

Romans 8:18
Part 2

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For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Before we begin, there was something I said in the previous lesson that I didn't word correctly, and though I'm sure most people will have understood what I meant, I want to clarify it anyways.

Last lesson I said that Jesus's life was *taken* from Him, and all I meant by that was that He was sentenced to death by the agency of other individuals—*He didn't die a naturally occurring death*. But technically speaking, no one actually took His life from Him.

In John chapter 10, Jesus says that no man taketh His life from Him, but that He had power to lay it down, and the power to take it up again. In Mark 15, when Jesus is on the cross, scripture says that He *gave up* the ghost, meaning *He willingly gave it up*. Ecclesiastes 8:8 says that *there is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death*—and yet Jesus *did*. And in this we see further scriptural proof that Jesus Christ was and is God in the flesh.

And so, while technically speaking, Jesus's life wasn't *taken* from Him, He was sentenced to death and crucified by unbelieving humanity, and Jesus actually honored the authorities' sentence against Him, even though it was an unjust sentence, and gave up the Ghost as a result.

As Peter says in Acts 2:23 in his indictment against the nation of Israel, *Him*, that is, Jesus, *being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*. And so while Jesus's life wasn't technically *taken* from Him, He was slain by unbelieving men in the sense that they *sentenced Him to death, crucified Him*, as it was in their heart to do so.

And in this don't we see a perfect example of *godliness*? That Jesus willingly suffered at the hands of wicked men as He honored the authorities ordained of God in this world? As He viewed things from the Father's perspective, and valued and esteemed what the Father valued and esteemed? We see that, to Jesus, the sufferings of the present time were in fact not worthy to

be compared with the glory that He would attain, and the things which His work would accomplish.

And of course we too are supposed to reckon the sufferings of this present time as not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us.

Previously, when discussing this future hope of glory that we have in relation to being *justified unto eternal life*, I took us to Titus 3:7, and demonstrated the connection between our *justification* and being an *heir of eternal life*, and that our being *heirs of God* by virtue of being *children of God* is actually meant to be understood simply as our being heirs of eternal life itself. *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God...* (Rom. 8:17a).

And so, I took the roundabout way to demonstrate that point, when what I should have done was take us back to the things we've already learned in Romans.

If you'll recall, we actually learned about this *hope of glory* that we have in relation to our justification in Romans chapter 5:

Romans 5:1-2

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

We see right there with the conclusion of the doctrine concerning our justification before God that we can *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. And so a future glory in relation to us has already been explained, and it is *God's glory* specifically; it is the glory of His presence which we will forever be a part of due to being justified by the finished work of Christ. This is the glory of *God Himself* and His very *presence*.

What we have now encountered here in Romans 8:18 is that, not only will we one day be in the presence of the glory of God *in heaven*, but that this very glory is within us *already*, and that this glory will one day be revealed. We have learned in Romans 8:9 of course that *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His*, and so we have already been introduced to the concept of our having the very Spirit of Christ Himself, and since that is something *Spiritual*, it must be something within us, within the inner man.

And so, though there seems to be a certain kind of *glory* attained by *suffering with Christ*, as communicated to us in Romans 8:17, which of course is of a conditional nature, Romans 8:18 has in view our future hope of glory in a more general sense, in connection with our justification,

as it *shall* be revealed in us—meaning, it is something going to be revealed in *every single believer*. Thus every one of us has this future hope of glory to weigh in our hearts against the trials we encounter here and now. This hope is the sure foundation that *we must* anchor ourselves in as we, as *sons of God*, begin approaching the world we live in and the pain we will inevitably experience with the same outlook and attitude that our heavenly Father has—one that fully sees and appreciates that, though the sufferings of this present time are unpleasant, it is through those things that He is accomplishing a necessary part of His greater purpose.

Remember, the first step in godliness is to view things the way that God Himself does. You can live righteously in an objective sense, and yet perceive something from a vantage point that is completely contrary to the way in which God does, thus, your outlook itself is *ungodly*.

If God is using the fallen state of this present world to accomplish His purposes, then we must view the things we encounter here from that perspective and attitude. God is allowing the fallen world to experience the pain and suffering that results from sin and rebellion so that they would actually be drawn to Him, so that they would be drawn to the gospel itself. Men see the futility and harshness of this world which pricks their own morale and their own conscience and they naturally conclude that things *should not be this way*, and that there has to be *something more*. And of course there is. And God is still perfectly righteous in allowing this because what man is experiencing in this fallen world are only the consequences of their own sin and rebellion.

God could have simply killed Adam and Eve the moment they took from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but this would have not actually solved anything. It would not have solved the issue as to how God was going to raise up free-will moral beings who chose a relationship with Him rather than rebellion, because had He created *another* man and woman, they would have been liable to do the same thing. And had they not, perhaps their children, or their children's children.

The fact is, within any group of free-will moral beings, a portion may in fact always choose evil. The only way to ensure that eternity would be filled with free-will moral agents who chose a relationship with God and who would never choose rebellion is to first allow man to corporately choose that rebellion. In this sense, free will is the very means by which God would accomplish a creation filled with those who truly and freely love Him. Thus we see the entire purpose of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the first place. Not only did it give Adam and Eve a legitimate opportunity to exercise free will, but it also offered God the opportunity to raise up a family who freely chooses a relationship with Him in eternity.

But that is not all that God is accomplishing through *the sufferings of this present time*; He is also providing us with an experiential education in what sin and rebellion actually produces, so that *that knowledge is incorporated into our inner man*, so that in eternity we will never even *consider* rebellion in any form or fashion—even with a free will.

He is also allowing us as justified, redeemed individuals to experience these things so that we learn to exercise faith and obedience to God even in the face of temptation, even in the face of sorrow and pain, to cultivate within us certain qualities—qualities which cannot be developed *any other way*.

Think about it: God could miraculously protect believers from the tragedies of this world, and yet it is apparent that's not the case. The subject of suffering in the dispensation of grace in which we live is a *major* subject in our doctrine—it is not a minor detail. That is why we are spending so much time on it, because if we don't properly understand these issues, there is absolutely no sense in moving forward in the doctrine.

I have mentioned previously the *three godly virtues* that the remainder of Romans chapter 8 aims to cultivate in us. These three virtues are actually the solutions to three basic things we will encounter as sons of God in this fallen world. The first of these is a *patient endurance and contentment* in light of the physical distresses we encounter.

This is something that God *cannot* produce in us *apart* from some form of adversity, and as we already know, He is *not* going to use His omnipotence as God to override our freewill to install this virtue within us. What He has done however is given us His word, and has given us the Holy Ghost, and through faith in that word, the Holy Spirit is going to help incorporate that truth into our inner man so that it produces within us the qualities He wants produced.

We see how the development of this virtue of *patient endurance* depends on a proper outlook—a *godly* outlook—on *the sufferings of this present time*. And if we live from that place of understanding, if we live out of the doctrine that has been communicated to us in the word of God, then what would we call that?

We would call that suffering in the same godly manner that Jesus Christ did, would we not? We would call that *suffering with Christ*. And thus we see that if we participate in that process, it develops within us a quality, a quality that is *useful*, that is *needful* in those positions of authority in God's kingdom. Thus, by developing this quality we are qualifying ourselves for a position there. If we suffer with Christ, we shall be joint-heirs with Him and be glorified together with Him in His kingdom.

You see how this is all connected? It's not simply that "*if you do this, then God will do that*." It's not that, if you *perform*, God is going to arbitrarily reward you. No, you are actually *growing up into the position*. You are *qualifying* for that joint-heir inheritance.

But not only will this virtue be useful for our future inheritance, this virtue will be profitable to us here and now, in this life. It will offer a solution to our present problem of suffering in this fallen world, in this fallen body, as we truly reckon the glory that awaits us for eternity in the presence of God as *so far exceeding our present afflictions* that they are not even worthy to be compared.

This *hope of glory* is functional, and provides a salvation for us from the ill effects that the sufferings of this present time can have on us—the *despondency*, the *hopelessness*, the *futility*; the pain we experience takes on meaning and gives us purpose rather than adding to a sense of inevitable defeat and confusion. Rather than sorrow in asking *why* we rejoice knowing *who*.

The lost man does not have this hope to anchor his soul; he may construct artificial purpose within his life, and even insulate his sensibilities with various philosophies or beliefs, but he is ultimately unsure and afraid when he lays on his death bed. Not so for the saint of God.

Remember what the cry of *Abba Father* was all about—it was the cry of a *son* who makes a *conscious decision* to submit to God's will and plan even in the face of pain and adversity, because of the greater overall purpose the Father is going to accomplish through it. It is a cry that, while made in great anguish of soul, is followed by the simple word, *nevertheless*.

And so, did Jesus Christ come *to be served* or *to serve*? He came as a servant, no doubt. Did Jesus Christ serve Himself or did He serve others? He served the needs of others, and the greater good of mankind. What I'm trying to get at is this: Jesus Christ performed many miracles and yet *did not use the resources He had as God to help Himself or deliver Himself*—He did not perform miracles for His own benefit, to make Himself comfortable. Jesus endured the sufferings of this present time as *man subject to the will of the Father* and didn't try to find a loophole, but fully identified with man in this, even unto death.

And so some ask the question: *what would Jesus do?* Well, Jesus would *live out of the doctrine* and *submit Himself to the ordinance of God*; Jesus would approach the things of this world from the same godly outlook as the Father. And Jesus would endure those things by the Spiritual provisions of *the word of God* and *prayer*.

To properly have the virtue of *patient endurance* and *godly contentment* developed in us requires Romans 8 verses 16 through 25, and it requires a *daily, thoughtful, purposeful meditation* on those verses, and an *intentional remembrance of them* in the situations one faces on a daily basis. This is not something that will work overnight, but is something that requires the steady application of our faith. It is how we are *led of the Spirit* to navigate the course of life. If we are not responding out of the doctrine when we face those things, then we are not being led of the Spirit. And in order to properly do this, in order to properly have things framed in our minds, we must view the state of natural affairs in this fallen world through the lens of *the gospel of Christ*.

Now, what do I mean when I say that?

In the last lesson we discussed how God is not showing partiality in judgment today in the natural world, in the affairs of men, and how He is not physically judging men at all, and how if He were to judge someone in one instance, then He would be showing partiality, in that He

would not be executing justice for others. But God shows no man partiality, and in fact that is what we learned from Romans 2:11, that there is no respect of persons with God. Certainly that verse is in the context of men's final judgment before God's throne, but the principle is universally true. God is not going to show favoritism to any man in any scenario because His judgment is perfectly just.

And though we discussed that issue, I did not put that in the context of our present dispensation. Of course, we have not yet been told about anything called a "dispensation" directly in Romans thus far. But what we have been educated in is what Paul calls *the gospel of Christ*, and the gospel of Christ communicates to us certain truths through which we're now supposed to view the world.

Romans 1:14-16

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, irrespective of their ethnicity or status or gender or anything else. Now why would Paul stress this right at the outset of this epistle to the Romans? It is because this *gospel of Christ* directly to all men bypasses the agency of national Israel as God's mediatorship in the world, and offers them salvation apart from them, which was not the plan of redemption as outlined in the prophetic scriptures.

Paul goes on to explain for us as to *why* this gospel is to all men, without the agency of national Israel:

Romans 3:9-10

9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one...

Romans 3:19-23

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

21 *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;*

22 *Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:*

23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...*

Paul here proves that Israel was essentially no different than the gentiles, and that, in fact, the Law was not given to produce righteousness at all but rather to act as the *legal condemnation of the entire world*. Thus, all of mankind has been deemed guilty, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Later, in chapter 5, Paul clarifies the depth and extent of God's love for us in *the gospel of Christ*, by declaring to us that Christ did not simply die for the *faithful*, for the *believing*, for the *sincere*, but that He died for His *enemies*:

Romans 5:6-10

6 *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

7 *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

8 *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

9 *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

10 *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

God's declared will is to save *sinners*, to save His very *enemies*. And so how can God be actively executing judgment against sinners and offering them free terms of salvation *at the same time*? And if He does execute judgment upon someone in one instance, now He has shown respect of persons, and neglected the judgment of another, or *justice* for another. See, God's will today is not to judge men, but to save them.

1 Timothy 2:1-6

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

We see here what is in view is not only mankind in a general sense but specifically even kings and those who are in authority. God is not judging nations today He is trying to save them before His prophesied wrath comes upon the whole world. Notice verse 6 tells us that this gospel of Christ, where Christ gave Himself a *ransom for all*, was only testified *in due time*, it was something revealed *in the course of time*, and that is because it was committed to the apostle Paul for the present time in which we are now living.

And so, we have to frame God's physical intervention in this world within the historical, dispensational context within which we find ourselves according to the Bible. And though we have not seen the word *dispensation* itself in the book of Romans, we have received the doctrine by which God is operating at our present time.

Under Israel's covenant system, God's physical intervention in the world and His judgment was per the contractual obligations of the Law. His declared will was not to save all sinners, but was rather, in some cases, to destroy them, and to use Israel to mediate to the gentiles, to be a city set on a hill that would teach the gentiles about the true God.

In that context, under the Old Covenant, God would actually physically intervene on behalf of Israel, for good or for bad, based upon their performance and adherence to that agreed-upon contract, which had stated terms of physical blessing or cursing. Thus, His intervention in the world was something contractually agreed upon with man and made known to man.

And yet we have no such contract today. What we have is an apostle who tells us that God instead is seeking to justify all of mankind.

This *gospel of Christ* is not an offer that will be made *indefinitely*—when God resumes His prophetic plan in relation to Israel and to the earth, He is going to *judge* sinners, and in fact, He is going to send the world a strong delusion as a part of that judgment, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Consider what Peter writes the believing remnant of Israel who are preparing to enter into those last days:

1 Peter 4:17-18

17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

If God's will is that *all men be saved*, then by implication, He cannot be judging them for those sins in the course of life. And if He is not judging them in the course of life, then that means evil will only continue to exist. Thus Paul's instruction to us to pray for kings and authorities, that we may live quiet and peaceable lives.

Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:13 that, in the last days of our present time, *evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse*. And it is because God is not stepping in to correct them or take them out of the picture, because His offer of salvation to them still stands.

And so, while we are of course living under the curse of natural creation itself, which began with the fall, and while that phrase here in Romans 8:18, *the sufferings of this present time*, is a reference specifically the fallen state of creation itself, we also have the additional element that God Himself is not stepping in to intervene in the wickedness of mankind, to judge sinners. We have no contractual, covenant promise with God for such intervention.

The truth is, God did in fact step in to judge nations, and mankind as a whole even, at specific times in human history, though these were in extreme cases. Violence filled the earth, and *the imagination of men's hearts was only evil continually*, and so God sent a flood to destroy mankind, saving only 8 souls; He scattered humanity at *the tower of Babel* in the midst of their rebellion; God specifically destroyed the cities of *Sodom and Gomorrha*; He judged *the Egyptians* with great plagues; He used other unbelieving nations to destroy *the city of Nineveh*. And while these were not typical in the course of His dealings with mankind, when considering the vast numbers of people and cultures and nations that have existed, they are examples of how God has stepped into the affairs of mankind to restrain evil in the world. And yet today, we have no such promise, because God is fulfilling an even greater purpose: to save sinners.

God is not judging or showing partiality in His dealings with man today because He is operating out of grace exclusively whereby He desires all men to be saved, even his enemies.

You typically never hear anybody ask “why do bad people suffer” or “why do bad things happen to bad people.” That’s not the question. It’s always “why do bad things happen to good people.” That’s always the question. But what that question presumes is that any man is good to begin with, and our doctrine has already told us that *there is none that doeth good, no, not one* (Rom. 3:12). This calls to mind the issue we discussed in Romans chapter 2 of mankind's excuse of *relative righteousness*, that man judges themselves by comparing themselves to others who are worse, and then use this as an excuse before God.

See, mankind is asking the wrong question to begin with. Everybody suffers whether objectively “good” or “bad.” We simply live in a fallen world, and sin has its own consequences. God is not orchestrating those consequences, just like God is not directing the hurricane because the natural evil of this world is a result of the fall. That is the natural result of sin and the curse. He’s not directing the hurricane anymore than he’s directing the murderer.

But see we’re asking the wrong question, or framing it wrong in our mind, because we’re assuming that God should be protecting people from the consequences of sin and suffering, because “they don’t deserve it,” but if we ask him to do that, we’re asking him to stop real consequences, and those real consequences are part of His greater purpose. If that was the case, then we should just be able to do whatever we want and avoid consequences altogether, but that's not the way it works.

And so of course some will then point to the issue of children. Why does God allow children in this world to suffer? And this of course would require more time than we have today, but my simple response to that is why does man allow children to suffer? With as many resources and medical technology we have today, children should rarely be suffering in the way they do. There are children literally starving in a world that has an over abundance of resources. That makes no sense on the part of mankind. And yet it's God's fault in the eyes of the skeptic.

And so, there are things God desires to develop within us, characteristics of godliness that He wants us to have built up in our inner man, but these things cannot be developed without some form of adversity in many cases. We have to view suffering as we encounter it in this world through the lens that God does.

And so, you are free to pray for physical deliverance. When we discuss the issue of prayer, we discuss these things at length. But just know that physical deliverance by God does not produce the following things:

- It does not produce patient endurance in the inner man
- It does not teach us to live out of the doctrine and appropriate God’s grace in our lives
- It does not allow the power of God’s grace to be demonstrated to His creation
- It does not conform us to the image of God’s Son
- It does not entail eternal reward