

Romans Chapter 8
Week 3, v.18

The first week we met, we made a list of blessings found Romans 8:1-17. Name some of the things you wrote down. Why did we do this? How did it affect you during the week?

Ro 8:18 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.

2 Cor 4:17-18 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 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.

How does the above verse describe affliction? What do these adjectives mean? Why is this important?

momentary – fleeting – lasting for a markedly brief time

light – easy – of little weight – not burdensome – of little importance

Affliction <thlipsis> means pressure, anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, trouble. How then can it be described as momentary and light? Doesn't this seem like an oxymoron?

First, what it produces is greater than what it is, and second, it is temporary compared to the result which is eternal.

Compare:

Momentary light affliction – fleeting easy trouble

Eternal weight of glory – everlasting abundant praise

Take a closer look at the words temporal and eternal.

Temporal <proskairos> for the occasion only, i.e. temporary: for a while, endure for a time, for a season. English Definition: related to or limited to time, not eternal

Eternal <aionios> perpetual, forever, everlasting. English Definition: ageless, unending, unceasing; continuing indefinitely, without end

Here are some additional verses that talk about present difficulties compared with eternal rewards: note the difficulty and the reward.

Matt 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when [men] cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

1 Pet 1:6-7 In this [v.3-5] you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, [being] more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Pet 4:12-13 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; 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.

1 Pet 5:10 And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen [and] establish you.

What are the 'sufferings of this present time'?

Sufferings <pathema> something undergone, i.e. hardship or pain; subjectively, an emotion or influence: affection, affliction, motion, suffering.

The 'sufferings of this present time' is in reference to the struggles that were occurring when Paul was writing this letter. But we can apply the same concept to our time and our circumstance.

Perhaps in the U.S. living as American citizens we may experience slight animosity from others towards being a Christian but largely we are free to exercise our faith however we choose. As a result, true religious persecution in our country is somewhat rare. We may not have first-hand knowledge of suffering resulting directly from our beliefs yet, in our lifetime, most of us will experience difficulties with physical pain, emotional stresses, relational problems and/or economic challenges.

The Christian of our time has little conception of the sufferings of the ancient saints, counted as outcasts, despised, persecuted, slain. Yet Paul counted these as nothing in view of the hope of eternal glory. People's NT Commentary

What accounts in the Bible can you think of where Christians truly suffered for their faith? Paul (Acts); Moses (Exodus); Gideon (Judges 6:28-32); Zachariah (2 Chronicles 24:18-21); Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3:8-23); Daniel (Daniel 6:1-28); John the Baptist (Matthew 14:3-12); James (Acts 12:1-2) – this list represents only a few of the accounts of persecution of the saints in the Bible. How about in our modern day times, especially in other countries?

The Middle East, Africa, China and Cuba have known Christian imprisonments and/or murders. The below accounts are from Persecution.org.

- July 3, 2012 Christian in Belarus Faces Possible Prison Sentence for Praying with the homeless
- Friday, December 6th, 2013 On Saturday, Nov. 16th, approximately a dozen Chinese police officers walked into the Nanle County Christian Church in Henan Province, a government sanctioned "Three-Self" church, and "tied up" the church's pastor, Zhang Shaojie. Authorities then spirited him away to a secret location. Today, almost three weeks later, no one is quite sure where exactly Pastor Shaojie is, or if he's even still alive.
- Wednesday, November 27th, 2013 A church in southern Algeria again was vandalized when a group of people attempted to break and throw a burning tire over the walls of the church. ICC recently spoke with the pastor and he recounted that similar incidents have happened before. He has filed complaints with the police, but nothing has resulted so far. The church has seen incredible growth in Algeria in recent decades and despite some improvements in the legal system there does remain social hostility towards Christians in some areas.
- Friday, December 6th, 2013 Slowly there is a rising awareness throughout Europe and elsewhere of the brutal treatment of Christians throughout much of the Middle East. Cases such as the murder of Jessi Boulus, a 10-year-old girl in Cairo, highlight the tragedy they face. Alan Howe, executive editor of the Herald Sun, describes Jessi's "an almost forgotten footnote in what can only be described as a war that strands Middle Eastern Christians somewhere between the Exodus and a Holocaust."
- Wednesday, December 4th, 2013 In an almost unbelievable case, a school counselor at the Robert E. Clark Middle School in Bonner Spring, Kansas confronted a 7th grade student and informed her that she could not distribute fliers for a "See You at the Pole" prayer event because they contained verses of scripture on them. The school then took down the fliers that had been posted and destroyed them, forcing the student to secretly hand out just a few fliers out of sight of teachers.
- January 8, 2014 Yet another disturbing report has come from Syria. Two Christian young men driving from the city of Homs to a Christian village were attacked by a group of jihadists who opened fire on the car, forcing it to stop. After seeing a cross worn by one of the two men inside they pulled him out and beheaded him. The other,

believed to be dead was left after the Jihadists looted the car. The second man was able to reach a nearby town and receive treatment. This is just the latest incident illustrating the horrific shadow war on Christians taking place inside the large-scale conflict across Syria that has attracted thousands of foreign fighters from around the world.

Look again at the Greek word and definition used for 'sufferings'. The definition says it can be used subjectively meaning it can be based on someone's response to a situation rather than solely on facts. When we think subjectively about something our own attitudes, opinions, experiences and emotions affect our thoughts and response. People are different and perceive things differently. What might cause distress in your life may seem like no big deal to me and visa versa. In other words, it is not up to us to determine what should or should not cause distress in someone's life. All of us will experience affliction in some way and more likely in several ways. So perhaps the subject at hand is not the severity or type of affliction itself but rather how we respond to it and what it produces in us.

2 Cor 11:23-28

"...the weight of the saint's cross is not comparable with the glory of their crown;"
WBN on the NT

Rom 8:18 says these sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

What does it mean for something to be worthy?

Worthy <axios> deserving; English definition: having worth or value or merit, important

"...this glory which we look for surpasses a thousand times the misery of our afflictions." Geneva Bible Notes

[the trials of Christians at that time...and all that believers are ever called to endure]
"...are nothing in comparison [with the glory in heaven]; the one is far more than an equivalent in compensation for the other."... "By this, therefore, Christians may be sustained. Their sufferings may seem great; but they should remember that they are nothing in comparison with future glory. They are nothing in degree. For these are light compared with that "eternal weight of glory" which they shall "work out," 2Co 4:17. They are nothing in duration. For these sufferings are but for a moment; but the glory shall be eternal. These will soon pass away; but that glory shall never

become dim or diminished, it will increase and expand for ever and ever." Albert Barnes' NT Commentary

What we look forward to is eternity, what we experience here is momentary. It is difficult, if not impossible, to even find similarities to make a comparison.

Where does the ability to persevere through trials come from?

Rom 5:1-5 Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 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.

Through what specific challenges have you seen God's sustaining grace in your life? How does that testimony affect the way you see additional trials?

What is God's 'glory that is to be revealed to us'?

Eph 3:16-21 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; [and] that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him [be] the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

God's glory is revealed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit here on earth in our lives and through our lives; the fullness of God's glory will be revealed to us when we are in His presence for all eternity. Right now, our faith is placed in what we know to be true; someday, our faith will be sight!

Col 3:4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

2 Thess 1:3-12

“True, we must suffer with Christ, if we would partake of His glory; but what of that? For if such sufferings are set over against the coming glory, they sink into insignificance.” Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

Also see Ro 8:23; Phil 3:20-21

Can you agree with Romans 8:18? Are you able to see your current difficulties, whatever they may be, as nothing compared to what is in your future?

When we perceive problems through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, how is our response different?

Application Questions

Read Romans 8. Review your notes then think about these questions and the applications you can draw from verse 18.

What is your expectation for the future?

What is ‘the glory to come’? (look forward in your Bible to Ro 8:23; also Phil 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2)

If someone were to ask you what your reason for hope is, how would you respond?

How is the hope of a Christian different than just the wishful thinking of someone living in the world?

How has the hope for your future affected your thinking about current struggles this past week?

What scriptures can you think of that help to support your thoughts? You may want to reference your notes and application worksheets from the last few weeks.

Prepare for next week by looking at Romans 8:19-21 carefully. You may want to look up some key words and, if you are using a study Bible, some cross-reference verses. Use your journal/notebook to jot down any definitions, verses or thoughts you have so you are able to share them during our study.