

Subject: *The Best Is Yet to Come*

Scripture: *Romans 8:18-27*

In these verses we see a contrast between present suffering and future glory. Paul is dealing with the final chapter of our salvation—glorification. We have been saved from the penalty of sin (justification). We are being saved from the power of sin (sanctification). We will be saved from the presence and possibility of sin (glorification). God plans to bring all His people into glory.

Psalms 73:24 *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.*

Colossians 3:4 *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

Verse 17 leads into this great truth. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Jesus first had suffering and then glory. The same is true for us. We suffer with Him and we will be glorified together. As one great preacher put it, “God had only one Son without sin, but no sons without suffering.”

In verse 18 we see a blessed promise. Our suffering in the present cannot compare to our glory in the future. Now when you think about how Paul suffered, that tells you something about the glory God has in store for His children. We have a picture of Paul’s suffering.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 ²³ *...in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.* ²⁴ *Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.* ²⁵ *Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;* ²⁶ *In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;* ²⁷ *In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.* ²⁸ *Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.* But Paul says all that suffering is not worthy to be compared to future glory

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 ¹⁷ *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;* ¹⁸ *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

1. The Groans of the Present

A. All creation is groaning (vs. 19-22)

All of creation suffers and longs to be free from the curse of sin and death. When Adam and Eve sinned, a curse came on them and on the world. Verse 20 says that creation was subjected to vanity (futility, unable to fulfill its purpose). Verse 21 says that creation is now in the bondage of corruption. Verse 22 says the whole creation groans and labors in travail (birth pangs) until now. All of creation longs for something better.

One of the best known Christmas carols is *Joy to the World*, and it tells us that Christ came to set the world free from bondage and reverse the curse:

*No more let sin and sorrow grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.*

B. All believers are groaning (vs. 23)

Like creation, we groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. These bodies get old, grow weary, and eventually give out. In the meanwhile we groan for something better, a better body. Now we have the B's of old age: bulges, bunions, bifocals, baldness, and bursitis. And we groan, longing for a better body.

Benjamin Franklin was a printer, and on his tombstone are these words: "Like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding, lies here food for worms. But the work shall not be entirely lost, for it will, as he believes, appear once more in a new and more perfect edition, corrected and amended by the author."

We groan not only because of our physical weakness and suffering, but we also groan over our spiritual weakness and sin.

Romans 7:24 *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

C. The Holy Spirit is groaning (vs. 26-27)

We not only have the problem of physical weakness, but the problem of spiritual ignorance. In our weakness we don't know how to pray as we should, but the Holy Spirit is our helper. He intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be uttered (spoken). The Holy Spirit takes our needs, our burdens, and our desires, interprets them, and then presents them to the Father without words. This is communication within the Trinity on our behalf. No words are needed because the Father understands and agrees with what the Spirit thinks (vs. 27). This is not an excuse to quit praying; it is an encouragement to know that when you can't seem to find a way to express your deepest needs, the Holy Spirit is always there to help. This work of the Holy Spirit is much like Christ's prayer found in John 17, where Jesus prays for believers to be sanctified and glorified.

2. The Glories of the Future

A. The future glory of all creation – There will be a new heaven and a new earth.

Romans 8:19 *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.* Manifestation comes from the Greek word *apocalypse*, which means a revealing or unveiling. It is the same word used of the book of Revelation. When Adam and Eve sinned and fell in the Garden of Eden, all creation fell and has suffered ever since. When God removes the curse and makes His people new, the whole creation will be made new.

Romans 8:21 *Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* The present world is under a curse where there is death and decay all around. In God's new creation there will be no more death, decay, suffering, or pain.

Romans 8:22 *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. This world is going through birth pains now, but a new world will be born and everything will be new. The pain of labor is followed by the joy of birth.*

Revelation 21:1 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

Revelation 21:4-5 ⁴ *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.* ⁵ *And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*

The world's condition is not hopeless or final. Everything will be made new like it should be.

B. The future glory of all Christians

We are eagerly waiting for “the adoption, the redemption of the body” (Rom. 8:23). This is the final stage of our redemption, when God gives us a glorified body and a glorified spirit. We will be like Christ.

Philippians 3:20-21 ²⁰ *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ:* ²¹ *Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

1 John 3:2 *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 ⁵¹ *Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,* ⁵² *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* ⁵³ *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* ⁵⁴ *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

In Christ we have hope (Rom. 8:24-25). This hope is what keeps us going. We are going to be glorified people in a glorified place living with our glorified Lord. The best is yet to come.

Three things to remember

- The Lord tells us that our present suffering is trivial compared to future glory
(The pain of labor is followed by the joy of birth)
- The Lord has given us a guarantee of future glory (vs. 23, *firstfruits of the Spirit*)
(The work of the Spirit in our lives is evidence that much more is to come)
- The Lord promised future glory for His children and He always keeps His promises