

**HAVING HOPE WHILE LIVING IN A BROKEN WORLD**  
**ROMANS 8:18-25**

We live in a broken world and we have seen it too closely this week:

- ✓ Two teenaged students in Granbury died suddenly and tragically this week.
  - ✓ Ruby Sargent's last sibling passed away last week.
  - ✓ One of our members experienced an accident at work that could have been deadly.
  - ✓ Several other church members have been hospitalized this week or experienced significant illnesses.
  - ✓ Sonny Murphy went for his morning walk on Monday and had a heart attack and did not awaken.
- In grace, we have not had a GBC member die in several years; his sudden attack and imminent death have been sobering. We have been reminded of the brevity of life and the harshness of death.
- ✓ And I haven't even mentioned broken plumbing systems, broken relationships, rebellious parents, illness that kept you awake at night, and temptations to far too many sins.

The world is broken. And the most difficult part of the brokenness is the intrusion of death. When we are young, it doesn't seem imminent. But it is. Sometimes it comes slowly and almost imperceptibly. And sometimes it comes with suddenness, as it has this week. We are reminded of the reality of James 4 —

*"Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away" (Js. 4:14).*

So how will we respond when death intrudes? What should we think about our suffering, and death in particular? It is those kinds of questions that Paul addresses in the middle of Romans 8. The theme of these verses is —

**ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR COMING GLORIFICATION.**

Paul will not minimize suffering and he will not attempt to remove the reality of death. But he will tell us that we need to think in new ways about suffering. And he will give us **two particular thoughts** to consider.

**Context:**

- ✓ God's children are **INHERITORS** (v. 17a)
- ✓ God's children are **SUFFERERS** (v. 17b)

**1. Consider Your **SUFFERINGS** (v. 18a)**

- ✓ You must **THINK** about your sufferings
- ✓ Your sufferings are **VARIOUS**
- ✓ Your sufferings are **NOW**

**2. Consider Your **GLORIFICATION** (v. 18b)**

- ✓ You must **THINK** about Glory (it's incomparable)
- ✓ Your glory is **ALL-TRANSFORMING**
- ✓ Your glory is **CERTAIN**

**CONTEXT:**

• God's children are **INHERITORS** (v. 17a)

- ✓ Four times in vv. 14-17 that believers in Christ as **sons/children** of God.
- ✓ Included in the rights of sonship is that they are made **heirs** of God. In v. 17 he says three times that they are heirs, increasing each time the significance of what he means:
  - They are **heirs also**. To be an heir means one receives an inheritance *as soon as* the child is adopted. It is *immediately* his (not after the father dies, as is normal with inheritance). In the NT, inheritance refers to the spiritual blessings the believer has reserved in Heaven through Christ (Eph. 1:3; **1 Pt. 1:3-5**).
  - They are also **heirs of God**. This means God is the One who gives the inheritance. The emphasis is not just that the believer gets a gift, but it is *God* who gives the inheritance.
    - ... God, who was their enemy, who was opposed to them, who would have only given them His wrath, now *that* God is the one who gives them their inheritance. It is almost as if Paul is saying, "Have you considered who has adopted you and given you this inheritance? It is God Himself. And it contains all the riches that come from God."
    - ... Even more, it also (and more directly) means that the inheritance is *God Himself*. Because we are His children, we get *God* (cf. **Ps. 73:25; Lam. 3:24; Rev. 21:3**).
  - They are **fellow heirs with Christ**. Now Christ is already receiving His inheritance, but this is a promise that we will join in His inheritance.
    - ... He means, "that every child of God receives a full and equal inheritance of being aligned to the Firstborn Son, Jesus." MacArthur helpfully says, "...every adopted child of God will receive the *full* inheritance with the Son. Everything that Christ receives by divine right, we will receive by divine grace." [*Romans 1-8*] (**Jn. 1:16; Eph. 3:19**) Because there is infinite grace and infinite riches, God has ability to give an infinite inheritance to all His sons.
    - ... We are not beggars at the table. We are fully adopted by the Father and granted a full inheritance at the time of adoption.
- ✓ But along with this inheritance, God's adopted sons also get something else...

• God's children are **SUFFERERS** (v. 17b)

- ✓ When Paul says, **if indeed we also suffer**, it is actually much stronger than that — "Seeing that," or "Since we suffer with Him." Paul is pointing to the certainty of suffering. It is a reality.
- ✓ The world hates Christ, so the world hates Christ's followers (Jn. 15:18-20). This is **v. 35**.
- ✓ There is no easy pathway in this life for believers. When we follow Christ, we will have suffering.

- ✓ In the context, Paul is thinking about suffering with sin (vv. 3-4), but he is also thinking about physical suffering and death (vv. 2, 10-11, 35, and vv. 19-25).
- ✓ When we suffer with Christ, there is also a great benefit — **so that we may also be glorified with Him**. (That statement serves as basis for theme of the section.) This does not mean, “if you suffer, you earn the right to go to Heaven,” as if suffering is a meritorious thing to do for eternal life. He means that if you suffer because you are identified with Christ, then it gives evidence of your sonship, and that sonship is the inheritance that produces glorification with Christ.
- ✓ *Suffering is part of the Christian life*. Christ suffered — “was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (Lk. 24:26). And if we are with Him, we will also suffer with Him, and then enjoy the fruit and culmination of faith — glorification with Him.

- Summary: Since we are God’s children, He treats us like His eternal Son, giving us an inheritance with Christ, fully sharing in the inheritance of Christ. Then He graces us (I choose that word intentionally) with the privilege of suffering with Christ.
- But that just sounds wrong. Sons shouldn’t suffer. Enemies should suffer. Rebels should suffer. Slaves should suffer. But sons shouldn’t suffer. *But* the promise is made that sons do and will suffer.

“When it is your duty to suffer for Christ, look upon it also to be your privilege, and be glad of the opportunity, rejoicing that you have anything to part with for the sake of Christ.” [Thomas Vincent, *The True Christian’s Love...*, 94.]

And that leads us to Paul’s next thought and his instruction for us: *How should we think about suffering?*

### 1. Consider Your SUFFERINGS (v. 18a)

- You must **THINK** about your sufferings
  - ✓ When Paul says, **I consider**, he is not offering a personal opinion — “Here is my idea...” The word **consider** is an accounting term, “to account,” or “to reckon.” The word implies a reasoning process. Paul calculated the cost of suffering in this world and he has come to a settled conclusion. Based on his careful consideration of the facts, he is fully and completely convinced.
  - ✓ And of what is he firmly convinced? He is convinced there is no comparison between the glory of what is to come and the suffering he has on this earth. However great his suffering is on earth, it cannot reach the smallest distance toward the heights of His glory. No matter the weight of his burden, it will not register on the scale when compared to the glory to come.
  - ✓ Paul does something interesting in this verse: he says **I consider the sufferings...** and then he says those sufferings **are not worthy to be compared**. In other words, as you think about your sufferings, don’t think of them in the same way you think of Heaven. There is no comparison!

- ✓ Paul is echoing **2 Cor. 4:16-18**. He is not saying suffering is light and short. But we *must* have the appropriate counterbalance to suffering when we are weighing it. And the counterbalance is eternity with God and Christ. The counterbalance is glorification. The counter is righteousness.
- ✓ Think about your suffering. But don't compare it to or make it greater than the coming glory.
- **Your sufferings are VARIOUS**
  - ✓ What is to be considered is the believer's **suffering**. Suffering includes persecution the believer experiences because of his identification with Christ (**v. 17**).
  - ✓ But the word **suffering** is broad. It refers to things that are "misfortunes." And we know that Paul means something more than just the suffering we get by being with Jesus because of **vv. 19-22**.
  - ✓ He is clearly talking about many kinds of things that go wrong in the created world (**longing, subjected, corruption, and groans and pains**).
    - While the suffering is real notice that it is like **pains of childbirth** (v. 22) — it is intense and real — it is not pseudo pain — but it is not permanent. There is joy on the other side of a child's birth so that the pain of the moment is gone. So it is with suffering and death for us.
    - Notice also that while these are pains, they are "birth pains," not "death pains." That it is equated to birth indicates that something better is coming. The pain isn't definitive or final.
    - Paul also says that the suffering is **until now**. The suffering of the world was true the instant God spoke the words of Genesis 3; they were true through all the patriarchs and prophets in the OT, in the time of Christ, until the time of Paul's writing, and to today. Suffering is relentless. No part of creation and no one living in creation will escape it. It was then. It is *now*.
    - That reality is what provokes us to **groan** (**v. 23**) waiting for the redemption of our bodies.
      - ... This groaning is a symphony of sighs and even agony, desiring the undoing of Gen. 3.
      - ... We want to go home and shed all the frailties (sinfulness!) of this flesh (**2 Cor. 5:2, 4, 8**). "How long, O Lord?" (Ps. 13:1; 35:17; 79:5; **90:13**; Hab. 1:2; **Zech. 1:12**; Rev. 6:10).
      - ... But creation and we aren't the only ones who groan; Jesus Himself groans (**Jn. 11:33**) —
        - **Deeply moved** is "the snorting of horses" = indignant anger & violent displeasure.
        - And **troubled** is "agitated," or "trembled." His response was far more than just empathy.
        - He was angry over sin and the devastation it wrought in the lives of His friends.
        - He indeed is "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Is. 53:6).
        - I preached Jn. 11:35 one previous time — when a 12-year-old girl was murdered in our community, and I was asked to do the funeral. To a community that was reeling in sorrow, this Word needed to be heard — God is not only compassionate towards you, but He hates what happened...
        - We need to hear this also; Christ also groaned. He knows (Heb. 2:17f). And He acted.

- ✓ In this text, Paul would have us to think about illness, loss, hunger, unemployment, financial burdens, broken relationships, consequences of sin, and death and grief.
  - ✓ That's what we have in this life. We jokingly say, "the only two certainties in this life are death and taxes." But it's true, isn't it? Death, loss, brokenness, weakness, hurt, sorrow — they are all part of suffering and life — and we have seen its severity this week. There is much suffering in this world.
  - ✓ Not everyone experiences the same sufferings. Everyone knows heartache. Everyone knows pain. Our sufferings are various (different). But since Genesis 3, they all terminate on sin and death.
  - ✓ Paul makes one other observation about the harshness of suffering and death.
- **Your sufferings are NOW**
    - ✓ Notice also that the suffering Paul is thinking about is of **this present time**. He doesn't mean, "they are here for the time being." He doesn't mean that he has them and others do not. He means that these sufferings are "of this age," in contrast to "the age to come."
    - ✓ He means, as we've already noted, that to be in this world means there will be suffering. It is the nature of this world to experience trouble. There are three kinds of people: those who suffered yesterday, those who have trouble today, and those whose phone will ring tonight.
    - ✓ But he is also implying there is (soon) coming a time when these things will not be, which is next...

## 2. Consider Your **GLORIFICATION** (v. 18b)

- **You must THINK about Glory (it's incomparable)**
  - ✓ There is a **glory**. The word **glory** can refer to the outshining of the radiance of God — the reality of who He is; or it can refer to the place where God's glory resides — in Heaven. It's almost impossible to separate the two, but Paul particularly seems to be pointing to the place where we will go to experience the completeness of our salvation.
  - ✓ And as we think about Heaven (and we must think about it!), we must realize that what is coming for us in Heaven far outweighs anything we suffer here on earth.
  - ✓ We must learn to give Heaven and our future the weight it deserves. We are far too earthly-minded. We think far too much about what we will suffer here and what we will receive here and far too little about what we will receive in Heaven as our complete joy.
  - ✓ We could talk about the many ways that Heaven surpasses earth:
    - We could talk about the beauty of Heaven (**Rev. 21:18ff**).
    - We could talk about restored relationships (and new ones) in Heaven.
    - We could talk about sinlessness and complete freedom from the flesh (**8:30; Rev. 22:1ff**).
    - We could talk about the absence of human frailty and illness (**Rev. 21:4**).
    - We could talk about the immensity of seeing Jesus (1 Jn. 3:2; **Rev. 1:17**).

- But what Paul would have us focus on here is the *duration* of Heaven — whatever we experience **now** and for however long we experience it, cannot compare to Heaven (“then”).
- Heaven is incomparable. Why? Because it is infinite in blessings and time. The joy we have is infinite (full and complete) and it is unending. We just have no good way to express it.
- Peter says a thousand years is like a day and one day like a thousand years (2 Pt. 3:8). The life expectancy of an American born today is ~78 years; that person can expect about 28,500 days on earth, which equals 28,500,000 Heaven years. And that, is just eternity’s beginning.
- So, what is one month of suffering? Or one year? Or 30 years. Or 80 years? After 28 million years in Heaven, the suffering we endured on earth will be just the smallest speck of time.
- One writer said, “Who would complain if God allowed one hour of suffering in an entire lifetime of comfort? Yet we bitterly complain about a lifetime that includes suffering when that lifetime is a mere hour of eternity.” [Yancey, in *Be Still, My Soul*, 29.]
- ✓ We must also think how Heaven and Christ will be a particular joy *because* we have suffered. Because there is suffering now, Heaven will be a greater joy then. We know full joy because of our suffering.
- **Your glory is ALL-TRANSFORMING**
  - ✓ The glory that is coming is going to be **revealed**. That is, glory will be known, disclosed, brought to light. It is the final revelation of God’s work of redemption to us.
  - ✓ Christ will reveal Himself and *we will see Him*. This is **Rev. 22:3-4** (cf. also 1 Jn. 3:1-2) — all the resurrecting power of God to draw Jesus Christ from the grave and sinners from death and Hell will be on display for all the members of Heaven to see. The prophets wrote about this salvation but didn’t understand it; then it will be revealed (**1 Pt. 1:11-12**).
  - ✓ Notice that Paul says this will be revealed **to us**. We will look around Heaven and we will see God’s glory on display like it’s never been seen. And what we will see is saved and redeemed people.
    - We see that in each other now, but then we will see it in complete fulness.
    - It is incomprehensible right now — never a single sin for thousands of days and years...and never again an ability to sin; no flu or cancer or heart attacks or strokes or snake bites; never the slightest inclination to sin... The “good guy” (righteousness) always wins; always happy endings (the “shoe never drops”).
  - ✓ We will also see God’s glory revealed not just *to us*, but God’s glory *in us*. The culminating work of salvation is *in us* when God will transform us from the inside out (**v. 29**). As one commentator said, “...this glory will, as it were, come to us, enter us, and then, having filled us and enveloped us, will be revealed in us. We ourselves will be part of that glory: the redeemed will see it in each other. The angels will behold it in us, and will be filled with thanksgiving and praise to God.” [Hendriksen]
  - ✓ And who is the “we” and **us** who are being changed? We are His **adopted** children (**vv. 15, 23**).

- We are already adopted. The paperwork has been signed. We are legally the sons of God (v. 14). We can rightly (and not blasphemously) call God our Father and “Daddy” (v. 15).
- But we have not yet received all the benefits of that sonship. And the believer craves the complete experience of his sonship. Specifically, we want our redemption, but not just the redemption of our inner man — we want the redemption of our bodies (v. 23). We are already in the process of being redeemed inwardly; here the desire is also for the body to be redeemed.
- To want our bodies to be redeemed is significant because our bodies are the location of the manifestation of our fleshly deeds. Our bodies are not inherently evil (they are under the curse, but the body itself is amoral); but our bodies are where our fleshly desires are done (7:5; 8:10).
- What will the redeemed **body** look like? Something like Christ’s resurrected body (6:5; Phil. 3:21):
  - ... Our faces and bodies will be recognizable for what they are today; and they may even still possess some scars from this life (Jn. 20:20)
  - ... We will have an ability to eat (Lk. 24:30; Jn. 21:12-13)
  - ... We will have an ability to touch and feel (Jn. 20:17, 27)
  - ... We will not have the same limitations of this earthly body — pass through doors/walls and be able to appear/leave instantaneously (Jn. 20:19, 26)
  - ... Because we will live eternally, our bodies will be ageless (some have suggested all women will be 23 and all men 29!). There will be no decaying of the body in any way.

“In the pleasant experiences of this life we sigh, ‘Oh, I wish this would last forever,’ but it never does. When we enter into our inheritance we will say, ‘Oh, I wish this would last forever,’ and it will. So living for the Lord, and even paying a price to follow him – we have nothing to lose and everything to inherit!...If we sense the greatness of the glory to come, we cannot be typical modern people – grasping, self-preserving, timid. This gospel confidence makes us more than conquerors through the One who loved us enough to buy all of this for us at his own expense and pour it all into our laps as a gift of grace.” [Ortlund, *Supernatural Living*....]

- ✓ There is nothing of you that will remain untransformed; it will all be changed the instant you enter eternity. Every fleshly temptation, every inclination to sin, every sinful thought, every sinful deed, every frailty of your body will instantaneously, completely, and eternally be removed.
- ✓ When we are having trouble, this is what we must be thinking; God is transforming us now, but then — oh how much more completely and satisfyingly will we be changed.
- **Your glory is CERTAIN**
  - ✓ Lastly, notice that Paul says there is a glory that will be revealed to us — ***is to be revealed***. He means us to understand that it is a certainty. It *is* coming. It won’t be missed. It *will* arrive. All the things that seem to be wrong in life and all the hardships we endure? They will be rectified and they will end and eternity with Christ in Glory will begin.

- ✓ This is our **hope** (v. 24) — 53x in the NT, 36x by Paul, 13x in Romans. It is confidence.
- ✓ Hope is the antidote to the lament “things will never get better.” In hope, they will become “best.”
- ✓ And Paul also means us to understand that this change is coming...*quickly*. It is close in time. This should keep us from despair — when it seems that 30-year illnesses are eternal, this helps us remember that illness isn’t eternal but our glorification is.
- ✓ Your weights are weighty — but not when they are compared with what is coming soon.
- ✓ Friend, persevere in doing good; the wait for Heaven is short, the burden you carry is light when it will be exchanged for the blessings of Heaven. The severest trial will be a triviality when weighed against the gifts of Heaven. Do not give in to sin. Do not give in to despair. Do not give in to hopelessness. Look past your trial to the King who is coming who will make you right and will heal all your wounds and give you infinite and everlasting life.

**CONCLUSION:** Some lessons —

- ✓ **Suffering is real.** Be sympathetic to others in their plights. You may not know the exact pain, but you know it is pain. Be compassionate to that suffering (Mt. 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mk. 1:41; Col. 3:12).
- ✓ **Seek God's refuge in your suffering.** It's not a sin to seek a remedy for your suffering (get stitches on a cut and take an aspirin for a headache). But don't attempt to create a refuge where you can escape suffering entirely. Between Genesis 3 and Revelation 21, that place does not exist. Everywhere you go you will see and experience suffering. When you suffer, run to the One who understands your suffering better than anyone else (Heb. 2:17-18); it is ok to lament (1 Thess. 4:13)
- ✓ **Be hopeful in your suffering.** Suffering and death are real and expected, but they are not permanent. This life is not permanent and the suffering in this life is not permanent.
  - Just as a woman giving birth can endure that pain by looking past the moment to what is ahead, so the believer endures his suffering by looking ahead to what is coming. Suffering is not the final word. The renovation of this world and the final redemption of mankind *is* the final word.
  - We have tasted the first course of our salvation; let that first satisfying morsel give you delight and hope for the feast that is coming soon in eternity.

**BENEDICTION:** Romans 8:37-39