

Freedom to Live

Romans 8v18-39

Please do turn in your bibles to Romans 8, and shall read from verse 18.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I wonder what you thought as the bible passage was being read. I wonder what you are undergoing currently in your life. Suffering comes to us all in one-way or another. Whether that be physical, psychological, emotional or spiritual suffering, it is common to all people of all time and of all cultures. And of course there are no easy answers as to the ultimate cause of suffering. You may also be wondering if God has somehow separated Himself from you during your pains and trials. But what is a Christian perspective on suffering? Let us look together at this most wonderful piece of Scripture.

1. Freedom from pain and suffering.

a. Creation groans (vs. 18-22). When God finished His creation, it was a good Creation (Genesis 1:31); but today it is an imperfect groaning Creation. There is suffering and death; there is pain, all of which is, of course, the result of Adam's sin. It is not the fault of creation. Note the words Paul used to describe the plight of creation: suffering (Romans 8:18), pride (Romans 8:20), bondage (Romans 8:21), decay (Romans 8:21), and pain (Romans 8:22). However this groaning is not a useless thing since Paul now compares it to a woman giving birth. There is pain, but the pain will end when the child is born. One day creation will be delivered, and the groaning creation will become a glorious creation! As people of the kingdom, we should not focus on the sufferings of today; but look forward to the coming glory (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:15-18). Today's groaning bondage will be exchanged for tomorrow's glorious freedom.

b. The Members of the Kingdom groan (vs. 23-25). The reason as Christians we groan is because we have experienced what the Apostle Paul calls "the first-fruits of the Spirit": a foretaste of the glory to come when we shall live with our King in glory. Just as the nation of Israel tasted the first-fruits of Canaan when the spies returned (Numbers 12:23-

27), so we Christians have tasted of the blessings of heaven through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This should encourage us to want to see the Lord, receive a new body, and live with Him and serve Him forever in everlasting life. We are waiting for "the adoption," which is the redemption of the body when Jesus returns according to Paul in Philippians 3:20-21. This is the thrilling climax to "the adoption" that took place at our conversion when the "Spirit of adoption" gave us the standing of an adult in the Kingdom of God. When Jesus returns, we shall enter into our full inheritance.

Meanwhile we wait and hope as Paul writes in Romans 8v24: "For we are saved by that hope". What hope is this we ask? Paul elsewhere in Titus 2v13 describes it as "The blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). The best is yet to come!! As people of the Kingdom of God, as God's children, we should not get frustrated as we see and experience suffering and pain in this world as we live in the Kingdom. As Christian believers we should know and remember that the suffering of today, will one day give way to eternal glory.

c. The Holy Spirit groans. (vs. (25-30) Just as Creation groans and as God's people also groan, what about God? Is He a distant God who is not concerned with the sufferings of His creation or His people? By no means!! Our God is not a distant God but a God actively concerned for His creation and for His people! God is concerned about the sufferings we go through. He desires for the redemption of both His creation and His people! When Jesus walked the earth, He saw what sin was doing to men and women (Mark 7:34; John 11:33-38). Today God the Holy Spirit groans with us and He feels the burdens of our weaknesses and suffering.

But the Spirit does more than groan: He prays for us in His groaning so that we might be led into the will of God. We do not always know God's will. We do not always know how to pray, but the Spirit intercedes for us

so that we might live in the will of God even though we are suffering in some way. The Holy Spirit shares the burden with us as we endure and persevere. I would like to concentrate here on verse 28 and I like the way The Message paraphrases it "*That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.*"

This verse surely ranks as one of the greatest verses in the Bible, Millions of Christians over the centuries have taken great comfort and hope from this verse. In all things God works for our good, Now the phrase, "*all things*" or as The Message puts it "*every detail in our lives*", includes not only the good, the happy and the pleasant things in life, but the bad, the unhappy and the unpleasant things as well. It includes evil, sickness and death. At the times when we are happy and things are going well, it is very easy to agree with this verse, But in times of trouble, this verse is hard to understand and still harder to believe. Now however, a question should naturally arise in our thinking,

If in every detail of our lives, God works for our good, does the term "all things" or "every detail" includes Satan and his evil works? Does God use Satan and his evil works for our good? You could argue that if the work of the devil can be used for our good, then Satan is not our enemy, but our friend.

However, as part of biblical balanced believing, the Bible clearly teaches us that the Devil is our enemy. In this world, Satan and his evil works are looking to cause harm, not to help. For the thousands of Christians who have spent their lives in jail, or have been killed for the faith, we cannot possibly say that all things have been for their good in this world. Then, how are we to understand this verse? We must understand it this way. All the things that happen to us here on earth, God will work for our good in heaven. In the previous verses, we have learnt about our future hope and future glory. Therefore, in this verse the good that Paul talks about is

heavenly good, not earthly good, On earth Satan's power is great but in heaven he has no power at all because he will not be there but cast away.. In heaven all of Satan's earthly evil will be turned to our good and to God's glory.

But having said that, it is also true that God is concerned for our welfare in this life. He cares about our bodies, our health, even our food and clothing. Jesus said, "*seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things (food, clothing etc,) will be given to you as well*" (Mt 6:33). When God allows trouble to come into our lives, He usually uses that trouble to bring about some good result in our lives here on earth (Romans 5:3-4; James 1:2-4). It is through troubles and that our faith is tested and made strong (1 Peter 1:6-7), Through various kinds of trouble God disciplines us, so that we might become more righteous (Hebrews 12: 7,10-11),

We must also remember that God's power is much greater than the devil, and the devil cannot alter God's ultimate plan for our lives. The most important thing to remember about this verse, however, is that the promise given here is given only to those who love God, and have been called according to His purpose, the members of the kingdom of God. If we love God, are called according to His purpose, and therefore members of the Kingdom of God, then we can fully trust Him to work for our good in all things, Our hope is in God; He is faithful and able to fulfil all He has promised (Hebrews 10:23).

Those that are in the Kingdom of God, that would call themselves believing Christians, should never give up in times of trial and suffering because God is at work in the world (Romans 8:28), and He has a perfect supreme plan (Romans 8:29), God has two purposes in that plan: our good and His glory. Ultimately we will all be like the Lord Jesus Christ. Best of all, God's plan will succeed – He has the victory and that victory was gained at the Cross of Calvary. It started in eternity when He chose

us in Christ (Ephesians 1:4-5; 1 Peter 2), He predestined that one day we would be like His Son. Predestination applies only to those in the Kingdom of God, not to those outside the Kingdom, Nowhere are we taught that God chooses who will remain outside the kingdom, If people remain outside the kingdom, it is because they choose to, by refusing to trust and believe in Jesus Christ (John 3:18-21), Those whom He chose, He called (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)' when they responded to His call, He justified them, and He also glorified them, This means that the believer has already been glorified in Jesus (John 17:22); the revelation of the glory awaits the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore how can we believers ever be discouraged and frustrated when we already share the glory of God? Our suffering today only guarantees much glory when Jesus Christ returns,

2. Freedom from fear of separation.

Sometimes we fail to trust in God, when we go through hard times and suffering, It is natural for us to then think that maybe I am somehow separated from the Kingdom as a result of my failure, The emphasis of this section is the security of the believer, We do not need to fear the past, present or the future because we are secure in the love of Jesus. There are 5 reasons why we are secure and will never be separated from God if we belong to the Kingdom.

a. God is for us (v 31). God the Father is for us and has proved it by giving His Son (vs. 32). God the Son is for us (vs. 34) and so is God the Spirit (vs. 26). Sometimes we are like Jacob and cry "All these things are against me" (Genesis 42:36), when actually everything is working for us. *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* As we enter each day, we should realize that God is for us. There is no need to fear anything, for the loving Father desires only the best for His children, even if they must

go through some suffering to receive His best. *"For I know the plan that I have for you", declares the Lord, 'plans for good and not for evil to give you a future and a hope'"* (Jeremiah 29:11).

b. Christ died for us (v 32). If when we were outside the Kingdom of God as non-believers God gave us His best, now that we are His children, will He not give us all that we need? Jesus Christ used this same argument when He tried to convince people that it was foolish to worry and fear. God cares for the birds and the sheep, and even for the flowers in the fields; surely He will care for you! God is dealing with His people on the basis of grace, freely giving all things necessary to His people in His Kingdom.

c. God has justified us (v 33). This means that He has declared us righteous in Jesus Christ and members of His kingdom. Satan would like to accuse us (Zechariah 3:1-7; Rev 12:1-10), but we in the kingdom of God stand firm in Jesus Christ. We are God's chosen in Jesus Christ and are accepted. God will not accuse us since it is He who has justified us. For Him to accuse us would mean that His salvation was a failure and we are still in our sins. We may accuse ourselves, and men may accuse us' but God will never take us to court and accuse us. Jesus has already paid the penalty and we are secure in Him.

d. Christ intercedes for us (v34). Both the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ pray for us (Romans 8:26-27, 34). The same Saviour who died for us is now praying for us in heaven. As Jesus is also our interceding High Priest, He can give us the grace we need to overcome temptation and defeat the enemy (Hebrews 4: 14-16). As our Advocate, He can forgive our sins and restore our fellowship with God (1 John 1 :9-2:2). Intercession means that Jesus Christ represents us before the throne of God and we do not have to represent ourselves.

e. Christ loves us (vs. 35-39). In the previous verses, Paul has proven that God cannot fail us, but is it possible that we can fail Him? Suppose some great trial or suffering comes and we fail? What then? Paul deals with this problem and explains that nothing can separate us from the love God in Jesus Christ.

Two points to note here. Firstly, God does not shelter us from the sufferings and hard times of life. He doesn't do that because we need them for our spiritual growth (Romans 5:3-5). As we read in vs. 28, God assures us that the difficulties of life are working for us and not against us. **God** allows trials and sufferings to come that they may be used for our good and His glory. We endure trials for His sake (Romans 8:36), and since we do, do you think that He will abandon us? Of course not! Instead, He comes closer to us through the hard times.

Secondly, He gives us the power to conquer and overcome (vs. 37). We are more than conquerors, super-conquerors, for the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives us the victory and adds more victory. When Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose again 3 days later, victory was assured! Victory was won! We need not fear life nor death, events past, events today or events in the future, because Jesus Christ loves us and gives us the victory. This is not a promise with conditions attached. It is not *"If you do this, God will do that."* The security we have in Jesus is established, and we claim it for ourselves because we are in Jesus Christ. Nothing can separate us from Jesus Christ, so we should believe it and rejoice in it.

So in conclusion, we have seen that God is not distant but is close and personal. He cares for His creation and for His people through the ministry of the God the Holy Spirit. We have seen we will one day have freedom from pain and suffering. We also saw that there is to be no fear from separation from God if we hold onto Him. God is for us. Christ died

for us. God has declared us His sons and daughters if we choose to follow Him. Jesus Christ prays for us and He loves us.

So what about you? I guess there are two kinds of people here tonight.

If you are a Christian here tonight, the torment and suffering we all endure today, are all part of living in the kingdom of God. As Christians, it is part of our Christian life to suffer for the kingdom, through such things as persecution. It is, as we look to the future, as we see that these things that are temporarily making us suffer, are conforming us to the image of Jesus and to the supreme glory of God, and not for ourselves. In any pain or suffering we endure, we shouldn't give up, because God has not given up. Get up and go from here knowing that God is holding your hand in these hard times. Keep holding to Him, because He is holding to you with his outstretched arms. We know from the book of Revelation that when that momentous day in history comes about, that our God will take our face in His hands and wipe away our tears of sadness.

And if you happen not to be a Christian here tonight, one thing separates you from God now, and that is your own sin, which God did not create. If you are not yet a Christian and you are not in His kingdom, you are already separated from God. To be in the kingdom of God, you simply have to trust in Jesus, and believe in Him for your future. If that is you, please do not leave here tonight without talking to somebody about how you can take that step.

Thank you.