

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #31

Romans 8:18-27

It is absolutely true if a person believes on Jesus Christ:

He will inherit eternal wealth .

He will have great joy .

He can and will find great fulfillment .

He can find great contentment .

However, what is also true is that if a person believes on Jesus Christ, at some point, he will also find he has suffering .

If you are a believer, then you are truly identified with Jesus Christ and while you are in this world, you will pay a price for this identification and the price is suffering. In the first century there was financial, social and physical suffering. In fact, there was even physical death.

Jesus Christ said this to His disciples: “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hates you” (**John 15:18-19**).

The Apostle Paul said, “And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted ” (**II Timothy 3:12**).

The moment we believe on Jesus Christ, we are identified with everything Christ is and did - including His suffering (**Romans 8:17**).

But the good news of this text is that we are not left with our own resources to cope with this. We have God’s indwelling Spirit.

IT IS GOD’S SPIRIT IN US THAT ENABLES US TO COPE WITH SUFFERING AND ULTIMATELY GIVES MEANING TO SUFFERING.

In this text, Paul sets forth four major realizations that enable a believer to cope with suffering:

REALIZATION #1 – Realize that our future destiny is far greater than our present suffering. **8:18**

What Paul is telling us here is that when we compare the time element of our present suffering with our eternal destiny in glory in which we will share with our glorious God forever, our present suffering is not even worthy of comparison.

The word “suffering” (παθημα) not only carries with it the idea of suffering some affliction , but it also carries with it things that upset one emotionally (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 332). Really the essence of suffering is how it affects us emotionally. The real battle we have when suffering is a battle of our emotions.

Now Paul uses an article “the” before the noun suffering. By this he has specific suffering in mind and that is the specific suffering that comes to one who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We could legitimately refer to this as a Spirit-led suffering (**8:14, 17**).

When it comes to a Christian suffering, there are many reasons why a believer might suffer:

- 1) He might suffer because he has done something wrong in society (**I Peter 4:15**).
In this case he should suffer.
- 2) He might suffer because he refuses to honestly face himself and deal with and judge his own sin (**I Corinthians 11:29-30**). In this case he deserves to suffer.
- 3) He might suffer because he needs to learn to depend on God’s Grace (**II Cor. 12:9**).
In this case there is a good purpose for the suffering.
- 4) He might suffer because he is very godly and God’s Spirit is developing him to greater levels of glorifying God (**I Peter 4:16-19**).

Paul’s point here is that any suffering for a believer is only temporary and it doesn’t even begin to compare with the glory that we will share for all eternity.

One of the great realities that you want to cling to is that there is a glory coming for you that is far above and beyond this temporal, transient, fading, evil, wicked world with all of its hardships and suffering. Hold tight to that reality. Whatever you are going through doesn’t begin to compare to the blessings of God you will receive.

REALIZATION #2 – Realize that our future deliverance is anticipated by all present creation. **8:19-22**

Please do not miss this point - all creation is lacking and longs for the day when God makes it better. Contrary to a Carl Sagan who deifies creation or evolutionists who claim the world is getting better, this world is in an imperfect state by judgment of God and it will not get better until God lifts the judgment.

The basic idea of these verses is that all of creation anxiously longs for the day when God’s children are delivered, because that will mean Jesus Christ is changing everything including a creation that groans.

Why does creation strain its neck to look for the day when God will deliver His people?

The answer is found in **verse 20** - because she too is suffering. When man sinned against God and blew it, God put a curse on all creation (**Genesis 3:17-18**).

Now **verses 21-22** inform us that creation realizes this and she also knows that when we, God’s children, are delivered from our sinful, cursed state, she too will be set free from hers. She will also be changed to be a complete and perfect reflection of the Glory of God.

But, of course, one question worthy of asking is how does this information help me cope with my suffering? How does news about the fact that trees, plants and animals long for our deliverance, help me when I am suffering? There are at least four ways this can help us:

1. It causes me to realize that God controls everything, even the negatives.
2. It causes me to realize that God always keeps His word - I will be delivered.
3. It causes me to realize that I am not alone in suffering - all creation is in it.
4. It causes me to realize that I am the most important of all God's creation; He will deliver His people first before anything else.

REALIZATION #3 – Realize that our present suffering is crucial to our future development.
8:23-25

Verse 23 answers an important question, “How long do we have to suffer?” The answer is until we get a new body.

There is a word that shows up five times in verses 24-25; it is the word “hope.” The word “hope” (ἐλπις) refers to something you expect or something for which you hope (*Ibid.*, p. 147).

One thing suffering does is that it produces in us a hope in God and a perseverance in trials that cause us to eagerly look for and expect God's intervention.

REALIZATION #4 – Realize that our present suffering is assisted by God's eternal Spirit.
8:26-27

We have a “weakness” in suffering which is explained by the conjunction “for”; it is our ignorance. We are ignorant as to how to pray or what to pray for when we are suffering.

Our typical prayer when we are suffering is for God to get us out of the suffering.

However, the Spirit of God, who knows the will of God, intercedes on our behalf at the Throne of God. He does so with groaning that cannot be uttered by us because we do not specifically know the will of God when we are suffering.

There are three groanings of this text:

1. The groaning of creation. **8:22**
2. The groaning of believers. **8:23**
3. The groaning of the Holy Spirit. **8:26**

The word “groan” is one that refers to unexpressed thoughts and feelings which are internal (*Ibid.*, p. 416). **In the midst of our trials when we are hurt, confused, lonely and suffering, the Holy Spirit actually communicates with God the Father on our behalf with petitions which we ourselves cannot begin to express.**

We can cope with any suffering we may experience through four wonderful realizations:

1. Our future destiny is far greater than our present suffering.
2. Our future deliverance is anticipated by all of creation.
3. Our present suffering is crucial to our future development.
4. Our present suffering is ministered to by God's Eternal Spirit.

Now **verse 27** is a critical verse pertaining to the subject of the will of God. This verse clearly implies that there is a specific will of God for your life as a believer and the Holy Spirit, working in harmony with the other members of the Godhead, is involved in interceding concerning that will especially when we are suffering.

There is obviously a sovereign will of God that sometimes is hidden from our knowledge and the Holy Spirit knows exactly what that will is and He prays on our behalf, knowing that will.