
Groaning for Glory

“Man, the bravest animal and most prone to suffer, does not deny suffering as such: he wills it, he even seeks it out, provided he is shown a meaning for it, a purpose of suffering.”

-Fredrich Nietzsche

I. Christian suffering is relative.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” [v. 18]

II. Suffering is inextricably bound to glory.

“Consider means I have thought it over carefully — I have weighed the evidence and thus reckon it to be so.” Hughes, 1991.

A. People suffer.

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 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.” [Romans 8:16–17]

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” [1 Peter 5:10]

“Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.” [2 Cor. 11:25–27]

B. The creation suffers.

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption.” [v. 20–21a]

C. Christ Himself suffered.

For it was fitting that He, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the Founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.” [Hebrews 2:10]

D. Suffering is part of the Christian life.

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” [Romans 5:1–2]

III. Suffering should not be surprising.

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” [1 Peter 4: 12–14]

A. We are still in the middle of God's redemption story.



IV. Life in the Not-Yet.

“Meanwhile the Cross comes before the Crown and tomorrow is a 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.” (Lewis)

A. To follow Christ means to suffer.

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.” [1 Peter 2:21]

V. We wait expectantly for what is to come.

“Bondage to decay will be replaced by the freedom of glory.” (Stott)

A. When the sons of God will be revealed.

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 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.” [v. 19–21]

“The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own.” (Hughes, quoting Phillips)

Greek *apokaradokia* (from the Greek for head) conveys a waiting with head raised, eyes fixed toward the horizon, on tiptoes, straining the neck, craning forward. (Stott, 1994)

1. What is it that all creation longs for?

“The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall

actually survive [God's] examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God...to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness...to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father and a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.” (Lewis)

B. When creation will be redeemed.

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.” [Isa. 65:17]

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.” [Rev. 21:1]

C. We must wait patiently.

“For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” [v. 24b–25]

Greek *apekdechomai*: a waiting that is neither so eager that we lose our patience, nor so patient that we lose our expectation, but eagerly and patiently together. (Stott)

VI. We wait for redemption. We groan for it.

Greek *alalētos*: wordless, unexpressed rather than inexpressible agonized longings for the final redemptive act and the consummation of all things. (Stott)

A. Creation groans.

“For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” [v. 22]

B. Christians groan.

“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.” [v. 23]

C. The Holy Spirit groans.

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” [v. 26]

D. The Holy Spirit intercedes.

“And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” [v. 27]

“How marvelous this all is! We have two intercessors: One in Heaven—our Lord Jesus who intercedes for our sins and one in our hearts—the Holy Spirit Himself. How greatly we are loved!” (Hughes, 1991)

VII. The path to glory is paved with suffering.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” [v. 18]

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 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.” [2 Cor. 4:17–18]

A. But glory is what puts suffering into perspective.

“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. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations— these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.” (Lewis)

VIII. The truth about Christian suffering.

“Suffering and glory are inseparable, since suffering is the way to glory, but they are not comparable.” [Stott, 1994]

A. Pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional.

1. Pain

Greek *pathēma*: ailment.

2. Suffering

“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.” (Lewis)

B. Nietzsche was right.

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1. Christians don't just survive, they thrive.

The meaning that God gives to our suffering doesn't give us the ability to survive, it gives us the ability to thrive- to find and fulfill our purpose.

"But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed... Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name." [1 Peter 4:13, 16]

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