

**The Gospel as it Really Is:
Romans simply Explained
Longing for a New Body?
Romans 8:18-27
October 5th 2025
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Who suffers most?

Do believers suffer less, the same as or more than someone who is not yet a believer?

In some ways believers suffer the same as unbelievers. We all live in this fallen world, we're all subject to accidents, earthquakes, the ravages of disease, the effects of ageing and so on.

In other ways a believer should suffer less than an unbeliever: we should be happier because we have the truth of the Gospel! We know where we came from, we know where we are going, and we have peace with the God who made us and loves us. Our domestic lives should be sweeter because we know from God's Word how family life was designed to work! Add to that we have the comfort of God's presence in times of trouble.—and we belong to a loving community of people who care for us. It is truly wonderful to be a follower of Jesus!

There are ways in which a believer will suffer more than an unbeliever.

(1) For example a believer *may face persecution* for Christ's sake. Some of you know that personally: family members or neighbours or work colleagues are not happy with your faith in Christ. In Nigeria, this past June, 200 believers were massacred by Muslim extremists and thousands more lost their homes. Just because they were followers of Jesus Christ!

(2) A Christian will suffer in other ways: they will make *joyful personal sacrifices for the sake of the Gospel*, giving up time and money and energy—which they could have spent on themselves.

Take money as an example. Many believers follow the long-established tradition of giving a tithe or tenth of their income to support the work of the Gospel. So every ten years they have given away what amounts to one year's wage! That's a lot of money they could have spent on themselves! They do it cheerfully and joyfully, but it's a sacrifice nevertheless.

(3) And here in Romans chapter 8, we've been learning about another variety of additional suffering that a believer faces, unknown to the unbeliever: *the battle against our sinful natures*.

If you have just joined us on Sunday mornings we've been making our way through the book of Romans. The last few chapters, 6-8, have been all about sanctification, becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. And sanctification involves a battle against sin!

Before we came to faith we followed the sinful desires of our old sinful nature. But now that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, a real battle rages between the old sinful nature and the new nature given to us by the Holy Spirit:

*“The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are **in** conflict with each other....” (Galatians 5:17)*

And believers are called to engage, by the help of the Holy Spirit, in this battle. It's not easy, because our old natures want to sin, indeed like to sin: it's another form of additional suffering believers face.

May I stop and ask—are you and I committed to this combat with sin? It's a battle to the death: either you will kill your sin or your sin will kill you!

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who reaps to please the sinful nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” (Galatians 6:7-8)

When I was preparing this sermon I read news about yet another religious leader in the UK who fell from grace—why? Because he did not fight his sinful nature. So I ask again, believer are you engaged in the good fight?

Let's go back to our original question, when you take everything into consideration, the subtractions, the additions, do believers suffer more than unbelievers in this present world?

The Bible's answer is that we suffer more. The proof is in 1 Corinthians 15:19. Some people were saying that there was no heaven, no glorious wonderful eternal life beyond the grave. How does Paul respond?

“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”

If all there is to following Jesus is what you get in this present life, if there is no heaven to come, then Christians are to be pitied more than anyone else in the world! Why? Because of the additional sufferings they will face: the persecution, the personal sacrifices and the battle against their sins!

Paul is teaching us that a true believer will suffer more *in this life* than an unbeliever! And this is the teaching of all of the Scriptures.

The rewards of following Jesus are mostly experienced in the world to come! Not here! How does John 3:16 read?

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish (that is go to eternal damnation after they die) but have eternal life (that is enjoy heaven after they die).”

The Gospel does not offer health and wealth in this life, Jesus came into this world to forgive our sins and offer us eternal joy and happiness in the world to come!

Look at how Paul begins, in this letter to the Romans, to write about suffering, verse 18:

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

Put all your present sufferings on one pan of eternity’s grand scales and all the future glory on the other pan:

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

The main blessings of the Gospel are in the world to come!

Perhaps someone listening to me is in the heat of the battle, the weariness of the strife; perhaps you’ve even thought of giving up! Two encouragements:

- You’re on the right path! If you’re in the battle, you must be a true soldier of Christ! If you’re on the narrow road, it’s the road that leads to life, better than to be on the broad road that leads to destruction. Be encouraged!
- And secondly, you’ve come to the right sermon, for today we learn to look to the future and to *hope*.

Let me summarise in three simple steps Paul’s word of encouragement for God’s suffering people in Romans 8:18-27, first:

(1) We suffer

First, “we suffer” a reminder that Christians will suffer in this present broken fallen world. You know that, I know that already, I simply remind us this morning that suffering is an expected part of the Christian life! It should never surprise us, though sometimes it does, particularly we who live in the comfortable West! Just think about it:

(1) We follow someone who suffered:

He “was despised and rejected by mankind, *a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.*” (Isaiah 53:3)

(2) He told us when we first followed him:

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24)

(3) The gift of Christ is in fact partly the gift of suffering in this life:

“for it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.” (Philippians 1:29)

When the Christian life is hard, we need a simple reminder—this is how Jesus told us it would be in this present world.

(2) We sigh

The second word of encouragement in our sufferings is this: we will find ourselves sighing, Paul uses the strong word “groan:” a sigh that is deeper than mere words can express. It’s OK to sigh, to be sad, to weep.

“We know that the whole of creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly await for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (v.22)

Paul personifies all of creation: the stars and the planets and the animals and says that all of creation is groaning, sobbing, sighing, because it too is suffering.

The Bible teaches that when Adam and Eve disobeyed God by taking the forbidden fruit, all of creation was put under a curse. “It was subjected to frustration” Paul says in verse 20, it is “under bondage to decay”, v. 21.

There is something wrong with creation. Have you noticed how beautiful the trees are turning their autumnal reds and browns and golds? As beautiful as creation now it, it’s not as magnificent as it once was or will one day be!. Creation is groaning and so are we.

Do you ever sigh, do you ever groan with sadness? A news bulletin from around the world. A tragic event in your neighbourhood, sad news in your family? A bereavement. Some personal disappointment or failure?

It’s OK to groan, it’s OK to weep, it’s OK to lament.

At the end of a conference some years ago that Yvonne and I attended, a microphone was passed around at the end and people were asked “What have you learnt?” And one guy got up, he said “I go to a happy-clappy church and today I learnt its OK to be sad.” We all smiled, but he was making a serious point: it’s OK to be sad, there are many psalms of lament. I wonder if we leave enough space for lament in our personal and church lives.

"Why are you downcast O my soul, why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God"
Psalms 42

(3) We hope

The kind of sighing Paul encourages here is not the sighing of despair, but the groaning of childbirth, the anticipation of something wonderful to come! We don't sigh in hopeless despair, we sigh knowing that something wonderful is around the corner! Just as an expectant mom sighs knowing that new life is on the horizon!

That's the spirit in which creation is sighing, Paul says, its looking forward to being.... "liberated from its bondage to decay", it's looking forward to "glorious freedom." (verse 21)

What are believers looking forward to? What's the childbirth, the great event? What Paul writes is remarkable:

"we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.." (v.23)

"Paul I thought that we were already sons and daughters of God, already children of our Father in heaven?" We are, but we've not yet experienced the reality of sonship until we have new bodies! That's how important our new resurrection bodies, like the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus, are!

And we will only enjoy the full experience of salvation, when we have our brand new bodies! Bodies that will be, according to 1 Corinthians 15:

- **imperishable**, they will never age, never grow old
- **glorious**, not the dishonourable bodies we now inhabit
- **Powerful** bodies, not like these weak bodies
- **Spiritual** bodies, not these natural bodies, some new supernatural quality about them

In other parts of the Scriptures, we are encouraged to look forward to (1) the glory of the place called heaven, (2) or the close presence of God who will dwell with us, or (3) the majesty of the Lord Jesus seated on his throne, but here in Romans 8, Paul wants us to look forward to the glorious new bodies we will be given.

Conclusions

Let me close with these three comments:

To **young people** who are tempted to think, because their bodies are often free of pain that they don't need to consider these matters, read Ecclesiastes 12 this week, King Solomon's warning, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years

approach when you will say “I find no pleasure in them.”

To those who **suffer greatly in body or mind**, mediate on your new redemption body, described in 1 Corinthians 15. One day you’ll possess a glorious new body!

And for **all of us**, let’s remember that the Gospel is about future glory, “in this hope we were saved” (v.24). Heaven will be here soon, we must wait patiently, day by day, week by week, month by month and year by year.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13)