

## Romans 8:18-30

“From Groaning To Glory”

Tough times, tribulation, hardship, persecution, affliction, and difficult days, we’ve spoken of them before they’re just a portion of the appointed lot in the Christian’s life. Jesus was very clear, “...*narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*” Matt 7:14 He said, “*In the world you will have tribulation;*” John 16:33 In the 15<sup>th</sup> Ch of John’s gospel He spoke to His disciples informing them that as the world hated Him, so it would hate them, and that if the world persecuted Him, that it would persecute His disciples as well, no student is above His master. Later on Paul the apostle would write to Timothy and tell him, “*Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*” 2 Tim 3:12 Christ suffered, and the bible is clear that in this world we will suffer with Him. Whether it be from verbal slander or abuse on one side of the scale, to the extreme of martyrdom on the other, at some point, and in some way, at some time every believer will suffer for Christ. Perhaps it’ll squelch you out of a higher position at work, or you’ll become automatically branded and ignored or excluded, made fun of around school, or whatever. But if it hasn’t come it will, and if you’ve lived your life as a “believer” for years and have never had any negative ramifications because of it, you might want to re-evaluate whether or not you’re truly seeking to live godly, because if the world can’t tell you apart, they’ll accept you as one of their own. But once they realize you belong to Christ, then comes the ostracizing, the criticizing, and all the rest, but that’s ok. Suffering with Christ now (temporally) means to you being glorified with Christ *eternally*.

That’s where we left off last week (Vs 17), “...Because indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be *glorified* together.” (Your bible may render it “if” but it would be better rendered “because” or “since” because suffering, and persecution as a true believer is a non-option). Remember Paul told the Philippians of his supreme desire, “...*that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*” Phil 3:10-11 They’re a package deal, how can you attain to the resurrection with out 1<sup>st</sup> being conformed to His death? The fellowship of His sufferings, conformity to His death, these things precede the resurrection life and being glorified together with Christ, the bible is clear that before honor is what? Humility, but having said all that, after carefully considering it notice what Paul says.

Vs18

You will be penalized, picked on, and persecuted for Christ, afflictions will visit your life, and you can do all you can do to try and magnify that, sing your sad songs and “Woe is me” but in the eternal perspective, if you place all the suffering, all the pain, all the persecution on one side of the scale, and then the glory that *awaits* you and will be revealed *in* you on the other side of the scale, it’s off the charts, not even worthy to be compared. The glory to be revealed in you is immeasurably infinite in comparison to any suffering or affliction that may presently plague you.

Now before you write this off thinking that whoever wrote this must not have ever had it *too* bad, do your research. This isn't some philosophical intellectual theorizing up in his ivory tower spinning out spiritual platitudes for us to be mesmerized by his deep thoughts. We're talking here about Paul the apostle who (I would dare to say) suffered more physically than any person in this room for the sake of the gospel, and probably more than any 10 or 20 of us. Hard-pressed on every side, perplexed, persecuted, struck down, this is a guy all too familiar with what it means to suffer. 5 times he received 39 stripes from the Jews, 3 times he was beaten with rods, pummeled and stoned with rocks till the city was convinced he was dead, then they drug his limp body outside the city and just dumped him there but God raised him up.

He was shipwrecked 3 times, once left bobbing a day and a night out in the open Mediterranean Sea, weariness and toil, sleeplessness often, cold, with out clothing, in hunger and thirst, common place to be fearing for his life not only from strangers but from his own countrymen. and What did he have to say about it all? "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*" 2 Cor 4:17-18 Now in the context of everything I just shared with you about this man's life, and after all he'd been through for the sake of the gospel, it's difficult for us to see how it is that he could consider it, "*Light afflictions.*" But there's a key in those Vs, and it's the same key we see here in Vs 18 of Ch 8 and it's the *eternal perspective*. God is able to use those things that afflict us *temporally* to shape and mold and prepare us for our state *eternally*.

Jesus Himself being our supreme example in what it means to maintain the eternal perspective in the midst of suffering and persecution. We read in Heb 12, "*For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.*" Heb 12:3-4 The point obviously being that *He* did, as did Paul and so many others, but so many of us haven't and probably never will. But say you did, let's say you're called upon to pay the ultimate price of martyrdom for the name of Christ. Here's the deal, as a child of God, your suffering comes from men, your glory comes from God, your suffering is earthly, your glory is Heavenly. Your suffering is temporary, your glory is forever, your suffering happens in this mortal and corrupt body, your glory will shine forth from your perfected, immortal and imperishable body, you see it doesn't even compare, not really even worth mentioning in the same breath. It's not wonder Jesus said, "*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven,*" Matt 5:11-12

One more thing to notice about this Vs and we'll move on, I want you to see the fact that the glory won't be then *given to you*, but it'll simply be *revealed in you*, what's the implication? That God has already imparted, or inserted, however you want to say it, the glory is already in you, it's just yet to be revealed. Remember this Vs in that high priestly prayer of Christ there in John 17, "*And the glory which You gave Me I have given them,*" John 17:22 notice He didn't say, "I will give them," He says, "*I have given them*" it's past tense, done deal, it's been given to you, but yet to be revealed *in you*.

### Vs19-22

Here Paul personifies all of creation as groaning, and laboring awaiting its deliverance from the bondage of corruption. Speaking of the curse that it's been subjected to along with man, and Vs 19 speaks of its "earnest expectation." That phrase is a picture of someone waiting and watching for something to take place such to the extent that they're standing on their tiptoes with their neck outstretched, it's like the anticipation is killing me.

What is it that it's earnestly expecting and eagerly awaiting? The revealing of the sons of God, that day when Jesus comes back and we are made like Him having seen Him face to face. Why? Because on that day creation itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, you see as beautiful as creation is, things aren't the way God created them to be. We look at Hawaii, New Zealand, powerful pictures like Niagara Falls and all these breath taking aspects of creation and think, "This is incredible" and it is, but creation is under a curse, famine, wastelands, earthquakes, Tsunamis, floods, tornados, poisonous plants, thorns, all of those things are every bit as much of the world around us as is all of those breath taking and powerful pictures of creation. and None of those things existed before the curse.

But when Adam partook of that fruit, God connected creation to him in the curse, that is He subjected creation to futility. You find it there in Gen Ch 3, "*Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.'*" Gen 3:17-19 and Since that day creation has been eagerly awaiting the revealing of the sons of God because on that day the earth will be restored, delivered from the bondage of corruption. Isaiah speaks a little bit about that day, and he says, "*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. 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.*" Isa 11:6-9

That's the day that creation is looking for and longing for, but meanwhile it's groaning. Those trees outside are groaning over the pollution that we've put in the air, the lakeshores and beaches, oceans and lakes are groaning over the trash that we just dump all over them and in them. and Even the areas that haven't been directly violated by man have been inadvertently impacted and infected by man's sin, and creation is longing for deliverance.

But notice that the pangs that are surging through creation aren't pangs of death, they're pangs of birth, they're pointing to the fact that new life dawns on the horizon. A day when the former things shall not be remembered nor come to mind, Jesus spoke of the labor pangs of a woman about to give birth, but once the child is born and she beholds that child, the pain is just a thing of the past. That's the way it is with creation right now, all these disasters, raging fires destroying 10's if not 100's of thousands of acres throughout Texas and OK, flooding on the west coast, the hurricanes down south, it's all pointing to a renovation, and a restoration, their birth pangs, new life is on the horizon. Jesus said, *“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”* Luke 21:25-28

Vs23-25

So not only is *creation* groaning awaiting its ultimate deliverance, but so to is the *Christian*. Having been given the 1<sup>st</sup> fruits of the Spirit; in other words having had a foretaste of Heaven through God's giving us His earnest down payment of things to come in the person of the Holy Spirit we long for the fulfillment of that which we've only sampled a foretaste. We all know what its like to cry out from the deep recess of our heart, “Come quickly Lord Jesus” it's so easy to get tired of this sin infested corrupt world in which we live. and Having tasted of the Heavenly through God's giving us the Holy Spirit, it's only natural (supernaturally natural) that we desire the culmination, the consummation of that which we've only dipped ever so slightly into. Remember Lays brand potato chips old slogan, “No one can eat just one” but imagine being given only one and then having the bag rolled up and put away. There'd just be this deep inner longing to have more, but that's all you get, (well that's a lame example) but in like manner God gives us the Holy Spirit, and to taste of Heaven is incredible, but it's all we get in this life, but something deep with in us longs, groans for more. We await the adoption in its fullness, that is the redemption of our bodies. We know that positionally we've been fully adopted in Christ, but practically we still live in bodies of corruption.

We spoke of the fact last week that the day is coming when even the redemption of our bodies will take place in the resurrection, this mortal putting on immortality, this corruption putting on incorruptibility, having been sown a natural body we'll be raised a spiritual body. Having been sown in the image of the earthly man (speaking of Adam) we'll be raised in the image of the Heavenly Man (speaking of Christ) when we see Him we will be like Him, that's the promise of the scripture, and our inner man longs for that day.

We're saved in this hope, that is the assured expectation and guaranteed certainty, we're not talking about wishful thinking too good to be true, that's not biblical hope, it's a concrete reality. Even though we've yet to see it because we walk by faith, not by sight, and that's what constitutes hope, because if you see it, it's not hope anymore, but as we await the guaranteed certainty and concrete reality of the redemption of our bodies, we eagerly wait for it, with perseverance, again this word "perseverance" speaking of waiting with expectation.

#### Vs26-27

Back in Vs 26 we read, "Likewise" perhaps your bible says, "In the same way" meaning just like you await the redemption of your body with the reality of a guaranteed end, so to the Holy Spirit with that same sense of expectation and certainty helps in our weaknesses. Now don't misunderstand this, I don't believe this is saying that when you're weak the Holy Spirit kicks in and helps you out but other than that you're on your own. Though we know that God's strength is perfected in our weakness because it's in those areas that His strength shines through because on our own we'd fall on our face. But it seems more accurate to say that in our human frame we're weak in general, subject to sin, prone to gravitate towards the things of the flesh, therefore the Holy Spirit is perpetually and consistently helping us. Left to ourselves we'd all fall off the deep end, but through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives we're able to lead lives set apart to the Lord, remember one of the names of the Holy Spirit in the scriptures is "The Helper" "The Comforter" One who comes alongside us, takes up residence in us and helps us in our weak state of humanity until the day of the redemption of our bodies.

Then Paul gives us a "For instance" one of the ways that the Holy Spirit helps us is in our prayer lives. We really don't know how to pray like we should, and again I appeal to the fact that we're living in corrupt, self centered tents. We have imperfect perspectives, finite minds, the frailties of the human frame, we're dealing with spiritual limitations and all the rest, and it's impossible that these things not impact our prayer lives. We're so often trying to direct God, and get our will done in Heaven, rather than simply seeking the *direction* of God and seeking to have His will done on earth which is the primary objective of prayer. So the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, now I don't believe this is a specific reference to tongues, though I believe in the gift of tongues. But Paul says real plainly here that the groanings which the Spirit Himself makes for us *can't* be uttered. Which is to say they go beyond our ability to articulate, it's speaking of a groaning or even a deep sigh, when you don't know what to say, or even what needs to be said, some how and in some way the Holy Spirit is able to articulate through groanings, or even the word could be translated "To sigh" the perfect prayer before the throne of God. Creation groans, the Christian groans, and here we read of the Spirit's groaning. But how encouraging it is to know that the Holy Spirit is praying and interceding for you. The bible teaches us that Jesus always lives to make intercession for the saints, God the Son is interceding for you, God the Spirit is interceding for you. Now that's some pretty powerful prayer in your corner, take heart. Because He who searches the heart (speaking of God) God is searching your heart even this morning.

The bible makes reference over and over again to the fact that though man may look to the outward appearance God is looking *to* and searching *out* our heart. and If He's able to see into and understand *your* heart, then knowing the mind of His own Spirit is no problem, and He's making intercession for you according to the will of God. Let that encourage your heart, you may not know how to pray in a certain situation, in most situations (whether we think we do or not) but the Holy Spirit intercedes for us perfectly according to God's will for our lives. and Because of that, truly believing that we can rest assured of Vs 28.

### Vs28-30

These are obviously some Vs that we could spend our entire time musing *through* and meditating *on*. Vs 28 gives us a *promise* it gives us *perspective*, and it gives to us the *people* to whom it's applied.

The promise articulated in the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 words, "And we know." No room for a shadow of doubt, nothing speculative, this is certain, what's the perspective, "...that all things work together for good" the word *all* is all inclusive, it misses nothing, perhaps you had a horrendous week, or month, or year, God didn't remove this Vs during that time, it was still here. Now it doesn't say that all things are good, but that all things work together *for* good. Be it bitter, sweet, painful, pleasurable, good or bad, bright or dark, things happy or sad, easy or hard, be it prosperity or poverty, health, sickness, calm or comforting or times of calamity, soothing times, times of suffering, life and death. All the above and anything I left out, another way to understand it is that there are no accidents, God is in control and He has (listen) our eternal best interest in mind. and So He causes the things that come into our lives to work towards that end, our eternal best interest.

It can be difficult sometimes for us to maintain this perspective, remember Jacob when his sons sold Joseph into slavery and told him that he was dead? Then over the course of years they went to Egypt to buy grain and seemed to come into another series of unfortunate events. What did he say to his boys? "*You have bereaved me: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me*" Gen 42:36 Now we can identify with that, have felt that feeling ourselves, "Everything is against me!" But we also know the rest of the story, were all those things working against him? No, they were working very much for him, to save him alive in the famine and make of him a great nation, the nation of Israel, he had the improper perspective. But Joseph was able to see beyond all the calamity that fell to him, remember what *he* said to his brothers when he revealed himself to them? "...*as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.*" Gen 50:20 Proper perspective, he could see the hand of God in it ultimately, may not've understood each circumstance individually, but collectively God was doing a great work. and That's what you need to see here, it doesn't say, "All things work individually for good" an isolated circumstance might be tragic indeed, but there's a big picture at work, and God is doing a work, working all things *together* for good. That's the perspective, now who are the people to whom this promise applies?

“Those who *love* God, to those who are the called according to His purpose,” this promise is really only relevant to believers, those who *love God*. If you don’t love God, if you haven’t received Christ into your heart, then this promise doesn’t apply to you, there’s no guarantee of any redemptive value whatsoever to the circumstances of your life. Tragedy is just that, tragedy because you’re with out hope, being with out God in the world. Now if those things cause you to come to the end of you and open your *heart* to God, then praise the Lord. But there’s not guarantee of a positive result to the nonbeliever.

But to those who love God, those who’ve been called of God, every circumstance, or situation that comes about in your life, will one day work out ultimately for your good, and God’s glory. God is preparing you now, for eternity hereafter.

In Vs 29-30 Paul basically amplifies this phrase that deals with being *called* of God. and I like what Ironside had to say about it when he said, “This blessed portion is not for theologians to *wrangle over* but for saints to *rejoice in*.” and Time denies us to speak a whole lot on this, but for now just realize that predestination has to do with the foreknowledge of God. Whom God *foreknew* He predestined, remember Jesus said that He’ll say to that select group who stands before Him on that day boasting of all they’ve done in His name, “Depart from Me I never knew you.” But if you’ve given your heart to Christ God has foreknown you, before you were formed in the womb God knew you and had a plan for your life. Also understand this, predestination in the bible *never* applies to the nonbeliever, it deals with the plan of God for the believer, God predestines *no one* for hell. The only way a person goes to hell is to willfully reject God’s plan of salvation offered to mankind through the person of Jesus Christ

Here we have the purpose of God in His predestination of your life, it’s to be conformed into the image of His Son. That’s God’s ultimate aim for your life, to make you like Jesus. and Those He predestined He called, speaking of that summons to salvation, He called you, you responded, because of that He’s justified you, and those He justified, He also (notice past tense) glorified you. It’s only a matter of it waiting to be revealed *in* you as we spoke in the beginning.

Listen, I know the topic of predestination freaks a lot of people out, and the more I know, the less I realize I know. But don’t wrestle *with it*, rejoice *in* it, because God has called you. and If you don’t know Christ, give your heart to Christ and you’ll discover He’s called you to. But if you don’t want to give your heart to Christ, don’t blame Him for that, the door is open. The bible is clear that whosoever will may come. Someone once put it like this, “The elect are the whosoever wills and the non-elect are the whosoever won’ts.” I’m not altogether certain that that’s even altogether accurate but you get the idea. The fact is that God’s ways are simply higher than our ways, and some things we have to concede to the fact that we just don’t get it, but we love God and trust Him for it knowing that His heart is that none should perish but that *all* should come to repentance. and So the invitation goes out, respond to Jesus, partake of the 1<sup>st</sup> fruits of the Spirit, taste and see that the Lord is good. Today we groan, but glory is on the horizon, maintain the proper perspective and allow God His will, done His way, in *your* life.

Prayer Points: God we long for the day we'll be delivered from these bodies of corruption, having tasted the 1<sup>st</sup> fruits, we're hungry for the fullness of what awaits. We thank You that we can trust in the promise of Your Word, that all things are working together for our good, and Your glory in our lives, because we love You, and we've been called *of* You.

If God is calling out to You today, let me encourage you to respond by receiving Jesus today. God is searching your heart, He wants to justify you, glorify you in the person of His Son. Forgiveness of sin, everlasting life await, but you've got to come to Him, He won't force Himself upon You. God demonstrated His love for you on the cross of Jesus Christ He's made the way for reconciliation all you have to do is accept it. If that's Your desire, than do so now, open your heart, invite Jesus in.