Romans 8:18-25

Verse 18:

--***For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.***

--Paul begins a transition. He was speaking about our shared life and inheritance with Christ, which includes, at present, our shared suffering.

2 Thessalonians 1:4-5:** ***So that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;*

--Paul quickly follows that truth with the reality that the glory which will be revealed in us is *always* greater than the suffering we may face here.

--***I consider*** could be translated *I am firmly convinced*. Paul is holding scales as one who understood the weight of present suffering more than most!

Acts 9:16:** ***For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.*

Colossians 1:24:** ***I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.*

2 Corinthians 11:23-28

--And yet what does he say about it? How does he personally sum up his sufferings?

2 Corinthians 4:17-18:** ***For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

--The difference between our faith and Paul's was not on the suffering side of the scale, as if he was just really tough, but on the glory side of the scale. We desire the great reward too little!

*Lewis (The Weight of Glory): *"The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire. If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."**

--God, in His Word, never promises us that the Christian life is going to be easy. He promises those who follow Him and obey Him that the Christian journey is going to be worth it. He promises that we will not be ashamed.
--God acknowledges both suffering and reward, and because He is The Truth, He acknowledges that the reward is worth more than all the suffering put together. He should know! *Lay up for yourselves…*

Verses 19-21:
--***For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of He who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.***
--Here, Paul reveals a very interesting truth. In a wonderful way, he shows us that the Lord has bound together both men and creation in their bondage and their freedom. The creation is in bondage, waiting for our revelation.
--He tells us that the creation has an eager ***expectation***—the word has the idea of standing on tip-toe with your neck stretched out to eagerly look for something.
--Nature was bound under the curse when its caretaker, Man (Adam), sinned, and has been forced into a position of hopeful waiting. Nature's state is not its original one.
--God cares about His creation. I am not going the crazy tree hugger route here, but I am saying there is something to the reality of our responsibility toward the earth. Creation is part of God's design for man. *Of course, *"How?"* is a viable question.*
Numbers 22:33:** ***If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live.*
Proverbs 12:10:** ***A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*
Jonah 4:11:** ***And should I not pity Ninevah, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?*
Matthew 10:29-31:** ***Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from you Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.*
--God provided for creation by putting creation into the care of His highest creature, Man, who was made in His own image and likeness. So the creation is eagerly waiting for us to be who God made us to be. For our liberty is its liberty.
--The creation wants to clap its hands and be set free. *We have no idea what it is for creation to be in the bondage of corruption!*

Psalm 96:11-12:** ***Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and all its fullness; let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the LORD. For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth.*

Psalm 98:7-9:** ***Let the sea roar, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell in it; let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth.*

***Millennial descriptions:**

--**(Isa. 11)** The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard and young goat, the little child shall lead them, and nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole and put his hand in the vipers den.

--**(Isa. 30)** The earth will produce plentiful harvests, there will be water streaming down every mountain and high hill and the sun will shine seven times brighter.

--**(Isa. 35)** There will be streams in the deserts and the wastelands will blossom and bloom.

--**(Ez. 34)** Showers of blessing will come down and everyone will be safe enough to sleep in the wilderness or the woods.

--**(Ez. 47)** A river will cleanse the Dead Sea, bring plentiful fishing, and trees will produce fruit monthly.

--The opening of a donkey's mouth, Jesus' speaking to nature, Jesus' saying the rocks would cry out, etc. We don't fully know the original wonders of the world around us, but we will!

--All of these prophetic words will happen when you and I are also set free from bondage. Our liberty is described as: ***the revealing of the sons of God. . . the glorious liberty of the children of God.***

--It is an understated doctrine in Scripture that God will one day put His children on exhibition for His own glory. When Jesus is revealed, we too are revealed! We will have a ***revealing***, like pulling a covering off a work of art. God wants the full glory of His salvation to be made evident *in this world!*

Romans 5:2:** ***And rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

Colossians 3:4:** ***When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

1 John 3:1-2:** ***Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

--All this matters very much. This is all part of the ***eternal weight of glory*** that Paul is putting on the other side of the scale. Do you ever feel this weight?

--Is it a fairy tale or is it true? Is it the wild, unbelievable, but inescapable truth? If so, it should determine the way we see everyone and everything.

*Lewis (The Weight of Glory): *"Meanwhile the cross comes before the crown and tomorrow is Monday morning. A cleft has opened in the pitiless walls of the world, and we are invited to follow our great Captain inside. The following Him is, of course, the essential point. That being so, it may be asked what practical use there is in the speculations which I have been indulging. I can think of at least one such use. It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor. The load, the weight, or burden of my neighbor's glory should be laid on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no **ordinary** people. You have never talked to a mere mortal."**

--What does it matter if we are overlooked, unknown, or disdained now? Who we are, who we are truly, will only be known then. *Satan has done so much to keep our focus earthly and shallow! We worry about gray hairs, wrinkles, nips, tucks, and weird skin blotches while wasting our reward and inheritance in glory and power!*

--How many are looking at themselves in such a shallow manner? How many live with eating disorders, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, or are just overly body-conscious? How many are so focused on our present image when the Bible tells us it does not yet appear what we are.

--Do we know that we have a temporary body here that is corrupt, but we will soon not only have a new body, but be known and recognized as incorruptible, heavenly, immortal, and powerful?! Does that matter? Is that true?

--You may feel like you don't like being forced to rest on that hope. But remember, Christ does not ask us to do something He has not already done. We are told of Jesus that He had ***no beauty that we should desire Him*** in this life. We have no idea what it was for Him to take on our flesh. He is, in fact, our only hope.

--How many are struggling with a physical or mental handicap? Wondering why they are the way they are: cripple, blind, mentally impaired to some degree, etc. You are yet to be revealed!

--How many are struggling with the effects of sin in their bodies here? Of drugs, alcohol abuse, the harmful effects of transgender surgeries, and experimental hormones?

--All of us are facing the corrupting realities of sin and death! Our outer man is perishing day by day, but our inner man can be renewed day by day. This truth is one of the great weights God gives us to place against the burdens of this life.

--God is not ripping anyone off. This is not all the life we have as it is for the unsaved. This life is where we follow Jesus as humble and unrevealed sons and daughters of God, just like He had to do for us. Except He was much more worthy of being known and recognized for who He was!
--What will all these sufferings be when we are redeemed and fresh in the light and strength and joy of our immortality? No more corruption, just: incorruption, glory, and power.
1 Corinthians 15:49:** ***And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.*

Verses 22-23:
--**(22)** ***For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.***
--The world groans, and we groan, ***until now***. ***Until now*** tells us that what he is speaking of still hasn't happened yet. It is still future. There are birth pangs of something coming soon.
--(The timing seems to be His own revelation at His second coming and the introduction of His millennial reign. See: **1 Cor. 1:7; Col. 3:4; 2 Thess. 1:7; Titus 2:11-13**.)
--**(23)** ***Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.***
--We groan (and should groan!). We should not try to escape our groans by looking to the world or this fallen state for distraction, entertainment, or comfort, so that we can ignore these things. Our outer man is perishing, but our inner man should be constantly renewed as we have ***the firstfruits of the Spirit*** (See: **2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14).**
--This groaning will end at ***the redemption of our body***. When our adoption is complete. You see, we have the Father who has adopted us, His own Son who has redeemed us as our Second Adam and Brother, and the Spirit who gives us life, witness, and hope.
--Notice Paul's hope is not to be "released" or "escape" from his body. Paul's hope is seen in the risen Christ. The ***redemption*** of our bodies in resurrection.
--We are not left in this world with only suffering. At the redemption of our bodies, we will finally have full sanctification—the absence of the presence of sin in us. This is what we are groaning for—for life! *Even the unsaved know things are good, but also off here.*
***** **2 Corinthians 5:4-5:** ***For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.****
--What will it be like to be revealed? To have our mortality swallowed up by life?! *The worship song says: "Our hearts will cry, Our bones will sing, Great are you Lord!"*
--There is something I like about that, it reminds me of the childlike joy of running out of the building on the last day of school into the first day of summer (No offense to any teachers because I know teachers are happy at the last day of school too!).
--Enoch prophesied: ***Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints!***

--Jesus warned us: **(Mark 8:38):** ***For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.***
--Paul tells us what it will look like—***Not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!***

Verses 24-25:
--***For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.***
--Paul is saying that we are saved *into a state of hope*. The full experience of our salvation is not realized in the singular instant we are saved. Truly, salvation is a gift of God that comes in many packages. For now, we are still strangers and pilgrims—unrevealed strangers and pilgrims.
--Israel was saved from the angel of death on Passover (not their hope); saved from the power of Egypt at the Red Sea (not their hope); and then led to the promised land (their hope).
Similar to our salvation journey.
--We are saved into a condition of Biblical hope that is steadfast and sure and an anchor for our souls in this storm-tossed world.
--All other hopes are earthly and unsure. Even the good things we desire must be held with an open hand. But this hope, we cannot lose sight of. It is essential for our current lives.
--This hope comes from more than prophetic speculation. It consists of more than intellectual information. It is only love and desire that cause us to wait up for someone, or to wait in expectation for their arrival. So too with us and Christ!
*Scroogie (Salvation and Behavior): *"We ask for strength that we might achieve; we are made weak that we might obey. We ask for health that we might do greater things; we are given infirmity that we might do better things. We ask for power that we might have the praise of men; we are given weakness that we might feel our need of God. We ask for all things that we might enjoy life; we are given life that we might enjoy all things. It may be that we receive little of what we ask for, but we yet may receive all that we hope for."**
--Biblical hope is always set in the same three things:
1) The personal return of Jesus Christ
2) Our personal resurrection
3) Eternal glory and reward
--All of you groaning souls. Trust God—it will all be worth it.
Isaiah 25:8-9:** ***He will swallow up death forever, and the LORD GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. And it will be said in that day: 'Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.'*