

Title: Keep Your Helmet On  
Date: 3/1/26  
Subject: The Christian has the necessary equipment to face life's trials.  
Scripture: Romans 12:12

Life's tough...get a helmet, any helmet. That's the best advice the world can give. It admits that difficulties in life are the norm. Their helmet can take the form of a pill or substance that deadens the awareness. It can be the promise of new technology that will rectify the situation. It can be idea to embrace the pain and suffering because everything physical is evil. Sometimes the world's solution is to throw up hands in surrender.

The solution people long for is to find a really good helmet as in the helmet of salvation offered by Jesus Christ. This helmet offers the ultimate in protection. It doesn't eliminate attacks by pain and suffering. It promises that those who wear this helmet have the assurance that the Lord is with them and nothing the person encounters can truly harm them. Their future in heaven is secure.

READ Romans 12:12

The three parts of the verse overlap. The great preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones observes, "Tribulation, hope and prayer always go together in the New Testament and it is a very good way of testing ourselves to ask whether they always go together in our experience. They should" (Romans: Christian Conduct, p. 402).

I. Be joyful in hope.

The object is hope. First, let's think about what hope isn't. It's not wishful thinking based on desires and dreams. Even though the word hope is used that way as in we hope spring is around the corner because we're tired of cold and snow and wind and wind chill. It's not groundless and speculative optimism. It's not based on circumstances.

Francis Schaeffer was one of the great Christian thinkers of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In an interview during his battle with cancer, he spoke about areas in which people have false hope and how some Christians have similar thinking: "The only way to be foolishly happy in this world is to be young enough, well enough, and have money enough—and not give a care about other people. But as soon as you don't have any of the first three, or if you have compassion for the weeping world around you, then it is impossible to have the foolish kind of happiness that I believe some Christians present as Christianity" (Our Daily Bread, 7/23/97).

The kind of hope people long for is based on firmer footing. That's what Biblical hope provides. Hope is expectation, trust, confidence rooted in God's promises and past actions. It's a reaction to what Jesus Christ has done through his life, death, resurrection, ascension and current work in heaven for us. It's the belief that God is faithful and control.

Earlier in chapter 5 Paul wrote about this hope. Read 5:1 - 5.

Hope is based upon our being made right by God through the trust we've placed in him. He's allowed us to be in a position of grace because of our trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. We rejoice in the hope of the glory

of God. Jesus' intent is for us to see his glory - the glory he'd been given before the foundation of the world. Followers of Christ are able to rejoice in our sufferings because they produce perseverance which produces character which produces hope. The bottom line is hope doesn't disappoint us. It's the "blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. O what a foretaste of glory divine." It's a confident hope because God's love for us has been demonstrated through Christ's death for us.

Biblical hope can also be viewed as "in-spite-of" hope – in spite of what happens, we still have hope. It's something that isn't fully realized in this present life because our true and eternal home is in heaven. Hope looks to an unseen future with confident and expectant anticipation of the most favorable outcome. When a person places their trust in Jesus Christ as Savior they're saved but the fulfillment of total salvation, the full experience of eternal life with all of its rewards is yet to come.

Our situation as believers can be phrased as "already but not yet." We already are experiencing bits and pieces of what God has in store for us - His goodness, provision, care for us. But we aren't yet experiencing all God has for his children. Scripture tells us that we are waiting for the blessed hope which is the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ God who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good (Titus 2:13, 14).

Earlier in Romans 8:24, 25 we find: "For in this hope (from 23 - our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies) we were saved. But hope that is seen as no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we hope for it patiently."

Our hope should cause us to be joyful. It doesn't make sense to be unjoyful in hope. What would that look like? (shuffle and drag feet as look down) - "Yeah, I'm going to heaven, I guess, if I have to."

Joy isn't having a natural cheery and optimistic personality or temperament rather than one that tends to be more cynical and pessimistic. Joy isn't based on having happy favorable circumstances. It isn't a smile on the outside while the heart is breaking and crying on the inside.

Some translations tell us to rejoice in our hope. Both ways of phrasing it – be joyful and rejoice - are commands. Our choice is to rejoice based on our relationship with God, dependence on him and what we are hoping for.

The shortest verse in the Bible in the original Greek is 1 Thessalonians 5:16 "Be joyful always." Paul adds the subject of rejoicing when he says in another place "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4).

You can discover more about joy by reading and studying Philippians.

## II. Be patient in affliction.

The subject is affliction. Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word as "persecution, affliction, distress, tribulation" and says it comes from a root word meaning pressure. Many translations use the word "tribulation." This English word comes from a Latin word for a tool used to crush, put pressure on the corn

to grind it into flour. Affliction goes by other names: hardship, trials, difficulties, challenges, trouble - experiences that bring pressure on our minds and hearts, trying to grind and crush our spirits.

Affliction is a part of life, a sad part, and sometimes a difficult part. No one is exempt from them. People may experience them at different levels and intensities.

How does God instruct us to approach affliction? Is there something that sets the follower of Christ apart in the way they respond to affliction? In another place (2 Corinthians 4:8) Paul speaks of being hard pressed on every side, but not crushed.

Be patient in our affliction. Patient means to wait for something to be removed while living beneath it, bear up under a situation and burden, remain steadfast, stand your ground, persevere. The natural tendency is to try to get out from under the difficulty as fast as humanly possible.

Many people are like the second grade boy on his first day at a new school. When recess came, he grabbed his coat, headed out the door and left the school grounds. A teacher caught up with him a block away. She asked where he was going. He told her, "I'm dropping out of school. I've learned enough."

It'd be nice to be able to check out of trials when we feel we've learned enough. However, we aren't afforded that luxury. Impatience doesn't help to get the trouble over any quicker but will probably make it seem like it's lasting longer.

Why should we be patient in affliction? There are lessons to be learned. The Bible says a lot about suffering and how we respond to it. Another assignment - read 1 Peter 3:8 - 4:19.

The book of James also says a lot about trials. It begins with the subject, bringing joy and hope to the party: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete am I not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4). Did you hear the sounds of triumph over the trial?

Trials test our faith, our confidence and trust in the Lord. It's like students tested see what they've learned. It's trickier in life as the test determines not just what we have in our head but also in our heart and have applied in our lives. God's desired outcome is that the testing of our faith will produce perseverance – the ability to withstand and stand.

In the last chapter of the book, James talks about being patient until the Lord's coming (James 5:7). The goal again is in future. It uses illustrations of a farmer waiting for the land to yield its valuable crop and being patient for rain. The plea is "you too be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers" (James 5:7-9).

Then James reminds us the men who spoke for God are examples of patience in the face of suffering. He singles out one particular person who persevered. That man is Job who suffered incredibly - the loss of his ten children and the destruction of his vast wealth. Job's attitude is summarized by this comment: "Though he (the Lord) slay me, yet will I hope in him" (Job 13:15).

We can go multiple steps higher for another example. “During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be a high priest in the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 5:7-10).

There's quite a bit in there to unpack but let's focus on the element most directly connected with our subject. Jesus learned obedience from the things he suffered. That statement boggles the mind as Jesus is fully man, but he's also fully God. How does that work? I don't know exactly. But let's take it at face value: if Jesus could learn obedience, could learn in general, from what he suffered, we are to do the same.

Our attitude of patience doesn't mean we seek out affliction like a bloodhound on the trail of an escaped prisoner. Nor do we have a passive resignation “O. It's here again...” We don't throw out the welcome mat for it. We welcome it as an uninvited guest who provides the opportunity for us to see God more clearly and to grow in our trust of him.

Earlier I shared scripture about hope while we're waiting, being patient. Here's some of what precedes the call for hope and patience: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, and hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to this present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, grown inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:18-23).

### III. Be faithful in prayer.

The subject is prayer. Prayer is communication with God. Talking with him signifies we believe in him, trust him and are dependent on him since he is the supreme majesty, creator and ruler of all. Prayer affords the opportunity to bring our needs for him to guide, provide and fortify. Prayer shows our concern for others as we talked to God about them.

The issue isn't so much knowing what prayer is but actually praying. The call is to be faithful in prayer. The two root words combined to form the Greek word for faithful are strong and towards. The Christian is to be strong towards prayer - endure, persevere, continue in, be diligent. Other translations state it as “keep on praying” (NLT), “be constant in prayer” (ESV), “be devoted to prayer” (NAS). Advance beyond “Now I lay me down to sleep,” quickie prayers before meals, recitation of the Lord's prayer.

There are frequent similar commands in the Bible: “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests...be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Eph 6:18). “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God” (Phil 4:6). “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (Col 4:2). “Pray continually” (1

Thes 5:17). This term was used for a hacking cough and repeated military assaults. The idea isn't to pray every second of the day, but to again and again and again come back to prayer. We're to pray anytime. Be relentless.

The command is necessary because it can be hard to be faithful in prayer. There's so much fighting against it. It takes time pray and there are so many other things crave our attention, so many things that are tyrannically urgent. Some requests are answered quickly but most aren't and it can be become discouraging when we have to wait. It can seem like a waste of time. Sometimes we think that the issue or request or need is too small for God. And admittedly, there are times we think the request is too big for God to handle.

Jesus offered encouragement that God hears us and will act. He told the disciples, but it's also for us, "a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1). The story is about a persistent widow who kept bringing her case before a wicked judge. He finally gave in to her and granted her request. The point isn't that God will finally give in to us because he's curmudgeonly and needs to be coaxed. The point is if the unjust judge will act, surely the loving and caring God will.

We choose how we respond to life. Trials and affliction often drive us to seek God and talk with him with intensity and fervency that often is lacking during normal prayer times.

"When we face difficult seasons in life, let's cling to our hope in God and remember that he's with us - using our challenges to grow our joy and resilient faith" (Marvin Williams, Our Daily Bread, 12/29/25).

Steven J. Cole, "Are you grumbling in depression or cynicism? Then you're not "rejoicing in hope." Are you giving up or despairing in your trials? Then you're not "persevering in tribulation." Are you grabbing every remedy that the world has to offer to get out of your trials? Then you're not "devoted to prayer." (Lesson 83: Joyful, Prayerful Perseverance (Romans 12:12) | Bible.org)