

## **Suffering and Glory**

### ***Romans 8:17 - 18***

*<sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

**At various times, we have all experienced suffering. And suffering can take any number of forms...physical, spiritual, emotional, financial and vocational just to name a few. Often suffering can encompass a variety of areas or compartments in your life.**

**We need to note that at no time did Jesus ever promise His disciples or us a “suffering free life.” In fact the opposite is true. He guaranteed that we would face suffering and hardships in John 16:33. God can use suffering and hardship redemptively and creatively in a Christian’s life. In short, we have to recognize that to serve Christ, to live for Christ and ultimately, one day, to reign with Christ means that we will identify with the sufferings of Christ as well. The pages of Scripture are replete and filled with examples of God using hardships for the benefit and development of His people. We often learn and mature more in the face of opposition than we do in times of prosperity.**

**David Jeremiah identified eight general reasons why suffering is often present in the Christian life. You can simply read these reasons here and, no doubt, will explore them further during your class time. Those reasons are...**

- 1. Suffering proves the reality of our faith.**
- 2. Suffering promotes our dependence upon God.**
- 3. Suffering purifies our relationship with God.**
- 4. Suffering produces endurance in our lives.**
- 5. Suffering prunes us for greater effectiveness.**
- 6. Suffering provokes courage in other believers.**
- 7. Suffering provides an opportunity to witness for the Lord.**
- 8. Suffering prepares us to reign with Christ.**

**With human wisdom and perspectives, we may question why, or even how, God would associate suffering with glory. A definitive answer is likely beyond human origination or comprehension. But the reality is, in the words of John Stott, that God has married or welded together suffering in this life with future glory. Some suffering originates from sin. Some suffering originates out of loyalty to Christ. Some suffering originates from a fallen world. Some suffering simply defies explanation or easy reasons.**

To belong to Christ means we identify with Christ. And we may have to experience some of the same things Christ endures...rejection, anger, misunderstanding, hatred, mockery, scorn, criticism, ridicule, unmet expectations, gossip and innuendo. Following Christ is not for the faint-hearted or thin-skinned. Thankfully, we will never suffer a cross like Jesus did for us. But, we will still experience and identify with many of the other ways our Savior endured shame and trials. John Piper has written that *"Jesus gives us the assurance that if we will follow Him during all the Good Fridays of this life, we will also rise with Him on the last Easter day of the Resurrection."*

The Psalmist could say with confidence, as can we, "though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will revive me" (Psalm 138:7). We approach our trials with faith that God loves us; He has not abandoned us; and He can produce something good from the suffering. And remember that the days and toils of this life are but a few fleeting seconds compared with the eternity that we will one day share and enjoy with the Lord.

#### Applications . . .

1. Identify a present hardship or suffering in your life. Ask God for the grace to bear this ordeal and for Him to be glorified in you.
2. Pray for someone you know who is facing a hardship or trial. Make yourself available to offer encouragement and help.
3. Make an effort to memorize Romans 8:18 this week. Commit this verse to heart so you have a resource to draw on in the face of a present or coming hardship.
4. Give thanks to God now for an ordeal or hardship where He enabled you to endure and prevail.
5. Speak less about your trials and hardships and more about God's greatness and glory! Make Him the center of your speech!