

The Incomparable Glory of What's Coming
Romans 8:18-30

Prop: Paul points us to the reality in which we live to fuel our desire for what's coming.

Paul declares that the glory that awaits the believer in eternity far outweighs the suffering of the present.

It is clear there is no lack of suffering in the world.

Plane crashes: DC and Philly. Children
Poverty: Immigration crisis
Illness & Disease/Addictions
Instability/Rage

The suffering is personal, global, physical, and in many places in the world, spiritual. Nigeria, Eritrea, Iran, China - all persecute and punish people based on their faith in Jesus.

And the Holy Spirit steps right up to us and speaks into our suffering, Christian, and declares the mind and heart of God: all this, all this suffering and sorrow and death and despair; all this opposition and persecution and injustice and disappointment; all these tears and loss and grief, wrap them all up, add them all together, and **they still do not begin to compare to the glory of what is coming for those who keep their faith in Jesus.**

Your broken heart is not wasted but it is not all there is, either. Paul writes,

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in and to us.

Inspired by the Spirit of God and speaking God's word, God's truth, Paul says, "When I take into account my experience in life as a Christian, and the experiences of others who follow Jesus in turmoil and storm, when I consider them all and probe the evidence and carefully calculate the outcome, the conclusion I invariably reach is this: If I were to put them on a scale of cosmic proportion, the sum total of them all would be as the weight of a feather against the inestimable, incalculable weight of the glory against which they are weighed."

Oh my friends, the incomparable glory of what's coming!

But, in thinking of these things this morning, let's ask a few questions.

QUESTIONS:

1. First, does Paul know anything about suffering?

We have

Death, destruction, violence, crime, rampant abortion, disease, conflict, rage

What does Paul know of suffering?

Let me remind you who Paul is

Philippians 3:4-6 (ESV) ⁴ *though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.*

Paul is the epitome of social/cultural/religious success in his day.
Rising star on the leadership scene.
He is a Roman citizen from a prominent Roman city.

What does a man like this know of suffering?

Let me remind you what Paul knows of suffering

2 Corinthians 11:23-29 (ESV) ²³ *Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. ²⁹Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?*

Paul knows a thing or two about faith and suffering. He has suffered at the hands of enemies and friends, of God and nature, and at the hands of his own heart and thoughts. He knows his own suffering and he carries in him both the suffering of Christ and the suffering of the Christians he is discipling for Christ.

He is a realist both by observation and by personal experience. He knows what it means to follow Jesus, to keep faith in a faithless world. He knows what it is to hold on to the promises of God when he has little strength. He knows, himself, what it is to walk through the valley of the shadow of death in the face of unrelenting evil.

God chose a man for whom suffering should have been a stranger and gave him a life of suffering so that he could speak God's heart into our suffering.

2. What then does Paul have to say about suffering?

His response to the suffering that plagues the people of faith living for Jesus in a fallen world is this:

Romans 8:18 (ESV) *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not*

worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV) *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,*

Colossians 3:4 (ESV) *When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Peter says essentially the same thing to the readers of his letter:

1 Peter 1:5-7 (ESV) *⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

1 Peter 4:13 (ESV) *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.*

1 Peter 5:1 (ESV) *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:*

Both of them reiterate the teaching of Jesus

Matthew 5:11-12 (ESV) *¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

THE REWARD IS GLORY! The reward of faith that outweighs all our suffering in this life is glory.

3. And now we have to ask our third question: What is this glory?

This is glorification: the personal bestowment of the perfections of the Father, Son, and Spirit
John 17:22-26 (ESV) *²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."*

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 (ESV) *¹¹ To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in*

you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 (ESV) *To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 John 3:2 (ESV) *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*

The glory that awaits us is not merely glory that we will observe, as astounding and satisfying as that would be. It is not merely glory that substantiates and justifies the investment of faith. It is not the glory of God put on parade for our benefit, as when Moses, hidden in the cleft of the rock saw God in passing. This is not glory apart from us. This is not just glory, this is our glorification.

God Himself will bestow upon His people a glory akin to His own, a perfection that reflects His perfection, a majesty that radiates His majesty. He will give us the glory of His Son, Jesus.

Remember the Transfiguration of Jesus, when He was on the mountain and His entire being shown with glory? That is the glory that waits for those who keep their faith in Jesus. That is His glory that apprehends you, infuses you, transforms you with a glory like His but yours. Glorification is not you celebrating another glory but you receiving yourself the glory God has for you.

Oh the incomparable glory of what's coming will not be just something you see and experience. It will be something you enjoy, something you have, something you are.

4. Since we are not going to be mere observers of glory but glorified ourselves with a glory like His glory, how does Paul excite a desire and hope in us?

Rather than focus on the glory that is coming to convince us, Paul points us to the reality in which we live right now to give us at least four reasons to put greater weight in our lives on what is coming rather than on our current experience.

- a. Because all creation is waiting for it. (8:19-22)
- b. Because every Christians is groaning for it. (8:23-25)
- c. Because our Comforter is praying for it. (8:26-27)
- d. Because our Creator is calling for it. (8:28-30)

5. The final question for this morning: why should I invest hope in future glory?

Because every aspect of my current life and experience points to the infinite worth of my personal glorification by God on account of Jesus Christ.

We often point to the glory of God that we will observe.

We point to the glory of seeing loved ones again.

We point to the glory of what won't be there: No death, no sorrow, no pain, no sin

Let us point the heart of faith to what awaits us: an incomparable glory that will be ours from God through Christ that will make sense of today and endure forever.

Glory is not something we simply resign ourselves to but a future we embrace in Christ through faith because everything around us testifies to the worth of the glory that will embrace us, apprehend us, infuse us, and transform us when it is finally revealed without filter to us.

Benediction:

Colossians 3:1-4 (ESV) ¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Not just present, surrounded by glory, but present in our own glory bestowed by the Father in honor of the Son on account of faith.