

Romans 8:18-25

Introduction

Fear may cause panic and a total abandonment of rational thought and action. That is why sometimes people, who are competent swimmers, nevertheless drown. This scenario often also occurs in the spiritual realm when we are faced with suffering. Suffering and persecution can drive us to panic so that we abandon rationality and begin to thrash about and drown in our own fears.

Summary

In Romans 8:18-25, Paul announces that the Christian life, both personal and corporate, is marked by suffering until the consummation of the age, but he also explains why this suffering does not compare to the weight of glory when God places them on the scale.

1. Preliminary Question

Why does Paul descend from the heights of the glories of our redemption to valley of our sufferings in this world? The brief answer is that Christians live straddling the two ages, the old and new creations. Yes, we have been given the right to eternal life (**Romans 5**) and have been justified from sin (**Romans 6**) and the law (as a covenant) (**Romans 7**) but we still dwell on this side of glory. Rather than being panicked or discouraged by the process of our redemption as we await the consummation of the age, the resurrection of the dead, and our glorification, Paul explains the nature of our sanctification and the Christian life so that "we do not lose heart" and so we ultimately understand that "our light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (**2 Cor. 4:17**).

2. Present Suffering vv. 18-25

Paul understood the depths of our redemption through union with Christ and had caught a glimpse of the future glories (**2 Cor 12:1-4**) but he was also intimately familiar with the way of the cross and the sufferings of Christ (**Col. 1:24**).

The apostle wants us to know that suffering is not inconsistent with the blessings of their union with Christ and the dawn of the new creation. He reminds us that whilst we live in this present age, we will suffer-whether in the struggle of putting to death the deeds of the flesh or undergoing persecution for the sake of Christ.

When he compares the suffering of this present age with the weight of glory that will be revealed in us at the consummation, however, he tells us that there is no comparison. He explains the source of his confidence in the midst of suffering (**Rom. 8:19**). At the consummation, we who wage the battle of sanctification, who suffer, will be glorified with Christ.

Why does all creation, animate and inanimate, eagerly await the reveling of the sons of God (**Rom. 8:20-21**)? God subjected the creation to this curse in the knowledge that He would one day remove it at the consummation. Even more so, Christians also long for the consummation (**Rom 8:23**). Who would not eagerly look forward to this grand event in which we experience the completion of the fierce battle with sin, the end of suffering and persecution, and our vindication?

Paul explains that the end of all things, the consummation, resurrection, and our glorification is the end goal of our redemption. He then concludes this thought with the idea that we are saved by faith pregnant with hope. (**Rom. 8:24-25**).

Believers look suffering in the face and do not fear or lose hope, because we rest in the promises of God given in Christ and applied by the Spirit.

3. Eternal Perspective vs. 18

When we place our current suffering on the scales, it cannot be compared to the surpassing glory that will be revealed. Paul was intimately familiar with suffering (**2 Cor. 11:25-27**), yet could take all this suffering and tribulation and still say that it was not worthy to be compared with the glory that would be revealed in him (**1 Cor. 2:9**). We follow in the footsteps of our Savior. Just as He endured humiliation and suffering, so too we must do likewise but, just as He was glorified, we too will be glorified (**1 Cor. 15:48-49**).

Christ shone forth His glory in His sufferings as well as in his glorification (**John 17:1-5**). So we too shine forth the glory of Christ in our own Christ-like humiliation now, as we will brilliantly shine it forth in our glorification (**2 Cor. 4:6-11**).

Let us not lose hope in the face of our current sufferings.

Our redemption in Christ, the consummation of the age, the resurrection, and our glorification should be cause to give us great hope in the face of our present suffering.

4. Practical Application

So, then, how do then live?

Will we allow the knowledge of our current sufferings to strangle our hope in Christ?

Will we allow our suffering to drown out our knowledge of who Christ is, what He has done, and our union with Him? Will we let fear rob our lungs of the air of the new creation and drown in our sufferings? Will we panic and forget that the very Spirit of the living God indwells us and will transform our lowly bodies?

If you find yourself drowning in your fears, open the eyes of your faith and look to the One who saved you - Jesus Christ, the One who entered the miry depths of death so that you might have eternal life. Pray and cry out to Him that He would strengthen your faith, give you peace in the midst of the storm, relieve your fear-stricken heart (**2 Cor. 4:16-18**).