

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. You may be seated. You got to really love the Israelites. They are an interesting people. They have just been through quite an amazing experience. The Exodus 17 is early on in the Exodus. So this is before they go to Mount Sinai and receive the 10 commandments. Before they go to the promised lands, send the 12 spies into Israel or into the promised land of Canaan. And then come back and reject God and go wandering for 40 years. This is well before all of that.

This is very early. The events of the Exodus, the 12, the plagues of Egypt, the 10 plagues of Egypt. The parting of the Red Sea has happened just recently within the last couple of months. God gave them manna to eat and they've been eating that for weeks upon end and being filled in full. There was even a time where they had bitter water someplace and God made it sweet again so they could drink of it.

So it's not as if they haven't seen God at work. And yet they get to a place and they become slightly inconvenienced with no water. And what do they do? They start accusing God and Moses of bringing them out in the wilderness to kill them. I think God had an opportunity to kill them well before this event. And yet that's still on their mind. They have received all of these wonderful things from God, and yet when life gets a little bit uncomfortable, they start grumbling and complaining. And asking, "Why is this happening to us? We deserve better."

And as much as I would love to just look at the Israelites and say, "How ridiculous are these people?" I have to admit that we are not very far away from them. As much as I would like to say differently, when life gets difficult, when we struggle with something, when things don't quite go the way we want, what do we do? We whine. We complain. We ask, "Why is this happening to me?"

How many times have we gone through our lives and seen God bless us. We look back at our lives and we see how well God has provided for us, how much He has helped us in the difficult circumstances of our life. And then a new problem comes along and what do we do? "Why me, God? This is not fair. It should be better. It should be different." So you've got the Israelites who can't seem to ever thank God for the blessings that he's given them. And then you got the New Testament, kind of the other extreme, where you've got a Samaritan woman who's coming to draw water from the well at the sixth hour. Now that is around noon.

Now imagine going in the middle of the day, in the summer in Florida without air conditioning. And walking a good mile or so, or however long it took to get to the well, carrying this stone jar that you got to fill with water and then walk back. That is not something you want to do in the middle of the day. That's something you do when it's still cool in the morning, or when it's cooled down at night, in the evening. You don't do it in the middle of the day. So what is she doing there? She's

avoiding everybody else. Because this woman, as we find out, has had five husbands. Which means she's had five divorces, more than likely.

And now she's on the sixth relationship at least. And this one isn't even a marriage yet. If ever, it will be. This is not exactly a woman of righteousness, shall we say. Let's just leave it at that. So she's going in the middle of the day to avoid uncomfortable conversations. To avoid talking with people because she's ashamed of who she is and what she has done. And here comes this Jew who shouldn't talk to Samaritans in the first place, because they don't get along at all. And he's offering her living water.

And when she hears about it, she rejoices so much so that she's willing to forget the fact that she's avoiding people and she goes and tells the entire town. "This man is a prophet. He may even be the Christ. He knew exactly what I did and He told me what I did. The implication is you all know what I did too. And yet He offers hope and promise and peace and forgiveness."

The Romans passage ties both of these passages together into why we are reading about them. So Romans talks about that we are justified by faith and have peace with God. We have peace with God because Christ has given us living water. He has given us from Himself the water that nourishes us, that creates faith in us. He has given us the waters of baptism, where we are brought into a relationship with Him and restored. But in that relationship, we rejoice for He has given us all good things. Rather than complaining, we rejoice.

But we rejoice even in our sufferings. Now, that's a little bit challenging to think about. We even, and more importantly, we rejoice in our sufferings. Why? What does that have to do with being justified by faith? What does it have to do with being at peace with God? What does that have to do with the woman receiving the words of God? The Samaritan woman, or the Israelites complaining about God not providing the way they want, when they want? You see, in our sufferings, because we have been justified by faith, because we have been made right with God, not by our own effort, but as a gift given to us. Because we are at peace with God, we know. We know that everything that comes our way is a gift from God.

Yes, suffering is a gift from God. I know it doesn't sound like it at first, but let's unpack that a little bit. Whenever we go through a hardship, whenever we go through a struggle in our lives, whenever we are wrestling with sin or some other problem in our life, what is able to carry us through all of that? The word of God. The word of God that comes to us and gives us His presence and His peace. And so we can look back at our lives and we can see how God was faithful in the midst of the trials and tribulations, but it was through the trials and the tribulations that we recognize that God is faithful.

When everything is going smoothly and well, it's very easy to forget that this is all because of God's gift to us. We can tend to think that we deserve it. We have a right to it. "God, we want water now because we deserve it, because of how good we are." So it's easy for us. And it's easy for us to sometimes forget to thank God for His gifts, or to when something comes away, how quickly, like the Israelis, do we forget that God actually has our good in mind? That's what suffering does.

Just like any athlete has to go through the pain and suffering of practice and training. You see, that's what suffering is in a Christian's life. It is training. It is getting rid of the bad habits. It is getting rid of the bad behaviors, the bad ideas. It is getting rid of the false comforts and the false assurances, and it is focusing upon the truth and the word of God. And so when we suffer, we learn that God is still providing for us. And that we can depend upon him even in the midst of the most horrible things that are happening in our lives. Because He has got us through this far and He will continue to get us through our entire lives.

And as we suffer, if we suffer understanding that God is giving us opportunities to grow, and to trust. That that suffering produces endurance. Because as scripture says, "In this world, you will have tribulation." It's a given. There's no way you can go through this life without trials and tribulations and struggles and hardship and suffering. Ever since we ate the fruit, that's what we get.

So how do we deal with it? When you see somebody, somebody that you respect in the faith. And you see how well they live and how confident they are even when life seems to be falling apart around them. Aren't those the people that you want to be like in the faith? I look at some of the things that people suffered and how joyful they are even in the midst of that. And I think I want to be like that when I grow up. I want to trust God every step of the way, because He gives us the endurance to face the trials of this world. And not just face them, but to face them with joy and hope. Because the endurance produces the character, and the character that is produced in us is the character of child-like trust.

I know that my dad is going to work things out. I know that dad's got it figured out. I know that dad's strong enough to handle anything that happens. I know that I can run to dad and he will protect me, and he will make it all better. We don't often think of God in those terms, but that's exactly what we're called to do. He is our loving heavenly father, and He wants us to call upon Him. It's not like he didn't want the Israelites to ask for water or He was surprised that they needed water. He just wanted them to ask and trust. Rather than, "Why have you brought us out here to kill us? We need water now."

Rather than demanding for something we think we deserve, He wants us to ask, trusting that He will give us what we need. And then, then we are at peace. And then that character shines through. See, and then we become a much greater

MARCH 8, 2026 SERMON

witness for Christ. If we are suffering, how much more is the world out there suffering? And they don't even know what it's doing or what his purpose is or why. We know. We know that God will work it for good. They don't. But when they see us trusting, walking in faith and joy and peace, that will draw them in to listen to the word.

Like the Samaritan woman, we no longer believe because just of what you have said, but we have seen it active in our own lives. We have believed because He has declared it to be true and we see it. And that character produces the hope. The hope that our suffering will end. That our hardship will be finished, that our race will be complete. And the hope ultimately, it's hope for this world. A hope that God will provide, and a confidence. But it's more importantly, a hope that can face the ultimate trials of life.

When we face that death, we don't grasp onto it and grasp for anything to avoid it. We rejoice that now is the time when we will see our God face to face and be at peace. Once Adam and Eve ate the fruit, when God showed up, they hid. But because of Christ giving us the living waters, restoring us, when we see God again face to face, we will not need to hide. But we will rejoice and be glad, because our hope has been fulfilled.

We don't deserve what God gives us. We have been laid bare before God and He sees us as we truly are. He has told us what we have done, and yet He still loves us, and He justifies us. He suffered for our sake. He was struck for us so that from Him, we might receive hope and that hope does not disappoint. May His grace, His mercy, His peace, be and abide with you always, now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.