

Grounded & Growing

The Tension

Romans 8:18-25

January 12, 2025

HDBC

Romans 8 is all about being grounded and growing; being grounded in Christ through salvation and growing in Christ through intentional effort and determination. Spending consistent time in God's word will do both. Studying Romans 8 provides a great example of this. So, as we work through this chapter let's confirm our salvation and grow in our faith.

When you make a conscious decision to trust Jesus as your savior, He forgives your sins, adopts you into His family, and sends His Spirit to live in you. **The one thing he does not do is to take you out of this world and into Heaven.** He leaves us in the same sinful bodies and in the same evil world where we will experience difficult things for a while. We know that Heaven is real and we will be there one day, but not yet. **Because we know about Heaven, yet still live in this world, we live in a tension.** Living for Christ in a broken world, while longing for the unbroken, perfect Heaven.

In this text, Paul writes about this tension. **READ: Romans 8:18-25**
Consider three things.

1. The suffering we experience in the present

Paul begins by admitting what we all know. **Life is hard, sometimes really hard.** In verse 17 he introduced the subject of suffering by reminding us of our responsibility to suffer with the Lord **as a prelude** to being glorified with Him. Suffering is certainly one of those things that reminds us that we have not yet reached Heaven. **Note vs. 18.**

The sufferings – Misfortune, difficulties, distress, adversity.

Consider – Numerical calculation. Come to settled conclusion.

This present time - Happening now, but will not last.

This means little to those who have never suffered, but to those who daily faced the **Roman Coliseum, the executioner's axe, or the possibility of becoming a human torch** this was incredibly encouraging.

One of the great motivations for hanging tough, not giving up, persevering, is the knowledge that it is not forever. There is an ending. Whatever it is that you are suffering, remember that it is not forever.

Testimony time in a country church. People sharing favorite verses. Lady shared her favorite phrase from the bible was *And it came to pass.* People had funny look. She said, *Whenever I find myself in tough situation, I go to the Bible and read those words, And it came to pass.* and I realize that this trial did not come to stay, but to pass.

2. The glory promised in the future

The Bible promises that the glory of the future will transcend the sufferings of the present. Three words describe our future.

1) Glory (18)

Glory - splendor, brightness, excellence. We will see God totally for who He is. Right now we see him through eyes that are limited and hindered by sinful humanity. Our understanding is limited.

We now see glimpses of His glory. Shadows of what that glory will be like in Heaven. Remember words of John. ***We shall see Him as He is...*** What a great day that will be.

God's glory always takes center stage. Whenever people have been allowed to glimpse it, everything else takes a backseat. **Moses, Joshua, Isaiah, Ezekiel, shepherds.** It always gets the attention.

No wonder Paul said the present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed. **It will forever erase all the suffering that we have endured.** Imagine this . . .

Feel bad. Nurse pricks your finger, takes blood, runs test, finds problem, prescribes medication, get well. You would completely forget about that pricked finger. Nobody would ask, *Was it worth it?*

2) Freedom (19-21)

Paul writes of a time when all creation will experience freedom from the corrupting effects of sin. Reminder that every part of creation has been corrupted by sin and is rotting away. Includes our bodies and minds. It's one of the frustrating things of life, that nothing lasts. Everything wears out. Joints, eyes, ears, muscles, and even minds.

Jan and I love old barns. We look for them and take pictures. Each one has a story. When we first moved here we often traveled through Grubbs to get to Newport and beyond. Old barn in that area that we loved. After several years of seeing it, we went through and it had collapsed. Sad. But reminder that everything is wearing out.

Nothing wears out in heaven. Nothing rots. Nothing is corrupted.

3) Redemption (23)

Paul also writes of our redemption and the redemption of creation. It is a word that speaks of **a purchase being made that sets one free**. God has purchased us out of this corrupted world and adopted us into his family. It cost him something to do this. **In the old days if you wanted to set a slave free you first had to purchase that slave**. It cost something. Well your freedom cost God the life of His son, Jesus. He died so that we could live.

1. The suffering we now experience
2. The glory promised in the future. Leads to . . .

3. The tension we feel as we wait

Paul doesn't use the word *tension*, but he describes it.

Three things related to this tension.

1) Longing (19)

Intense desire with confident expectation. Our suffering reminds us of a wonderful event that is to come. This will lead us into an eternity where suffering will not be allowed. We live with the expectation that it is right around the corner.

Reminds me of bride or groom as wedding date approaches.

Family of the soldier who is on his way home.

Children doing school work, but dreaming of a trip to Disneyworld

Better yet . . . *Woman in labor, waiting for the child to be born.*

This is not all there is. There is an existence beyond this life. And for those who have been born again, there is a great future. There is *longing*, but there is also . . .

2) Groaning

To lament, to sigh. There are two groans here and one more in 26.

a. Groan of creation (22)

Even the natural creation groans with anticipation for something more. (22) Paul pictures *creation as an audience waiting eagerly for the children of God to come into their glory. For this will signal its own redemption.* In verse 19, *waits eagerly* carries the idea of one craning the neck or stretching forward to see.

Phillips translates it like this:

The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own. Creation longs for liberation.

Why does creation groan for this future? Because it has felt the sting and corruption of sin. When Adam sinned, even the natural world created by God to be good, productive, helpful and beautiful immediately felt the sting of sin.

One scholar wrote:

Everywhere our eyes meet images of death and decay; the scourge of barrenness, the fury of the elements, the destructive instincts of beasts, the very laws which govern vegetation, everything gives nature a somber tone.

The animal world experienced fear and confusion, leading to violence and death. Even the most beautiful scenes in nature have felt the destruction through hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes and more. No wonder it groans!

b. Groan of believers (23)

We are already adopted as sons and daughters of God. However we have not yet experienced the full benefits of that adoption. Like being adopted, but remaining in the orphanage waiting for the full benefits of our adoption. *Waiting for our adoptive parents to move us into their beautiful and wonderful home.* We groan, as we wait for that time. The analogy is not totally true. *We are not left alone in the orphanage of this new world. Our heavenly Father, through His Holy Spirit, moves in to be with us.*

3) Hoping (24-25)

Paul doesn't leave us with the frustration of longing and groaning. He adds the element of hope. *Expectation*

What do you do when you are in the *present* but so desperately want the future. *I mean when life gets tough. When the days get long and the nights are dark. When things only go from bad to worse.* How do you handle this tension? The answer is HOPE.

Hope is the conviction that something more is out there for us. It is the knowledge that the future is real and is waiting for you. Hope for a future that we cannot yet see with our human eyes is what enables us to persevere in this life. *The longings and groanings of creation and of believers are real. But both will be erased by the glory of our future.*

When that future becomes the present we will forget the groans.
When hope is replaced by reality, the groans are forgotten.

My brothers and sisters as we struggle with the frustrations and sufferings of this life, **keep your eyes on the prize**. Never lose sight of the glorious future that God has prepared for you. Live every day in light of that hope, that assurance, that promise. Stay hopeful. Stay focused.

Matt Emmons had the gold medal in sight. He was one shot away from claiming victory in the 2004 Olympic 50-meter rifle event. He didn't even need a bull's-eye to win. His final shot merely needed to hit the target.

He fired and hit the target. Normally, the shot he made would have received a score of 8.1, more than enough for a gold medal. But in what was described as *an extremely rare mistake in elite competition*, Emmons fired at the wrong target. Standing in lane two, he fired at the target in lane three. His score for a good shot at the wrong target?—0. Emmons ended up in eighth place.

It does not matter how focused you are, how committed you are, how dedicated you are, if you are looking at the wrong target. **Our hope, is in Christ, as our Savior, nothing else, nothing more.**

Are you looking to Jesus? Do you know Him? Have you trusted Him? If not, you cannot possibly have hope for what comes after this life. But you can have that hope. You can join with us and experience the power of hope in Christ. It will change you in this life. Most importantly it will prepare you for the next.

To join this band of hopeful Christ-followers, you simply need to put your faith in Jesus. He said . . . *I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.*

Paul wrote: *if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;*