

# LOOKING FORWARD TO GLORY

DECEMBER 03, 2023

## WORSHIP

Angels We Have Heard On High, My Soul Magnifies, None But Jesus, Holy Forever, Living Hope

## WELCOME

What are some things that you are looking forward to this week, month or year?

## WORD

### ROMANS 8:18-27

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.<sup>19</sup> For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.<sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?<sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, through perseverance we wait eagerly for it.<sup>26</sup> Now in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;<sup>27</sup> and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

The Oxford dictionary gives one definition of “suffering” as “the state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship.” Pain and suffering come in different forms. There is suffering that is physical (medical or health issues), financial/economic, mental or emotional. There is also a certain kind of pain that followers of Jesus experience resulting from the hostility or opposition of the world because of their faith. The technical term is tribulation.

The Greek word for tribulation is \*thlipseis\* (literally, ‘pressures’). It refers to suffering that God’s people must expect in the last days before the end (cf. Mk. 13:19, 24; cf. Rev. 7:14). “Thlipsis” is a strong term which does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to real hardships.

The apostle Paul shares with us that we can rejoice or exalt in our sufferings,

*“...we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope... (Romans 5:3b-4)”*

After Paul described our salvation and new life in Christ in the earlier chapters of his letter, in Romans 8, he continues to discuss God’s purpose for us (Romans 8:29a). God’s Spirit does the work of transformation in us (2 Corinthians 3:18). Sometimes we may think that God is no longer at work in our lives because we are experiencing difficulties or hardships. On the contrary, God uses our sufferings to make us more like Jesus.

#### I. Suffering prepares us for future glory (Romans 8:18-21)

The Greek word for suffering is “pathema.” It describes what happens to a person and must be endured. It refers to actual pain that we experience – meaning, those that we “see, feel, touch,” – that cause us to feel anguish or emotional trauma.

If you are a true follower of Jesus, you will experience suffering. The apostle Peter tells us that we are not to be surprised about our sufferings (1 Peter 4:12-13). If Jesus suffered, then we who are bound to him will inevitably experience hardship.

Paul views suffering in light of the future glory that will be revealed in us (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). This is God’s glory revealed in Jesus which includes the revelation of His children who are conformed to the image of Jesus. Jesus will rule and reign for eternity and we will be with Him forever as sons and daughters of the King. Then, there will be no more tears, no more pain, no more suffering. There is also hope because “the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:20)”

Therefore, no matter what you have gone through, you are presently going through, or will go through, even when you put them all together, the sum total hardship is not worth comparing with the glory that awaits you and me.

#### II. Suffering affirms our adoptions as God’s children (Romans 8:22-25)

Paul talks about a true and lasting reality that begins with our being adopted as children of God. That adoption is “here” and “not yet.” It involves a process that entails we look forward to the reality in hope.

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A child who is awaiting the completion of an adoption process waits patiently. He knows that he has been chosen and it is just a matter of time before he will be joined by his adopting parents. In the same way, there is no trial, tribulation, or persecution that compares to the glory of us being finally taken into glory with Jesus as God's adopted children.

Meantime, God's Spirit in us helps us during this time of waiting. In those times when our faith is wavering, God's Spirit helps us and intercedes for us.

### III. Suffering allows us to experience the presence of God in our lives through the Spirit helping us (Romans 5:26-27)

In Romans 8:26, we find this beautiful word – HELP. The word HELP speaks of the action of a person coming to another's aid by taking the load he is carrying.

A.T. Robertson says – *"The Holy Spirit lays hold of our weaknesses along with us and carries His part of the burden facing us as if two men were carrying a log, one at each end."*

When we experience situations that are too complex and distressing and we do not know what to do, as we pour out our heart to God, it is God's Spirit who intercedes for us through wordless groans. What is so comforting about the Spirit interceding for us is that we experience the presence of God in our sufferings. The truth of the matter is that God's Spirit, in fact, intercedes for us especially during times of testing.

Some practical things we can do as we ponder upon the biblical truths about the suffering that God allows in our lives:

#### 1. Always view things in light of eternity.

Remember that your present situation will pass. It is temporary. God's plan is to transform you. Like a caterpillar, you will turn into a beautiful butterfly.

God is molding us to become a precious jewel as you are being changed from glory to glory – becoming Christlike slowly each day.

Always remember your new identity as an adopted son and daughter of God in Christ. Your Father in heaven has made available to you through the Bible vast resources so that you are able to handle anything that life may bring you so that you will finish well.

#### 2. Be Spirit-filled and walk in the Spirit.

You cannot live the Christian life on your own power.

Paul wrote in Galatians 5:16, "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." To walk in the Spirit means that we yield to His control, we follow His lead, and we allow Him to exert His influence over us.

#### 3. Be in a discipleship relationship with others.

You are meant to journey with others! In the journey of life, you will face some mountain peaks. Walking alongside others provides you the opportunity to encourage others as well as be encouraged by others as life's difficulties appear in the horizon. If you are not yet part of a small group, pray about being part of one.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What kind of sufferings are you experiencing lately?

2. How have I dealt with these sufferings/challenges?

3. In what ways can I view my sufferings in light of my future glory in Christ and my adoption as God's child to better respond to these sufferings/challenges? How has enduring suffering in the past allowed me to experience the work of the Holy Spirit?

## WORKS

### PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for those who are losing hope or have lost hope for the future because of their sufferings. Find ways to reach out to them and share about your hope of a future glory with Him. Spend some time with them; be with them in their suffering and share the gos-pel to them that they too, may share in this hope and look forward to glory.

## WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

### I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

### II. Country and the World

- War in Ukraine to end; peace and order restored; lives be rebuilt, and people come to Christ in their suffering.
- Upright and moral governance of public servants and a God-centered Philippines and Canada.
- Repentance and salvation for government leaders, citizens.

### III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

### IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Retreat Centre and Shelter

### V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends

## MEMORY VERSE

### ROMANS 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."