

“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.” (Romans 8: 18)

One of the difficulties in our time and place, is that we believe we are suppose to have remarkable and glorious lives. We’ve watched “Life Styles of the Rich and Famous.” We know people who have achieved massive success. We have witnessed doctors who have saved lives and professional athletes who made millions of dollars. We want to believe if they can have the glorious life, so can we.

So we hear the story of their success, but do we know the rest of the story? When their life style leads to divorce? When their success leads to excess and overdose? When their life saving surgical procedure still can’t save their own daughter, or the millions are squandered on the things of the flesh?

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.” (Romans 7: 7)

When a human being takes their eye off the ball, they get smacked in the face. Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the God who dwells in you, forgiveness, child of God, Glorified in Christ, eternal life... These are things of the Spirit. This is the ball that we are to follow and focus on. Everything else distracts us from the goal - the glory about to be revealed.

Will we suffer? Of course we will. After all, Jesus says, if they hang me on a cross, what do you think they will do to you?

“When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ — if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.” (Romans 8: 15b - 17)

We have already suffered with Christ. We have already died and in that death (baptism) our sins were forgiven and death lost its sting. We live eternally - today, tomorrow and forever. Should we choose to live a lifestyle that goes back to the things of the flesh, then we take our eye off the giver and the gift. Until suffering shows us the things of the Spirit is what the glory of God that is all about, not our vain attempts for achieving glory through wealth, style, prowess, or talent.

Yet, quickly it must be said, even after all our attempts to reject the way of the Spirit and the gifts of Jesus, we read:

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8: 37-39)

There is no condemnation - There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God.

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For Whom Christ Died

A 21st Century Approach to:
The Letter of Paul to the Romans
By: Rev. David L. Stoner



God Is For Us

Life is not easy. The Christian life is not easy either. In fact if you average it out the Christian goes through just as many heart aches as those who do not know Christ. To dispel any myth, there is no advantage to being a Christian when it comes to warding off hardship, suffering, or pain. It may be that Christians, because of their faith, face more challenges. Though we may think martyrdom is rare, globally there are many who lose their lives because they follow Jesus.

So, what advantage is there to being a Christian? Its about belonging to God. It’s about knowing you are a child of God. It’s about having God on your side through thick and thin. It’s about having the Spirit of God dwelling in you. Indeed, if God is for you who, or what can be against you. The Spirit helps us in our weakness.

For Whom Christ Died #8

“The Spirit Helps Us In Our Weakness”

Romans 8: 1

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”

If I had a wish for every man, woman and child, (especially the children) of my congregation, it would be that they would hear these words, “no condemnation” and believe them true for themselves.

Why? What difference would that make for them, or anyone else for that matter?

As an athlete, I know there is nothing more important to the competitive spirit than positive thinking. Any athlete who walks to the starting line, or begins the first quarter, believing they are going to lose, is going to lose. But the competitor who believes that they are the most practiced, conditioned, and healthiest in the competition and who believes in their heart they will win, is the most likely victor.

Those who know they are in Christ Jesus, have an ability to rise above the pit falls and challenges that life hurls at them, because they know a champion is on their side. The very one who conquered fear, death, evil and sin is the one coaching them to victory. Christ Jesus is his name, and he not only frees us from death, but also frees us for life. This life, death competition is stacked in the Christian’s favor. The one who believes that Christ has already run the race and won the victory once and for all, is led by the spirit to live life free from the law and free for the sake of righteousness.

I have the heart of a football player. I love football. In fact I played football for eight years and loved every minute of it. At the beginning of my ninth year. I put the offensive team in a huddle, before I called the play. I looked up and saw faces and looked down and saw feet. That’s when reality sunk in that I was not only the shortest man on the team, but also the smallest by many pounds. My dream



of playing high school football was over. Four foot - eleven inches and 98 pounds was not conducive to football. I had heart enough to want to play, but had the size of one who would not.

When I told the coach I was going to quit, rather than try to talk me out of it, he congratulated me on my decision. Then he pointed at a group of guys running around the track. See those men over there? They run for Coach Vogel. That is our school’s cross country team. With your heart and speed you’ll make the team and with a lot of hard work and practice, you’ll help the team win.

Running ten miles a day was not my idea of a good time. It was hard and quite frankly I suffered. The pain in every joint, the ache in every muscle, the constant pounding of the heart and the burning of lung tissue that felt as if spontaneous combustion was taking place inside my chest; these were my only sensations for the first two weeks. It was hard to comprehend why I would give up the glory of football for the suffering of the long distant runner. I knew I was not cut out for this sport. I knew I would never succeed, or to use a theological image, I condemned myself to failure. To this day it amazes me that I did not quit.

By the fourth week the pain was a forgotten memory and the excitement of the first race was days away. Would I help the team by completing the two mile race, or hurt it by failing to finish?

Coach Morris Vogel, one of the great mentors of people I’ve ever known, called us to our huddle and looked up into each of our eyes and said. “At some point during this race, everyone of you will think of quitting because it will just be too hard and you’ll believe you can’t take another step. But listen to my voice when I tell you, not only will you finish, but you will feel great in the end. Whether you win or lose, if you finish, you will be a champion of your own body. You’ll defeat suffering, and begin to seek glory.”

He was right, everyone of us thought about quitting. He was also correct, everyone of us felt like a victor, because we defeated the quit and ran through the pain. None of us on our team won the race, but all of us finished. That was a great accomplishment. That was the first leg of a long journey to becoming a great team of champions.