

Romans 8:18 – 25 Security through the sure hope of glory in the believer's soul.

1. Does it matter how a Christian handles suffering?

The answer is an absolute yes. It is the difference between glorifying God through tribulation and being defeated by it. It is a matter of our own assurance of God's love toward us and our testimony before men. The ungodly will be careful to observe a Christian in times of trouble for it is under pressure that a Christian will show forth his true nature and his faith in Christ.

2. How does the apostle encourage the believer in the midst of troubles?

In verse 18 he uses the logic of long-term gain. When we weigh the Christian's troubles on the scales of eternal glory they we get their true measure. The word "worthy" v18 gives us the word "axiom" in the English language. An axiom is a self-evident truth. It needs no proof.

The apostle had just stated that Christians are joint heirs with Christ. If that is rightly understood, if it truly sinks into our minds, then there can be no argument for self-pity or shame even in times of trouble. We possess all the riches of Christ and shall reign with Him in glory. Note how verse 18 begins with "for" which can mean because. Link that with "we shall be glorified together" v16 and you see the apostle's logic.

3. What do we take from the statement: "the glory which shall be revealed in us (v18b)."

Our security in Christ and our joint position with Christ ensures our glorification. Christians in this world are justified and are being sanctified, but we have yet to be glorified. Not until Christ returns shall our bodies be changed into the likeness of Christ (1John 3:2).

Now we have the spirit of Christ; then we shall have the full likeness of Christ. We shall see him as He is and we shall be like Him. This hope stirs us to purity of life (1John 3:3). We strive and struggle to be as holy as possible this side of glory. This striving in the flesh is the cause of much grief and sorrow to our hearts, for our desires are greater than we can achieve in this world while we are in the flesh.

4. What is the significance of the apostle's way of thinking or reckoning on this subject of suffering?

"Reckon" v18 is to apply logic. It is evident that since we shall be "glorified together" with Christ that anything we endure for a little time here on earth is worth enduring.

In suffering there is the logic of reality. The apostle does not deny suffering. He does think about it and he factors it into his life. He does not say it is unnecessary, or nullified by being a Christian. Rather he shows that the suffering is real. It is, however, to be endured as a Christian with all the hope and all the confidence that God's love and grace is still flowing into the lives of His suffering children. Suffering does not change our status as a Christian. Rather, our readiness to endure suffering as a Christian confirms our status as children of God. It is because we are heirs with Christ that we will be loyal to him when we face the rebellion of this world against us for Christ's sake. We suffer not in defeat or in misery but with our eye to the glory that shall be ours.

In suffering there is the logic of time - "this present time" – not just a period of trouble for an individual Christian, but the whole time that the world is under the curse. All of life here on earth since the fall is troublesome and Christians are subject to the same effects of the curse while they remain on the earth. Trouble ought not to surprise us nor shake our confidence in Christ for these reasons:

- Our suffering is for this brief present time versus the future time of eternal glory.
- The present time of suffering will end while our future glory with Christ will never end. It is eternal.
- The present time is marked by waiting. Christians wait for the Son to appear. We watch and live in hope of the glory shall appear at the revelation of Christ. Only then will we have life that is full and satisfying to our souls.

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In suffering there is the logic of hope. We are to use this logic of hope in working through our suffering in this world. We are not to go into denial, or seek mere distractions from our suffering. They are real, but calculate what you are enduring now in this earthly state (time/age) and reckon how little it is in comparison to the future glory we shall enjoy. Count in also what you endure because you are a disciple of Christ and compare it with your future state as a glorified Christian. You will not be ashamed of Christ then, so with this logic why should you be ashamed of Him now. This kind of logic will comfort our hearts and allow this hope to well up within us.

Martin Lloyd Jones stated: “Christianity never provides a ready-made comfort. You only enjoy the Christian comfort and consolation as you put into practice this process of ‘reckoning’. It is not something that is done to you. Christianity is not like a drug which acts on you; it is not like the Roman Catholic view of the sacraments which, they say, act *ex opera operato*, which means that they act in and of themselves without your doing anything at all. Not so! It is nothing mechanical. You only get the comfort of the Christian message as you do what it tells you to do. The Apostle says, therefore, that, when he suffers, he view his suffering in light of this glorious event which is yet to be. The immediate result of this, he tells us, is that he finds that ‘the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us’”.

5. What is the apostle’s argument of hope regarding creation waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God? v 19 – 22

The term creature in vs 19 & 20 means the whole creation. It refers to the earth under the curse, which was “made subject to vanity” (V20). Think of weeds, thorns, disease, pests and death in the world. The things that we continually struggle against and can never eradicate. Only the coming of Christ will change the world into a curse-free environment.

Note the link the apostle makes between the fall of man in these verses and the renewal that will happen at the redemption of our bodies (v23). The earth was cursed because of man’s sin; the earth will be delivered from that bondage through man’s redemption.

In v19 the apostle personifies the earth as “waiting”. It is fully expecting deliverance from the curse when Christ returns to put Christians on display (manifestation) to shine forth in sin-free bodies. Then too the earth will be curse-free. For this the earth is waiting and groaning under the misery of the curse.

The Christian, who has the Holy Spirit dwelling within, also groans against the vanity of this world. V23 We long for a better world that is free from the curse. The Christian’s peace in this world comes from the hope we have of a better world. We are therefore waiting for our adoption – the fulfilment of our adoption as the sons of God.

How should these truths affect a Christian’s view of the world in its present cursed state?

How should this affect our expectations of creating a better world, or a perfect world with even a perfect society?

Should we be concerned that we are destroying the environment? What is the perspective of the ungodly versus the Christian to the use of the earth?

