

A Salvation Worth Suffering For

Romans 8:17-39 ESV *The atheist is offended by present suffering – “How could an all-loving, all-powerful God be supervising a world like ours.” They see Christians suffering for their faith and see them as vulnerable, naïve sheep being led to slaughter.

“...provided we suffer with Him.” Why is our salvation worth suffering for?

- I. It is temporary – the best is yet to come.
 - a. The birth pains are real and they are part of this time. They include everything in our lives that we wouldn't choose and can't make better even though we've tried. They also include:
 - i. False Christs and false prophets.
 - ii. Wars and rumors of wars.
 - iii. Natural disasters and their results – earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanoes, tornadoes, and famines.
 - iv. Persecution and martyrdom of believers.
 - b. The riot and the dance – amazing creatures God made, but also suffering in nature – frustration – vanity. Creation itself is only temporarily in this state – there will be a new earth when Jesus comes back. *Birth pains are leading to a birth and once the child is here the pains are seen as worth it. The pains leaves, the child stays!
 - c. Don't overreach in your theology. *Ticket to Ride – you will end up losing and disillusioned.
 - i. Fear based theology – we don't want to groan and we don't want to see others groan, so we decide that the fulness of the sons of God is for right now – everyone is waiting for us to get a revelation of who we are so we can remove the curse off of creation!
 - ii. Sorry – that will only come when Jesus returns and our redemption is complete. We'll see some of the kingdom (when Jesus was here the kingdom was fully here and it will only be fully here when He returns) now, and we will experience groans now. We celebrate His Presence and remember His absence. God does want to reveal our identity now and Paul prays for revelation, but it doesn't mean we're going to take over.
 - d. Mother Theresa: In my NDE devotional about a blind woman and a deaf man. “In light of heaven, the worst suffering on earth, a life full of the most atrocious tortures on earth, will be seen to be no more serious than one night in an inconvenient hotel.” Paul's take on his sufferings: 2Cor. 4:17 NIV “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”
- II. It is accomplishing a great purpose.
 - a. Don't read Romans 8:28 without reading Romans 8:29-30 Jesus is using this time to form us into His image. C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity: “God

will make the feeblest and filthiest of us in a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God His own boundless power, delight, and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what He said.”

- i. All things that happen aren't good and they don't necessarily make people good. Suffering can make people sour, traumatized, and afraid.
 - ii. We must embrace His purpose, and not be offended by it. And we must love God, not just believe in God. If we only don't really love God but only what He does for us; even though we have faith, we are trying to use God for our own purposes, so we will easily fall away when suffering comes – which it will. *Law reveals sin; suffering reveals self. *The tea bag and hot water.
- b. Foreknowledge, predestination, glorification – we will cover all of them next week!
- c. Our Father in heaven isn't a reflection of our earthly father; He's the perfection of our earthly fathers – He disciplines us for our good. (Hebrews 12:10) Timothy Keller: “When parents discipline a child, they allow or introduce a milder form of pain in order to teach or mature the child away from behavior that lead to a far greater pain later. A good father will lovingly discipline. He will not use his authority selfishly to indulge his own need to feel powerful or in control. But neither will he be so needy for his child's love and approval that he never does what is hard or difficult. It is a painful privilege to be put through discipline by the most loving Father of the universe.”
- i. Don't be discouraged by it. This can lead to becoming a victim. “Victims get attention but they don't get better.” The enemy wants to turn you into a victim. *this week – “You won't see me at church again.”
 - ii. Don't take it lightly. Proverbs 29:1 ESV “He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.” *People decide they don't want to be Christians. The last days will feature “many falling away.” Don't be one of them no matter what happens!

III. Suffering can't separate us from God's love.

- a. God is for us! He has proven it by giving us His Son and He is willing to give us everything else with Him. Hebrews 13:5-6 ESV “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” *So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

- b. He will suffer with you and give you the right response in every circumstance. *The Ally within – He will help us pray. *Being misunderstood – “...the fellowship of His sufferings.”
- c. Jude 21 ESV “...keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”
 - i. If it's not good, it's not done.
 - ii. We can leave our faith in the love of God for us if we believe the enemy's lies. The enemy calls us naïve, like sheep being led to a slaughter – God doesn't care and all this won't be worth it. Not true!!! We are loved! He is doing something great for us – He sees our suffering and tells us to remain unafraid and faithful. He calls us to see each other and encourage one another and lighten each other's crosses. It will be worth it!