

Morning Sermon October 25, 2015
"Sharing Christ's Suffering" Romans 8:17-18

When we celebrate the Lord's Supper a big part of what we are celebrating is our union and communion with our Lord Jesus Christ. Our union with Him, our abiding in Him, as He Himself described in John 15, makes us more like Him. By the Holy Spirit we are sanctified and by God's grace grow in holiness, godliness and Christ-likeness.

As we have been learning the past few weeks this growing in Christ pulls us in a way which is CONTRARY to, OPPOSED to our flesh –

“Across the will of Nature Leads on the path of God;

Not where the flesh delighteth The feet of Jesus trod.

O bliss to leave behind us The fetters of the slave,

To leave ourselves behind us, The graveclothes and the grave.

We follow in His footsteps; What if our feet be torn?

Where He has marked the pathway All hail the briar and the thorn!

Scarce seen, scarce be heard, unreckoned, Despised, defamed, unknown

Or heard but by our singing, On, children, ever on!”

— Gerhard Tersteegan 1697–1769

Going against the flesh no only takes us in a way contrary to ourselves and our own sins, but also against the carnal minds of others, who

hate God and Christ – Galatians 5:16-17

the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. (Romans 8:7 NKJ)

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. (John 15:18 NKJ)

When the world starts hating us the temptation is to go along (with the world's ways) to get along (with worldly, ungodly people)... but we miss the joyous fellowship we might have with Christ in His sufferings and we also miss having an impact on the world, for its betterment – and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them

go. ⁴¹ So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. ⁴² And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. (Acts 5:40-42 NKJ)

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12 NKJ)

We don't desire persecution for persecution's sake, but we desire "godliness" and Christ-likeness, even though the carnal minds who are at enmity with God will hate us because of it. We draw nearer and nearer to Christ in spite of pain, because this pain is full of gain –

What gains will we have for our pains? What motivation do we have for continuing in growing Christ-likeness even though it may mean growing persecution? Or other kinds of pain?

I. *Our present sufferings are nothing compared to the eternal weight of glory they prepare us for –*

and if children, then heirs-- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Romans 8:17-18 NKJ)

According to the verse above we gain two things as the children and heirs of God:

1. Suffering now
2. Glory forever

Some may question, if I have to endure great pain to attain Heaven, eternal life, is eternal life WORTH that pain?

Paul is saying, it is a no brainer! YES, it is WORTH IT! Why?

- Pains here, however bad are temporary / Glory, joy, pleasures in Heaven are eternal
- Also, even if we do not choose Christ, we will still have pains, sorrow, difficulties in this life, plus the eternal wrath of God later.

This was what our Lord saw –

² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrew 12:2 NKJ)

II. *Our present sufferings are part of the Big Picture process that leads to the birth of universal glory –*

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope;²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. (Romans 8:19-22 NKJ)

A second reason Paul gives enduring the pain, taking up Christ's cross, is this is what the entire world is enduring. The earth, its plants, its animals, the non-rational creatures did not ask for the PAINS of SIN! They were subjected to these things for our sake and for the sake of redemption, not only of us but of the entire universe – these are birth pangs of glory! Revelation 21:1-4

III. *Our present sufferings add glory to the precious hope which is now a key element in our glorifying of God –*

Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.²⁴ For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance. (Romans 8:23-25 NKJ)

Here Paul refers to "hope." Hope he says is always for the unseen. The Roman Christians lived in a world ruled by Nero, and Satan, they were for Christ's sake ---

³⁶ As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Romans 8:36-37 NKJ)

Their hope was for something beyond this life! This kind of not seeing but still believing glorifies God and increases our personal joy –

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 1:6-7 NKJ)

whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, (1 Peter 1:8 NKJ)

Here we see Peter admiring the faith of those who lacked his privilege of seeing Jesus Christ, they were hoping for His revelation, His second coming! We hope for the same!

IV. *Though our present sufferings are hard and heavy we have the Holy Spirit to come along side us, helping us in all our weaknesses / helping us to pray –*

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.²⁷ Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*. (Romans 8:26-27 NKJ)

We are not alone when we struggle, even when trials seem to hinder our prayers. The Holy Spirit understands and communicates extremely well! He helps us lift what we cannot alone.

V. *Our present sufferings along with all else that happens to us in this life have been custom designed (skillfully mixed) by our Heavenly Father to help conform us to Christ's image, that He might be the First Born of many brethren -*

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His purpose*.²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be conformed to the image of His Son*, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:28-29 NKJ)

"all things work together" is pharmacy terminology. If we love God, He works all things together that we might become more Christ-like, which brings us back to verse :17 **and if children** We are God's children, Christ's brothers and sisters ... everything that happens to us, good or bad, including pain and persecution is working to make us more like Jesus, this is the ultimate good! This is why first century Christians seem to desire suffering –¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, (Philippians 3:10 NKJ)

Arnold A. Brevick