

Waiting Eagerly

Text: Romans 8.18–25

Theme: Our assurance of salvation in Christ is not stripped due to suffering because that is the pathway to glory

Introduction — when sophomore in high school, fell out of truck

- you might think: “So? What’s big deal?”
- it was moving...on asphalt highway...going nearly 50 mph
- caught side of box as falling, knees hit pavement, pulled up hard
- thoughts in my head: strange—not of death, but parents find me in hospital
- they’re going to kill me!

Suffering, danger, even for some, persecution

- produces ominous effect: panic
- rational thought is right out window
- as live Christian life, we succumb to this unless reminded of reality
- Paul knows our lives, individual & corporate, marked by suffering
- yet he confidently asserts: not worth comparing to weight of glory

Why talk about suffering here at this point?

- seems like a real downer in light of upbeat positivity he’s been giving us to this point
- well, reminds us—we live in two ages: now & not yet
- we live in old creation, but have been placed spiritually in new creation
- suffering & persecution come to all of us
- wants to remind us of what he’s been stressing in all of ch. 8 so far
- our assurance of salvation in Christ is not stripped due to suffering
- this suffering is actually the path to glory
- no shortcuts, no escaping this reality, so God helps us face it

As take brief look at these verses, let’s consider first, the themes of...

I. SUFFERING AND GLORY

- Paul compares these two; and truly, no comparison: “not worth comparing” he says
- but wants to us understand why this is so
- Paul knew suffering quite well personally
- he knew Christ, he knew law & gospel, he knew theology, but well acquainted w/ suffering
- **Colossians 1:24 “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church”**
- you could say Paul had a PhD in suffering for Christ
- but God wants us to know suffering is not inconsistent with Christian living
- looking back over this grand chapter leads us to this
- putting sin to death proves that we have the life of God in us
- this life of God proves that we are children of God
- being children of God proves that we are heirs of God
- and being heirs of God proves that our inheritance is sure & certain
- and this sure hope proves that we shall be like Christ in His glory
- however, something comes prior to this: humbling through suffering, just like Christ
- in fact, as we see here, it is part of life, even that of all creation

- there is this age, where evil has invaded
- we suffer, all sorts and varieties of suffering, big or small, short- or long-term
- from putting indwelling sin to death to loss of loved one to suffering at hands of others
- suffering marks this age: inward suffering, outward bodily pains, and more
- earlier this month, reminded of persecuted church around world
- so many suffer for the sake of the name of Jesus
- but in age to come, that can't even be compared to now
- our future glory is real & beyond comparison
- this glory will exclude all pain & suffering, sin & sorrow
- in glory, no more foes or any cause of any trouble
- there will be perfect, perpetual & never-ending happiness in glory of Christ
- splendor in presence of Christ will fill soul, clothe body, perfect the image of God in us
- Paul isn't wearing rose-colored glasses here
- he, like his Lord & Savior, was well-acquainted with grief and sorrow
- **2 Corinthians 11:23-28 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.**
- this is reality, and creation helps us see this: suffering is pathway to glory

So, let's move on to see that...

II. IF CREATION HAS TO WAIT FOR FUTURE GLORY...

- not really expecting this at this stage
- but God wants us to know why the glory will be so marvelous
- we wait for it, but so too does creation

1. creation is involved, v. 19

- this is what began, back in Gen. 1.1, when He created all things
- creation is waiting for our final redemption, consummation of all things
- **Psalm 98:7-9 “Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.”**
- not just waiting idly, but eagerly waiting, like watchman waiting for messenger of news
- this will be revealed in and to us, but whole creation will also be involved
- why? Why does creation have to wait?
- v. 20: it was subjected to futility by its Creator
- **Genesis 3:17 And to Adam he said, “...cursed is the ground because of you...”**
- yet God promised to remove this curse upon creation
- do you see and hear the terrible nature of sin in what is said here?
- man's sin, our sin, causes even the creation to suffering & await His glorious appearing
- instead of perfect order throughout creation, there is often chaos & disorganization
- rather than peace, there seems to be nearly universal conflict

- we see disease, cancers, illnesses of all sorts instead of perfect health
- and, oh how sad, instead of perfect happiness, there was & is misery, wretchedness and woe
- so, when Christ comes back & we will be fully & completely renewed, creation waits too
- as v. 21 states, creation will be renewed, even as we come into glory promised

2. Groans while waiting, v. 22

- fascinating picture here
- not that of earth on its death bed, but instead, waiting in maternity ward
- in pains of childbirth: suffering, yes; pain, yes; struggle, indeed
- but what's coming is so special, so sweet, beyond compare
- earth was place of life in Garden
- then suffered the curse and became place of death
- our bodies buried in it when we die; blood of martyrs spilled & soaked up by ground
- but when God brings consummation to pass, He will give birth once again to creation
- **v. 21: "...creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the sons of God"**
- not only do you & I wait and hope for this appearing in glory, so, too, does creation
- so, in between then and now, creation & we humans groan under suffering
- but one day, true freedom will be ours and all God's creation
- we will be set free from every shackle that binds us
- free from every conflict that tests and tries us
- free from all the burdens that weigh us down
- we can scarce imagine it, but we're told to, this is our blessed hope
- free from the curse
- free from all opposition
- free from every one of our faults and failings
- free from frailty, free from folly
- free from sin and all evil
- the glorious beauty, brightness, majesty, honor and splendor...all ours as we see Christ!
- but until then, creation groans and we suffer
- His grace and power sustain us until that day, but nevertheless, we hope & look forward

Well, if creation has to wait, even though with great expectation...

III. THEN, SO TOO, DO WE WAIT IN HOPE

- Christ was raised by the power of the Spirit of God
- this, too, is how we come to new life in Christ: by Spirit raising us from spiritual death
- Spirit is given, dwells in us permanently
- He is downpayment as guarantee of inheritance—glory that awaits us
- this is what we look forward to
- battles with & against sin=over
- suffering = done
- persecution = no more
- vv. 24–25 tells us: end goal is redemption
- **Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."**
- faith is pregnant with assurance of hope, one writer said
- together, faith & hope, give us conviction of things unseen
- vv. 24–25 confirm that this is end goal of redemption, this as of yet unseen glory
- cannot see the "then" now, only tiny glimpses

- yet faith & hope are fixed upon that which lies ahead
- Paul leads into this elsewhere
- **Romans 5:1-5** “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”
- God fills us with hope & faith so we’ll know our salvation & assurance isn’t taken away
- suffering is the path to glory

Conclusion – 2 Corinthians 4:17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

- suffering at this present time cannot compare
- our battle against sin in our own hearts...
- our infirmities, illnesses, and diseases wearing down our mortal bodies...
- our grief over lost loved ones...
- even others of God’s people suffering under persecution...
- all pale in comparison to this weight of glory awaiting us
- Paul, nor I, mean to trivialize any suffering you’re going thru now
- Paul knew hardship, pain, and suffering, as we read earlier
- this same apostle also said...
- **1 Corinthians 2:9** But, as it is written,
“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—
- so, in hope by faith, we wait eagerly for that which we cannot see: glory!
- how will you live now as you wait with great expectation?
- **2 Corinthians 4:16-18** “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 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.”