

Joy in the Midst of Severe Suffering – 1 Thessalonians 1:4-7 – October 13th, 2019

- Today, I want to answer the question of why and even how it's possible to truly have joy while in the midst of severe suffering.
- This because, the Apostle Paul makes mention of how that the Christians in Thessalonica were known for their joy in suffering.
- I would suggest there are two reasons in these four verses that reveal to us the way joy can be experienced in the trials of life.

1. The fruit of the Holy Spirit (Verses 4-5)

4 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

- Notice Paul says the gospel came to them not simply with words, but also by the power of the Holy Spirit and deep conviction.
- The reason I point this out is because joy comes by way of the fruit of the Holy Spirit and also by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Perhaps better said, the severe suffering is the fertilizer that produces the growth of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is the joy.

James 1:2-4 - 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

2. The openness of brokenness (Verses 6-7)

6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

- What Paul says here is interesting for a number of reasons, chief of which is that he says they actually welcomed the message.
- I believe they welcomed the message in the midst of the severe suffering in the way that the broken soil welcomes the seed.
- By that I mean, the severe suffering is the very thing that's needed in order to break up the fallow ground of our Christian lives.

Hosea 10:12 - Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

A. W. Tozer: Trials and Pain - The Sharp Blade of the Plow - Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you. (Hosea 10:12) The fallow field is smug, contented, protected from the shock of the plow and the agitation of the harrow...But it is paying a terrible price for its tranquility: Never does it see the miracle of growth; never does it feel the motions of mounting life nor see the wonders of bursting seed nor the beauty of ripening grain. Fruit it can never know because it is afraid of the plow and the harrow. In direct opposite to this, the cultivated field has yielded itself to the adventure of living. The protecting fence has opened to admit the plow, and the plow has come as plows always come, practical, cruel, business-like and in a hurry. Peace has been shattered by the shouting farmer and the rattle of machinery. The field has felt the travail of change; it has been upset, turned over, bruised and broken, but its rewards come hard upon its labors. The seed shoots up into the daylight its miracle of life, curious, exploring the new world above it. All over the field the hand of God is at work in the age-old and ever renewed service of creation. New things are born, to grow, mature, and consummate the grand prophecy latent in the seed when it entered the ground. Nature's wonders follow the plow. (Paths To Power, 31-32)