

A REDEEMED MAN IN A REDEEMED WORLD

Romans 8:18

*illuminating*

This text is *unusually* <sup>in</sup> for it sets forth two great opposites in the Christian's life. On the one hand, it promises suffering, and on the other hand it speaks of glory. It reminds us of the words of Jesus in John 16:33 where he says, "In me ye shall have peace, but in the world ye shall have tribulations."

Let us look closely at the words of our text. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." These words indicate that Paul engaged in some spiritual mathematics. The word "reckon" is logizomai, the word of an accountant, meaning a "reasoned calculation." Paul divided the Christian life into two columns. In one column he set down all the conceivable sufferings of the Christian in this life; in the other he set down the glory destined to come to God's children. Then he concluded that the sufferings were a mere "nothing" compared to the glory. No wonder the apostle could bear his sufferings with such joy and confidence. Let us now look at these two columns in the Christian life.

I. THE COLUMN OF SUFFERING. There is great comfort in the Christian faith. The hymn writer was correct in writing, "Here is balm for all our woes." Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give thee rest."

But we misunderstand Christ and the Gospel if we regard Christianity as merely a religion of comfort. It is also a religion of pain. Real Christian faith calls upon a person to stand up and be counted. In our easy going world, standing up to be counted for Christ is not easy.

Jesus Christ offered no painless Christianity when he said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself..." (Matthew 16:24-25).

Nor did Paul offer a painless way of faith in Romans 12:1-2. Jesus said to His followers, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." The word "witness" is the same word as "martyr." Christ calls upon us to be martyrs in His name. Most people think of martyrs as those who give up their lives in one great act of devotion. Actually the great martyrs are those persons who offer themselves constantly as living sacrifices, which may require more courage than going before a firing squad.

Yes, there is suffering for the Christian in this life. It may or may not be physical. It may be mental or spiritual, which is worse. I have never been physically harmed, but I have felt the suffering of misunderstanding, the suffering of unjust criticism, the suffering of men's hatred, the suffering of loneliness, and the suffering of social ostracism. You have also felt suffering if you are a Christian.

Dr. R. G. Lee said when he died he could imagine the preacher at the funeral saying, "Dr. Lee was such a good and beloved man; no man ever hated him or spoke a word of evil against him." He said, "When I hear this I am going to kick the lid off the casket and rise up and say, 'You are a liar.'" He said to me one day, "No man is prepared to preach the Gospel who is not prepared to be crucified every day."

Dr. Oswald Hoffman of the Lutheran Hour says, "Faith that costs nothing, suffers nothing, does nothing, and gives nothing, is worth nothing." I tell you Christianity is worth everything. It calls for suffering.

II. THE COLUMN OF GOD'S GLORY. "I reckon that the sufferings<sup>of this present time</sup> are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us." Phillips says they are "less than nothing." Weymouth says "they are not worth considering." New World Translation says "they do not amount to anything." Then the question is, what could this glory be? Paul spends the next five verses telling us:

1. He says the GLORY will consist of a new world order which God is going



to create and give to His people. These promises of the Lord are the most glorious in God's Word. Verse 19 - "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Phillips says, "The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own." So vast and glorious is the glory, that Paul says the irrational creation is waiting with eager expectancy, knowing that when the sons of God enter into their glory, nature will share in it also.

Verse 20 - "For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." Creation is neither in its original nor in its final condition. It fell with man in the Garden of Eden. Then God subjected it to vanity, that is, unattainment. Nature is not what God intended. "All the voices of nature are in a minor key." God intended for all nature to be friendly, to serve man, and to be subject to Him; but sin corrupted this plan of God. I used to wonder why there were things like rattle snakes and marijuana plants in the world. Here is the reason: Because of the corruption of sin which man brought upon all creation.

Verse 21 - "Because the creation itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Nature itself shall share the same deliverance, the same resurrection that Christians share when Christ comes in His glory.

Verse 22 - "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Weymouth catches the intensity of this when he says, "the whole creation is moaning in the pangs of childbirth until this hour."

It is an observable fact that the entire creation is in a state of pain and sorrow. Man is cursed, woman is cursed, the ground is cursed, the planets are cursed. When a cat brings kittens into the world, she does so in travail. When a man eats he destroys the life of some animal. God <sup>did not originally</sup> ~~never~~ intended this. One glorious day, thank God, Jesus is

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coming to recreate the whole universe - the animal world, the vegetable world, the mineral world, the world of astronomy. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the lion shall eat straw like an ox. The child shall play on the hole of the asp. When will this begin? It will begin in the millennial kingdom, a kingdom which will embrace only the earth. However, at the end of the millenium the recreation shall be extended to the whole universe with the coming of the new heaven and the new earth. O glorious day! Do you think any present suffering can compare to such a great day?

2. The second aspect of the glory will be the redemption of the bodies of the redeemed. The lower creation is groaning to be delivered; but so is the Christian in this frail body. Verse 23 - "And not only it, but ourselves also which have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Groaning is a part of the Christian life. Some time ago, as I arose early to do my daily jogging, I was groaning. My wife said, "Bill, why are you groaning so?" I said, "Honey, do not criticize me. Don't you know it is scriptural to groan?" Here is the Scripture. The trouble with most Christians is that they are not willing to groan. Many Christians get weary and long for death - disembodiment, which is not the Christian hope. They turn back for some kind of satisfaction in the things of this poor, wretched world. Or they seek to have sin "eradicated" from their bodies. The Christian is not to long for death, he is not to give up the fight or to try to satisfy the body's longings. He is to groan for that new body, that full deliverance. Paul says in II Corinthians 5:1-3, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked."

Not until the Christian receives this new body will his sonship be complete. Romans 8:14-15 says we are already God's sons, but verse 23 indicates that sonship is not complete until we receive the new body. For you see, we must be like Jesus in every respect, even in our body. Ask me what the new body will be like and I would answer that it will be like

the resurrection body of Jesus.

- (1) It will be a real body
- (2) It will be a body of flesh and bone, but not blood
- (3) It can be touched, it can be seen, it can be <sup>talk</sup>heard, it can partake of food.
- (4) It will be recognizable
- (5) At the same time, it will not be under the control of normal laws of physics as we know them, since it will not be limited by space nor time.

Is it any wonder Paul wrote, "I reckon the sufferings of <sup>this</sup> present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

At the World's Fair in New York the General Electric Company had as their theme song, "There Will Be a Bright Tomorrow." The world would like to think there will be a bright tomorrow, produced by its goods and gadgets. There will indeed be a bright tomorrow for God's people, for the King will bring it ~~himself~~ in due time. The question is, will <sup>you</sup> have a place in God's great tomorrow? It depends upon what you do with Jesus Christ now.