

Romans 8 (Part 2) 8:18-25 - The Sufferings of This Present Time

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Romans chapter 8. We're beginning here in verse 18 for today and we're going to read just through verse 25. And then I'm going to pray. Here we go.

"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 first fruits of the Spirit, grown 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." (ESV)

Stop there. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, open our hearts to the ministry of Your grace today. And through Your Word, speak to us, equip us and direct us with wisdom, insight and understanding.

Lord, these verses I find myself so unworthy to share and to convey, which is pretty much the case with all of Your Word. But I pray, Father God, that we would have listening, hearing hearts, hearing spiritual ears and seeing spiritual lives that we might lay hold today of the things that are in this passage. Use them we pray. Teach us we pray. We ask this in Jesus name, amen.

I don't know if you've ever noticed, but when you're reading the letters of the apostle Paul, it almost seems like when he's writing, he'll say something, and then he'll anticipate a question based on what he's saying. It's just a one-way conversation.

You almost wonder, you know that Paul had people transcribing or he was dictating to people while he was talking most of these letters that he wrote. You almost wonder if the guy that was writing spoke up and said, hey, can I ask a quick question? And who knows? Maybe Paul used that as a springboard to ask or to make comments that he did.

But he made a statement in our last study which he now begins to explain in this study. And just so we can see it all together in the same translation, let me put this up on the screen for you because it's just the previous 2 verses to where we began reading. And here's the point that Paul made or the statement that he made.

Romans 8:16-17 (ESV)

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 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.

The Spirit (he said) himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 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.

Now, as we leave this passage up just for a moment on the screen, can I please call your attention to the connection in those verses between suffering and inheritance? Did you catch that? In that last little bit, "*heirs of God... fellow heirs with Christ...*" Then notice he says, "*provided we suffer with him in order (that) we may also be glorified with him.*"

This is something the Bible talks about elsewhere throughout the course of Scripture. It makes the connection between suffering and glory. Jesus went through suffering and then was glorified. Guess how it happens for you and I? Suffering, then glory. Oh, how I wish I could bypass the suffering part and just go right to the glory! Right? But it doesn't happen that way.

In fact, you might remember that Peter says something really interesting about suffering. Let me show you this one, too. This is a passage you probably won't find on a magnet.

1 Peter 2:21 (ESV)

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

An example of what? Suffering. Wow! You didn't even know this is what was going on when you signed up. Huh? For this whole Christian thing. Peter says, He left you an example to suffer like Him, because why? Because first comes suffering and then comes glory. It's death before resurrection and He exemplified it for us.

Now, that's not to say we all suffer in the same way. Many of us have different forms of suffering, I dare say. Probably the way Pastor Saeed is suffering right now in a prison in Iran, is something that you and I most likely will never experience. There are certainly differing levels of suffering. But all of us suffer in some capacity, living life on this earth. All of us.

We all suffer. We suffer the results of sin. We suffer sickness together. We suffer loss. We have all of us in this room, lost someone in some capacity. Sometimes to death, sometimes to something else. And then we suffer different levels of persecution. Even if it's just family members that just don't talk to you much anymore. Maybe it's a job you didn't get hired to because they knew you were a believer. And you didn't even know that's why you didn't get hired. Someday you'll find out.

But we all suffer. This life is full of suffering. And it begs the question, which I think Paul is anticipating here. Is it worth it? Is all the suffering that you and I endure in this life worth it? And that's why Paul begins this section of Romans in verse 18. Look again with me in your Bible, by saying this, *"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not even worth comparing with the glory that is (going) to be revealed to us."* In us..., however, your Bible may say it.

And just remember something. This is a statement... When Paul says I am convinced that the suffering that you and I endure in this life isn't even... It can't even compare. Remember, this isn't... This is a man who suffered. This is not written by some guy who was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. And went through life just skateboarding on daddy's bankroll, and lived a glitter filled life. And who makes some casual statement about, yeah, suffering big deal. This is a man who suffered.

This is a man who suffered greatly in this life. And eventually, according to church history, had his head cut off by the Romans. And yet he was a man who could say with confidence, I am convinced that whatever you and I may go through as it relates to suffering in this life, doesn't hold a candle to what we're

going to receive in terms of the glory. That it just... This life... Nothing in this life could possibly trump what God has in store for you and I. And that's why it's called our hope of glory. It's our hope of glory.

In fact, look what Paul writes in verse 19. He says, the creation waits for this. He says, that the *"creation waits with eager longing..."* What are they waiting for? He says it right here, *"for the revealing of the sons of God."* Interesting, isn't it? He says creation waits with eager longing. He doesn't tell us how creation waits. It's one of those mysteries I guess. We just don't really know. Paul doesn't explain himself here.

But he does explain why" creation is waiting eagerly for you and I - the sons of God - to be revealed. Notice what he says in verse 20. Here's why. Because *"the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 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."*

Wow! Two key phrases. If you're the person who underlines things in your Bible, I would encourage you to underline, or circle these. Or maybe write them down on your notes. Or just make a mental note of it. Here are the phrases because they're pregnant with meaning: *"subjected to futility."* Just think about that phrase for a little while. Subjected to futility. And then the second one: *"bondage to corruption."*

I tell you, if you and I, would sit and meditate on those phrases for a little while, they would unlock a world of information. An explanation for you and I, about the world in which we live. And the troubles we go through, the hardships, the trials, the struggles and so forth that we deal with on a daily basis.

He says here that all of creation was literally, subjected to futility. Wow, that's such strong language. I've told you guys this many times. I like to... I see a word; I know what it means. But it's just interesting to go back and redefine it. Or, to say, just show me what the definition is. You ever thought much about the definition of futility? Are you ready for this? Because this is what all creation has been subjected to.

fu•til•i•ty

ˈfyoʊoʊˈtɪlədē/ • noun

def. pointlessness or uselessness

The definition on that bottom line is pointlessness or uselessness.

Now, you're probably sorry that you asked. This is the world in which you live, guys. Are you with me? The world in which you live has been subjected to pointlessness. It has been subjected to meaninglessness, purposelessness.

Isn't that exactly what Solomon wrote in the Book of Ecclesiastes when he looked at this world —life under the sun —and he said, you know what? I applied the wisdom God gave me, and nobody had given any man more wisdom... Did I say that right? God had given no man greater wisdom than Solomon. And with that wisdom, he looked at life under the sun —apart from God —and he says, there is no meaning to life. It is vanity. It is vanity.

You know what's interesting? I found this very fascinating in my study. I found out that if you take... You know that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. Right? Well, at one particular point, when the Greek language became the most spoken language in the world, they actually took the Old Testament and translated it into Greek. We call it the Septuagint. Okay?

In the Septuagint, the Hebrew word, vanity used in Ecclesiastes, is translated into Greek. And guess what word it is? It's the exact same word we see in Romans, futility. Same word. Isn't that interesting? Essentially, Solomon said, I looked at life and it's futile. It's filled with futility. It's filled with purposelessness and meaninglessness. I just... I find that just fascinating. It's empty.

Now, if that doesn't help you and I, understand life on earth, nothing will. I mean... And specifically, it helps us to understand why people are so incredibly hopeless in our culture today. When you and I, look at the world and we see hopelessness, that's their natural state. And who wouldn't be living in a world that is meaningless. And given over— subjected— to futility, what does it create in people's hearts and minds? Hopelessness; a sense of that futility.

I got to be honest with you. I always considered it a mystery why people gave over their lives to drugs and alcohol. I got to be honest with you. Can I just admit something to you? And please don't think that it makes me virtuous in any way. I've never been drunk in my life. And I've never taken any illegal drugs. But it wasn't because I was a good person. I was a wuss. And I just didn't particularly enjoy the idea of throwing up on my shoes, or losing control, or something like that. I just didn't do it. I didn't do it because I just didn't want to. It wasn't because I was a virtuous person. Believe me.

But I also looked at people... But it doesn't mean I didn't go partying as a kid, teenager, upper teen, whatever. I did. I just never drank. I was always the

designated driver. That was fun. But it's really interesting going to a party and being sober is a very eye opening experience. Because you notice what's going on in people's lives. And I've always been interested in watching people, anyway. And I'm watching this thing unfold in front of me, as people give way to greater and greater drunkenness and so forth. And I'm thinking: Why are you doing this? Why are you living this way?

I've never been able to accept the explanation that, well, it's an addiction. I'm sorry. It just doesn't cut the mustard for me. There's something greater in back of it that we just don't like to talk about. We'll talk about addiction. And yeah, people can get addicted. I'm not denying that that's a reality. I'm simply saying it's too easy of an explanation to simply say, well, he got addicted. He started off as a kid just going to parties. Just wanted to have a good time. Pretty soon he found himself addicted to all these sorts of things. Well, that doesn't answer the question.

I look at this thing and I asked myself the question: Why are people slowly killing themselves? Slowly putting themselves to death by doing this sorts of stuff. And I really believe that this passage explains it. This passage basically tells us that, they see the world in which they live and it has been subjected to futility, and meaninglessness, and purposelessness. And they're like, I'm just going to try to anesthetize the thing and make it go away. I'm going to try to find some way to hide from the reality of the fact that the world that I live in is vanity. It's meaningless.

Now I'm talking about people who don't know the Lord. Please understand. You know what surprises me now? It surprises me that everybody outside of Jesus, isn't involved in some mind-bending weirdness. Because outside of Jesus, I mean, you take Him out of the equation, what is there? What's there to live for? Well, you know what people live for. But you can't keep it up.

You see all the things that people live for. And you used to live for them before you met Jesus. But you couldn't keep it up either. And we try to put on this happy face, and go to Disneyland, and just... We try to like... And we talk about... What do people talk about? Their number one goal in life: Just want to be happy. Well, good luck being happy living in a futile world.

Is this depressing you? I hope not. I mean, the fact of the matter is, we have hope in Jesus Christ. And I'll get to it. I'm just trying to paint a particularly dark picture because that's what Paul's doing here. He says, the creation that you and I live in has been subjected to futility. And you and I, need to know that. We need to understand that. Because it helps us to see our world in a biblical

worldview. And not some rose-colored glasses that the world tries to put on to try to just make themselves feel like, "This is a happy place."

It's not a happy place. Jesus said, in this world you will have trouble but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world. (John 16:33) That's the only reason there is to be of good cheer. Because Jesus has overcome. Boy this morning crowd, you guys are rough. Jesus has overcome! (Congregation responds) Okay, I just want to see if you're awake. (Congregation chuckles) I don't need that. I'm just looking for a little bit of sign of life here.

Oh, and then this second phrase. I love this one, too: bondage to corruption. Think about that. The world has been given over to bondage to corruption. Who doesn't see that? In about three days, I'm turning 58. Two days. You get to a point where birthdays just don't matter anymore.

Well, I took a test years ago about my intellectual/emotional age, and it was 22. And I've been hanging onto that ever since. I tell my staff, I'm the youngest one here. And all these other chronological birthdays mean nothing. I'm just hanging on to 22. It's a good age.

But the fact of the matter is, the mirror doesn't lie. And as much as I'd like to think of myself as a younger man, I look in the mirror from time to time and frighten myself in the morning with what I see. And I used to actually have dark hair. Some of you have been around long enough to remember.

We live in a world that is in bondage to corruption. Scientist even came up with a name for it. It's called the "second law of thermodynamics." Isn't that a wonderful phrase. Or, it's like, oh, wow! That sounds really cool. Just means everything is in bondage to corruption. The second law of thermodynamics simply says this, all matter is in a constant state of breaking down.

We knew that. We wake up in the morning and we feel it in our bones. We see it in our - in everything. Right? In our entire world. The world has been given over to bondage to corruption. I don't care how many times you shoot yourself up with Botox. It's going down. Right? You're going to be the prettiest looking corpse around someday. But it's going down one way or another. Sorry! Boy, this is depressing. I tell you.

But you know what? That's why... Let me show you this from 2 Corinthians. This is why Paul wrote this. He said, you know what?

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (ESV)

So we don't lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light and 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.

So we don't lose heart, (we know that the world we live in is in bondage to corruption, but) Though our outer self is wasting away, (and boy is it) our inner self (what's going on there? No, no, no, no. See, that) is being renewed day by day. For (he says, and he repeats here) this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen (in the mirror) but to the things that are unseen. (right?) For the things that are seen (they) are transient, (they're constantly moving, constantly changing) but the things that are unseen are eternal.

And are unchanging. And that's why our hope is not in that which changes. It's not what we can see with our physical eyes. Our hope is in what we can see with our spiritual hearts predicated on the promise of God's Word. And the assurance of those things which will, in fact, come to pass. The glory of the Lord.

Someday I'm going to get a new body. That's what I'm looking forward to. I mean, there was a time when I was 22, I thought I was bulletproof. And I could stay up all night. And I could drive all night long. And I could do all kinds... And I can run... I was fast, believe it or not. I haven't run for so long. But I used to be fast. And I don't even know why I'm telling you that.

I guess I'm just saying there was a time. But that time is gone. That ship has sailed. And now there gets a point in our lives where, we look forward to the redemption of our bodies. Receiving those new bodies that will never tire, and never thirst, and never wear out. And the bondage to decay that is currently overseeing all of this creation, is going to be gone. And there will be no decay. There will be no deterioration. That's something to look forward to. Let me tell you.

Paul says, we don't lose heart unlike the world that loses heart every day. And that's why I believe they give-in to drugs, and alcohol, and money, pursuit of fame, pursuit of happiness, the pursuit of happiness. Pastor, I just want to be happy. Boy, don't pursue happiness. Pursue hope. Hope won't disappoint when your hope is based in the promises of God. In the midst of all this futility and corruption, there is still hope. But like Paul says, our hope is unseen.

And did you notice that in verse 22, he actually uses a picture of childbirth? Isn't that an interesting sort of a picture? Look at verse 22. He says, we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth. It's like a baby that hasn't been born. And we haven't seen the baby.

Today we have the ability to do ultrasound. And now we've got this fancy, schmancy 3-D ultrasound. It's amazing. I see these pictures, these 3-D pictures of babies in the womb. And it's just, isn't it crazy? I mean, you can see them suck on their thumb. You can see them sticking out their tongue and whatever all else. And normally though, a baby is not seen. But we know it's there! And it's coming!

And it gets to the point, I personally have never given birth. But I have watched my wife do it four times. And there's this point where birth begins to just... There's this groaning. This thing that you know it's going to happen now. And there's all these signs that go along with it. And Paul says those signs are in creation right now. He says all of creation is groaning as in the pains of childbirth. Isn't that just a fascinating sort of a word picture.

Verse 23, and then he says, it's more than creation. He says, it is not only the creation, but we, ourselves. And he's talking about believers here. And that's why he defines us as we who have the first fruits of the Spirit. We too, he says, we groan inwardly. It's not an excuse to groan outwardly. We do that just because of age. But there's an inward groaning.

Do you guys have a witness to this inward groaning? It doesn't come out of your mouth. It's just in your heart. It's in your Spirit. Understanding, as we do, that we live in this world of futility and corruption. And we want it to be over. And we want... But not just be over in the sense of, I just want to be done with it. We want it over in the sense, I want the newness. I want the life. I want the vitality. I want the strength. I want the promise to be manifest.

Paul says that inwardly, we groan as we await all of these things to take place. Which he refers to as our adoption and redemption, and so on and so forth. We're looking to be set free. That's what we want. We want to be set free.

Paul talks elsewhere in Corinthians, when he refers to the resurrection. He's talking to the Corinthians about the resurrection. And he talks about how we're really longing to be clothed with our new body. He says, but some of us aren't going to be clothed right away. Some of us will, actually, go and be with the Lord, after we die. And we will have to await being clothed. The being clothed, or receiving a new body, takes place when Jesus returns. Right?

But up until that point, anyone who dies in Christ, yeah, you go to be with the Lord, but you're unclothed. Doesn't mean specifically naked. It just means, you are who you are, minus a corporeal body. You don't get your new body until Christ returns.

That's why he said that, when Jesus returns, those who have died in Christ, will first be given their bodies. And then any who are on the earth at the time when Jesus returns, they will just be transformed. Or he says, changed in the twinkling of an eye. (1 Corinthians 15:52-53)

Wouldn't that be a trip? I mean, that's almost something to look forward to. It's like, come Lord Jesus. Because I want to know what it's like to be transformed. And what's interesting about that, is that those people will not experience death. (Pastor Paul whistles in attraction) Pretty snazzy. That's something to look forward to. But we're looking for these eternal bodies.

Then Paul says, look at verse 24. He says, "*For in this hope we were saved.*" See, the essence of the gospel is bound up in the hope that we have in Jesus. In this hope we were saved. The salvation of our souls is not just, okay, my sins are forgiven and, "Gee, that's really cool. Now I can go through the rest of this life. Just know that my sins are forgiven. And that's a great thing. That's a wonderful thing.

Oh, but there's so much more. So much more than that. There's this hope that you have, that I have, that we will go to be with the Lord. And when He returns, we will receive our new physical bodies. And corruption will pass away and futility will be no more.

But Paul reminds us here in verse 24 that, hope is something that you don't see. It's unseen. Hope is unseen. You don't... A kid who has a shiny new bicycle doesn't hope for a new bicycle. He's got it. Right? If I'm driving my new snazzy sports car, I'm not hoping to get a new snazzy sports car. I've got it. You hope for what you don't have, but what you know you're going to get.

See, that's the difference between what the world defines as hope and what you and I define as hope. With the world, hope is a pipe dream. I hope, I hope, I hope, I hope. Oh, I hope the Vikings win on Monday night. That's a pipe dream. But that's the way the world hopes. Right? Our hope is founded in the surety of the knowledge that, this will come to pass! That's our hope. It's... Okay, you see the difference? And that's why Paul says in verse 25, "*...if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*" Why? Because we know, that we know, that we know it's coming. It's coming.

And I want to close out here with a wonderful passage from 1 John that speaks of the benefit of our hope. This is a wonderful benefit. John writes and he says,

1 John 3:2-3 (ESV)

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Beloved, (and he likes to use that word when he talks to the people of Christ. He says, right now) we are God's children (That's who we are right now) and what we will be (Well, that) has not yet appeared; (What we will be has not yet been manifest.) but (here's what we know.) we know that when he appears we shall be like him, (Why?) because we (are going) to see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

This is the last benefit I want to leave you with of this hope that Paul is talking about. But now John enlarges on in a very beautiful and wonderful way. He says that hope in the Lord, does more than just give us a confidence that we know these things are going to take place. Notice what it says in that last line. It actually has a purifying effect in our lives.

When we put our hope in Jesus Christ, and our hope is firmly founded in Jesus Christ, it actually changes the way we live today. Isn't that amazing? It's because our hope is in Him. And that hope is so real, so tangible, that it actually changes us on the inside. And you and I are being transformed on the inside every day as we look to Him in hope.

Now, there's going to come a day when we're going to see Him face-to-face and that change will be completed. Right now we're changing incrementally. At least I hope we are. As we look into His eyes: we do that through the Word of God, we do it in prayer, we do it many ways—we look into Him in hope. And as we do, as we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, He's changing us. He's transforming us into an ever increasing glory.

And you and I can't see it on the outside. It doesn't show up in a mirror. But we know it's going on. We know what's happening. There's this work going on that we cannot deny. That I am being formed into the image of Jesus Christ. And it's an exciting thing.

But there's going to come a day, and we're going to, hopefully, we're going to increase, and increase, and increase. And then there's going to come a day we're going to see Him. We're going to see Him face-to-face. And on that day, when

we behold Him, face-to-face, it'll just be like, (Pastor Paul makes the sound of an explosion) just absolute pandemonium. We're going to be like Him. We're going to be transformed. And the completion of that work will take place. We will be like Him for we will see Him as He is. Wow! That's cool! That's cool!

You see, we brought it to an uptick here. Didn't we? We started off really depressing with all this talk of corruption and futility. But, Oh people, we have so much reason to hope.

Now, listen, let me just say this. As you leave this place, this room of hope, this gathering of hope, you're going to go out into a world and you're going to not rub up against people who are hopeless. And it's going to be: the guy maybe pumping your gas, depending on whether you do it in Oregon or Idaho, I guess, or the person checking you out at the grocery store, or the service person who comes to work on your water heater, or the person you work with, or sit across the hall from, or across the cubicle from— you're going to come face-to-face with the hopelessness.

Listen, you understand now exactly why they're hopeless. You understand. There's no question. You're not surprised when they say things, yeah, we're going to go out this weekend. And we're just going to get blasted. And why don't you want to come along with us? We're going to buy a keg. And stuff like that. And you're not going to look down on them anymore and say, oh, you dirty, scummy sinner. You're not going to do that anymore.

You're going to say, you know what? That's the response of a hopeless person. And I'm sorry that you're hopeless. But I'd like to tell you there is hope for this life. And it goes beyond this life. And that hope is found in the person of Jesus Christ. And the wonderful glorious promises that He has made us in His Word. And I'd like to tell you about some of those. Because you know what? You're living a life of hopelessness. And that life of hopelessness ends in death. And I don't want to see that in you. But the hope that we have in Jesus, brings forth life, and joy. A joy that happiness can't even begin to touch.

And when we understand that hope, it doesn't immune us. We don't become immune to suffering just because we're full of hope. We just begin to see suffering in a whole new light. And we begin to say with the apostle Paul, you know what? I'm convinced no matter what we go through in this life, it doesn't hold a candle to the glory that awaits us in Jesus Christ. You and I don't get a free pass on suffering. But we have a whole different mindset about its impact on our lives. And we understand, we know, that it can only impact us for so long. And then we're set free.