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More Than Conquerors

Studies in Romans 8
Study 5 – Hope in Suffering (Romans 8:16-25)

What Keeps You Going Through the Challenging Days of the Session?

Serving in state government can often be difficult, particularly through the challenging days of the regular session. What is it that keeps leaders going? Why do folks continue to serve in such difficult roles, some for many years? For most, you would have to say it is HOPE. Hope that they can help truly make a difference in making West Virginia a better place to live and work. Hope that they can find answers to the many problems our state faces. Without such hope, it would certainly be difficult to continue in government service.

What keeps us going through the challenging days of life? Every person faces difficulties and suffering. The follower of Christ will face trials particularly because of their faith. How do we deal with the trials and sufferings of life that are sure to come? It is through HOPE. Paul writes in Romans 8 of the hope believers have that Jesus will be with us through any trials and suffering we might face. He reminds us the hope that we have that we will one day be with Christ and all the trials and sufferings will be over.

In his letter to the Romans Paul has proved how every person is sinful and guilty before a Holy God. He has shared the great news that God sent His Son to live a perfect life, suffer and die to pay the punishment for our sin, and raise from the dead to provide new life. He teaches we can have this new life and be made right with God only when we turn from our sin and trust in Christ for salvation.

In Romans 8 Paul now shares the results that come about in our lives because of our faith in Christ. He tells us about the suffering, glory, and hope the children of God will experience.

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. (Romans 8:16-25)

The Certainty of Suffering

For Every Person – Why do bad things happen? Paul tells that every person on earth will face suffering simply because we live in a fallen, sin-cursed world. As he writes of the creation “longing” (vs. 19) and “groaning and suffering” (vs. 22), he reminds that this world has been cursed because of the sinful rebellion and fall of Adam and Eve. This certainly applies to the people on earth, and as a result we all must deal with the suffering caused by the sinful wicked actions of others. But Paul writes this also applies to the earth itself. In poetic personification Paul says our planet “groans and suffers” because of the fall. As a result, we all face illness, accidents, natural disasters, and death. Bad things happen because we live in a sinful, sin-cursed world.

For Followers of Christ – Paul tells us there is suffering we will endure particularly because we are followers of Christ. In fact, Paul tells us that one of the proofs and assurances that we have that we are indeed “in Christ” and “heirs with Christ” is that we will suffer with Him (vs. 17). To be “in Christ” means we have been united with Him. When He died, we died. As He rose again, we rose again (Romans 6:3-7). Now Paul tells that since Christ suffered, we will suffer. This should not surprise us as this is something we are taught throughout the New Testament.

Jesus warned us:

18 “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you ... John 15:18-20

Paul reminded us, **“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”** 2 Timothy 3:12

Peter, in a letter written to believers who were undergoing great suffering taught, **“...But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. ²¹ For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps...”** 1 Peter 2:20-21

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. ¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 1 Peter 4:12-14

How We Deal with Suffering

Considering what the Bible tells us about Christians and suffering, how should we respond?¹ (Adapted from Lloyd-Jones, Martyn. *Commentary on Romans 8:17-39*. Banner of Truth, 1975.)

We should never be surprised by suffering. Considering what the Bible teaches about suffering, we should never be surprised when it comes into our lives. We cannot be “in Christ” without experiencing suffering with Him.

We should never be shaken by suffering. We should never allow suffering to cause us to question the truth or reality of Christianity. We should never doubt God’s love or His goodness because of suffering. And we should certainly never be angry or hold a grudge against God because of the suffering that comes into our lives.

We should remember there is no promise we’ll be relieved of suffering in this life. Despite what health & wealth preachers might proclaim, there is no promise that God’s children will never experience sickness, tragedy, or persecution for their faith. The Lord never promised His people an easy time. What is promised is that God will be with us and give us grace to endure our suffering. We are promised that one day we will be with Christ (glorified, vs. 17-18).

We should remember the sufferings of Christ. When we remember all that Jesus Christ suffered on our behalf, our own suffering, no matter how great, is certainly nothing compared to His. Jesus suffered greatly in His life here on Earth. We read of how He took on human nature so that He could experience all the suffering in life that we experience. He hungered and thirsted. He was faced with temptation. He experienced the death of friends and loved ones. **“He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...”** (Isaiah 53:3). We cannot begin to imagine the suffering Christ endured for us as He went to the cross. The physical suffering was bad enough. But what suffering was involved as He took the guilt of our sin upon Himself and experienced the wrath of God – which we deserved – poured out on Him instead? We get just a glimpse of the depth of this suffering when He cried out, **“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”** (Mark 15:34). It is

when we remember this that we can keep on rejoicing that we share in His suffering.

We should “consider” what God tells us about suffering.

Paul tells to “consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (vs. 18). The word “consider” speaks of a numerical calculation. It means to reach a conclusion by careful study and reasoning. Paul says we must carefully consider all the sufferings we might experience in this life and weigh those against the glory that will one day be revealed in us when we are glorified with Him. The sufferings of this life are temporary. The glory which we will experience with Him is eternal. The suffering of this life prepares us for glory. It makes us more like Christ and causes us to depend upon and trust Him more. The whole Earth, as well as those who follow Christ will one day be redeemed and made new.

We should live in the hope this truth provides. Paul closes this section of chapter 8 with these encouraging words:

²⁴ For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?

²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. (Rom. 8:24-25)

Yes, we will endure suffering throughout this present life. But in the midst of the suffering we have the hope of what Christ has in store for us when we get to be with Him. We are fellow-heirs with Him. We are glorified with Him. When we carefully consider this to be true, then this gives us the perseverance to eagerly wait for what is in store for us. Even beyond merely persevering, we can even rejoice in our suffering. Here in chapter 8 Paul is expanding upon what he had already written in chapter 5:

...We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵ and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)

So how do we respond when we face trials and suffering in our lives?

If you are not a follower of Christ, then they are just a reminder of the suffering and judgment you face in eternity. It is a reminder to repent and trust in Him.

For the child of God, suffering should drive us to carefully consider what God tells us to be true. There is now no condemnation if we are in Christ. We have been given the Holy Spirit as a witness and assurance that we are indeed children of God. If we are in Christ, then we will share in His suffering as well as in His glory. These truths will give us hope to endure in our faith and in living for Him.

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

Thursday, February 15

8:00 AM McManus Conference Room (M252 by House Min. Ofs)

12:00 Noon Senate President’s Conference Room