

Pt 23 Romans 8:18, Suffering Compared to Glory

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Romans 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Last week we looked at verses 11-17 of this chapter and saw all the wonderful truths given to us about what it means to be a child of God. We looked at the benefits of being in God's family and being His heir and joint-heirs with Christ.

The very last verse we looked at was verse 17 and I want us to read it again because, although we expounded on the first part of that verse, we didn't really spend any time on the second part of that verse which is actually the springboard for the verse we read this morning:

Romans 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; **if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.**

In both of these verses we find Paul making a comparison between suffering and glory. I've titled the message this morning "**Suffering Compared to Glory.**"

It's been said that a Christian is either presently suffering, coming out of suffering, or about to go into suffering. The fact is, if you are a Christian suffering is going to be part of your life. Of course, this is not mentioned in the Mega-Churches or today's liberal seminaries.

Today's watered-down gospel is a prosperity gospel. One that says, "**name it and claim it.**" Or "**just trust Jesus and all your troubles and worries are over.**"

Those are some more of those "cutesy Christian cliches that we talked about last time.

The problem with that teaching is that is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. In fact, it is heretical teaching. It is the complete opposite of what the Bible says concerning Christians.

The human-penman of the Book of Romans, being the Apostle Paul, knew more about suffering than nearly anyone in the Bible. In fact, only hours after he was saved a very interesting thing happened that would forever change Paul's life.

Look at it with me in **Acts 9:10-16**

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, **Ananias.** And he said, Behold, I *am here*, Lord.

11 And the Lord *said* unto him, **Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,**

12 **And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.**

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord *said* unto him, **Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:**

16 **For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.**

Jesus himself appointed Paul to suffering. Wait a minute! What about just trust the Lord and all your troubles will be over??? No, that's not what the Lord said at all. He said that Paul "**must suffer for my name's sake.**"

We all know what it means to suffer don't we? Webster's defines it like this: **to feel or bear what is painful, disagreeable or distressing, either to the body or mind;**

And boy, did Paul ever suffer! Let's look at a few of the things Paul had to suffer with:

2 Corinthians 11:23-33

23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by mine own countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

Listen to what he said in **2 Corinthians 1:8** For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

The average person would have given up at the first sign of trouble or the first time they had to suffer. And while Paul suffered many great things, he continues to compare the suffering to the glory of God.

Look at our opening text again: **Romans 8:18** For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Did you see that? Paul says the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Many times, you can replace that word "**glory**" with the word **Heaven**. We do that sometimes. For instance, we will say things like "**so-and-so has gone on to glory**" meaning Heaven. **Colossians 3:4** When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him **in glory**. Again, meaning Heaven.

So, Paul is making the case that although suffering is bad, it pales in comparison to how wonderful God's glory is.

This isn't the only time Paul compares suffering to glory.

Listen to what he says in **2 Corinthians 4:7-18**

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

8 *We are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair;

9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you.

15 For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

Did you see that in verse 17? He calls our present suffering a “**light affliction.**” He says that our suffering is “**but for a moment.**”

Now to us it seems that our suffering is heavy and will never end. We sometimes get bogged down in our suffering and allow it to take over our lives. That is what Paul is trying to warn us about. Yes, we are going to suffer but we must keep remembering that it will not be forever. This time we have on earth is but a blip in time compared to the eternity that we will spend in Heaven.

In fact, that is what he is saying in verse **18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.**

In other words, take your focus off of your present circumstances which are only temporary and place it instead on things you cannot see, the things that await for us in God's glory which is eternal.

Listen to what Paul wrote to Timothy: **2 Timothy 3:10-12** But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus **shall suffer persecution.**

He said that we “**shall**” suffer persecution, not “**might**” suffer.

What would be like if we never had to go through any kind of suffering? We'd be spoiled rotten brats. We would not appreciate the good things the Lord does for us.

The truth is, it is during suffering that God does the most work in our lives. The early Church would never have left Jerusalem and spread the Gospel throughout the world if they had not of suffered persecution.

God's uses our suffering to refine us, to test our faith. Much like gold being burnt in a fire to refine it. That is what Peter alludes to in **1 Peter 1:7-8** That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Did you see something in Peter's writing very similar to Paul's? He too makes the comparison of suffering and glory. He does it several times in his letters.

Look at **1 Peter 3:14-18**

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy *are ye*: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17 For *it is* better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

He also said this in **1 Peter 4:12-16**

12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

16 Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

It is a running theme throughout the Word of God. The Apostle James uses the word “**temptation**” in place of **afflictions and suffering.**

James 1:2-3 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

James 1:12 Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Most of the time when we think of the word temptation, we think of it as being tempted to sin, but here as James uses it he is referring to affliction and suffering for the cause of Christ. -- Over and over and over in the Bible we find that men and women of God must suffer great things.

Joseph suffering the mistreatment of his brothers, the lies of his master's wife, being thrown into prison for something he did not do. Yet he was able to say in the end:

Genesis 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.

And, of course there is Job. The very definition of suffering. He was the most righteous man on the face of the earth but listen to what the Lord did:

Job 1:8 And the LORD said unto Satan, **Hast thou considered my servant Job,** that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

Job 1:21-22 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. 22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

And, of course, we cannot end this message without mentioning the greatest suffering of any individual who has ever lived – the Lord Jesus.

We often speak of His suffering especially around Easter time when we read the account of his betrayal, arrest, beating, and crucifixion. There is no way we can even imagine the horrific suffering our Lord endured.

You will find in the Bible that the Lord warns us many times that those who follow him will also suffer.

One of the greatest examples is when he is speaking with his disciples just before he would be betrayed. He was trying to prepare them for what was about to happen. He had washed their feet, they shared the last Supper together and he announced his betrayal by one of them. Then afterwards he spends a great deal of time talking to them. Listen to what he says in:

John 15:18-16:4

- 18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you.
19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.
20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.
21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.
22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.
23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.
24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.
25 But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.
26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:
27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.
1 These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.
2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.
3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.
4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

All of these things happened to the disciples just as Jesus had said it would. Those that are His disciples even today are subject to this same persecution by the world. The world still hates Jesus, they hate God, and they hate everyone that claims the title of Christian.

The truth is, the world still delights in seeing Christians persecuted. Here in the United States we have no idea what it is like to actually suffer for the cause of Christ. Being made fun of for being a follower of Christ is only light suffering. I pray that we never have to know what true suffering for Christ really is.

But, regardless of what happens, we are taught that even at its worst, it doesn't compare to the glory that awaits us.

After Christ was buried and rose again, he ascended unto the Father and was exalted in His glory.

Philippians 2:9-11

- 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:
10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;
11 And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

One of these days we too will rule and reign with Christ and bask in His glory and it will make this little bit of time we had here on earth seem like nothing.