

The Pain of Childbirth

Romans 8: 18-30

November 15th, 2009



I don't know if you have ever had an event take your breath away, but yesterday I was coming home from helping Mom and Dad shell corn. We had quit a little early and I had pulled in to my driveway right around dusk. Our driveway makes a sharp turn to our home and you can't see the house from the road, but you can see it after your make the turn. I went down that driveway as I have done thousands of times. I saw the porch light on and the lights on in the room where my wife was. I don't know why, but just for a split second I couldn't breathe. My home literally took my breath away. Have you ever had a moment like that? Now, if you had been with us last week when we were going through all of the things that was wrong with our house and property, you would think we lived in a shack. You would think it was a piece of trash, a dump. But last night, for a split second when I saw my home in its entirety, I couldn't breathe. I want us to have one of those moments like that now.

In the last lesson, we began to deal with a topic that is painful and personal to each of us when we talked about suffering being the path to glory. I don't want to look at individual verses by themselves, but I want you to see the big picture. I think the big picture is verses 18-30. I want you to promise as you read these verses to honestly look at the passage and not let a word or phrase throw you, or make you stop and wonder what it means. I want you to see this in its entirety. We will back up and

see suffering in light of the big picture. I think when you see the big picture that it will help make sense out of what we might think of as nonsense in our lives.

Scripture

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

In verse 18, Paul introduces us to the truth that suffering is the pathway to glory for a believer. One of the evidences that we are true sons of God is the fact that we will suffer. Without suffering, we will not share in the glorification with Jesus Christ. For we know that God only had one Son without sin, but He has never had one without suffering. Paul tells us if you put all the suffering you are going through now or have gone through before on one hand, and put the glory that will be revealed at Christ's return on the other hand, it will not even tip the scale. It won't even move the scale one ounce! He is teaching that you have to weigh your suffering by a different standard than what you have been.

Making Sense of Suffering

Now, I sense that we all agreed with what Paul taught in last week's lesson. But the reality is that even though what I'm going through doesn't weigh anything in light of the glory to be revealed, it still feels heavy. Knowing that doesn't take away the pain or the hurt in mind, spirit, or even body. In no way is Paul making light of your situation or suffering, and neither am I. I know that what you are in hurts, and God knows it too. We live in a world that has to make sense of what it believes is nonsense. We live in a world where people write books and philosophers are grasping at the thought of why bad things happen to good people. Christians are trying to devise lifestyles, believing they could possibly be exempt from suffering. But we only have one reference, and that is the Word of God. Let's follow the big picture here.

Paul says that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and if we suffer with Him, then we will be glorified with Him. So, we have a future that is certain. We will be glorified with Christ; we will be just like Him one day. Now, let's make some sense out of this suffering that you're going through.

First of all, you need to understand that you aren't the only one that's suffering. The passage says that not only are you, a believer, suffering, but creation is suffering. As a matter of fact, verse 19 teaches that creation is suffering to the point that it cannot wait until God sends Jesus back. It wants everyone to know who the true sons of God are as they are glorified and get a redeemed body just like Christ's.

The picture is that creation waits with "eager longing." 'Eagerly' meaning that creation cannot sit still. Have you ever been around someone who cannot sit still? I mean, they were so excited about what was ahead that they just couldn't sit still. That is the picture, but it gets more intense. Paul just piles adjective upon adjective here. He says that creation stands up on its tippy toes and it stretches its neck and it's looking to see what is coming! Have you ever been at a parade where the guy in front of you was taller than you? You knew the parade was coming, so you got on tip toes, stretched your neck, and looked for it. That is what creation was doing. Creation cannot wait for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The reason is because creation is "groaning" right now. Three different times, "groaning" is used in this passage:

1. Creation Groans
2. Believers Groan
3. Holy Spirit Groans

- **Creation Suffers**

All of these are in light of suffering. Creation is right now suffering. A lot of people look at this passage and think that creation is suffering because it has been subjected to death; it is suffering the pains of death, and death wasn't God's original intention for creation. That is not what this says. The description that God used for creation's suffering is the pain of childbirth. Whoa!

- **Believers Suffer**

Then it says, "*And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*" The same way that creation groans is the same way believers groan. Biblically, we groan, not pains of death, but pains of childbirth. Now, pains of death are absolutely the wrong way to groan, according to the Bible. They make us say things like, "This is going to kill me...I just can't take this anymore...This is getting the best of me." That is suffering the pains of death. That is believing that what is happening to you has been ordained to bring about your demise. That is not the description the Bible paints of suffering in this passage.

Most of you ladies can identify with the description that it does paint; the pain of childbirth. I get so tickled and I understand this now that I'm a grandparent, but I understand why ladies carry around pictures of their babies. Now, I'm sure there isn't a lady here who has a picture of herself in labor during childbirth. But you remember the pain associated with childbirth. I even bet there was a time during childbirth that you thought *I'll never do this again!* But you did, because in that pain of childbirth, something enabled you to handle the pain and suffering. It was the thought of bringing forth and giving birth to a new life! We carry around a picture, not of the labor, but of the new life.

What does that have to do with creation? Creation, right now, what we believe doesn't have life, is groaning in childbirth and putting up with the suffering because it knows that one day all of its suffering will give way to a new heaven and a new earth. Creation believes that everything it has been subjected to at this very moment is worth the pain for that day when Jesus steps out on that cloud and there is a new heaven and a new earth! I don't know if you realize this, but the sun is going to be without a job on that new heaven and new earth because of the light and glory of the Son of God. We will not even need a sun! Do you understand that the new

heaven and the new earth will be radically different from this heaven and this earth? And in the same way, believers suffer and groan.

I remember when Celisa was giving birth to KiKi. Now ladies, don't ever minimize the pain that comes to men during that process. We deserve a medal for what we have to put up with. It's painful being a husband when your wife is delivering your baby! I will never forget, I took the course and I mastered it. I found a spot on the wall and told her to focus on that spot. I knew how to tell her to breathe. I knew all of the right thoughts to tell her to think. But there came a point in the childbirth process where the pain got so bad that she told me what to do with the breathing...and I ran! I got out of there! Tears were flowing down my face as I got out of that room we were in. I turned her over to our mothers and I told them that I wasn't having anything else to do with it, and I went outside! I had the luxury of doing that, but she didn't. Do you know why she did what she did? It was because she had to get what was in her out of her.

If you missed that, you just missed the whole message. According to the writings of the New Testament, our groanings are compared to the pain of childbirth, which means the suffering that God has allowed in this world and your life as a believer is to get what is in you out. The new life of Christ is what is in you. My Father does not cause all of the things that happen to me, but there isn't a thing that happens to me that hasn't been allowed by my Father. And when philosophers and speculators look at this biblical teaching, the truth is that whether it is caused or allowed, it still happens. Why is it happening? Why are we suffering and groaning? We aren't groaning pains of death, we are groaning as a lady labors to give birth to a baby.

- **The Holy Spirit Suffers**

Have you ever been in the midst of suffering and didn't really know what to do? Have you ever been in a situation that was so traumatic that you didn't know how to pray? It's covered. It tears me up when people take these verses out of context. We know that all creation and believers are groaning

the pains of childbirth. But we don't always know how to pray. This isn't talking about not know how to pray for someone who is going to be a missionary to Japan. This isn't talking about not knowing how to pray about whether to build a new church or not. This is talking about not knowing how to pray because you are suffering! You are in the midst of a situation that just doesn't make sense, and you don't even know how to pray; you can't even talk to God it is so bad. Maybe you have never been there and I pray you don't go there, but I have. What do I do? I bank on what I know to be true. The Bible says that not only are creation and believers suffering, but because of my suffering, God is suffering. The Holy Spirit of God, who lives within me, when I don't know how to pray, intercedes for me! Every intercession that He has ever made for me has been according to God's will. When He prays for me, because I can't pray for myself, He hurts so with me that He doesn't even have words to say to God the Father. When He prays, all that comes out of Him is a groan, a sigh! Then how does He get anything accomplished? God the Father knows the mind of the Spirit, and the Spirit knows the will of God, so He doesn't have to use words. When He sighs and groans on your behalf and comes in alongside and suffers with you, you can bank on it being true that God hears His prayer. Do you get that? Creation suffers, believers suffer, and the Spirit groans too.

All Things Work Together for Good

The next verse says, *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good."* It is the most quoted verse in the Bible, quoted more than John 3:16. In its context, this is a verse that is trying to help you make sense out of the suffering you must endure as a believer if you are going to be glorified with Christ. Loving God doesn't mean that you just have this emotional attachment to Him. It means that you are a person who has turned from you being the center of your life and a lifestyle of sin, and you are trusting in the finished work of Jesus on a cross. You have declared your loyalty to Him. You are banking everything you are on it being true that God crucified Christ in your place in order to make you right

with Him. And the Bible says that if you love God that all things, not some things, work together for good.

This verse doesn't mean that all things that happen to you are good. If anyone ever tells you that, they are fibbing to you. Personal experience says that not all things that happen to us are good. Don't use this verse to stand before a mother who has just lost her child and whisper that all things work together for good. Don't try to make that event to be good; that is not what this is teaching. It is teaching that all things, no matter what they are, are ultimately coming together for my good. I have to ask, how can that be true? That absolutely does not make sense, unless there is a purpose to my suffering. If there is a purpose to my suffering, then possibly, all things do work together for my good.

Predestined to be Conformed

But does God give us any insight? In verse 29, it says, *"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."* Now, let's take a deep breath. This church doesn't fear the word "predestined." As a matter of fact, we have studied the Bible enough here that we believe it to be a beautiful word, a glorious word. It is a compound word; ***pro-horizó***, meaning, 'before and horizon; to mark out a boundary or to set limits.' This word means to decide beforehand to set boundaries or limits. Therefore, it means to predestine or predetermine; to have something already set before you ever start. It was used in the biblical world in the field of architecture.

Now, my home caught my breath because it is finally where we always wanted it to be. But before we started, we had a blueprint. A blueprint sets the boundaries and limits. Before you start building, you decide what you want your building to look like. Then you build according to the blueprint and it will look like what you wanted it to.

Do you get it? If you love God, if you have turned from a life of sin and put you faith and trust in Jesus as you Lord and Savior, the truth is that God has a blueprint for you. The blueprint is that you will be just like Jesus Christ. Everything that is happening to you, under God, is guaranteed to ultimately make you more like Jesus Christ, wow...So when you want to say why me, pull your wallet out and take out your picture of Jesus and know that this thing you are in, along with everything else you have or will be in, is ultimately working for your good. That good is that God is allowing everything that happens to you under this framework to get what is inside you out; and that is the new life of Jesus Christ.

No, this won't get the best of me, and no, this will not kill me. Ultimately, it will be used by my God to make me more like His Son Jesus Christ. He had to be made like me so that I can be made like Him. I know it hurts, but it is worth it.