

How Love Is the Key to Persevering in Life & Ministry

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Resilience – the capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties. (Oxford Language)

Resilience – the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands. (APA)

Paul's External Afflictions

- 5 times I received forty lashes less one.
- 3 times I was beaten with rods.
- Once I was stoned.
- 3 times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea
- In danger from rivers, robbers, my own people, from Gentiles, in the city, in the wilderness, at sea, from false brothers
- In toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure

Paul's Internal Pressure and Anxiety for the Churches

- Sexual immorality that even unbelievers didn't tolerate (1 Cor 5:1)
- Conflict between leaders and church members (1 Cor 11:18–19; Phil 4:2–3)
- Those leaving the faith from deceitful spirits and teaching (1 Tim 4:1)
- False leaders—like wolves preying on the sheep (Acts 20:29–30)
- Shepherding the church at Ephesus—night and day for three years, I never stopped warning each one of you with tears (Acts 20:31)

If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

2 Corinthians 11:30

⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:8–10

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹ He gives power to the faint,
and to him who has no might he increases strength.

³⁰ Even youths shall faint and be weary,
and young men shall fall exhausted;

³¹ but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;
they shall run and not be weary;
they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:28–31

Living in a Broken World

- Following God's will may include suffering.
- Serving in the church includes daily pressures and anxieties.
- Satan is involved in our struggles.
- God gives power to the faint and increases their strength.

God's Purposes in Suffering

- God allows Satan and his schemes so we will not be conceited. (2 Cor 7:7; cf. Job 1:12; Luke 22:31–32)
- God uses suffering to make us not rely on ourselves. (2 Cor 1:9)
- God uses suffering to perfect us in our weakness.

God uses suffering to perfect us in our weakness

- Endurance → character → hope → doesn't put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts (Romans 5:3-5)
- Tests our faith → steadfastness → perfect, complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:3-4)
- Tests our faith → results in praise, glory, honor at the revelation of Christ + love and inexpressible joy → salvation (1 Peter 1:6-9)

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- God uses suffering to perfect us in our weakness.
- God uses suffering as a backdrop to experience his love, comfort, peace, joy, and hope.
- God also disciplines us as we sin in our sufferings.

How should we respond in our suffering?

- God calls us to **boast** in our weaknesses so that the power of God will rest on us.
- God calls us to be **content** in our weaknesses and hardships.
- Count it all **joy** (Jas. 1:1)
- **Rejoice** always, **pray** without ceasing, and **give thanks** in all circumstances (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

Paul was compelled by the love of Christ

The **power of Christ** gave Paul the ability to endure and persevere in both body and soul, and the **love of Christ** motivated him to live for Christ.

Paul was rooted and grounded in the love of Christ

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:14–21

Paul knew that suffering produced fruit through God's love

¹ 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.

Romans 5:1–5

Paul knew nothing could separate him from the love of Christ

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:35; 37–39

Paul experienced God's love as better than life

- ¹ O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
- ² So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
- ³ Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.

Psalm 63:1–3

Paul was controlled and compelled by the love of Christ

¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again

2 Corinthians 5:14–15

Reflecting on the Love of Christ

- God rooted and grounded you in the love of Christ.
- Suffering produces fruit through God's love.
- Nothing can separate you from the love of Christ.
- God's love is better than life.
- The love of Christ controls and compels you to live for him.

Abiding in the Love of Christ Is Key

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

John 15:9–11

**Abiding in Christ means living
by faith in his presence,
promises, and power, resulting
in the fruit of loving God and
others.**

Meditating on God's Word

Psalm 119:25–32

Meditating on God's Word (Psalm 119:25–32)

²⁵ My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word!

²⁶ When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes!

²⁷ Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works.

²⁸ My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!

²⁹ Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law!

³⁰ I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me.

³¹ I cling to your testimonies, O Lord; let me not be put to shame!

³² I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!

Psalm 119:25–32

Praying God's Word

Psalm 119:89–96

Praying God's Word (Psalm 119:89–96)

⁸⁹ Forever, O Lord, your word
is firmly fixed in the heavens.

⁹⁰ Your faithfulness endures to all
generations; you have
established the earth, and it
stands fast.

⁹¹ By your appointment they
stand this day, for all things are
your servants.

⁹² If your law had not been my
delight, I would have perished in
my affliction.

⁹³ I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me
life.

⁹⁴ I am yours; save me, for I have
sought your precepts.

⁹⁵ The wicked lie in wait to destroy
me, but I consider your testimonies.

⁹⁶ I have seen a limit to all
perfection, but your commandment
is exceedingly broad.

Psalm 119:89–96

Living God's Word

Psalm 119:105–112

Living God's Word (Psalm 119:105–112)

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

¹⁰⁶ I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules.

¹⁰⁷ I am severely afflicted;
give me life, O Lord, according to your word!

¹⁰⁸ Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O Lord, and teach me your rules.

¹⁰⁹ I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law.

¹¹⁰ The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.

¹¹¹ Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.

¹¹² I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

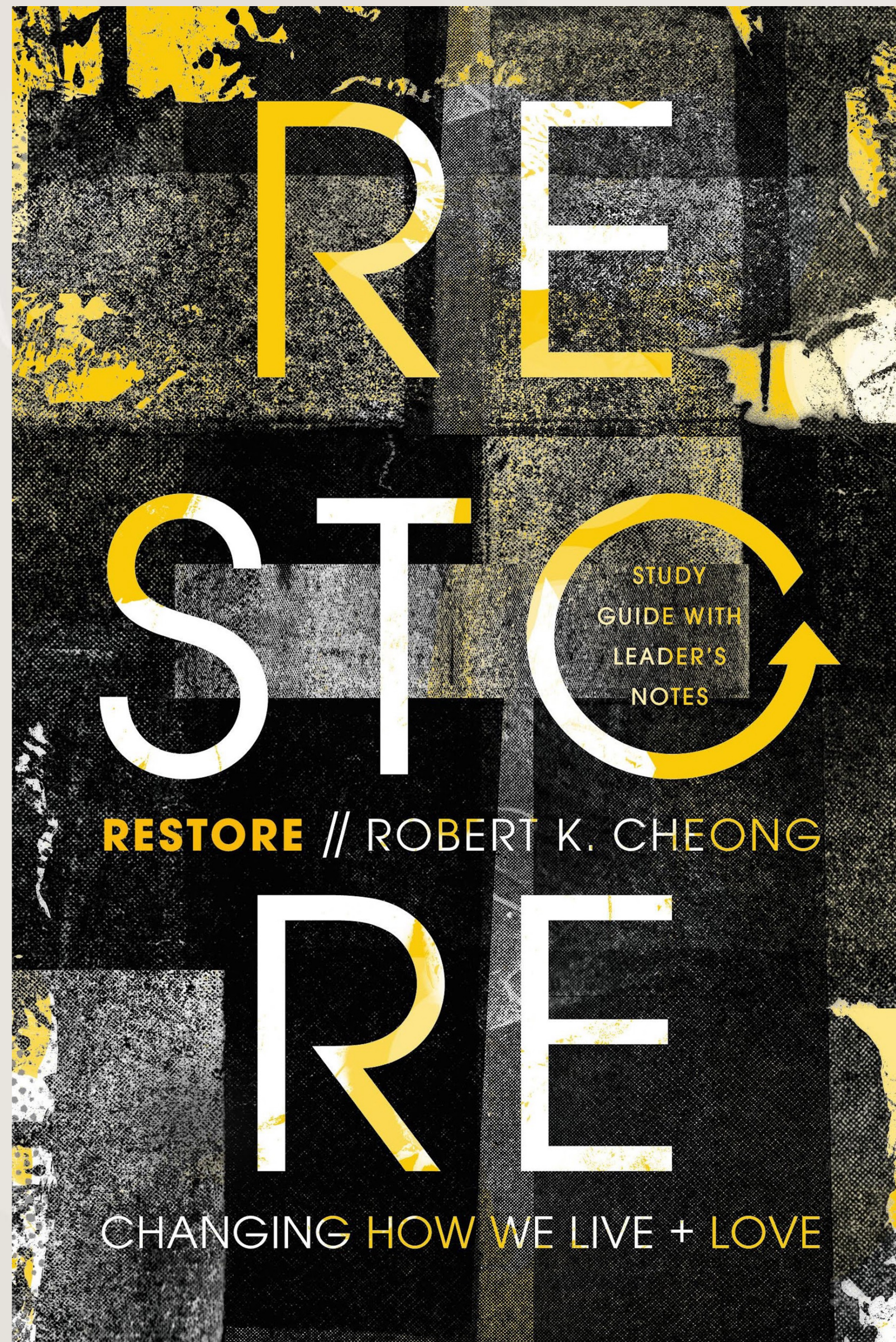
Psalm 119:105–112

Living God's Word (Psalm 119:105–112)

- How is God inviting you to live differently in your reality?
- How is Jesus inviting you to follow him?
- As you reflect on how the Lord shepherded you and stirred your heart, how did you experience the love of Christ?

In Closing

Like Paul, the **power of Christ** gives you the ability to endure and persevere in both body and soul, and the **love of Christ** motivates you to live for Christ.



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