

***RO 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.***

Notice here –Our Sufferings. Paul doesn't assume that his suffering is any greater than anyone else. When we have an issue, often it can become all consuming – we think we are hard done by. Paul doesn't make this assumption. His assumption is that the glory revealed in us – remember last week we talked about the Holy Spirit living in us. The Holy Spirit can be revealed in us, God revealed through us – The suffering, while still a valid experience, and a hassle and truly suffering pales into insignificance by comparison.

Kind of like the suffering is worth it because we are confident in a future glory without the suffering being present. Here Paul is not talking about pain or sickness, although I do think that the principles carry over into those areas of sickness. He is inferring the suffering of persecution. It was happening. That was the Roman churches experience. Suffering through persecution. You have heard of the kind of things. Admit you're a Christian and you become the next weeks entertainment at the Coliseum. I remember a T shirt at a christian concert once. It said **“Headlines: Upset at the Coliseum. Christians 3 Lions 0.”** I don't think it happened. The authorities took advantage of the legal system and tried to wipe out christianity. That is the kind of pressure the Roman christians were under.

Yet we do read of amazing stories of God's glory being revealed in their suffering. The church grew, at an amazing rate even though people knew the dangers, people from all walks of life became christian, soldiers, public official, heathens, people from all countries.

Weighed in the scales of lasting values, the sufferings endured in this life are light indeed, compared with the splendor of the life to come--a life undisturbed by anything hostile or hurtful. Scripture does not tell us much of what that glory will be, but it assures us that it will be. The glory will be revealed "in us" (or possibly "to us").

But there is more to it here. Sin has affected not only all human kind but by side affect all creation.

***19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own***

*choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope<sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.*

*RO 8:22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

Instead of considering the future simply from the standpoint of the redeemed, Paul enlarges the perspective to include the whole "creation" which is here personified as longing for the time when the children of God will enjoy the consummation because creation's own deliverance from the frustration imposed on it by the Fall cannot come until that time.

This accords with the superior place given humankind in the creation (Ge 1:26-28; Ps 8:5-8).

"Eager expectation" is a picturesque term describing a person leaning forward out of intense interest and desire, usually used in Scripture regarding one's attitude toward the Lord's coming

The one who subjected the creation to frustration is not named. The most natural interpretation is that God, at the time sin entered the world, did the subjecting. The creation is pictured as not willingly enduring the subjection, yet as having hope for something better--liberation from its "bondage to decay." The apostle is concerned with the creation only as it relates to humanity. How gracious of God to retain for believers the habitat they have long been accustomed to, only so changed and beautified as to harmonize with their own glorified state.

What about this creation groaning? Well I think there is a direct link here to creation's capacity to worship. *If all creation worships God – then knowing that sin has affected its potential for adequate worship must frustrate it.*

Many would say creation is unconscious of its worship.

How does a dog worship? Does what it is designed to – Bark.

How does a river worship? Does what it is designed to – flow down hill.

How does a baby worship, does what it is designed to – Cry and poo.

Actually worship is about doing what we are designed to – Worship, glorify God.

Perhaps but sin has affected creation. Look at our world and what we have done to it. It is no longer God's design but seeing the effects of man's desire

to design it his way. That is an **evidence of sin = mans desire to do his own thing**. Creation is showing us just that.

One commentary summed it up this way. Verse 23 implies that the expression "whole creation" (v. 22) excludes the people of God. It's "groaning" looks back to its subjection to frustration (v. 20), whereas the "pains of childbirth" anticipate the age of renewal. In other words, the same sufferings are at once a result and a prophecy. Christ too spoke of the renewing of the world as a "rebirth" (Mt 19:28).

We will get a new heaven and a new earth. Creation is looking forward to being right with God just as we are.

***23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.***

Only the people of God have "the firstfruits of the Spirit" (v. 23).

The concept of "firstfruits" is prominent in the OT, where the Israelites were expected to bring the first ripened elements of grain, fruit, etc., to the Lord as an offering. By doing so the offerer acknowledged that all produce was the provision of God and was really his.

Implicit also in the ritual was the assurance from the God's side that the general harvest to be enjoyed by the offerer would providentially follow.

As applied to our passage, the concept seems somewhat out of place, for if the Spirit is truly a person, how can any more of him be given in the future than has been given at conversion? We should rather understand the gift of the Spirit to believers at the inception of Christian life as God's pledge of the completion of the process of salvation, here stated as "adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." These bodies were earlier described by Paul as spiritual bodies (1Co 15:44). The future bodily resurrection of believers will be the full **harvest**.

With this we see "adoption" for the second time (we mentioned it briefly last week in vv. 14-17). The people who already have an adoption and are sealed

by the Spirit will receive their second and final adoption. Between the two events stretches the course of sanctification, and at the final adoption the children of God will be fully conformed to the likeness of God's Son . Here is your theology thinking question for the week – Have you been sanctified or are you being sanctified? Is it done or is it a process? Spend your week on that one.

Verse 24 and 25 are in keeping with the concept of us eagerly waiting for our complete salvation in v. 23. The emphasis in vv. 24-25 is on hope (cf. also 5:4). The Christian pilgrims are on the road to glory, we have been assured that the promises of the word and the spiritual energy provided for their "walk" are provided and are not illusory. As we see the dark tunnel of death ahead of us, we are confident that beyond it the road leads on to our ultimate destination, the presence of God, even though it remains unseen. Because an element of our salvation--the redemption of the body--is held in reserve, we have hope. If it was ours now, there would be no reason for our existence here on earth for this life experience. Since the object of our hope is not yet realized, "we wait for it patiently" (or "with endurance," if the hardships and sufferings that remain to be faced are in view).

The next verses have been such an encouragement to me over a lot of years.

***RO 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.***

Just as the Spirit is working in creation God is working in us through Himself – the Spirit. Helps us in our weakness. This is such a huge statement. Without God we can do nothing. So God helps us in all things.

Paul arrives at the final ministry of the Spirit mentioned in this chapter, his work of **intercession**. The statement "In the same way" seems to link this ministry with hope. Both help to sustain believers amid the burdens and disappointments of life. The word "weakness" is a general expression for the Christian's limitations while still in the human body. Paul had long before discovered his weakness and along with it the **compensating factor of the power of God**

***(2Co 12:9-10 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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

He admits that we often do not know our real needs as God sees them, nor do we know the needs of others. Going deeper, we do not know the will of God respecting these things. In the last analysis, it is God's will that determines how our prayers will be answered.

Standing over against this severe limitation is the freaky information that "the Spirit helps us." The culmination of the Spirit's activity on our behalf is the declaration that he intercedes "for the saints" (intercessory prayer means prayer for others). Prayer activity on the part of believers goes on in the background and is overshadowed by the part played by the Spirit of God. Elsewhere this is called praying in the Spirit. Or at least this is some people's concept of praying in the Spirit. **Eph 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.**

Verse 27 is needed to clarify something referred to in v. 26, i.e., the inexpressible groanings. How can such prayer, if it be called prayer at all, be answered? Are not such prayers unintelligible? Not for God! He is no stranger to the intent of the Spirit. He knows what the inexpressible meaning is, because the petitions that the Spirit voices are strictly in accord with the will of God.

Ever been in that position – don't know how to pray? Yeh, but the good part is – God knows the heart, God knows. It really is a matter of being prepared to be letting God have his way, even if we don't know what that is.