

You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet | Romans 8:18-25
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<PRAY>

Please turn to the Acts reading, so that you can follow along with me, to make sure what I am saying is trustworthy and true.

It can be found on page 944 of the pew bible or on page 6 of the bulletin.

Intro

What plans do you have for your future?

What are you waiting for?

For the immediate future, it is a common question that gets asked in these summer months; What are you doing this summer? Do you have plans to travel?

But also, in the distant future, where do you want to spend the rest of your days? For me, I would love to retire on the east coast of Australia, just below Sydney in a town called Gerringong. Spending my days on seven-mile beach, where the soft sand goes on for miles. And the water is crystal clear. Catching waves, drinking good coffee, and eating good ice cream, actually any ice cream will do.

These are a few of my favorite things.

But what about you?

What plans do you have for your future?

And where does suffering fit into your plans?

It is inevitable for each and everyone of us,
but seldom do we plan for it.

This morning, as we look at Romans 8, we see that God does have a wonderful future for you.

Far better than any of your wildest dreams.

But the reality of your life in the present is that it will include suffering.

This raises the question; how do we deal with it?

How do you plan to cope in suffering?

Context

Romans is a letter in the New Testament written by the Apostle Paul to the Christians living in Rome.

Our passage comes in the middle of chapter 8, one of my favorite chapters in the Bible, where Paul is explaining the abundant blessings that come from the Holy Spirit, who comes and dwells in us, when we put our faith in Jesus Christ.

So far in this chapter those blessings have included being set free from the condemnation of the law, life and peace in the Spirit, being united to Christ, belonging to God through adoption as sons, and becoming heirs of God's kingdom.

This brings us to our passage in verse 18-25, which we will look at in 3 points.

1. [Abstract]
2. [Category]
3. [Comments]

1. Point 1 - [Abstract]

So, Point 1 – Our present suffering

Look at verse 18 with me again,

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

What a great verse and great imagery. It is not even worth your time to get the scales out to see if your suffering weighs the same as your future glory. They

are on different playing fields all together. The glory is so much greater that they can't be compared!

But the sufferings of this present time, that's a pretty disappointing statement! Why couldn't God have said, that the joys of this present time are not worth comparing, or the richness and fullness of this life, why did there have to be suffering?

To be honest, I can't give you a satisfying answer that perfectly explains why we must experience pain in this life. As Deuteronomy 29:29 says - *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."*

So, what is God revealing to us this morning?

The first thing he is saying is that in this present age there is suffering.

Paul tells us in verses 20 and 21, that the creation, meaning the earth and all created things (animals, plants, atoms and molecules), all of it has been subjected to futility and is in bondage to corruption.

This is a reference back to the very first chapters of the bible, in Genesis chapter 3, where God put the earth under a curse because of the disobedience of humanity. So that now, instead of living in peace and harmony with all of creation, the ground produces thorns and thistles, and it is through pain and sweat we live off the land. All of this produces a groaning and longing in the creation for something so much better.

Then in verse 23, Paul says that we humans also feel the same frustration, groaning, and longing the creation feels, as we too eagerly wait for the dawning of a better day.

Notice in verse 23, that Paul says **"we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly"**. Paul is not just talking about non-Christians here. He is talking about Christians.

Even with the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the dead, Christians are not immune to suffering and the groanings of living in a frustrated world.

This is the reality of the world we live in. And this dispels the idea that we can build utopia or be perfect in this life. We can never work hard enough or long enough to overturn the problems we face in this world. This doesn't mean we stop trying to love others and work for the good of our neighbor and our world. But it is helpful to know our limitations and to have humility before God.

It is normal for you to face frustration, disappointment, and futility in your work, in your relationships, in your finances, in your children, in your body and in yourself. Yes, even we who have the Spirit already.

Now I wish this wasn't the case. And that I could tell you about the present glory. I wish I could say that God promises to fix everything and make it all better for you right now! So that you can turn that frown upside down.

But that is not what God promises. Of course, he can heal your present suffering, he is able to do anything. But he doesn't promise that in this life. And if he doesn't, it's not because you don't have enough faith.

You might live with a thorn in your flesh for your whole life, because we live in a broken and fallen world that has been subjected to futility.

But the truth is, your pain and suffering are not the final word in your story. It doesn't define who you are. It doesn't define your value before God or your place in this world.

You are destined for so much more.

You are meant to live for so much more.¹

Sum – So in this present life there will be suffering. That is the bad news. Let's look at the good news.

2. Point 2 - [Category]

And that bring us to point 2, our future glory.

¹ Switchfoot, *Meant to Live*.

The good news of this passage is that the sufferings of this present time will not last forever, because we have glory in our future.

What is this glory that Paul is talking about?

Look at verses 18-19 with me again,

"¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God."

Here we see it has something to do with the revealing of the sons of God.

Now, it is important to note that in verse 14 of this chapter, we read that **"all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."** So, when Paul says "sons of God" here means all people, men and women included; all those who have put their faith in Jesus.

So, the glory has something to do with the identification of those who are in Christ.

But we are already, through the Spirit, considered children of God in this present age of suffering. We can already, right now, call God our father. So, what exactly is being revealed?

It is the unveiling of what is already known.

It is like an athlete receiving their trophy or medal for an event they have already won.

Or the installment or inauguration of someone in a position of power, like the president who is elected in November but inaugurated in January. We will be revealed to be what we already are, heirs of the kingdom of God.

We learn more in verse 21, where the future glory includes **"the freedom of the glory of the children of God"**.

This freedom is contrasted with the creation's present state of "bondage to corruption".

Then finally in verse 23, we read that we are eagerly waiting **"for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."**

Paul is building upon the two previous images; the revealing of our sonship includes our adoption proceedings, when we finally get to live with our heavenly father.

And our freedom from bondage occurs when our bodies are redeemed.

So, the glory that is in our future is the time when we will fully and completely be incorporated into God's family and when we will be fully and completely free from the effects of sin and death.

Praise be to God there will be a time when we pass from this present age of suffering into the future age of glory. When we will no longer experience frustration and futility, pain and toil. When all your deepest longings and groanings will be fulfilled.

There is a time coming when we will enjoy the good life, fully free and gloriously alive.

When God will renew our strength; when we soar with wings like eagles; when we shall run and not be weary; walk and not grow faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

Implication

An implication of this is your life and your suffering are not random. The world is not rushing towards chaos. You don't have to be afraid of "the constant drift of time pulling us slowly towards an inevitable death."² You are not at the mercy of fate, or the whims of the "gods".

There is something so much bigger and so much better coming.

"You ain't seen nothing yet!"³

"There something you ain't never gonna forget!"

The one and only true God has a plan for this world and a plan for your life, that will not end in misery, but in everlasting glory.

Why Suffering?

² Connor, Internet Meme.

³ Bachman-Turner Overdrive, *You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet*.

I want to suggest two reasons why the path to glory passes through the valley of suffering.

1. Suffering is part of being united with Christ.
2. The suffering is preparing us for glory.

1. Union with Christ

By the power of the Holy Spirit, when we put our trust in Jesus, we become united and bound to him. We are stuck to him, so that whatever happens to him happens to us. Paul explains this in Romans 6, where he says in verse 3 that through our baptism we are baptized into the death of Christ. Then in verse 5, "if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."

It is through this union that we receive Spiritual blessings. Because whatever belongs to Jesus, now belongs to us too. But we don't just get all the good things. We also get the bad.

In verse 17, the verse right before our passage, we are told we follow the same path Jesus trod to glory, which means going through suffering. We can't avoid it.

In fact, Jesus himself tells us constantly to expect suffering.

Every time I read the gospel of Mark, I am struck by what happens in chapter 1 after Jesus is baptized, and God the Father announces from heaven that Jesus is his beloved son, with whom he is well pleased. We read in Mark 1:12, the very next verse, that "The Spirit immediately drove him [Jesus] out into the wilderness." Where he was tempted by Satan.

If we are to call ourselves followers of Jesus, we must follow him through suffering into glory.

Suffering is part of our union with Christ.

2. Preparation for Glory

Second, we read in another letter from Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:17 - "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison"

The suffering of this present age is in some way preparing us for glory. It is a refining fire. Stripping away our love of this world.

We see this in 1 Peter 1:6-7 *“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

Last week John Frederick took us through Isaiah 55, and challenged us to hunger for God.

One of the ways, one of the graces, that God gives us to make us hungry for him is through suffering.

As he adjusts our appetite and our taste buds, to hunger for glory.

Or again it is like an athlete who suffers through extreme physical training for future winning glory.

As much as I would like to, in my current physical state I can't just walk into the stadium and put on a jersey and play in the world cup. It takes players years of pain and suffering to reach the glory of winning the world cup.

Through suffering we are being prepared for glory. As the writer of Hebrews says, Jesus learned obedience through what he suffered.

Our suffering is sanctifying us, and teaching us obedience to God, preparing us for the time when we will be with him.

One pastor writes, “Sickness among Christians, even chronic illness, is no sign of failure or lack of faith; it is the thing to which God has committed our world for its salvation, and us, for our sanctification.”⁴

Sum – So, in this present life there will be suffering, but it is not worth comparing to the glory that is ahead of us.

[3. Point 3 - \[Comments\]](#)

⁴ David Secombe, *Romans*, Reading the Bible Today.

So, how do we live well in this in-between time, dwelling in this present age of suffering but looking forward to the future age of glory?

Look at verses 24 and 25 again with me,

²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

How do we live well now?

How do we deal with the suffering of this present age?

How do we cope with it all?

The answer is with patient hope!

It can be difficult when confronted with suffering to have the right perspective.

It can be hard to see the future glory, when our mortality is thrust in front of us.

We need hope.

We need hope to help us to see with our hearts and minds, that which we cannot see with our own eyes.

Pastor Paul Tripp, who in 2014 suffered acute kidney failure, explains that the way that we think about the world and suffering has a massive impact on how we experience our suffering.

He writes,

*"You never come to your suffering empty-handed. You always drag a bag full of experiences, expectations, assumptions, perspectives, desires, intentions, and decisions into your suffering. What you think about yourself, life, God, and others will profoundly affect the way you interact with and respond to the difficulty that comes your way."*⁵

All these things that we bring to suffering can either leave us crushed and demoralized or they can help us to endure and persevere.

So, we need the hope of future glory to help us to suffer well in this life.

⁵ Paul David Tripp: <https://www.paultripp.com/wednesdays-word/posts/what-you-need-to-know-about-suffering>

We need hope to remind us that this is not the end, that evil has not won, and you are not defeated.

But you are destined for glory.

You have been saved in this hope and you will one day reach this hope.

With hope we, and the whole created order, eagerly look to the future.

Whenever I read this passage I get an image in my head of a lion on a mountain top looking off into the distance. It's probably a coming together of Aslan in Narnia and Disney's The Lion King.

We look to the future,

because *"the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."* (2 Cor. 4:18)

Patience

And this hope is to be patient.

Patiently enduring trials without losing hope and becoming pessimistic about the future.

And without losing joy for the blessings of this present life.

Patient with God's timing, not wishing this life away, or trying to speed up his return.

And without trying to experience in this life, what God has in store for our future.

Patient in the confidence of God's promises that the firstfruits of the harvest will be followed by the harvest, bondage will be followed by freedom, decay will be followed by incorruption, and the labor pains will be followed by the birth of a new world.⁶

We also wait with patient hope because the bible says that God's patience in bringing that day to fruition means a chance for more and more people to experience that glory.

A chance for more and more people to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

The good news of the forgiveness of their sins, of freedom from their bondage to sin and death, of new life in the Spirit, and glory everlasting.

⁶ Paraphrase, John Stott, *Roams: God's Good News for the World*, IVP, p.243.

Sum – So, we will face sufferings in this life, as wait for our future glory, with patient hope, in full confidence that “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

Conclusion

So, brothers and sisters in Christ, what are you waiting for?
And how do you cope with this present age of suffering as you patiently wait for your glorious future?

I want to conclude with the words Paul uses to end this chapter, in verses 31-39. Hear the word of the Lord to you this morning:

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

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.

Let me pray for us.

Discussion Questions

(Small Group Leaders these are the same as the ones we emailed you)

Observe—What does this text say?

- What words or phrases stand out to you in this passage?
- In verse 18, how does Paul compare present sufferings with future glory?
- What is creation eagerly waiting for in verses 19–21?
- How does Paul describe creation's current condition?
- What does verse 23 say believers are waiting for?
- How does Paul define hope in verses 24–25?

Interpret—What does it mean?

- Why does Paul emphasize future glory when discussing present suffering?
- What does it mean that creation has been subjected to frustration or futility?
- How does the suffering of creation reflect the effects of sin in the world?
- What does “adoption as sons and daughters” and the “redemption of our bodies” mean for believers?
- Why is hope connected to patience and perseverance?

Apply—How should you respond?

- What current hardships makes it difficult for you to focus on God's future promises?
- How can remembering God's coming glory change our perspective on suffering?
- What are practical ways we can encourage one another to wait with hope?
- How can our hope in Christ impact how we respond to uncertainty, loss, or disappointment?

This is a preaching draft

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