

The Sanctity of Suffering
Romans 8:16-17

Sometimes, life hits us with the unexpected.

- Driving down the road on vacation and a deer steps out in front of the car
- Making headway on a project at work and encounter severe criticism
- Taking final exams and come across a question that accounts for 25% of your grade and you've never seen the subject of the questions before
- A routine visit to the Dr leads to a cancer diagnosis
- You're celebrating the New Year in New Orleans and a car plows into the crowd
- You're a 71 year old lady, step off a train in NYC, and are mugged by four teenage girls and have to fight for your life.
- You are homeless. asleep on a subway car in a major US city, and someone sets your clothes on fire

Sometimes, life hits us with the unexpected.

As we return to Romans 8, we are hit with the unexpected.

- Sinners are justified with God by the death of Jesus and through faith in Him
- The Holy Spirit, when we put our faith in Jesus, unites us with Christ
- On account of the work of Christ in his life and death and the work of the Spirit in faith Romans 8:1 says, ***“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”***

We are free from the law of sin and death

The Spirit of Christ in us assures us that as Christ was raised from the dead, so will we be raised

We are the adopted children of God

We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ

The Spirit of God Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God

Two witnesses:

our redeemed, newly enlivened spirit (subjective)

Holy Spirit: God Himself (objective)

God stands in the middle of the throne room of our heart

Isaiah 43:1 (ESV) *But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:*

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

Jeremiah 31:3 *I have loved you with an everlasting love.*

And then, suddenly, in the midst of our revelry in the sovereign grace of God, we are hit with the unexpected: suffering! I bet you didn't see that coming!

Romans 8:17 (ESV) *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs*

with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

And, like encountering the unexpected anywhere else in life, we are filled with questions.

- Why are you talking about suffering at a time like this?
- What kind of suffering are you talking about?
- Are you saying we have to suffer in order to get into heaven?
- I thought we just had to have faith. Is suffering the price we pay for grace?

You could almost get the idea that Paul says future glory is provisional, based on present suffering. You could think he is saying that all the good stuff he's been talking about is only really yours if (provided) you suffer with Jesus.

Over the next few weeks, as we walk through Romans 8, we're going to look at these questions. This morning, I want to focus on just this one: **Does Paul make suffering a provision, a requirement for glory?**

The answer to the question is an emphatic, "NO!"

Suffering is not a requirement for sonship, for adoption, for becoming a child of God, for entering into future glory. **Suffering, Paul is saying, is evidence that you are in fact already a child of God, already experiencing in life the life of Jesus, already seeing the proof that your life is headed to an eternal existence in keeping with the experience of Jesus Himself.**

Let's look at verse 17 more closely.

Romans 8:17 (NIV) Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, **if indeed** we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8:17 (KJV) And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; **if so be** that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

Romans 8:17 (ESV) and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **provided** we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Linda likes to remind me that "if" usually presents a condition, makes whatever follows conditional. But Paul is not setting up a condition here.

- "If children"
- Holy Spirit "are children"
- Therefore the "if" is assertive, not conditional
- We would say, "since"

Have you put your faith in Jesus today? Are you trusting God to keep His word and count the life and death of Jesus as sufficient for you? Are you trusting God to save you from wrath through faith in Jesus? Then, brothers and sisters, you are children of God because faith is the condition for salvation.

And since you are children of God, by faith, as declared by God Himself, **the suffering you experience in the world as a result of faith, the suffering that mirrors the suffering of Jesus Himself in the world, gives evidence that you are, in fact, through faith and the Spirit, a child of God.**

Just as suffering had purpose in the life of Jesus, suffering has divine purpose in our lives.

It is not random. It is not meaningless. It is not pain and suffering for the sake of pain and suffering. And it is not some price we pay to get God to love us and let us in the door of grace.

When a believer suffers like Jesus suffered (and we're going to talk about that in the weeks coming), that suffering testifies to them and to the world that they are children of God and are headed to an eternity of glory the world cannot imagine!

Paul writes to believers in Rome and says, "Your suffering? The suffering you experience on account of faith in Jesus? That suffering demonstrates you are children of God, adopted and loved, and as Christ was glorified after He suffered, so you too will join Him in post-suffering glory.

We're going to talk about suffering for a few weeks but this is the perspective we have to keep in mind: suffering in the life of a believer is evidence not of rejection by God but of full acceptance by God. Suffering does not mean God has given up on us or abandoned us. Suffering means we are united with Jesus. We are children of God. We are loved. And we have a great future to look forward to.

And we're going to find, by the end of Romans 8, that nothing in all creation, no suffering in the world, can take our future away from those who by the Spirit through faith are children of God.