

The Agony and the Ecstasy

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I. Introduction.

A. Text: Romans 8:18-28.

B. Suffering and glory seem unlikely things to link together, but Paul links them together anyway.

II. We do not earn our glory through the sufferings we go through.

A. Suffering and glory are privileges. (Philippians 1:29)

B. The early Christians rejoiced in their sufferings.

III. Incomparable glory lies ahead.

A. Nature points to this.

1. Creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.
2. Creation was subjected to frustration because it fell into bondage when man sinned at the Fall.
3. In redemption, creation will be delivered unto the freedom of glory.
4. Nature groans in anticipation of the day of liberation from decay.
5. The groan is producing the glory. (II Corinthians 5)

B. We have the first fruits of the Spirit.

1. Part of the privilege we have is to suffer with Christ—what is happening to us now has meaning.
2. The first fruits of the Spirit are the power of God to give the believer peace in difficult circumstances.
3. We often know what to pray for but there are times when we will not know for what to pray. The Spirit intercedes for us in these circumstances.
 - a. The Spirit prays according to the mind of God.
 - b. He sends to the believer the experience we need—both tragedies and triumphs are answers to the prayers we pray to God through the Spirit.

Application questions:

1. How is nature a part of the Fall and redemption?

2. How can suffering be understood as a normative part of the Christian life?

3. Reflecting on Romans 8, how might a person view his plans differently in light of the glory and suffering to come? Explain.
