

Romans: Verse-by-Verse

Romans 8:18-22

Student Notes:

- **A Contrast Of Two Periods: Here, and Hereafter.**

Verse 18: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

- Our Present Sufferings versus Our Future Glory: (1). The sufferings and glory of God's creation, in verses 19–22. (2). The sufferings and glory of God's children, in verses 23–27.

John Stott's Outline:

1. The Sufferings And The Glory Belong Together Indissolubly.

Christ's sufferings and glory went hand-in-hand. While we might often focus on his miracles and other displays of power it was only a matter of time before his overarching purpose for coming to this world would be revealed in suffering.

- **Jesus' Words To Peter:** "Get behind me, adversary, for you do not value the things of God." – Matthew 16:23
- **Jesus's Words to the Emmaus Disciples:** "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." - Luke 24:25-27

If suffering and glory were tied together in Jesus' experience, why would they be separated in ours? See: 1 Peter 5:10; Philippians 1:29; Philippians 3:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; Revelation 2:10

John Stott: "...The sufferings and the glory are married; they cannot be divorced. They are welded; they cannot be broken apart."

2. The Sufferings And The Glory Characterize The Two Ages

Paul clearly envisions what is already and what will be: Two distinct Greek words make this contrast: (1). "Patheōmata" which means, "sufferings". (2). "Doxa" – which means, "glory".

A closer look at "Patheōmata", or "sufferings":

Most of the time, we think of "sufferings" as suffering for Christ. However, "Patheōmata" can be applied to the opposition of the world we feel, as well as human frailties -- both physical and moral.

- **Good News:** God acknowledges all of that. He realizes that our lives in this world involve the world's opposition as well as our physical and moral frailties.
- **More Good News:** The "glory" (Doxa) will one day be ours. We cannot separate sufferings from glory, but we can evaluate them; we can prioritize them.

3. The Sufferings And The Glory Cannot Be Compared.

It is obvious that Paul has reached a very firm conviction. He says these sufferings are not worthy of comparing to the future "Doxa".

Paul had plenty of experience to work with. See: 2 Corinthians 11. Even he did not consider the magnitude of his own suffering to be worthy to be weighed against future glory.

- An additional word on "sufferings":

While Paul's list is heavily weighted towards suffering in the course of ministry, he also highlights the daily concerns for the churches, the fact that he suffers "weakness" and his fights with temptations.

As painful as they can be, Paul has done an evaluation. He says they are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

4. The Sufferings And The Glory Concern Both God's Creation And God's Children.

John Stott: "Paul ... writes from a cosmic perspective. He presents a relationship between the sufferings and glory of both the old, material order and the new people of God. Both creation and God's people are suffering and groaning now; both are going to be set free together:

"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..."

As Paul sees it, creation itself has been struggling beneath the weight of sin. Since nature has been forced to share in the curse of sin – it also shares in our expectation of redemption. Paul says that creation has been groaning like a woman in childbirth.

Paul says creation waits for the "sons of God to be revealed." Greek wording for "eager expectation": To "wait with the head raised and the eye fixed on that point of the horizon from which the expected object is to come".

Creation is looking up -- waiting for the moment when God completes his work in His children. Stott: That moment will include: 1. The disclosure of their identity on the one hand and their investiture with glory on the other."

- **Three Reasons Creation Eagerly Awaits These Events:**

1. The Creation Was Subjected To Frustration: Romans 8:20-21

"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 freedom and glory of the children of God."

Paul no doubt is thinking of the judgment of God which came because of Adam's rebellion. As we recall, God said the ground was "cursed" because of him.

2. The Creation Will Be Liberated: vv. 20-22

“In hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay...”

The pivotal word: “Hope”. Creation has maintained a confidence that one day the Creator will restore it to its original state and purpose.

Creation was subjected to the curse because of Adam's rebellion, but now a New Adam has accomplished his mission. He is sitting at the Father's right hand – waiting for the moment of final victory.

As a result, Creation's frustration will not be permanent. God has promised two events will happen together: The sons and daughters of God will come into their inheritance and creation will be restored.

3. Creation Is Expecting Deliverance: v. 22

Paul says the creation is currently “groaning” – and has been since the day it was subjected to Satan's dominion.

John Stott: “Its groans are not meaningless, however, or symptoms of despair. On the contrary, they are like the pains of childbirth, for they provide assurance of the coming emergence of a new order.”

Ancient Jewish literature: Israel's sufferings are “the woes of the Messiah” or “The birthpangs of the messianic age”.

Jesus used the same analogy: Israel's end-times suffering -- false teachers, wars, famines and earthquakes as “the beginning of birth-pains” or “the first birth-pangs of the new age”.

Three dominant themes:

1. The creation's subjection to frustration was in hope (v. 20).
2. The bondage to decay will give place to the freedom of glory (v.21).
3. The pains of labour will be followed by the joys of birth (v. 22).