

## Romans 8:17-18

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*17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

*18 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.*

Now, we have discussed the difference between simply being *heirs of God* by way of our justification as God's *children*, and being *joint-heirs* with Christ, which is contingent upon *suffering* with Christ. I have spent several lessons attempting to demonstrate that *suffering with Christ* is not simply speaking of our suffering as believers in some general sense, but is speaking to our participation in the edification process itself, how, if we engage in an instructional relationship with the Father as *sons of God*, just as Jesus did, then we are actually sharing in this process with Him, as this process takes place within the context of a fallen world and satanic opposition, consequently, this process takes place within the context of *suffering*.

The qualifier in verse 17 of course is not simply our sufferings—everyone in this world suffers, believers and nonbelievers alike. Many believers, though positionally secure in Christ, live as what some refer to as *practical atheists*—they do not read the scriptures nor meditate upon them so that the words of the Father dwell in them; they do not pray and talk to the Father about the matters He's disclosed to us in His word: they do not seek to cultivate a practical working relationship with God. And so when they do suffer, are they doing so from the same godly viewpoint and utilizing the same godly resources as Jesus did? Or are they simply going through the motions, in their flesh, trying to grit their teeth and make it through the best they can?

Apart from that process that God has put in place through the Spirit and the word, there is no godly development in the inner man taking place, there is no perfecting as a son taking place. And so, are they really identifying with Christ in what He went through? Are they really suffering with Him? They are not. They are living out of the strength of their natural man, their flesh.

The qualifier or condition in verse 17 is not simply to suffer—it is if we suffer *with* Christ, whose suffering itself is over. Jesus is not suffering the pain and sickness of this presently fallen world as we do. And so, how do we suffer with Him if He is no longer suffering? It is by engaging in the process He Himself engaged in, and in so doing we identify with Him in this process, and as we

engage in this process, we actually have His Spiritual life ministered to us in the midst of whatever it is we encounter. How we view and handle the sufferings we experience in this life must be out of the doctrine the Father has communicated to us, just as Jesus did.

What we have to understand is that our inheritance is not given on the basis of the sufferings themselves, but what those sufferings produce within the inner man, so that, as we learn to incorporate *the doctrine* into our souls, and *live out of it*, we are increasingly conformed to the image of God's son, and that whatever level we attain to in this process corresponds to a specific role in eternity; it corresponds, as we will see, to a certain level of *glory*—we're going to *inherit* that which we are perfectly equipped *for*. The reward itself *flows out of* the level of our maturity, or *edification*. It is not an arbitrary decision God will make—it will be perfectly just and befitting of *who we are* and *what we're capable of*—things which we only made possible by His grace, by Him working *in us*.

We've also discussed the nature of Jesus's inheritance, and how that inheritance encompasses all of creation—both heaven and earth, and how the cross itself provided for the redemption of both spheres of creation. And yet, as we've gone through the prophetic scriptures, we've seen that the redeemed nation of Israel—that portion of Israel who receives Jesus Christ as their Messiah—they are going to inherit dominion and legal authority in the earth under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, to bring the government and peace of Christ to the gentile nations. And so, what dominion is left? It is the heavenly sphere of creation, the heavenly world. And so, by way of deduction we already see this idea of our heavenly inheritance coming into view. And so, if what is in view is our *heavenly* inheritance, then when verse 17 says “that we may be also glorified *together*,” this must be a reference to Jesus's glory and inheritance in the heavens, not the earth.

Now, as a side note, I realize that in the past I've said that the cross itself was not the end goal, but that it was the component necessary for God to accomplish all of the things that He wanted to accomplish, which of course is true, but that was with the concept of our eternal inheritance in view. I was only trying to shift our attention to the reality that there is more God desires to accomplish in the future by the cross than to simply save mankind from eternal judgment—that the cross itself was not the end goal. *And though that's true*, as we will see in future lessons, in another sense, the cross *is* the end goal, because it's not just that by the cross we are going to be forever *redeemed*, but that by the cross we are going to forever *function*. And that is something we are to be learning here and now.

Our new identity in Christ and our being *dead to sin* and *alive unto God* is going to be the backbone for everything else we receive in the doctrine—it all must be done upon the basis of that knowledge and from that spiritual resource.

Think about it: every redeemed individual functioning in eternity is going to have died a *death*—not necessarily a physical death, but an inner-man death, a *spiritual death* of the in-Adam

nature. Even Jesus Christ died that death when He assumed the corporate Adamic nature on the cross and absorbed the wrath of God. And this concept is going to become important as we discuss *the sufferings of this present time*, which Paul mentions here in verse 18, though the connection may not be immediately apparent. How will *freewill, moral agents*, be able to live in eternity with God and never again choose sin?

See, what we are going through in this life, and in this process of edification, is meant to provide something that ensures that we will never again choose sin, it's meant to accomplish something practical, something functional. And yet not all will engage in this; and thus the judgment seat of Christ is going to be the mechanism by which this is accomplished in every last one of us.

And so, there are many things that we are going to need to discuss as we consider Romans 8:18 and all of its implications. But with all of this being said, let's move into the verse itself.

Paul says, *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.*

Now, what are the sufferings of this present time?

To answer that, we might be first inclined to define what "this present time" even is. Some have posited that this is a reference to the *dispensation of grace*, but that is not the case.

A *dispensation* in the Bible is not properly a period of time at all, but rather, it is *a message that demands obedience*, it is revelation that God Himself dispenses to a particular audience, and of course this occurs, as all things in life do, within the context of *time*. But *time itself* is not the defining attribute. In fact, dispensations within the Bible often overlap *within* the same periods of time. A period of time might actually contain multiple ongoing dispensations. The *unconditional* promises given Abraham overlap the dispensation of the Law which contained promises of a *conditional* nature, thus, as I've mentioned before, you have the tension between two covenants: judgment based upon Israel's performance, and mercy based upon promise. The dispensation of grace itself actually begins to be communicated and put into force while the kingdom saints of Israel are still alive and under their own set of instructions, which are of an entirely different nature. Thus within the book of Acts, after chapter 9, you actually have two ongoing dispensations: two different messages God revealed to two different audiences. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance; and so the calling that those believing Hebrews were a part of prior to Paul's conversion never changed. That generation had to die off without seeing the promised land, as typified in the Old Testament.

What this phrase, *the sufferings of this present time*, is referring to is something we all already know and understand; and this would make sense, as Paul, in this letter to the Romans, hasn't even specifically mentioned a dispensation of the gospel of God's grace. He has certainly laid

out the foundational doctrine for it, but he hasn't actually addressed that concept in particular. And so the audience—whether the Romans he was writing to, or us—should already have an understanding of what he's even referring to.

The dispensation of grace itself *is* characterized by a particular type of suffering, what Paul will call *the sufferings of Christ*, which are specifically *satanic* in nature, but what is in view in this portion of Romans 8 is the suffering we experience due to living in a fallen world. And so to say this phrase, *the sufferings of this present time*, specifically related to a particular dispensation is not accurate in my opinion, because man has lived in a fallen world since Adam. All this phrase is referring to is the suffering we naturally encounter as a result of living in that world. God, as we know, created the earthly world and everything in it perfect, and it was not designed for man to experience suffering or death.

Pain and sorrow in pregnancy and child birth; the contention between man and woman for dominance; the curse of the ground to be stubborn and unyielding; the harsh and futile labor of man just to survive; and of course, spiritual and physical death itself—all of these resulted from the disobedience of one man, Adam.

From the fall itself came both the *moral* and *natural* evils of this world. Man's very nature was corrupted with satanic wisdom and sin, and the curse pronounced upon the physical world itself produced an environment that is hostile to life and to man, even within the animal kingdom.

This present time is of course going to come to an eventual close. When Jesus Christ returns and establishes His kingdom in the earth, the curse of natural and moral evil will be repealed, first in Jerusalem, and if the nations serve the Lord, they too will share in God's blessing so that the entire earth experiences these benefits. We see descriptions of this in the prophetic scriptures.

#### **Isaiah 11:4-9**

*4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.*

*5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.*

*6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.*

*7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*

*8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.*

*9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*

#### **Isaiah 33:20, 24**

*20 Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.*

*24 And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.*

The book of Zechariah details that those nations that do not keep the feast of tabernacles yearly, to go and worship before the King, will experience the natural evils of drought, and eventually, if they continue in their rebellion, they will be struck with a plague.

#### **Zechariah 14:16-19**

*16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

*17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.*

*18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

*19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

We will not detail every aspect of this, but all we really need to understand for now is that the suffering of this present time are broken into two basic components: moral evil, and natural evil, or, the things we suffer because moral evil exists in the world, and the things which we suffer

because the natural world itself is under a curse. As we know, the work Jesus Christ performed provided not just for man but also for the curse upon the earth itself, hence, He bore the crown of thorns for the land.

We've also seen in Leviticus 26 how if a man was obedient to the Law, God would bless him physically, and if he was disobedient, God would curse him physically, and in this God was teaching them that moral evil results in God's curse.

### **Leviticus 26:3-6**

*3 If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;*

*4 Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.*

*5 And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.*

*6 And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.*

### **Leviticus 26:14-18**

*14 But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments;*

*15 And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant:*

*16 I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.*

*17 And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.*

*18 And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.*

For their disobedience, God says He will punish them *seven times more* for their sins—and yet there are only *five courses* or *stages* of judgment described. He says He will punish them *seven times more* for their sins, and yet when He describes the blessings earlier in the chapter, He doesn't say this *at all*. Why? Because they were already under *the sufferings of this present time*, and what would happen if they remained in disobedience is that God would *amplify* the

curse—He would multiply it *by seven* in terms of *intensity*; but if they obeyed, God would remove that curse so that they could experience the blessings of God's provision.

And so, why does Paul here even mention *the sufferings of this present time*? Why is this *the first issue* he brings up in regards to *suffering with Christ*? It is because *that* is the most *elementary* form of suffering, one that everyone alive experiences; it is the first one we will encounter, and it is the first one we will get to apply the doctrine to. We are not under the Law, and so there is no covenantal provision from God for us to escape these things. These are things we will all deal with in life, and the Father wants to see if we are going to utilize the Spiritual resources He's provided for us in the midst of them or not.

### **Romans 8:17-18**

**17** *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

**18** *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.*

Now, Paul begins verse 18 with the word *for*. *For* is a logical word, it is a *function word* denoting *purpose* or *causal relationship*, or can be used to offer further explanation, and I think both are true in this case. Paul is offering further explanation of something that relates to our future inheritance, but is also indicating that there is in fact a cause and effect relationship between some things—between *suffering with Christ* and the glory, and is connecting that *suffering with Christ* issue to *the sufferings of this present time*, meaning there is a connection. We are to approach the things we suffer in this fallen world from the same godly viewpoint as Christ did and apply the doctrine to those situations—we must learn to utilize the Spiritual provisions God has made for us through the doctrine so that God's grace works in us to build us up, to edify and strengthen us.

The word *For* here *is* certainly used to connect the ideas in these two verses. Paul introduces us to this concept of *inheritance* and then says *For*, and so the information contained in verse 18 has to be understood in light of what was just said in verse 17. And what Paul says is *For I reckon*, meaning there is a causal relationship between what Paul knows about his future inheritance and the sufferings of this present time, because of what that word *reckon* itself *means*. There must be a *cause and effect relationship* between the knowledge of our future inheritance and the sufferings he makes reference to.

If you would, think back to when we encountered this word *reckon* in Romans chapter 6, verse 11. If you'll recall, this word is not being used in the colloquial sense as it has been historically in the American south.

When my grandmother would say, "Well, I reckon I should go to the store today," what she was saying was "I *suppose* I should," or "I *likely* will," or even "I *guess* I will," because it was an *estimation* of what she would or wouldn't do based upon some fact or another. It wasn't something definite in that sense, it was a supposition. I understand *reckon* was not *always* used that way, but often it was, and is. But *that* is not what's being communicated here, just as that's not what was being communicated in Romans chapter 6.

A *supposition*, a *likeliness*, and a *guess*, though these all contain their own distinct shades of meaning, all have something in common: they are not *definite*. But what's in view with this word *reckon* is something as definite as a math formula. What math represents is numerical interaction as found in the natural world, thus it is definite. It is the interchange, exchange, and interdependency of values, which are governed by universal principles. This word *reckon* is a term that denotes mathematical absoluteness, mathematical precision, not something that is *likely*, or *possible*, but something *real*, *absolute*, and *definite*. It is an accounting term, after all.

Consider what Charles John Smith says of the word *reckon* in his book *Synonyms Discriminated*:

*To RECKON (A. S. recnan, recnian) is to tell one by one, and deals only with matters of addition and subtraction. It is a process of units only. It is to count into a number, rank, or series; hence, analogously, to place as an item in a moral or social account, as, "I reckon him among the aristocracy." Hence the process of reckoning is more straightforward, and the result of reckoning more exact and certain than calculation, while it is less comprehensive and varied.*

Charles Smith recognized that the word *reckon* itself, at its very core, denotes something exact, something *certain*. It's something that is straightforward, dealing with matters of addition or subtraction, but is something definitive. There is mathematical precision denoted by this word choice. Consider how this word is used in Matthew 18 by Jesus in the parable of the unforgiving servant:

#### **Matthew 18:23-24**

**23** *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.*

**24** *And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.*

In taking account of his servants, the king began to reckon, to take "a count."

Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language defines the word *reckon* as follows:

**1.** *To count; to number; that is, to tell the particulars.*

*The priest shall reckon to him the money, according to the years that remain, even to the year of jubilee, and it shall be abated.*

**Leviticus 27:18**

*I reckoned above two hundred and fifty on the outside of the church.*

**2.** *To esteem; to account; to repute.*

**Romans 8:18**

*For him I reckon not in high estate.*

**3.** *To repute; to set in the number or rank of.*

*He was reckoned among the transgressors.*

**Luke 22:37**

We see here in these definitions that they all have in common the definite assigning of *value*. The second entry here in Webster's 1828 defines *reckon* as *to esteem* or as *to account*. If you *esteem* something, you are placing *value* upon it. We might say, *The man was highly esteemed*. What we are saying is, the man had a high level of value placed upon him. In the same way, when we *reckon* that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us, we are *esteeming* that this glory is of greater *value* than the sufferings.

For a man to *value* something is essentially a *heart issue*. A man might know something is valuable *intellectually*, and yet live in a manner inconsistent with that truth. An alcoholic might *know* how much better, how much more *valuable* sobriety is, and yet may continue to live inconsistently with that truth. But to truly *value and esteem* something reflects a heart position, and is translated into one's experience. One acts in accordance with what one truly *values*, even if it's inconvenient at the moment.

This is exactly what Hebrews 12 tells us about Jesus's freewill choice to endure the cross:

## **Hebrews 12:2**

*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Had a certain joy set before Him, and *despised* or *looked down* upon something else. Jesus *valued* and *esteemed* that something was of far greater importance, that something was more valuable to Him, than the things He was going to face in crucifixion, both spiritually and physically. Jesus had *reckoned* something to be so. It was more than just an idea; it was more than just a consideration.

But this is how loose we've become with the English language—we don't even see how the word *consider* is completely inappropriate for a saint who has *fully seen and believed* with *absolute certainty* that the sufferings of today are not even worthy to be compared with our future glory.

Look at how many of the modern Bible “translations” render Romans 8:18:

## **Romans 8:18**

### **New International Version**

*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

### **English Standard Version**

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

### **New American Standard Bible**

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

### **Christian Standard Bible**

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.*

The things we have been learning in regards to our inheritance and the glory that it carries with it are meant to produce a *reckoning* in our lives—they are meant to have an actual, *transactional*

*impact* on the way we conduct ourselves, because they are meant to do a work within the heart. This is *exactly* what we saw in Romans 6:11; we were to not simply know intellectually that we were dead to sin—we were not to simply *consider* ourselves dead to sin—we were to *reckon it to be so*. There was something that was supposed to be received with the same absolute certainty as 1 plus 1 equaling 2. We discussed at length in that chapter how, in order for us to *reckon it to be so*, first required absolute faith in what the word of God itself *told us*, even in the face of feelings, impulses, emotions, desires, memories, or anything else that might try to suggest the contrary. We have to decide who we're going to believe—our feelings, or what God has said. Who are we going to serve? Our experiences, or the Lord?

When we have truly internalized that truth, and understood that what God did within us spiritually *is true, and finished, and absolute*, and that all the other influences in our lives are lies contrary to that truth of our new identity, and that reality takes root not just in the mind but in the heart itself and actually impacts the way you see yourself and the way you live—only then has it been truly *reckoned*, because there is a *definitive numerical quantifying* between the truth of the spiritual reality itself and your physical life—there is a *transaction* between *truth* and *experience*.

As long as these things are just *considerations*, as long as they are just *intellectual knowledge*, they will never produce in us what the Father wants produced in us.

This is the first step in developing the first of the three godly virtues found in this chapter: a *patient endurance* in the midst of the sufferings of this present time. We must not simply *understand* that there *is* a future glory in our inheritance, in our roles as sons of God, but we must actually meditate upon that truth and allow it to change the way we perceive, approach, and interact with these sufferings. Paul is telling the Romans—he is telling *us*, right here in this verse, that he himself had reckoned this truth to be so. This is an essential aspect of our edification, and one he himself went through. If we are going to be properly established as sons, we must develop the virtue of *patient endurance*, and that virtue is developed by truly believing from the heart, by reckoning, that what the Father has in store for us is so much better than the sufferings, so much so that we shouldn't even compare the two.

I understand this is not an easy thing to do, but this is something we need to have instilled in us. This is not the *natural* response we have to pain, or to uncomfortable situations. But we are not called to live by our natural responses. We have been called to be conformed to the image of God's son.

And so, when we lose power in the middle of summer, and it's hotter inside the house than it is outside, and we're just trying to sleep, are we moaning and complaining and asking God *why*? Are we begging God to miraculously intervene so that the power comes back on so that we can get back to our life of comfort? Or do we *really believe* that the suffering is *not even worthy to be compared* with the future glory? Are our eyes set on something altogether different? Are we really *valuing and esteeming* what *He* values and esteems? Because what *He* values and

esteems is sons of God who He can educate to reign with Him in eternity, who have learned to utilize the resources He has made available to us so that we are edified unto godliness. How many saints actually view these situations through the lens that scripture provides for us here? How many believers actually develop *patient endurance* in the midst of their trials by internalizing the truth that the glory God has appointed us to far outweighs what we go through in this world? We need to hide these verses in our heart so that we can continuously remind ourselves of these truths as we go through life.

By now I hope you are realizing this is more than just a bible study. *Edification* is something that requires *the ongoing, active participation of our faith*.