

AN ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY

How Present Suffering Assures Us of Future Glory

Romans Series
PBC 2026

Text: Romans 8:18-23; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

Romans 8:18–23 *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ 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. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ 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.*

2 Corinthians 4:7–18 *But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you. ¹³ Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, ¹⁴ knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵ For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. ¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

Introduction:

I want to do two things as we start this section of Romans 8 this morning:

First, I want to tell you a story, or, more accurately, a fable. A fable is a story that teaches an important moral or spiritual lesson and makes it understandable and memorable to the hearer. So this morning, I want to start by telling you a fable.

Second, I want to set the biblical context for the second half of what Paul has to say in this amazing chapter!

The Fable: A Box of Rocks

- They show up at your address mysteriously and continuously over years – no matter where you live, the rocks keep coming.
- They are of different weights, shapes, colors, and sizes – the vast majority seem to be large, rough, and clearly found in a field or dug out of the soil somewhere.
- Each rock arrives unannounced from an anonymous source with one instruction – *“Don’t throw out the rocks I am sending you. Whatever you do, hold on to them. Trust me on this.”*
- Over time, you realize they come after times of trial, sorrow, difficulty, and pain – and that there is a correlation between the level of difficulty and the size of the rock that arrives.
- At first, you put them in a shoebox – but over time you had to get a larger box to accommodate them, and ultimately you decided to store them in an old freezer in your garage that had stopped working years earlier.
- No matter how hard you try, you can’t figure out who is sending the rocks or why. You have some suspicions about the sender’s identity – but nothing has checked out so far, and your explorations have always ended at apparent dead ends.
- Every so often, you have considered throwing out the rocks and getting rid of the freezer – but something always kept you from doing it, and so there it sits in your garage – an ever-present, growing reminder of the difficult times and painful circumstances in your life.
- And from time to time, you sit down with your spouse to talk about what to do with your box of rocks. Everyone who comes over asks about them, and you have no good answers – frankly, they have become more than a painful reminder of the difficult times in your life – they have become a source of embarrassment and even discouragement.
- But there they sit – your box of rocks, that keeps growing year by year.

I want you to put this fable on hold and let it sit to the side for a bit – and we will come back to it later in the message

The Context: Unshakeable Assurance and Unmovable Confidence that we really are no longer under condemnation (8:1).

- Chapter 8 is about assurance that leads to personal confidence and spiritual stability in our lives.
- Paul has been assuring us that the justification we received removed all condemnation from our lives – no more condemnation of any kind, for any reason, under any circumstances, for a certain group of people – those who are in Christ Jesus.
- And you recognize those people because:
 1. They have been delivered from the controlling power of sin.
 2. They have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
 3. They have joyfully embraced the holy obligation of Sonship.
 - *They are the sons and daughters of God, they are heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ!*
 - *And the proof of their sonship and the confirmation of their heirship is that they share an experience with Christ – suffering!*
- And the reason we need to know this is that this experience of suffering is the second thing that shakes our confidence that we are no longer under condemnation – because when suffering comes and God is silent or seems absent, we wonder whether we have done something that has separated us from the God who said He loves us!
- ***Our ongoing struggle with sin leads us to wonder whether we are still somehow under God's condemnation (8:1-17).***
- ***Our ongoing experience of suffering makes us wonder whether we have been separated from the love of God (8:18-30).***

- To help us with this fear, in the verses that follow (8:18-30), Paul points to 6 realities that put our suffering into perspective, so that we will never doubt the love God has for us, no matter how painful or how long the suffering we experience.
- This morning, I want us to look at the first of those realities: ***Present suffering leads to Future Glory!***

I. A Perspective that Orients Everything (v 18)

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

This verse serves as the hinge that moves us from the first part of the chapter, where Paul has been assuring us that our ongoing struggle with sin does not mean we are still under condemnation, to the rest of the chapter, where Paul assures us that the painful, extended experience of suffering does not mean we have done something that has separated us from the love of God.

Because we are tempted to think this during a time of prolonged suffering, Paul begins by speaking to us about our minds – our thinking!

Later in 12:2, Paul will remind us that we must shape our renewed minds by the word of God so that our new thinking results in transformed living. But in this text, he does so by instructing us to cultivate an intentional way of thinking about our suffering – *“I consider . . .”*

Note: The term Paul uses is the word “reckon” (λογίζομαι), which he used earlier in 6:11.

A. The ongoing commitment to this perspective

- It is personal and experiential – *“For I consider . . .”*
- It is ongoing and intentional – note the use of the present tense verb.

B. The nature of this perspective (what it is):

- The term reckon is an important term Paul uses in Romans to communicate a powerful truth. In fact, it is the term Paul chose in 6:11 when framing the first command in the entire book!
 - The term is a mathematical or accounting term that expresses or describes the idea of counting up or calculating something carefully, accurately, and exactly.
1. Sometimes this term refers to something that is credited or debited to someone's account.
 - Psalm 31:2 and Romans 4:6 use the term in this way: when David speaks of the good fortune that belongs to a person to whom God credits a righteousness he does not deserve, rather than the immense unrighteousness he deserves.
 - In Romans 4:8, Paul goes on to explain that this blessing not only includes God counting righteousness to the sinners' account but also includes the opposite, God refusing to count a person's unrighteousness against them.
 2. But another way this word is used refers to the process of thinking carefully about the implications of something and drawing a conclusion that then shapes a course of action.
 - The idea is to make a calculation resulting in an estimate leading to an action or position to which you are firmly committed and about which you are deeply convinced.
 - For example, in Acts 19:27, the silversmiths in Ephesus saw what was happening when Paul began preaching and large numbers of Ephesians responded and believed.
 - They calculated that this would lead to grave danger and serious damage, and on the basis of that estimate (conclusion), they proposed firm action.

- *“We calculate that if these men are allowed to continue preaching, it will damage our trade!”*
- *“We calculate that the glorious temple of our great goddess will be counted as nothing!!”*
- *“We calculate that even the goddess herself will be deposed from her magnificence!!!”*

- And the firm action they took was to call the city to action, enraging the citizens, and by dragging the leaders of this new preaching (Paul’s companions) into the city arena to protect and firmly establish the greatness of Artemis and the loyalty of Ephesus to her and to her temple.

- Paul uses this term in this way in the very first command he gives in the book – Romans 6:11, **“So you also must *consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*”**
 - **“So”** – based on what I have been teaching you in Romans 6:1-10, you must form an evaluation.
 - **“You must reckon yourselves dead to sin”** as a ruling power over your life, and instead reckon yourselves alive to God for His purposes and pleasure.
 - And on the basis of that conclusion – you must determine to take a course of action to which you are firmly committed and in which you are deeply convinced – **“therefore, Do not continue to let sin reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.”**

- And that is the sense in which Paul brings out this term again in verse 18 – about suffering. We are to approach the problem of ongoing suffering with a mindset that carefully evaluates and accurately assesses present suffering in light of the future promise God has made to us.

C. The Necessity of this Perspective:

- We must conduct a careful, thoughtful, and accurate evaluation of our present sufferings because Paul made it clear that suffering is an essential reality for all who are co-heirs with Jesus and will share His unique and glorious inheritance (8:17).
- Those who will receive what Jesus received after His resurrection will also experience what He experienced during His earthly life!
- And Paul sums up this reality (what they will experience in this life) as “***present sufferings.***”

- Note: Paul makes clear that the reality of “present suffering” is neither optional nor incidental to our lives as believers on our way to the future glory God has promised us! Here is how he stated it in 8:17: “*and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **provided** we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*”

- The term “provided” (εἴπερ) in vs 17 is there to make a very emphatic point – the way you recognize someone who is an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ is:
 1. They are overcoming sin in their lives.
 2. They are doing so through the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in them.
 3. They are experiencing the kind of lifelong suffering that Jesus experienced in his earthly life and responding to it with the same joy-filled, grace-enabled, humble obedience that he displayed – even to the point of his violent death on a cross.

- So, with regard to the sufferings that Paul (and all of us) experience throughout our lives on the road to future glory – Paul has adopted an ongoing commitment to looking at those sufferings and evaluating them through a particular perspective – we must do the same.

II. An Evaluation that Changes Everything – (v 18)

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time **are not worth comparing** with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

A. The Comparison

- Paul is urging us to carefully and accurately compare two things by weighing them against each other. The word “worth” is used to determine the value of something by weighing it against something else.
- The two things being weighed and compared are: the sufferings of this present time (what we experience in this life) weighed against the glory that is about to be revealed in us.
- The unshakeable evaluation and firm conclusion reached is that when these things are carefully weighed (evaluated), one of them is not at all worthy of the other.

B. The Conclusion

- When the comparison is made carefully and accurately, with all the facts in mind and in light of the whole picture/story, our present sufferings do not come close to the value of the future glory God has promised us.

C. The Conviction

- This future glory is what we should firmly grasp, joyfully embrace, and eagerly anticipate!
- Another way of stating this would be that what is on the “worthy” side should not be sacrificed to get relief from what is on the “unworthy side.
- Paul is saying – *“do not give up and disobey God or deny God in order to get relief from this present suffering, and in the process sacrifice the future weight of Glory that God has promised to all those who suffer with and for His Son!”*

III. A Reality that Flavors Everything (vs. 18)

*For I consider that **the sufferings** of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

A. Present Suffering (vs. 18)

- The **nature** of the suffering Paul has in mind: *it is painful (fiery – 1 Peter 4:12) and prolonged (after you have suffered for a while – 1 Peter 5:10).*
- The **kind** of suffering Paul has in mind (2 Cor 4:7-18): *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*
- The **amount** of suffering Paul has in mind (2 Cor 11:23-29): *exhaustion, imprisonments (plural), countless beatings, left for dead, given 40 lashes 5x, beaten with rods 3x, stoned once, shipwrecked 3x, spent a night and a day nearly drowning in the ocean adrift at sea, frequently on difficult journeys, facing dangers from rivers, robbers, the Jews who hated me, the Gentiles who resisted me, sleepless nights without count, hungry, without food often, in extreme cold or heat – and on top of all of this – the spiritual weight of the anxiety I bear for all the churches!*
- The **effect** of the suffering Paul has in mind (2 Cor 4:16): *this kind of suffering takes our outer man and causes it to waste away! It is being beaten down, used up, marred and disfigured, weakened, and destroyed little by little for the sake of the gospel.*
- The **shame** of the suffering Paul has in mind: *when Paul walked into a room, you would instinctively want to avert your eyes and wonder what in the world had happened to that man to cause such bodily damage and shameful disfigurement – because it was evident that a good bit of this disfigurement and damage had come from Roman punishment and imprisonment. So it wasn't just physical impairment; there was social shame.*

B. Inward Groaning (vs. 23)

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.

- All of this outer suffering exacts an inward toll on the soul – because we are embodied souls! There is a deep, internal groaning because we wonder why God has not intervened.

IV. A Confidence that Governs Everything (v. 18, 23b)

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. . . . as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

A. Promise of Future Glory – “the glory that is to be”

- There is a visible glory that God has promised us.
- Glory is a term used to describe the brightness of God’s perfections – manifested as a brilliant, blazing light that you can hardly look at with your earthly eyes. John records this brightness as exceeding the sun at full strength (Rev. 1:16).
- This blazing glory is experienced by humans – Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17:2-3; Luke 9:30).

B. That will be Our Permanent Experience – “revealed to/in us”

- This glorification will be revealed, uncovered, and displayed to us and, more importantly, *in* us – in our bodies! They will blaze with light! We will receive our resurrected body, but it will be a new and improved one – fully restored to the way God originally created the bodies He designed for Adam and Eve!
- And it is a sure thing – the grammar Paul uses (about, μέλλω) indicates a process that has started and can’t be stopped until it is complete! It is ordained, and nothing can stop it.

C. At a Defined Time – “the adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (vs. 23)

- This glory that Paul speaks of here will be revealed in us at a time determined by the Father.
- That time is when we receive our adoption as sons and enter into our full inheritance, the one we share with Christ.
- And the time God has appointed for this is when our bodies are loosed from their present bondage to weakness, temptation, sin, the flesh, and death, and are given the full freedom that comes with a glorified (new and improved) body capable of doing things impossible for our present bodies!

Conclusion: So what are we to do in the meantime?

We are to suffer with patience – waiting for this future glory with joyful endurance (v. 25). And here is why:

Let's go back to the story of the freezer filled with rocks in your garage.

One day, you get a new neighbor who happens to be a geologist, and you decide to ask him about these stones. So you invite him to dinner, and afterward you bring out the box and ask him if he knows what these stones are.

When you pull out the box and set it before him, his face goes white and his eyes grow wide. He brings out his instruments and begins to examine the stones. When he is done, he looks at you, speechless, and asks where you got them. So you tell him the story of how these stones keep showing up in the mail or mysteriously dropped off at your doorstep every time you go through a trial or difficulty, and that this has been going on for years!

He then proceeds to tell you that what you have here is a treasure of unimaginable, inestimable worth – these stones are priceless gems (rubies, sapphires, diamonds, emeralds, etc.).

He holds up one of the stones and tells you that the largest diamond in the world is the Cullinan diamond in the crown jewels of England (priceless) – and this one is easily twice its size, and you have 8 other uncut diamonds just like it; the most valuable ruby ever found is the Maharlika Star Ruby, worth about 11M, and you have 15 that are double that size and one that is so large it beggars the mind; the largest sapphire is The Star of Pure Land, worth 400M, and you have 10 to 12 that are larger; the largest emerald is the Duke of Devonshire Emerald, worth 400M, and you have more than 50 that are larger. In short, your freezer has gems of a quality the world has never seen and in amounts whose

value cannot be fully estimated, but it is in the trillions of dollars! There is coming a day when God reveals the glory He has prepared for you, to you and in you! And all of this treasure has been accumulated one rock at a time, tied to one trial at a time – and all of this priceless treasure has been kept for you in an old, beat-up freezer in your garage!

And the point of this fable is this – every time you add suffering to one side of the scale of your life, God adds a massive treasure to the other side of the scale that you can't yet see because your earthly eyes are not yet capable of seeing this treasure.

It looks and feels like a box of useless rocks piling up in your life. But don't be deceived! What you can't see with your physical eye, you can see with the eye of faith – and that eye has learned to see by hearing and believing the Word of a God who never lies and always keeps His promises!

The wealth you will inherit will make Elon Musk, the trillionaire, look like a pauper! The world may think he is the first trillionaire – but there have been trillionaires among God's faithful people for centuries, and you are one of them, provided you suffer well!

And in light of this perspective – reckon something!

- Don't just hold on to your box of rocks
- Cherish it!
- Hope in it!
- Count on it!
- Live Redemptively in light of it!