

I. Introduction:

If you're faced with difficult circumstances, how do you typically respond?

- a. try not to think about it
- b. talk to friends about it
- c. pray
- d. use your brain to figure out a solution
- e. yell at someone!
- f. some or all of the above

II. Read: Romans 5:1-5

5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **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. **3** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering

produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** 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.

III. Into the Bible:

1. What exactly is "character"? What does the word "character" mean here?
2. How does character produce hope?
3. How does the fact that "hope does not put us to shame" help us to rejoice in sufferings?

IV. Application:

4. What are some things in your life that have made you hopeful?
5. Have you experienced joy in suffering? Or have you known someone who was joyful in suffering? How did you/they do it?
6. In a sermon a few weeks ago, Daniel argues that it is very difficult to raise your baseline level of happiness. Yet we're all trying to pursue happiness. The key to rejoice in all circumstances, to have a higher baseline level of happiness is proven character. It's to know God's hope through character. What is preventing you from having more joy in your life? Are there any adjustments you need to make in order develop this type of joy in your life?