's not how you equip yourself for service and for reflecting the glory of God and being the good and faithful servant. To do that requires faith and hupomone.

It is faith and patience that qualifies us to inherit the promises. That takes us from being sons in position to sons in practice. Then are ye sons indeed.

In the remainder of the New Testament you have many, many references. We don't have time to even begin to look at all of the passages where patience is mentioned. But an obvious example of patience is the passage in Romans chapter 8 verse 25 talking about hope.

If we hope for what we do not see we wait with perseverance for it. We wait with patience. Patience is inextricably linked to hope.

You cannot have patience without hope. Why would you endure if there's no hope of rescue, if there's no hope of deliverance, if there's no end in view, no goal in sight? That's why we have to turn our eyes to the Lord Jesus. We have to look at the joy that has been set before us.

We have a joy that's set before us. We just have to look at it. Same thing when you go to 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 20.

What credit is there if when you sin and are harshly treated you endure it with patience? But when you do what is right and suffer for it, you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. It's not just any kind of patience. It's just like it's not any kind of faith.

There's people that have faith that will move mountains, faith to pull themselves up, faith to endure all kinds of things. But if it's faith in the wrong thing, if it's a false hope, if it's a self-defined program, all the faith in the world, if it's got the wrong object, doesn't count. It has to be faith that qualifies us and God declares us to be righteous on account of it.

It has to be a hope that is something God has put before us. Some people are hoping for prosperity and they'll endure all kinds of hardship for approval or for recognition or for money or for fame. And they endure greatly.

And they trust many times that God will supply their needs and help them build their next big building. And how many churches have had a building program and have trusted God for the

money? And here came the money and they built. And it was nothing of God.

It was a self-defined program with self-determined goals. And they choose to believe that the money that came in when they strong-armed and pressured and wheedled and cajoled and used guilt and all kinds of things to get people to give, they say, oh, look how God provided. It's nothing of God.

It's important that when we understand patience and the word of Christ's patience that we see that it's the right patience. Unbelievers can be patient. Pagans can be patient.

Pagans can have hope. Scientology and L. Ron Hubbard and all the Dianetics and a lot of these other people, they have hope of a brighter day and being one with the wisdom masters and all the rest of it. But it's a false hope.

It's a faulty program. It is not just the attribute of enduring. It is not just the attribute of patience.

It's patience for the right reasons, looking for the right joy and the right hope. Again, Romans 5.3, not only this, but we exult in our tribulations knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, hupomone, patient endurance. And patient endurance, proven character.

And proven character, hope. And of course when you go forward from there it says hope does not disappoint us because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given to us. And so you see the triad of Christian virtues interwoven into that cycle of growth.

Each is a part of the other. And it is in testing in less than ideal circumstances that all of these come about. How are you going to manifest and develop and grow in perseverance unless you have something laid on you, a burden to bear up under? So Paul says there is a sense in which you can exult.

You can relish the challenge of bearing the burden. Don't look on it as something to get out from under. Do you want to sacrifice your opportunity for hupomone? Do you want to leave off patience? Are you not looking at the joy that is set? We should look at stress.

We can. Think of Christ in Gethsemane. Nobody is going to be real super excited, but a way to be giving thanks in everything is to say, you know, as difficult as this is and as painful as this is, this is an opportunity to excel.

If I persevere here and if I set my sights on the joy that is before me, this is an open door of opportunity. This is a way to hold fast to my crown. This is a way to please my Savior and glorify my God.

Is it worth a short time? Paul says the tribulations of this present age are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed in the sons of God. That's us. We can

transform our outlook and we can redeem the time and lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven if we can keep this truth before our eyes.

If we can cultivate the ministry of God the Holy Spirit to impress this truth on our heart, this is the way to accomplish the purpose for which we were saved, for which we are being prepared in the future in the kingdom and the eternity beyond. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, it boggles our minds.

It is an awesome truth to see where you have placed us in the opportunities that you have given us in Christ. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will make these things real, make them live in our souls, that we will be ever mindful of our opportunities. Greater the adversity and the greater the challenge, the greater our opportunity because of your grace and your faithfulness toward us.

We pray that in all things our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be glorified. We pray it in his name. Amen.