

# Romans 8:18-21

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## Romans 8:18-21

### The Reward of the Holy Spirit

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

**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 19 For the [anxious longing](#) of the [creation waits eagerly](#) 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 also](#) will be [set free](#) from its [slavery](#) to [corruption](#) into the [freedom](#) of the [glory](#) of the [children](#) of [God](#).

We have seen the **Role** of the Holy Spirit, the **Result** of the Holy Spirit, the **Right** of the Holy Spirit and the **Relationship** the Holy Spirit brings. Now, today, we will see the **Reward** the Holy Spirit guarantees.

The apostle Paul has told us in verses 15-17 that the Holy Spirit that lives in us bears witness that we are the children of God. Someone might say, "you don't look like a child of God." And that's a true statement. But, daily we are being conformed into His image as we learn to trust Him. Verse 29 of chapter 8 says,

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren."

And we know that one day, when we finally see Christ as He is we shall be like Him. John tells us of that day in **1 John 3:2**:

"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is."

We are conformed to His image through the tool of suffering. The "suffering with Christ" that is found in verse 17 refers to the fact that all believers suffer as Christ suffered. No one is left out. In fact, the word "suffer with" is *sumpascho*, meaning "to experience pain jointly." It is found only here and in **1 Corinthians 12:26**:

"And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."

All believers "suffer with Christ." In the awful context of when Nero had burned Rome and the people were being slaughtered, Peter writes in **1 Peter 4:12-13**,

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation."

We suffer not only when sinners come against us and persecute us, but in the ordinary sufferings that life on earth brings. You see, suffering now is a "tool" that God uses to prepare us for the "glory" that is to come.

Suffering, according to Paul, is the indispensable prelude to glory. It prepares us to participate in the glory to come. We have a totally different attitude and perspective towards suffering on this earth. Well, let's continue to watch how Paul teaches us concerning suffering with Christ.

First of all, Paul tells us that all our pain will dim when we see the glory that is to come. **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."

Paul certainly knew the pain that is involved in "suffering with Christ." **2 Corinthians 11:23**:

"Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death."

He would bear the marks as a worn out warrior for Christ.

Paul wrote Romans before he went to Jerusalem where the most serious of his troubles began. But, he always had the perspective of eternity. In verse 18, the word for "I consider" is *logizomai*, meaning to take all the facts and reason to a conclusion. If any man could look at suffering, Paul could.

The word for "suffering" is *pathema*, that which one suffers, or has suffered. The actual suffering itself involves pain, agony, and trauma. This word is used both of Christ's sufferings and of believer's suffering for Christ's sake. Peter admonishes believers in **1 Peter 5:9** to

"Resist [Satan], firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world."

Paul assured the Corinthian believers in **2 Corinthians 1:6-7**:

"But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort."

Christ is Himself the perfect example of suffering for "righteousness" sake. Just as "suffering" was essential to Christ's obedience to the Father, so it is with our obedience to Christ.

ROMANS 8:18

Now, in **verse 18** we find two great encouragements. First, Paul tells us that suffering, for the believer who obeys Christ, is only for a season. Paul says the "sufferings of this present time." This gives the idea of that it is not forever, but for a particular season.

You see Christians have great hope—their sufferings will end. The word translated "**season**" is the word *kairos*, a set or fixed time. It is different from *chronos*, which means a space of time. Kairos refers to that which will end, like spring, fall, and so on.

Remember Habakkuk when God finally spoke to him telling him of the great suffering that was coming because of the people's sin? **Habakkuk 1:11** says,

"Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is

their god."

Even chastisement, which is to be willingly received by the believer, will pass.

#### ROMANS 8:19

The second encouragement Paul gives us in **verse 19** is that suffering will add to our eternal glory:

"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."

This is where the believer is different from the unbeliever. Believer's who suffer for Christ's sake will be rewarded for it one day. Those who do not know Christ have no hope when they suffer. Whatever the reason for their affliction, it does not come upon them for Christ's sake, or righteousness sake, and therefore cannot yield any spiritual blessing or glory. But all our suffering for the sake of Christ does.

The verse says that these sufferings "are not worthy"—they do not in any way compare, or measure up to—"the glory that is to be revealed to us".

Paul speaks of a time when we shall have "glory" revealed to us. A time when this suffering is over. The word "glory" refers to the glorious condition of blessedness, our glorification, into which it is appointed and promised that true Christians shall enter after their Savior's return from heaven. This glory will be revealed to us. The word "revealed" is *apokalupto*, to uncover something that has been hidden.

Paul is simply saying that all the pain, suffering, tribulation we go through here on earth as believers for the sake of Christ, is nothing compared to the state of blessedness we shall one day have revealed to us. There is a future reward that the refining experience of suffering is preparing us for, a future glory that only believer's have to look forward to.

The second thing Paul wants us to know is that all creation will rejoice when we are glorified. Look at verse 19: "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God."

Now, when Paul mentions "creation", we must make the exception for the devil and his demons, because they are sentenced to eternal torment; also of God's holy angels who are not subject to corruption; and believers, because we have already been covered in the previous verses. So, what does the "rest" of creation refer to?

Let's look again at **verse 19** and take it one phrase at a time.

"For the anxious longing of the creation."

The word here is *apokaradokia*. It bears the sense something that is greatly desired. Something that is awaited with intense anticipation, or as the King James puts it "earnest expectation."

"**Of the creation**" is *ktisis*—that which has been created; all of the non-rational creation of God. You get the picture that all of God's creatures of nature are standing on tiptoes. All of nature longs for an event to occur. Their destiny is inseparably linked to man's. This future time is going to be beneficial to all of creation. It is the time when we get our glorified bodies and all of creation sees us for who we really are, and a time when they will be restored to their created purpose.

"Waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God." *Apekdechomai* means to patiently, but expectantly await. **James 5:7** says,

"Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains."

So the sense is that creation is waiting like a farmer waits for his crops to come up—earnestly expecting them to come up, but not knowing when that will be exactly.

And what is creation waiting for? "*The revealing of the sons of God*" ***Apokalupsis***, the manifestation, uncovering, of the huios, the fully mature sons of God. Oh, what a day! Colossians 3:4 says,

"When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

All believers will be revealed with Him in glory, and all "creation" will rejoice, because now they can be restored. What a future we have to look forward to! It's amazing how all of creation awaits the "revelation of the Sons of God". Our pain will dim when we see the glory that is to come. All creation will rejoice when we are glorified.

#### ROMANS 8:20-21

Well, the third thing Paul wants us to see in this passage is that God has a plan for death and decay. Look at **verses 20 and 21**:

*"For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope, 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."*

You may ask, what did the plants, the animals, the birds do to deserve "being subjected to corruption," which means death and decay? We must understand this. It was all because of man's sin. No part of nature exists like God intended it to.

Look again at **Romans 8:20**:

"For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope."

Now, again, he doesn't tell us when it was subjected to futility, but we already know when. **Romans 5:12**:

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."

Notice that it says, "creation was subjected." It did not subject itself. God Himself subjected it. It's interesting to me that so many environmental agencies are making noble attempts to turn the tide of corruption that has devastated both man and his environment since the fall. But, it will never cease until the Creator, who subjected it, removes the curse and creates a new heaven and new earth.

**"Futility"** is the word **mataiotes**, emptiness, that which is vain. The idea of the word mataiotes is the idea of being without success, of being unable to achieve a goal or purpose. You see, because of man's sin, no part of nature now exists as God intended it to be, and as it originally was.

This is a cursed world we live in, yet in spite of that, God's glory and beauty are still seen in it. Look back to **Romans 1:20**:

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."

So "the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will." The word here is **shekon**, not voluntarily, not willingly. The word for not is **ou**, which means "not in any way" willingly.

"But," the verse goes on, "because of Him who subjected it." Again, God subjected it. Why? Because of man's sin. "Who subjected it" comes from the word **hupotasso**, to subordinate. God Himself subjected it to the impossibility of ever getting better on its own.

All this happened because of man's sin. Why? Read **verse 21**, picking up the last two words of **verse 20**,

in hope, 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."

**"In hope"** is the word **elpis**, which carries the meaning of confidence, expectation. So you could translate it **"certain hope"**—hope that is never uncertain. Just as man's sin brought corruption to the universe, man's restoration to righteousness will be accompanied by the restoration of the earth and its universe to their divinely intended perfection and glory. We can be certain of that.

**"That the creation itself also will be set free."** **"Will be set free"** is the word **eleutheroo**. We have seen this word before in Romans. It carries the idea that, not only will it be set free, but it will be shown to be free. Everyone will know it.

God will set it free. There will come a time when the creation will be fully restored to its desired perfection and glory. Free from what? From its **"slavery to corruption."**

The word here for **"slavery"** is **douleia**, which indicates any kind of bondage. **"Corruption"** is **phthora**, that which is perishable, that which decays. Again, all of nature is in a current that is heading into corruption and seems to be on tiptoes waiting for the event when the sons of God are revealed.

Martin Lloyd-Jones made this wonderful insight:

I wonder whether the phenomenon of the Spring supplies us with a part answer. Nature every year, as it were, makes an effort to renew itself, to produce something permanent; it has come out of the death and the darkness of all that is so true of the Winter. In the Spring it seems to be trying to produce a perfect creation, to be going through some kind of birth-pangs year by year. But unfortunately it does not succeed, for Spring leads only to Summer, whereas Summer leads to Autumn, and Autumn to Winter. Poor old nature tries every year to defeat the "vanity" of the principle of death and decay and disintegration that is in it. But it cannot do so. It fails every time. It still goes on trying, as if it feels things should be different and better; but it never succeeds. So it goes on "groaning and travailing in pain together until now." It has been doing so for a very long time.... but nature still repeats the effort annually. But, it will be set free one day from this corruption "into the freedom of the glory of the children of God."

This refers to the time when believers will be liberated from the presence of sin, liberated from their flesh and their humanness. When we are given our glorified bodies and begin to share in His eternal glory, then the world itself will also be set free.

In my own belief, I think this begins in the Millennium. Turn to **Revelation 5:9-13**:

"And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."

Isaiah speaks of the millennium in Isaiah 11:6-9 "And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the kid, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze; Their young will lie down together; And the lion will eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea."

Then it culminates in the "**new heaven and the new earth**", cleansed of all corruption.

Well, our pain will one day dim in the light of the glory God has prepared for us. Creation will also rejoice in that day. God has a plan for death and decay. He is in control!