

Romans 8:18-25

Verse 18

Christians suffer (note verse 23)

- Suffering is for, in, and with Jesus – Romans 8:17, 2 Corinthians 1:5, Philippians 1:29, 2:4-11, 3:10-11, Hebrews 2:9-11, 1 Peter 4:12-13
 - We have a God that suffered for us, suffers with us, and who leads us through and out of it.
- Paul is not speaking from ignorant naivety – 2 Corinthians 11:22-33 & 12:10
- All suffering is ultimately from the fall
 1. Suffering for sanctification – Romans 5:3-4, 8:13 & 17 – Warring with our sin is painful
 2. Suffering from death and its symptoms – Romans 8:10
 3. Suffering from persecution – Matthew 5:11-12 (consistent of the saints in history), 10:16-18, 13:21 (when, not if, persecution comes), Mark 10:29-31, 2 Timothy 3:12, & 1 John 3:13
 4. Suffering as a part of loving a fallen world – Matthew 23:37 & Matthew 5:38-48
 5. Suffering, because we have an enemy – Ephesians 6:12, 1 Peter 5:8
 6. Suffering from hard work and labor – Genesis 3:16-17
 7. Suffering for unknown reasons – Job (pretty much the whole book), John 11 (Lazarus)
 8. Suffering from anticipation of the already not yet – Romans 8:23

“this present time”

- The key to knowing what timeframe is being referenced is in verse 23, “the redemption of our bodies.”
 - The time is between when we are born and our resurrection.
 - At this point the problems of the fall are resolved
 - This means it does not continue afterward (eternity) – Revelation 21:3-4
 - Suffering is temporary, but the glory to come is eternal

“not worth comparing” to future glory

- This does not diminish the suffering, but heightens the anticipation of glory
 - Romans 9:23, 1 Cor. 2:6-7, 2 Cor. 3:18, Colossians 1:27, 3:4, Hebrews 2:10, 2 Timothy 2:8-13 – Revelation 3:14-22 & 4:2-11
 - We may not know why God does things this way, but we won't lament His methods in eternity. It will be too good.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 – light, momentary suffering, preparing for a weight of glory.

Verses 19-21

Even creation is on the edge of its seat, so to speak, waiting for that day

- Creation subject to futility from the fall – Genesis 1:26-31 & 3:17-18
- Creation also has the hope of new life – Revelation 21:1 & 5

Verses 22-24

Both creation and Christians are “groaning” in simultaneous pain and anticipation

- Joyful in suffering, because of hope (not wishful thinking, but true hope)
- Hebrews 12:1-3

Application:

The problem of pain

- If God is all loving, all knowing, and all powerful, why do we suffer?
 - Some conclude that there can't be a good reason for such a world.
 - Some even conclude that the pain isn't worth the joy, so they conclude that life itself is immoral
 - Antinatalism
- Tim Keller: There is a difference between saying, to say "there is no good answer" is really saying, "I can't think of a good answer."
- Ravi Zacharias: Love is the highest moral good. Love mandates choice. Choice mandates options. The alternative to good is evil. Evil without pain is far worse, for there is no incentive to turn away.
- The philosopher: Whatever you do with your pain, don't throw out God. Without Him, pain is neither meaningful nor evil. It just is.

We don't have all of the answers in our suffering. But ...

- We have a God who does not spare Himself from suffering beside us and even for us.
- We have the hope of eternal life in a place that is better, by far, than our present.
- We have the assurance of this hope, because our suffering is sanctifying us.

Questions:

Did anything jump out to you from the text? Anything that landed for you or anything that was not clear?

Have you ever wrestled with the problem of pain? Do you ask God "why" when you are hurting?

Of all of the kinds of suffering you've experienced (loneliness, physical pain, heartbreak), what was the worst? Can you think of anything from Jesus' life, where you would say that He may have felt something similar?

When you compare your worst pain and your highest joy, what seems more weighty?

Have you ever had simultaneous sorrow and joy?

What are some good things to remember when you are having your worst days? How can you remember to cling to these on those days?