

More Than Conquerors 3

Suffering For Glory

Romans 8:17-25

Memory Verses: Romans 8:18

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

We are more than conquerors in Christ! Which means, we have victory in Jesus! A victory that proclaims, we are not condemned, and a victory accompanied by the power of the Spirit. We have a new station and a new support. Our past is settled, and our present is empowered!

But as they say in the infomercials... but wait... there's more! This week we will recognize that being more than conquerors in Jesus means that our suffering is not really the suffering we thought it was. **Christ reframes our pain and gives our suffering purpose!** Even in our greatest defeats, Christ gives us the victory! Look with me at our passage this morning in **Romans 8:17-25**.

This is a big deal. This is a very important subject. It's so important that our bible contains an entire book about it; the book of Job. Will we still stand for Christ when our faith is tested? Will we continue to trust in the overwhelming victory we have in Christ when the trials, storms, suffering, and pain come our way? Will we stand strong in the middle of those storms, declaring our triumph or curse Him as Job's wife suggested. Because, let's be honest, it's easy to talk about being more than conquerors when life is going well. It's easy to rise to the station and walk worthy of the calling when life feels steady and uncomplicated.

But what about when it hurts? What about when the diagnosis comes back positive? What about when the prayer isn't answered the way you want it to be? What do you do when it feels like you are being punished for being faithful? The way we answer this question changes everything. Because if victory only works when life is easy... then its not real victory.

Today, I want you to see clearly that your pain is one of the greatest tools you have to leverage your life for the kingdom of God and the Gospel of Christ! Today, I want you to see that your suffering isn't an interruption but its actually a part of the process. Today, I want you to see that God has a plan and purpose for your pain. Your pain isn't the end of your story. Your pain is your story. Because without pain to conquer, there is no victory.

Horatio Spafford was a very successful lawyer and businessman in the 1800s in Chicago. He loved the Lord. He was faithful in all of his ways. And he was very generous with his wealth. And then tragedy hit him hard. First, the Great Chicago Fire wiped out much of his wealth.

Then, in trying to help his family recover, he sent his wife and four daughters to Europe. On the way there, their ship sank. His wife survived but his four daughters all drowned. His wife sent him a telegraph from Europe which simply said, "saved alone." Spafford boarded a ship to go meet her and as the ship passed over the spot where his daughters died he wrote down these words; when peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul."

Today's main point is simple; **God Is Not Wasting Your Pain. He Is Preparing Your Glory**. Today, I want us to see three ways God is preparing your glory through your sufferings.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see today is that... **Your Pain Is Part Of The Process**. Look again with me at **vs.17**. For a Christian, for someone who is stationed IN CHRIST, suffering is not merely a possibility... it is an expectation. This verse makes it clear... one of the sure ways you know that you are a Christian is that you suffer for Christ. And if you want to be glorified with Christ... then you are, in a sense, commanded to suffer with Him.

Our way of thinking about this is so backwards. We often feel that if we follow Jesus, then Jesus will make our lives comfortable and safe. In fact, many Christians see it as part of the package: Jesus, I will go to church if you make life better. So, they actually seek out safe and comfortable lives with no risk and no cost. If we come across a trial then, it's an inconvenience and interruption of our easy Christians spin on the American dream. But **suffering is not an interruption of the Christian life; it is part of walking with Christ**. Pain is a part of the process. **2 Timothy 3:12** tells us that if we live for Christ we will be persecuted. **Philippians 1:29** tells us that we have been granted suffering for Christ. It's a gift. Suffering for Christ isn't a punishment... its part of the calling!

It reminds me of the Christians in the underground church in China. In his book "The Insanity of God," Nik Ripken speaks of how the Chinese will not let you become a leader in their church until you've gone through the process of suffering for Christ. In China, if you are caught worshipping in an underground church, or carrying a non-state sanctioned Bible, or preaching, or sharing the Gospel... you get a state mandated minimum sentence of 3 years in jail. Because this is so standard among the chinese Christians, until you have served your 3 year jail sentence you cannot become a pastor of one of their churches.

The point is this... **suffering for Christ is not a punishment... it is a privilege**. We have to change our perspective. If we are IN Christ... it's going to happen. Embrace it and give God the glory for it! **God Is Not Wasting Your Pain. He Is Preparing Your Glory**.

The second thing we need to see today is that... **Your Pain Is Part Of The Plan**. Look again with me at **vs.20-22**. God has placed your suffering inside a much bigger story. All of creation has been suffering since the fall in the Garden of Eden. But not because of an accident. But because God himself subjected it. It can be very hard to wrap our minds around, but the sin in the garden, however not God's doing and not God's design, was part of God's plan. And, by extension, the suffering of creation, nature, animals, and of course humanity... was also part of God's plan.

Why? So God could save it! So, through Christ, all of creation would obtain freedom of the glory of the children of God. **Verse 19** tells us that all of creation, even if they are unaware of it, longs for the salvation of all things... when those who are in Christ will be revealed as the sons of God. The point is; **your pain feels big until you see what God is building**.

Look at **vs.18** again; the verse this whole passage hinges on. There will be a glory that will be revealed to us. When? When will we be glorified and revealed as the sons of God? When will we receive freedom from the bondage to corruption? **Colossians 3:4** and **1 John 3:2** tells us clearly. At his appearing. At the second coming we will be glorified as he is glorified. **Philippians 3:20-21** and **1 Corinthians 15:52** tell us that we shall be changed and given incorruptible bodies and souls. The point is simple; we must suffer now because it's part of God's plan. And though we can't understand how our pain is part of his plan, we can trust in it because He is good. And, we can leverage it because, though it is heavy and significant, it is temporary. We can risk it because it presents no loss to us, only benefit.

Look at **18** one more time. Our present pain isn't worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us. Meaning our prize won't be equal to our pain. In fact, it won't even be close. Even if your pain in this life is a 10 out of 10... the worst imaginable suffering, your prize will be greater. And it will not merely be a 100/10 or 1000/10 or 10000/10... we can still kind of compare that. No it will be closer to a million out of 10 or a billion out of 10 or even greater. In other words, not worth trying to compare.

And what does that have to do with you right now? Well it changes your perspective. I know you guys don't ever play the lottery because you are good Christians... but lets just say you did... You pay \$5 - \$10 for the ticket. But the prize is 5 million dollars. You have leveraged your \$10 for a chance to win a fortune. Totally worth it in your eyes. Critics will say, man you could have bought milk with that money or food for your family... but you think; "the suffering of going without milk and bread is worth the chance to win 5 million dollars. Now get this. Jesus says, your pain in this world is like that \$5 - \$10 dollars. You don't see it that way... but Jesus is telling you... it's nothing, risk it, just lay it down!

But here's the catch... your giving your pain and suffering up, not for a chance to win the big prize... but because the big prize is guaranteed. And the big prize isn't 5 million dollars, its not 10 billion dollars, its greater than all of the riches on earth. It's eternal life, Heaven, glory, glorification, and it is guaranteed for those who are in Christ! Do you get it. Your temporary suffering is nothing compared to what you have in christ and what you will have in Christ forever. The pain is worth it because the pain is part of the plan! **God Is Not Wasting Your Pain. He Is Preparing Your Glory**.

The last thing we need to see today is that... **Your Pain Has a Purpose**. Look again with me at **vs.23**. We groan inwardly as we wait eagerly. The point is clear. As we suffer in this life something is happening inside of us. Our pain is producing something in our souls. Look back at **Romans 5:3-5**. We didn't spend much time on this verse when we came across it earlier this year because I knew we would talk about it here. **We must suffer because God desires us to be changed through the process for the purpose of leveraging our lives for the glory of God. When we suffer and we accept it as something from God we build an immunity to it. We grow thicker skin and stronger resolve. We don't become caloused to people or God, rather we don't allow our pain to effect our joy as much as it once did. When we learn to endure through pain without letting it destroy our joy, it then builds our character. It changes the way we relate with others. Instead of letting our pain destroy us, we now use our pain to mentor and disciple others. Eventually pain is merely a tool by which we give others hope in Christ! Suffering is a tool God gives you to become the person he wants you to be and the person the world needs you to be.**

Now back to **Romans 8:24-25**. Our suffering produces spiritual maturity, but it also strengthens our hope. As we just saw, our spiritual maturity is used to give others hope in the salvation of Christ. But it also gives us a stronger hope for what is to come. And in doing so it weakens our attachment to this world. The less we hope in this world the better. Why? Because this world will let you down and leave you dry. Your stuff will rot, your money will devalue, your leaders will betray you, your body will die... But if we keep our eyes on the prize... these little sufferings will have less of an effect on us. **Our hope isn't in the things of this world which cause us pain... its in the God of this world which gives us purpose. God Is Not Wasting Your Pain. He Is Preparing Your Glory.**

Application

So..... So what do we do with all of this? Stop asking, "Why is this happening to me?" and start asking, "What is God doing through this?" Your pain is not random, it's part of the process of following Christ, part of the plan God is unfolding, and it's actively shaping something in you. This week, when suffering shows up, don't waste it. Let it push you toward God, toward

spiritual maturity, toward evangelism. Let it deepen your hope, and remind you this world is not your home. Let it encourage you to leverage your life... cause this pain is nothing... and his glory and our glorification are everything! **God Is Not Wasting Your Pain. He Is Preparing Your Glory.**

Conclusion

There's an old story about a child watching his grandmother work on a large tapestry from under the loom. Where he sat, the tapestry looked like a mess. There were loose threads and nasty knots. The colors were jumbled and nothing looked intentional. The child says, Grandma, this looks horrible, what a mess. Then the Grandmother said come up here and look. And when the child looked from the top down everything changed. The threads weren't random, the knots weren't mistakes, and the colors fit together to make a beautiful pattern. Right now, we are living under the tapestry. All we see are the painful knots, and the confusing suffering. We may ask, what is the point of all of these loose threads that make no sense. And we are asking God... why are you doing this? But one day we will see it from his perspective and when we do we will realize... Every thread has a purpose, every fiber was part of the plan... every storm, every trial, every heartache, was being used for something too awesome for us to ever comprehend. So trust Him with your pain. He's still weaving... and it will be worth it one day.