

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. 1 Peter 1:3-12*

This Sunday morning we are two weeks removed from our *joyful* celebration of Jesus Christ rising from the dead – defeating sin, evil and death - so we might rise up to a new life in Christ while we are on earth, and also rise up to an eternal life with Christ when our lives end on earth. Jesus' death on a cross and his resurrection from the dead are the fertile spiritual soils which ultimately bear the fruit of the power of the joy of Jesus that we can know in the gospel. This is what Jesus was talking in John 15 when he said if we “*abide*” in him and if he “*abides*” in us, God will be “*glorified*” because we will “*bear much fruit*” and so “*prove*” to be his “*disciples*” (John 15:7-8). And then Jesus said, “*These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full*” (John 15:11). This was the power of the joy that Jesus' disciples experienced when he appeared before them after he had risen from the dead. The disciples had watched Jesus die, yet he now stood alive before them. Seeing their uneasiness Jesus shows them the marks on his hands and feet where he was nailed to the cross. And in Luke 24:42 we read their response: “*They . . . disbelieved for joy and were marveling.*” They reacted to seeing Jesus risen from the dead with overwhelming joy, mixed with disbelief and wonder.

The joy we have in the risen Christ should cause us to do the same. The resurrection should cause us to marvel at that joy, to such an extent, that it's beyond our belief. It takes eyes of faith with wonder to see the joy of the resurrected presence of Jesus. This is not about human reason; this is about God opening our eyes to the fullness of who He truly is, so we'll be flooded with joyful wonder. When we are willing to look at God with wonder; when we are willing to believe beyond our own human reason; when we are willing to commit our lives beyond what we know for certain - we are then open to knowing the power of the joy of Jesus beyond our imagination, a joy that is saturated with the mystery and wonder and life and love and grace and God in all His sovereign splendor and glory. This what Jesus died for. This is why Jesus rose from the dead. This is the answer to old question: “What is the chief end of man? – The chief end of man is to glorify God, by enjoying him forever.”

Before we go too far, we need to define the word “*joy*” when used in the context of the gospel - because we all have been infected with the vocabulary of entertainment and amusement – and as a result we have borrowed the language of entertainment and amusement to describe sacred, weighty, serious, holy joys. What that means is that word “*joy*” is now been infused with a spirit of levity, lightness, flippancy, silliness, and playfulness – and the result has been our inability to emotionally distinguish between the *joy* of the glories of Christ that we sing about on Sunday morning and the joy of singing your favorite songs at a outdoor concert. That doesn't mean that our “*joy*” should be glum, gloomy, sullen, dark, or heavy. But there does need to be serious sobriety to our gospel “*joy*” - and the apostle Paul points this out in 2 Corinthians 6:10 when he speaks of being “*sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.*”

What this means is that every Sunday morning there people sitting in our church who are dying of cancer, whose marriages are suffering, whose children have broken their hearts, who are barely holding on financially, who have just lost their job, who are lonely and frightened and misunderstood and depressed - and they don't need to be sitting in an atmosphere of bouncy, chipper, frisky, light-hearted, playful worship. What they need is to see and feel an unconquerable joy in Jesus in the midst of their suffering and sorrow. They need to taste that those of us in this church are not playing games - in that we are not using religion as a platform for the same-old, hyped-up self-help that the world offers every day. They need the greatness and the grandeur of God over their heads like galaxies of hope. They need the unfathomable crucified and risen Christ embracing them in love with blood all over his face and hands. And they need the thousand-mile-deep rock of God's word under their feet. That's the kind of sorrowful, but rejoicing joy, that we all need. *"Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."*

This is the joy we have been given as born-again Christians. In Christ we have been given the gift of joy - it's included in the price Jesus paid for our salvation. The Word of God tells us that the Christian life is a life that is saturated with joy. The word "joy" and its derivatives appear almost five hundred times in the whole of Scripture. Psalm 19:8: *"The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart"*; Psalm 47:1: *"Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!"*; Psalm 71:23: *"My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you"*; Psalm 92:4 *"At the works of your hands I sing for joy"*; Psalm 96:11: *"Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice"*; Psalm 100:1: *"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!"*. Moses talked about joy. David wrote about joy. The prophets predicted joy. Jesus proclaimed joy. The disciples taught and lived out joy. They were witnesses of Jesus' joy!

A quick glance across the landscapes of our world, our nations, our communities, our churches, our families and own personal lives reveal that in the midst of our busyness and our comfort and our entitlements - true joy seems to elude us. We are most often more tired, frustrated, anxious and angry than we are joyful. And the greater wonder is that there are many who claim Christ - who have even more struggles and troubles in life than we do - *but who have much more joy than we do*. In the month of July in the year 64 A.D., a great fire broke out in Rome and the entire city was engulfed in flames. Hundreds of public buildings were burned to the ground, hundreds of acres were blackened in the city, and thousands of homes were destroyed, so that there were thousands of people left homeless.

History tells us that the Emperor Nero set that fire in order that he might have more room to erect marble palaces and monuments for himself in order to establish his name in history. It was during this time that the story was born that Nero fiddled while Rome burned, though in reality the violin had not been invented yet. The point is - the Emperor enjoyed watching the city burn - until he learned that people of Rome were incensed about the fire, and they gathered together in revolt to overthrow him. So Nero quickly looked around for a scapegoat that he could blame for the fire, and he decided to put the finger on those who were called Christians. The Romans saw Christians as a cult, who followed a man named Jesus. Rumor was that they were cannibals, because they talked about getting together in their houses to drink Christ's blood and eat his body. They spoke about "love feasts," where they greeted one another with a holy kiss, and shared their personal problems with each other - which was interpreted to mean they were involved in sexual immorality. As a people already under suspicion, it didn't take much for the people of Rome to believe Nero that Christians had burned down the city.

As a result, those in the first church suffered through a serious series of persecutions. Christians were dipped in tar and burned as torches to light the gardens of Nero when he threw an outdoor party. Some were tied up in leather bags and thrown into water. Others were tied to chariots and dragged through the streets of Rome until they were dead. Some were thrown to the lions. Untold numbers of Christians were cut up, pulled apart, and crucified. And in the midst of this horrific suffering, one of Jesus's disciples, the apostle Peter, wrote the words of the text we are looking at this morning.

History records that between the first persecution under Nero in 64 to the Edict of Milan in 313, there were ten periods where Christians experienced 129 years of intense persecution - and those years were also when the churches experienced their greatest growth. Justin Martyr wrote: "Though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to wild beasts, and chains, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but, the more such things happen, the more do others in larger numbers become faithful." The second-century theologian Tertullian became a Christian based on his wonder at *how joyful Christians were in the face of martyrdom*. As he watched that joy press a similar effect on others as well, he would famously declare: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

One could easily amend Tertullian's statement to say: "The blood *of the joy* of the martyrs is the seed of the church." I suspect the apostle Peter, who wrote the words we are reading today and who also gave of himself unto death for his faith in Jesus Christ, would agree with that. He said so in what we have read this morning: "*In this you rejoice, though now for a little while . . . you have been grieved by various trials . . . tested by fire . . . rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.*" Peter wrote the words we are reading today to the churches throughout modern day Turkey who were undergoing political, social and personal suffering. Last week, we saw the apostle Peter open his letter to them by encouraging them, that in spite of their present circumstances, they could joyfully endure through the indwelling Christ if they considered two realities: 1) They should remember that they were "*exiles*" (aliens). Their time on earth was for a short season before they would go home. And 2), that God had "*chosen*" them for all of this before the foundation of the world. They had been set apart by the Spirit to believe the truth of the gospel, and given the power of God to be witnesses for Jesus Christ.

How did these born again Christians grow in their walk with Jesus and grow in their witness of their joy in Jesus in a world where they were being subjected to constant persecution, painful loss and horrific suffering? Peter tells us this morning that *we can do so by the power of the joy that we can know in crucified and risen Christ*. Where does this kind of joy come from, the kind of joy that stands fast and goes deep in the face of pain and suffering, the kind of joy that radiates in the shadow of death and infects those who see its light? Peter points out 10 things which will empower us to live out the joy of Jesus in a world that is opposed to Jesus Christ and persecute those who follow him.

1) We have the power of joy in Jesus *because of God's great mercy*. "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy.*" Mercy is not getting what we do deserve. Before God, we deserve God's condemnation – but by God's mercy through Christ we haven't received what we truly deserve! The story is told of a mother who approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied the young man had committed an offense twice and justice demanded death. "But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I ask for mercy." "But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied. "Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for." The emperor said, "Well, then, I will give mercy." He spared the woman's son.

2) We have the power of joy in Jesus *because God has given us new life*. "*According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again.*" The Greek verb here for "*born again*" means "to cause to be born again"! In Jesus we have joy because in Christ God has mercifully given us new life on earth by being spiritually born again! Romans 6:4 tells us that "*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*" We read in Revelation 21:5 that Jesus said: "*Behold, I am making all things new.*"

3) We have the power of joy in Jesus *because he is our Living Hope*. "*He has caused us to be born again to a living hope.*" The resurrected Jesus Christ is our "*living hope*." Living hope reminds us that we have an expectation for the future, not based on what we've done or what we've not done - but on who God is and what Jesus has done for us. 1 Timothy 4:10: "*For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*"

4) We have the power joy in Jesus *because in him we have the promise of life after death.* “According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” The resurrection from the dead is not just an historical event, but a life-changing, heart-forming, mind-transforming, will-conforming physical miracle that identifies Jesus as the victor over sin, evil and death, which should cause us to live joyful lives of living hope beyond this mortal life.

5) We have the power of joy in Jesus *because in Christ we have an everlasting inheritance.* “An inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.” Everything we know in this world will someday wear out or fade away or burn up. What we consider valuable will mean nothing in the end. The only real secure inheritance we can count on is the one made for us in heaven - an “*inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.*” Ephesians 1:11-14 tells us that in Christ “*we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will*” - and God, through Jesus Christ is the One “*who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*”

6) We have the power of joy in Jesus *because in him we are protected by God's power.* “Who by God’s power are being guarded through faith.” The Greek verb for “*guarded*” means: “to maintain a watch, to provide security, to protect, to keep.” God is the one who sovereignly guards and protects us. Psalm 46:1 tells us that “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*” yet the phrase “*through faith*” indicates our faith has a part in activating God’s protection. God's strong guard around us is not dependent upon our wavering faith, but God calls us to joyfully seek his protection “*through faith.*”

7) We have the power of joy in Jesus *because when he returns we will know the fullness of our salvation.* “For a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Salvation is one of those biblical concepts that can only be understood in the “already – not yet” thought process. We normally think about salvation as an event in the past, when we have been rescued from our sins by God. But actually our salvation can be looked at in several tenses: *past* (“*while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” - Romans 5:8); *present* (“*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure*” - Philippians 2:12-13); and *future* (“*He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away*” Revelation 21:4). In the end we will have all of these in Christ.

8) We have the power of joy in Jesus *because suffering for our faith in him has great purpose.* “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” The first five verses of 1 Peter tell us that the power of joy in Jesus is in our salvation. Peter is now telling us that the power of joy in Jesus is also in our suffering. No suffering occurs outside of God’s purpose. God is aware of every tear we shed (“*You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?*” - Psalm 56:8) and every affliction in life ultimately comes from Him (“*I know, O Lord, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me*” - Psalm 119:75). God providentially does what He deems “*necessary*” as “*we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose*” (Romans 8:28). That should give us great joy! Peter is also implying here that if we are going to follow our Savior we should expect to suffer. Scripture is saturated with this reality. In John 15:20-21 Jesus said: “*Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.*” The apostle Paul wrote that we will be “*heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him*” (Romans 8:17). And Peter affirms this again in 1 Peter 4:12-13: “*Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.*”

God tells us that suffering is a joy in that suffering is a “*necessary*” reality of what it means to follow Jesus. We read of a dual purpose here: 1) suffering gives proof (“*tested*”) of the “*genuineness*” our faith in Christ and 2) suffering purifies (“*tested by fire*”) our faith in Christ, so that our walk with God might “*result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” We read the same in James 1:2-4: “*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*” Suffering has great purpose in our lives and therefore we should rejoice.

9) We have the power of joy in Jesus *because suffering for our faith in him ultimately glorifies God.* “*Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*” Peter is stating the truth that all suffering for our faith in Christ is ultimately for the glory of God. When we respond to suffering with joy, we demonstrate to the unbelieving world that Christ is more glorious and precious to us than any pain and difficulty we might endure. Our suffering is our opportunity to show where and in whom we find our true joy. By joyfully placing our ultimate hope in Christ rather than in the temporary things of this world, God receives all the glory. In the midst of all of the suffering that Job endured, he did not curse or turn away from God. In the midst of his worst suffering Job joyfully proclaimed: “*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!*” (Job 19:25-27).

The joy that we have in our faith in Jesus Christ is not joy that comes from trusting God for blessings and safety and comfort and health and wealth and prosperity. *The true joy that we have in our faith in Jesus Christ is a joy that comes from trusting in who God is.* The old tradition says: The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying him forever. It does not say: The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying the blessings God gives. Everything that was and is and ever will be - in all the universe - *is about giving God glory for who He is* - not for what He does for us. That’s why 1 Corinthians 10:31 says: “*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*” That’s why Peter tells us that when God does give to us, He does so “*in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*” (1 Peter 4:11).

The joy we have in God that gives Him glory – even in the midst of suffering – is the joy that comes from having a personal, intimate, living, relationship with the creator of all the universe. Joy that comes from God is a joy that is effective irrespective of difficult circumstances or personal pain or lack of material wealth. Joy in Jesus is a joy that is life-giving and heart-transforming; a joy that turns tragedy into triumph, loss into gain, night into morning. Joy in Jesus Christ that glorifies God is that which shines in the darkness - despite feelings and situations and people and experience, a joy that bursts upon us in the midst of suffering - “*Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.*”

Following Jesus means living a life filled with joy, fully expressing the joy we have in Christ. Philippians 4:4: “*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.*” 1 Thessalonians 5:16: “*Rejoice always.*” 2 Corinthians 13:11: “*Finally, brothers, rejoice.*” Living out the joy we have been given in Jesus Christ is our call to follow our Savior: “*Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God*” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

10) We have the power of joy in Jesus *because our salvation through him and our suffering for our faith in him is our calling to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.* “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.” For generation after generation, the prophets faithfully recorded their prophecies about the coming Messiah, but they didn't know who this Messiah would be, or when he would come to earth. Even the angels looked intently to see if they could get a glimpse of the joy of God's grace at work. But the people to whom Peter is writing had already received that joy of God's grace which the prophets would love to have seen and the angels to have understood. Today we have received that same grace, in the joy-saturated power of the gospel in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Brothers and sisters, expressing joy in Christ is the mission of the church. We don't need evangelism training or outreach events or special programs to share our faith in Christ. *All we need to do is live out the joy that we know in Jesus, who died for our sins and rose from the dead, so he might live in us and we might live with him now and forever.* Our call to mission is our call to spread the joy of Christ throughout all the world. That should be true for all churches – and especially so for us, as the mission statement for Arrowsmith Baptist Church is: “*We seek to passionately proclaim the glory of God in Christ for the joy of all people!*” In Luke 1:14 God's Word speaks of this at the coming of Christ into the world, as it was proclaimed to be a time of “*joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.*” Matthew 2:10 tells us as the wise men “*saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.*” When people without Jesus see the joy of Jesus Christ - they will rejoice with exceedingly great joy!

Jesus himself calls us to a life of sharing the fruit of our joy in him with others - so that God might be glorified. Our mission is to live out the fullness our joy in Christ so that we might bear the fruit of God's glory. Acts 13:48 tell us when Paul and Barnabas shared their faith in Jesus, “*the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.*” Paul wrote in Romans 5:2: “*Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*” Joy in Christ produces glory for God!

Our God is a God who is full of joy. In Nehemiah 12:43 we read that as God's people worshipped God “*they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.*” When we truly live out our joy in God, God will empower us to more joy, and others will then hear and become infected with that same joy. As a third-century man was anticipating death, he penned these last words to a friend: “*It's a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians--and I am one of them.*”

That is the joy that is changing the world today. The church, the body of Christ, continues to grow in leaps and bounds, throughout the world – but mostly in Third World countries and in countries where Christians are being prosecuted. Sadly, that's not true for those of us who live in North America. We are losing ground in our battle against the kingdom of darkness. The church is being slowly but surely marginalized, our moral fabric frayed by the claims of entitlements and rights, with our governments adopting policies and making laws that are contrary to the truths and principles of God. God has been legislated out of the public square, the Christian faith is no longer is seen as a precious gift but rather as an oppressive monster, and we are currently faced with dealing what is a somewhat lower level of persecution. But it is closing in on us and it will get much worse. Going through Peter should help us.

The truth is the church in North America is declining and ineffective because the true joy of the living God is painfully absent in the lives of too many who claim Christ. May we take this to heart and know the reality of Jesus words: *"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full"* (John 15:11). In John 17:13 Jesus prayed those who follow him *"may have my joy fulfilled in themselves."* It's interesting to note that back in 2003, many proposed to Mel Gibson that he follow up his powerful movie *The Passion of the Christ*, based on the sacrificial love of Jesus, with an even more challenging sequel titled, *"The Resurrection of the Christ."* The reason? Jesus's crucifixion was followed by the joy of his resurrection! I felt that same after seeing the movie 3 times that year. After the crucifixion, the risen Christ appeared to his disciples, which led to an explosion of joy and celebration throughout the world in the hearts and lives and people groups and nations – all changed by the power of the joy of Jesus in his people. Well, guess what? Mel Gibson is making that movie. They just began filming. I pray God would use the movie to bring the joy of Jesus into many hearts!

A movie about Jesus' resurrection will surely stir up a lot of controversy and opposition – and in these days that might even mean trouble and loss and suffering. And when those times do come upon us, we need to remember how the born again Christians in the early churches grew in their walk with Jesus, and grew in their witness of their joy in Jesus, in world where they were being subjected to constant persecution, painful loss and horrific suffering. God's Word told us that we can do the same by the power of the joy that we know in crucified and risen Christ. In Matthew 5:11-12 Jesus said: *"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* In Matthew 16:33 Jesus also said: *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*

The mission we are called to is the mission of living our joy in Jesus with such fullness that others will see our joy to such a degree that that would join us in enjoying Him. The risen Jesus Christ ought to rise up in us with such a joy - that those around us would be powerfully changed for the glory of God. Zephaniah 3:17 says: *"The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing."* God is in our midst! He has saved us, and He is protecting us! God is rejoicing over us with His gladness! He is exulting over us with loud singing! We seek to passionately proclaim the glory of God in Christ for the joy of all people! Let us then *"Rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory!"* Amen.!

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Romans 5:1-5*

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Pastor Leland Botzet

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