



St John's
Hartford

walking in truth, living in love



Welcome to **ROOTED**

Romans 5.1-10, p1132

This is the word of the LORD
Thanks be to God

A large, glowing white cross is centered in a dark, textured room. The cross has a thick black outline and a bright white center. The text "sharing in his sufferings" is written across the horizontal bar of the cross in a red, cursive font. The room's walls and floor are covered in a repeating pattern of small, dark, rectangular shapes, creating a grid-like texture. The lighting is dramatic, with the cross being the primary light source, casting a soft glow on the surrounding walls and floor.

sharing in his sufferings

“Sharing in his sufferings”



- The certainty of suffering (last week)
 - *“the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Romans 8.22)*
- The necessity of suffering (tonight)
 - *“we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Romans 8.17)*
- The brevity of suffering (next week, DV)
 - *“our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8.18)*
 - *“our light and momentary troubles ...” (2 Cor. 4.17)*

‘Regrets? I’ve had a few ...’

- A wedding, long ago
- The reading: 1 Peter 1.1-9 – but this was verses 6 & 7:
 - *“⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*
- The reality: suffering is both certain and *necessary*.



The *necessity* of suffering

- Certainty is one thing – but why *necessity*?
- This is the pattern:



*“I want to know Christ
and the power of his resurrection*

and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,
and so, somehow, to attain to
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(Philippians 3.10-11)



The *necessity* of suffering

- Certainty is one thing – but why *necessity*?
- This is the pattern:
 - *“I want to know Christ ... and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings ...” (Philippians 3.10-11)*
 - *“it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him” (Philippians 1.29)*
 - *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9.23)*
- But isn't this “Christian” suffering? Does it matter?



What kind of suffering?



- Suffering in a fallen world:
 - *“Cursed is the ground because of you ... dust you are and to dust you will return” (Genesis 3.17, 19)*
- Suffering for our own sin:
 - *“If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.” (1 Peter 4.15)*
- Suffering as a disciple of Christ:
 - *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.” (Matthew 5.11)*

What kind of suffering?



- Suffering as the discipline of Christ:
 - *“For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 11.29-30)*
 - *“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.” (Hebrews 12.7-8)*

What kind of suffering?



- Sometimes, it is obvious:
 - *“If your Christian faith is discovered in North Korea, you will either be immediately executed, or deported to a horrendous labour camp that few survive.” (Open Doors Watch List 2025)*
- Sometimes, it is not so easy to disentangle the origins:
 - *Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” is most likely physical, but he speaks in the same place of “weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and difficulties”.*
 - *The remedy is the same: “the Lord ... said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’” (2 Corinthians 12.7-10)*

The Prayer Book is wise!



- “Dearly beloved, know this, that Almighty God is the Lord of life and death, and of all things to them pertaining, as youth, strength, health, age, weakness, and sickness. Wherefore, whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly, that it is God’s visitation. And for what cause soever this sickness is sent unto you; whether it be to try your patience, for the example of others, and that your faith may be found in the day of the Lord laudable, glorious, and honourable, to the increase of glory and endless felicity; or else it be sent unto you to correct and amend in you whatsoever doth offend the eyes of your heavenly Father; know you certainly, that if you truly repent you of your sins, and bear your sickness patiently, trusting in God’s mercy for his dear Son Jesus Christ’s sake, and render unto him humble thanks for his fatherly visitation, submitting yourself wholly unto his will, it shall turn to your profit, and help you forward in the right way that leadeth unto everlasting life.” (*The Visitation of the Sick*)

The *necessity* of suffering



- “I want to know Christ ... and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings ...” (Philippians 3.10-11)
- Romans 5:
 - *Summary (v1-2): “we have been justified through faith”*
 - *What does faith look like in practice (v3-5)? “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”*

Hopeful suffering

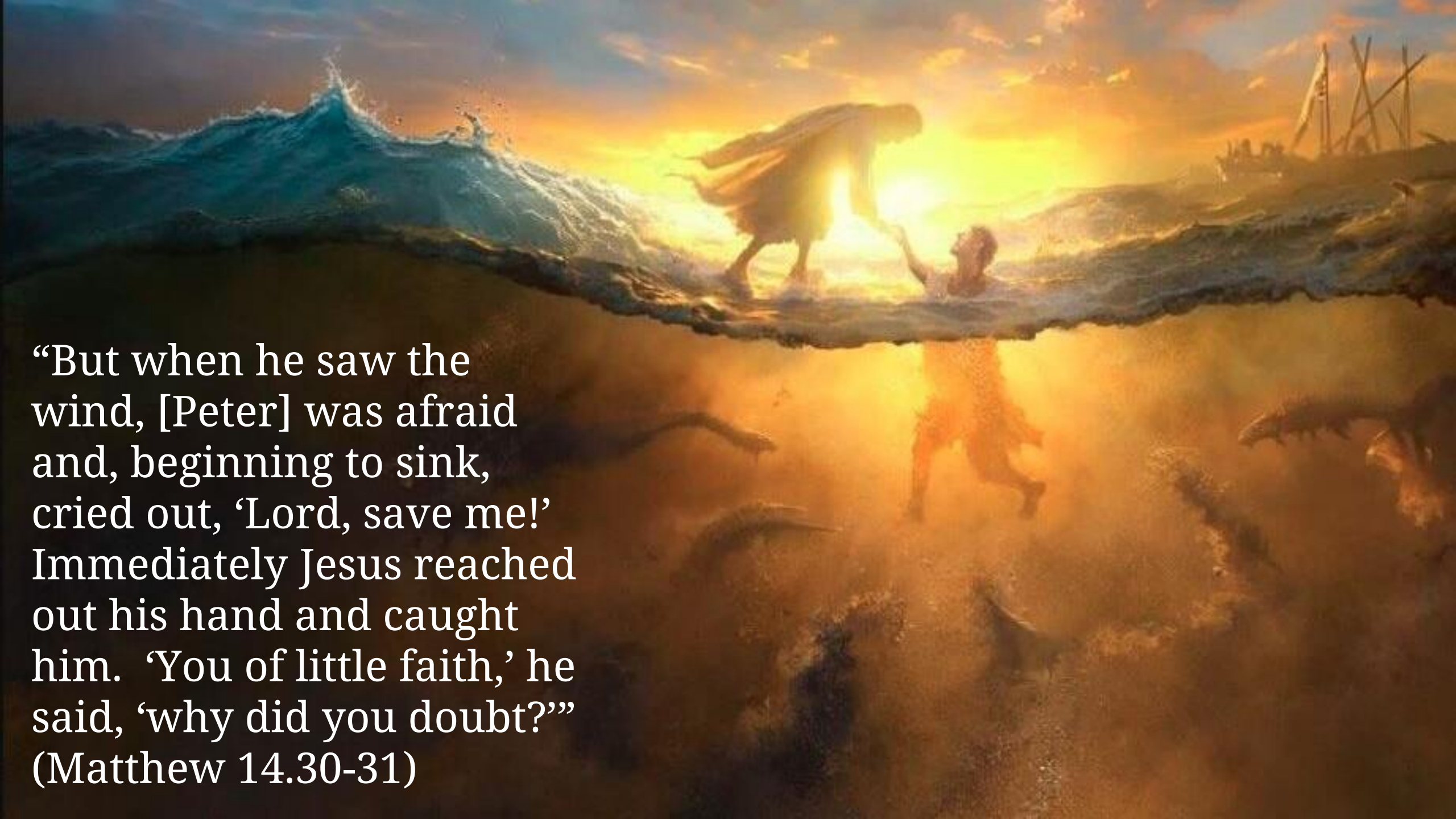


- *“We rejoice in our sufferings, because ...”*
 - *We are not masochists: we do not enjoy suffering*
 - *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.” (Heb. 12.11)*
 - *Suffering is the first link in a golden chain tethered to certain hope, which is itself guaranteed by God’s love:*
 - *God’s love is demonstrated by the dying and rising of Jesus, which saves us (v6-11).*
- **Follow the chain:**
 - *suffering, perseverance, character, hope.*
 - *Suffering may be a necessary part of our earthly pilgrimage: but it is a hope-sustained journey of faith.*

Link 1: Perseverance



- Don't give up:
 - *“All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 10.22)*
 - *“I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” (Revelation 1.9; cf 13.10)*
 - *“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness ... tomorrow will worry about itself.” (Matthew 6.33-34)*
- 30 years into my ministry, I have an exciting vision!
 - *Stay faithful to Jesus, stay faithful to Sarah*



“But when he saw the wind, [Peter] was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. ‘You of little faith,’ he said, ‘why did you doubt?’”
(Matthew 14.30-31)

Link 2: Character



- Perseverance in faith produces character:
 - *“Sow a habit and reap a character” (Emerson)*
 - *The gospel declares us to be God’s children, by faith. Suffering teaches us to think and act like God’s children.*
 - *Hebrews 5.8 says of Jesus, “Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.” How much more so for us!*
 - *James says the same thing (1.2-4):*
 - *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, not lacking anything.”*

Link 2: Character



- How does suffering shape us, and teach us obedience?
- It humbles us:
 - *“Not until I had terminal cancer did I grasp the simple reality of my faith: Jesus Christ is Lord, and I am not.” (St John’s member)*
- It teaches us to pray:
 - *Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” (M. 26.42)*
 - *So we pray “... your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6.10)*

Link 2: Character



- It teaches us to listen to God's word:
 - *“My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life. ... Look upon my suffering and deliver me, for I have not forgotten your law.” (Psalm 119.50, 153)*
- It teaches us mutual dependence:
 - *Our experience of the Vicarage fire: “love one another” in action*
 - *“it was good of you to share in my troubles” (Paul to the Philippians, 4.14)*

Link 2: Character



- It teaches us compassion:
 - *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.” (2 Cor. 1.3-5)*

Link 2: Character



- It teaches us the sufficiency of Christ as Saviour ...
 - *“Though the fig-tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.” (Habakkuk 3.17-18)*
- ... and the necessity of Christ as teacher:
 - *“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” (1 Peter 2.21)*
- *“Sow a character and reap a destiny” (Emerson)*

Link 3: Hope



- Connecting the links:
 - *The more we suffer, the more we trust Jesus (perseverance)*
 - *The more we trust Jesus, the more we reflect him (character)*
 - *The more we reflect Jesus, the more we long for him (hope)*
- Yet the links are anchored in God, not our faith:
 - *“hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”*
 - *The Father has loved us, proved by the death of his Son (v8)*
 - *The Spirit has made it our present experience.*
 - *The love of the triune God is the anchor point of our hope. In suffering, we rejoice, in hope, firmly rooted in the unchanging love of God.*



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(Philippians 3.10-11)*

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Questions




Prayer

The Evening Collect



*Lighten our darkness, Lord:
and by your great mercy defend us
from all peril and danger this night;
for the love of your only Son
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.*



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“Sharing in his Sufferings”

Why do we suffer? What purpose does it serve? Will it ever end? How do we endure it?

Rooted: Sundays 7-8pm at St John's. 9, 16, 23 November.

Teaching, then Q&A. All welcome. All questions welcome. And time to pray.