

The Sufferings Of This Present Time, And The Glory To Be Revealed In Us.

Text: Rom 8:18-23

1) The Sufferings

Suggested Hymns:

2) The Glory

357, 344, 210, 848, 343

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Romans 8:18–23, 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.* ¹⁹ *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.*

²³ *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.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In our text the Apostle uses a special form of speech. He personifies the creation. He speaks of the creation outside of man, of the animal, vegetable, and mineral world, of the irrational creature, as if it had sense the same as man.

He says, “¹⁹ *For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God,*” and “*we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.*”

Now this is certainly not to be taken literally, as if the creature had sense and mind. The only creature in the visible world with a rational mind, the only creature possessing the faculty to think, to wait in earnest expectation, to hope for the future, the only creature having a living soul, is man.

Does not God say distinctly in Psalm 32:9, *9 Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding?* Our text, therefore, must not be understood as if the animals, the plants, and the rocks around us had understanding, but it is a figure of speech which the Apostle uses that he might better impress on the minds of his readers the truth which he has under consideration.

And what is this truth? It is that *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* The Apostle points to the creature to impress this great truth the more forcibly.

He is telling us, *Look at the sufferings in the house of the creation. See how peace and harmony are disturbed in the visible world by volcanic eruptions, by storms, by floods, and other calamities; how sorrow is mixed with joy everywhere; how the creatures prey one upon another; and how the earth is turned into a huge grave for everything that has life.*

What causes this suffering? Did God ordain it so? Was not everything good that God had made in the creation? It was; but the moment sin was brought into the world by the disobedience of our first parents, there was a sudden change.

God's creation was marred by sin. God cursed the ground to bring forth thorns and thistles. Now the creatures of God are being abused for sinful purposes, and they groan, as it were, under the service of sin; they wait, as it were, for the time to come when sin shall be no more, when they shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, as the Apostle says.

Now as the creature shall be freed from bondage and suffering, so shall we be made free of all the things that are hurtful to us, and be received into such glory as is not worthy to be compared with the sufferings of this present time.

Let us consider, then, with the help of God's Holy Spirit: *The Sufferings Of This Present Time, And The Glory To Be Revealed In Us.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Sufferings

The Apostle says, *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.* The

sufferings of which the Apostle speaks here are the sufferings which the Christians must endure, as the context plainly shows.

In the preceding verses the Apostle says, ¹⁶ *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,* ¹⁷ *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.*¹

As Christ had to suffer, so also the Christians, who are His followers, must suffer. And what are our sufferings? They are the sufferings of this present time. They are limited to this present time. No suffering of any nature are awaiting Christians beyond the grave.

In the Roman Catholic Church they have made up the doctrine of the purgatory of which the Holy Scriptures do not say a word. They claim that the souls of Christians go to a place in the hereafter where they must suffer until they are perfectly cleansed and purified; and the more you pray, or the greater sacrifices you offer for those departed souls, the sooner they are relieved from their sufferings in the purgatory and received into heaven.

This doctrine of the purgatory is a flat denial of the all-sufficiency of Christ's redemption. Does not the Scripture say in 1 John 1:7 that *the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*? How, then, can we be made to suffer for our sin in the hereafter when Christ has already suffered all for us?

Our sufferings are therefore limited to this present time, and in the hereafter no sufferings are in store for those who have been cleansed from all sin by the blood of the Son of God. Only the wicked must suffer in the hereafter, those who die in their sins, and pass away in unbelief.

Lazarus suffered in this life only, and in death his sufferings are ended, for he is carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, while the rich man dies and finds himself in hell and torment.

And being sufferings of this present time, the sufferings of the Christians are of various kinds. The Christians are subject not only to all the common ills of mankind which fall to the lot of all men, whether they be Christians or unbelievers, but they also have special sufferings to endure which come to them for the very reason that they are Christians.

Those who enter the Christian ranks, and expect to fare so much the better in this life because they do so, will find themselves greatly mistaken. Are not the Christians subject to illness as much as other people? Do they not meet with accidents as well as others? Are they exempt from sorrow, and grief, and pain?

When there is a general calamity, a flood, a shipwreck, an earthquake, a famine, or any disaster which comes upon a community composed of Christians and unbelievers, does not the blow fall upon all alike?

Do not Christians often meet with unexpected reverses, with trouble in business or in the family? Does not death come to them at last, or deprive them of those whom they love?

And are not Christians often made acquainted with troubles of which unbelievers know nothing? Are they not mocked, spitefully treated, and persecuted for Christ's sake? Are they not often made to suffer for it because they confess Christ before men?

And the spiritual sufferings of the Christians — who can list them? When the devil assails them, when their sins trouble them, when they are brought to the verge of despair, when fear seizes upon them that their faith might not be true, and that they might be lost, what must they suffer! Unbelievers have no idea what it is to be in the furnace of affliction.

Now, when these sufferings are upon us, we must well bear in mind, my friends, that we must expect this in this evil world. Some people think that no evil should come to the Christian, that God should defend those who put their trust in Him against all danger, and protect them from all evil.

And when they see that some great misfortune has come upon a Christian, they are quick to murmur and to blaspheme, to dispute the existence of a God and to say, *How can a loving God deal thus with those who believe in Him?*

Or they turn upon the poor afflicted Christian and say, There! what did it benefit him to pray, and to go to church, and to deprive himself of this world's pleasures?

But we Christians must not listen to such vain talk. Has not God plainly told us in our text that we must endure the sufferings of this present time? Did not Jesus say to His disciples as it is written in John 16:33, ***In the world you will***

have tribulation? Are we not told that ***“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God?”***

It is true that we groan under our sufferings and desire to be relieved when they are upon us. But has not our God given us the gracious promise that He will not impose on us greater burdens than we are able to bear,² and that He will deliver us when His time has come?

Has He not assured us that all things must work together for good if we love Him,³ and that He will turn all our sufferings into blessings? Let us not murmur, then, and complain when His hand is upon us!

It is also true that sin is the cause of all the suffering in this world. There would be no suffering if there was no sin. Sin has turned God’s beautiful creation into a great hospital and grave-yard.

But we Christians know that our sufferings are not punishments for our sins. Why, where would we be if God should punish us for our sins? There would be no end of suffering. No; these sufferings of the present time are but wholesome chastisements to keep us in the narrow path that we may not be damned with the world, and they are followed by an unspeakable glory.

2. The Glory.

In this second part let us consider the glory which shall be revealed in us.

It has been claimed that the creatures shall take part in the glory to be revealed in the children of God. The glory to be revealed in us is the blessed state in the yonder world, the happiness and bliss which consists in the things which ***“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him;”***⁴ and the claim has been made that the creatures also shall be received into this glory.

The Apostle says in our text, ***“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.***

These words have been explained to mean that the creatures shall share our glory in the resurrection of the dead, that animals, plants, and minerals shall rise with man, and be received into heaven.

But the Apostle says no such thing. He says, *the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption.* And in what manner the creature shall be delivered we are told in the plainest words of Scripture.

For the Bible says that heaven and earth shall pass away, that the elements shall melt with fervent heat,⁵ that the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up, and that there shall be an end of all things.⁶

And when the Apostle says that this deliverance is “*into the glorious liberty of the children of God,*” he does not say that the creatures are received into this glory, but he simply states that their deliverance has come when the glorious liberty of God’s children is revealed.

Scripture speaks of a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.⁷

This glory is to be revealed in us, and therefore it is called our manifestation or revealing. The Apostle says, ¹⁹ *For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.*

As long as they are in this life, the sons of God, the children of God, are not revealed; it does not appear in this life what a great and glorious thing it is to be a true child of God. On the contrary, God’s children are often held in contempt in this world, and regarded as fools.

But the time will come when our glory is revealed, as the Apostle John says in 1 John 3:2, ² *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

What a glorious day when in our flesh we shall see God, when face to face we shall see our glorious Saviour, and our corruptible bodies shall be made like His glorious body!

What a glorious day when we shall stand at the right hand of the Supreme Judge of the world, and hear from His mouth the blessed words: “*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*”⁸

Then our glory shall be revealed, then all our tears shall be wiped away from our eyes, then it shall be revealed that not in vain we have trusted in our God in

this life, and cast our lot with Christ in this world, and believed in our merciful Saviour, and endured in the faith to the end.

Finally, the glory to be revealed in us is represented as our full adoption in the redemption of the body, our resurrection on the last Day. The Apostle says, ²² *For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.* ²³ *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.*

As the whole creation is yearning and longing for deliverance from bondage and groaning under the service of sin to which it was unwillingly put, so likewise we should long and yearn for deliverance, and wait for the glory which is to be revealed in us. For this glory is our full adoption.

It is true that God has already adopted us; for by faith in Christ Jesus we have been made the children of God and heirs of eternal life. But in the yonder life our adoption will be completed, our hopes realised, our faith changed into sight.

For this is the redemption of the body. Both body and soul have been redeemed by the glorious work of the Son of God, by His painful suffering and bitter death on the cross. But while in death the soul is immediately received into glory, the body is entrusted to the ground and returns to dust. However, in the resurrection the body is reunited with the soul and received into the same glory, into happiness and bliss which no human tongue can express.

And now, my friends, I have pictured to you both the sufferings of this present time, and the glory which is to be revealed in us. Is it not true what the Apostle says that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us?

Should we not be willing and ready rather to suffer in this life, and to be received into heavenly glory, than to enjoy this life, and to go into eternal torment?

Is it not much better to be carried with Lazarus into Abraham's bosom by the angels than to go with the rich man who fared sumptuously every day into hell and torment?

Let us be wise, then; let us be prudent; let us take up our cross and follow Christ; let us be willing to suffer with our dear Saviour, and we shall be glorified together with Him, and live with Him forever and eternally. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Romans 8:16-17

² 1 Cor. 10:13

³ Rom. 8:28

⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:9

⁵ 2 Pet. 3:10

⁶ 1 Pet. 4:7

⁷ 2 Peter 3:13

⁸ Matthew 25:34