

Romans 8:16-27 (ESV)

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing 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 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

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.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

When someone you've been at odds with for a long time, finally admits that you were right and they were wrong, it's a pretty sweet moment.

Such was the case with our second born daughter. Since she and our son-in-law were married over seven years ago, I've been reminding them both of the Biblical mandate in Genesis 1:28,

"Be fruitful and multiply."

Now that she holds our little grandson in her arms day after day, there is no doubt that she knows I was right all along. I've not actually heard her verbalize those words, but it's self-evident.

But all of that wasn't so obvious just few months ago. Our daughter did not like being pregnant. She moaned and groaned about it and was not a happy camper. (we spent a lot of extra time in prayer...for our son-in-law)

Today, it's a different story. She loves being a mother and she falls in love anew everyday with that baby.

That's hardly a unique experience. Many of you here have been through the same emotions. But it illustrates exactly what the Apostle Paul is saying in verses 18 & 22.

Romans 8:18 (ESV)

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

And then in verse 22 Paul expands that to the entire cosmos waiting for redemption.

Romans 8:22 (ESV)

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

Today's message in a sentence is this: Your present suffering will one day be a distant memory, not worth comparing to the glory that is yours in Christ.

Is that pie in the sky wishful thinking or is that hope in our present suffering?

This morning we continue our study of Romans 8. We begin at the end of last week's passage.

Romans 8:16-18 (ESV)

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.** ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

There is to be a connection between the suffering of Christ and our present suffering. If your present affliction helps you to identify with the person and work of JESUS Christ, you are in the right place spiritually.

However some people think of suffering as simply not getting what you want when you want it. It produces a pity party that nobody wants to be a part of.

When JESUS suffered in his life, it was marked by doing the will of His Father. There was an easier route to go, but not for JESUS. JESUS knew what He was on the earth to do.

Q. 23. How is Christ our redeemer?

As our redeemer, Christ is a prophet, priest, and king in both His humiliation and His exaltation.

What does the word “humiliation” mean in this theological context? It’s similar to the word “mortification” that we used last week. It is the act of subduing one’s bodily desires.

The flesh wants to do one thing, the spirit another. You remember the old axiom, “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” JESUS endured all of the limits, afflictions and challenges of this life of the flesh, yet without sin.

Q. 27. How was Christ humiliated?

Christ was humiliated: by being born as a man and born into a poor family; by being made subject to the law and suffering the miseries of this life, the anger of God, and the curse of death on the cross; and by being buried and remaining under the power of death for a time.

The omnipresent Deity confined Himself to the womb of a woman. The omnipotent Creator took on flesh and blood. The omniscient God limited his consciousness to space and time.

Philippians 2:5-8 (ESV)

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Humiliation and humility are not the same thing in our context. For us to be humiliated is to have your pride stung and your ego damaged. That will cause you to either strike back in anger, or to withdrawal in anguish.

To be humble is to have an accurate assessment of yourself as a human being. You're no better or worse than anyone else. You have strengths and weaknesses that makes you the person that you are.

A humble person has little pretense. You don't have to pretend to be something that you're not just to impress others. Your present sufferings ought to humble you before God and man.

You are not omnipotent, omniscient, or omnipresent. You live with the frailties of these earthly vessels. We all have limits, and we can't control everything that goes on even in our own lives, much less the lives of others.

Your present suffering could cause you to be bitter, resentful and angry with God. Or that same anguish could cause you to identify more with your Savior, who suffered for your sake.

A new parent is introduced to the reality of vicarious or mediated suffering. You would gladly take on the anguish of your child if only you could. What you can't feel physically you certainly experience emotionally.

What parents long to do for their children JESUS did in the incarnation and throughout His ministry. He took on our sufferings.

- This morning you may feel the loss of being with someone you love.
- You may be frustrated with your limited resources or with your physical infirmities.
- You may feel like nobody understands you or that you're not being treated very well by those around you.
- Or you may be just plain worn out because there's so much to do and you just can't be in more than one place at a time.

Think about your present suffering, and then look to JESUS, the author and perfecter of your faith, who for the joy set out before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and is now seated at the right hand of God.

We're not the only ones who groan in this life. The creation itself groans.

Romans 8:19-22 (ESV)

For the creation waits with eager longing 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 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been **groaning** together in the pains of childbirth until now.

The pains of childbirth is a pretty intense **groaning**. It's more of a travail, an excruciating painful ordeal. For a mother in labor, that could last for a number of hours or even days.

That pain is intense and all consuming. When it's over, it's not forgotten, **but it is replaced**. The joy of holding a newborn is even more overwhelming.

Paul says that the earth itself is groaning as in the pains of childbirth. The earth and the entire universe has been affected by curse of sin.

What some people call Mother Nature is the personification of the forces that control the climate, atmosphere, and the environment.

There is a very delicate balance in nature that allows life to flourish on the earth. The curse of sin disrupts that balance, sometimes in violent and destructive ways.

And so we have droughts, tornadoes, hurricanes and extreme weather patterns that are out of our control. When those things happen people often talk about the power of nature.

Nature indeed is powerful, but it is all under God's control. Humankind is meant to be stewards of the earth, to rule and subdue the planet to allow life to flourish.

It is a God given duty of mankind to use the natural resources of the earth responsibly. But there are limits to what we can do. We cannot control the planet under a curse.

When God created the earth in six days, every portion of it was pronounced as good. It is still good, but flawed, not because of a manufacturer's defect, but because of sin.

I sometimes like to think of what this place was like before it was settled by human beings. My imagination pictures a pristine garden like setting. Virgin forests, unspoiled pastoral landscapes.

I'm told that much of Michigan was nothing of the sort. Before this land was settled, there were a lot of swamps in this region. Swamplands have their own beauty, but in order for the land to be cultivated for human flourishing, it takes a lot of work.

The earth groans in the sense that it too waits for the full redemption of mankind. The new heaven and the new earth will be a place where there will be no more sickness, disease, destruction or death.

The wolf will lie down with the lamb, and the food chain will be vastly different from what it is today. The soil will not produce thorns and thistles, and the weather won't fight against us.

From what I can tell in Scripture, there will still be seasons of the year, springtime and harvest, even winter will have its due.

But each season will have its own beauty and its own contribution for the embellishment of life for God's glory.

What is partially true now will be fully realized in the new heaven and the new earth.

Those of you who are sportsmen, and those of you who love being in the great outdoors all share a profound respect for the beauty of creation.

Nothing inspires you more than being at peace in a tranquil setting enjoying the handiwork of God.

On the other hand, nothing is more upsetting than to see that setting spoiled. People will just dump their trash out in the country not caring about the mess they leave behind.

When I see that, I think of this passage. The planet itself groans waiting for the corruption of this world to be purged from the face of the earth.

If that's true for the planet, how much more do we long for that redemption as the crown of God's creation.

Romans 8:23 (ESV)

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

This is where theological terms are so helpful. Justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification.

- We are justified by grace through faith.
- We are adopted into the family of God.
- The spirit of God begins the life long process of sanctification, causing us to die to sin and live for righteousness.
- Glorification is the completion of redemption, when the glory of God will be fully realized in His people through Christ.

That will come with the final resurrection. We long for that as believers. At times you'll even groan for it. There awaits for us a glory that far surpasses the splendor of this world.

In this life we have people who have risen to the top because of their talents, resources or privilege. There is an earthly glory of men and women that is in proportion to their perceived splendor.

In heaven those differences won't mean much, because from the least to the greatest, the glory of Christ will overshadow them all.

The rich and powerful in this world won't have any advantages over any other believer in glory. You will be in heaven not because you were so great in this world, but because of the atoning work of Christ.

How does that give us hope and patience now in our current sufferings?

Romans 8:24-25 (ESV)

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.

Patience and hope are inseparable. You can't have one without the other.

Perhaps this morning you lack both. Your situation isn't good, and it doesn't look like it's going to get any better. Well-meaning people have urged you to be patient, but how can you be patient without hope?

Romans 8:26 (ESV)

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

There's that word again. We groan when words aren't adequate. *"O LORD, you the mess that I'm in. I don't know what to do, or even what to ask for. Help me to see your hand in all of this, and guide me on the right path."*

Sometimes that's about as articulate as your prayer is going to get. I want you to leave here with new hope, because with the Spirit of God, that's enough.

Romans 8:27 (ESV)

And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

When the Spirit of God is working in your heart, you know that it's not enough just to ask the LORD to make everything work out the way you want it to be.

Next week we'll start with verse 28 that says God works out everything for the good for those who are called according to his purpose.

God's purpose will always be for your sanctification. Some situations will not change in order that you might change. Therein is your hope.

The God of all creation is working within you, and He who began that good work will bring it to completion. You have His Word on that.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (ESV)

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.