

The Suffering Spirit

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

All right, if you've got your Bible, turn to Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8 is going to be our passage this evening.

We are continuing in our series that we've been in throughout the month of May, the last several weeks, on the Holy Spirit. And this is going to be the last sermon in this series for now, for now. I may actually return to this later on in the summer, but next week, I'm actually taking a break. And all God's people said, amen, right?

Or maybe just the pastor does. So I actually, you know, normally I don't announce when I'm not preaching, but given that I'm actually going to take a break just for a few weekends, I didn't want you to think like something happened to me, like I got kidnapped or something.

[1 : 53] Actually, I'm going to be around, I'm just, I'm taking a preaching break. Really since about February, and this has been so fulfilling, so fulfilling.

I've been teaching like Tuesday nights, Wednesday nights, Saturday nights, twice on Sunday. And if there were another day of the week, probably that one too. And so I have so enjoyed it, but my mind is mush.

And at my age, I don't have much of a mind left, all right? So I'm trying to take care of it. But I've been talking, it feels like nonstop since February.

And some of you have been praying that I would shut up, all right? And so because of that, amen? I figured I'd get an amen, right? So I'm just going to take kind of a preaching break.

I'll actually still be around and be in the services, but it's just, it's been a long run, and it's been so rewarding. I have loved the classes that I've been teaching.

[2 : 54] And so, anyway, so we just kind of, as we... I didn't expect that, but thank you. Thank you. It's great to be applauded that you're not going to be preaching.

So thank you. I think, isn't that what you were trying to... Okay, whatever, all right? Anyways. So anyways, I'm going to be around, but June is kind of a good time to kind of take a little bit of a preaching break.

And so because of that, I just wanted you to know. And so we may come back to this series and finish it up, or we may just do a different summer series later in June when I preach again.

So anyways, I just kind of wanted to give you that public service announcement. So the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit. This is the series that we've been in the last several weeks.

And kind of the big idea, the thing I've been trying to drive into our minds and our hearts is that the Holy Spirit is the personal presence of Jesus.

[3 : 55] That the Holy Spirit is the personal... He's a person. The personal presence of Jesus. Distinct, but same. It's the orthodox view of the Trinity.

And particularly understanding that with Jesus comes His very presence. The very beginning of the Bible begins with God said, right?

He speaks. Now, John chapter 1 will use that and says, in the beginning was the Word, the very Word of God.

And with the very Word of God comes the Ruach, the Spirit, right? It's Word and breath. Are you with me? And you don't have Word without breath, even though Word and breath are two different things.

Do you see that? And so they go together. And so particularly when you come to the New Testament, you really see this in terms of the Holy Spirit being the personal presence of Jesus.

[4 : 57] In John chapter 14, this is where we started this series, Jesus says, in my Father's house are many places to dwell.

That is not heaven. It's not a mansion in the sky. Sorry, Southern Gospel music. It's not a mansion in the sky or King James Version. It is...

There's many dwelling places in my Father's house, which is temple language in the Gospel of John, but I'm going to prepare a new kind of dwelling.

And later in John 14, he tells you what that new kind of dwelling is going to be, doesn't he? That the Holy Spirit will be sent, His personal presence, to dwell where?

In us. That is, no longer will my Father's house be a building. My Father's house will be my body. Where my very Spirit will dwell with you and in you.

[6:01] Isn't that incredible news? It's transformational. It's transformational. And this is precisely, I believe, how the Apostle Paul understood what Jesus was saying.

Because in the letter to the Corinthians, he's able to say, you're fighting and destroying one another. And what you don't realize is you're destroying the temple. Because you are the temple of God.

Because the Spirit dwells in y'all. And so, it's no longer a building. It's the very body of Jesus.

That Jesus is the temple, John chapter 2. Destroy this temple. I'll build it up in three days. He was talking about His body, John says. And Paul understands that now, because we have His personal presence, we're the temple.

Is everybody with me? And then Paul will use language like the fruit of the Spirit. This was last week. Because he understands that Jesus is the what?

[7:08] The, John 15, the true vine. And anybody who abides in the vine will bear fruit. And it's the fruit of His personal presence.

The fruit of His very life that is produced in us. So, that's kind of what we've been talking about thus far. Now, tonight what I want to show us is another aspect of the Spirit.

And that is how the Spirit works and ministers to us in our suffering. And I really hope this will be a great encouragement to you.

There is so much in the verses that we're about to read. Alright? So, if you would please stand, if you're able to do so, as we honor the reading of God's Word.

In Romans chapter 8, and we pick it up in verse 18. Now, I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

[8:10] 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 and the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the adoption of sons, the redemption of our bodies.

For in this hope we're 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.

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought.

[9:12] But the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Wow. Those are awesome, awesome verses. Let's ask God to teach us what they mean and how they apply to our life. Pray with me. Lord, this is a divine moment when we gather around your Word.

We want to hear from you. And I know, I know, there are people in this room that need this message tonight. And everybody in this room will need this message at some point.

So plant this truth. This way of viewing the world in which we live. And the hope of the gospel. Plant that deep in our hearts, I pray.

In Jesus' name and all God's people said, amen. Amen. You can be seated. Can anybody name the famous Dutch artist who painted this?

[10:22] Anybody? I'm hearing wah, wah, wah, wah, wah, right? So in unison, right? Some of you are saying Vincent van Gogh, right? Vincent van Gogh.

Actually pronounced van Gogh. But we Americans like to butcher foreign names. So we made another name up, Van Gogh, right? But we'll go with Van Gogh because that's what you're used to

hearing.

And it's actually his famous painting, The Starry Night. The Starry Night. Now, Van Gogh is actually considered one of the most famous and influential artists in history.

And yet, behind the beauty of Van Gogh's painting was a man that struggled with loneliness, poverty, and severe emotional suffering.

You may not know this, but before Vincent van Gogh was a famous painter, he was actually an unknown preacher. He was a missionary that traveled to a very small coal mining town in Belgium.

[11 : 34] And the coal miners there lived in horrible conditions. Like, really, really terrible conditions. They worked underground, mostly in darkness.

Their faces were literally stained with coal dust. Their bodies were worn out by endless labor. Cave-ins were common.

Injuries were frequent. And poverty was everywhere. And Van Gogh couldn't turn away from this. He was drawn into their suffering.

But most preachers during that time, they would visit a town like this. They would preach their sermon and then they'd go home. But Van Gogh actually lived with them. He shared in their suffering.

He lived in the same conditions they lived in. He even shared their hunger. He believed that if he was going to preach Christ, he needed to live among the broken.

[12 : 38] But listen to me, Faith Family. Listen, listen. Something happened to him while he was living among the broken. Something broke in him.

Watching the suffering of the people of this little town. The suffering of those around him. It changed him.

And that's when he started to paint. And what he painted was not kings and celebrities and wealthy people. What he painted were tired workers.

With rough hands. He painted faces that were full of grief. He believed the pain he saw needed to be painted.

And you actually see this throughout a lot of his works. One of his famous works, The Potato Eaters, shows a peasant family that's sitting around a very dim lit table, eating the only meal they could afford.

[13 : 46] And maybe one of his most famous paintings of all is a painting by the name of At Eternity's Gate. Look at it.

It's an old man sitting in a wooden chair. Body folded. Elbows on his knees. Hands covering his face.

Like you look at that and you can tell this man is carrying the weight of the world. And I want you to keep looking at it. Because the longer you look, you begin to realize this man's not just grieving. He's praying. It's why the painting is called At Eternity's Gate. It's a man who is in anguished prayer. And the reality is it wasn't simply just a painting of an old man. It was a painting of the very life of Van Gogh. A man who was tormented by the suffering world he saw around him.

[14 : 59] Now part of the reason why that painting became so popular is because of how relatable it is. Listen, faith family, can we be honest tonight?

If you live long enough, eventually you're going to find yourself in the chair of anguished prayer. Amen? If you live long enough, at some point you will find yourself in the chair of anguished prayer. Moments when life is hard, when circumstances seem impossible, when you are literally crying out to God. Have you ever sat in that chair?

Some of you are in that chair right now. When your marriage is barely hanging on. When you don't know if your child is going to make it through the night.

When you simply do not have enough money in your account to pay the bills. When it feels like one storm after another.

[16 : 09] Does it ever stop raining? Do you know these moments? When you don't know how to pray.

And you don't know what to pray. And the question before us this evening is where is the personal presence of Jesus, the Holy Spirit.

Where is the personal presence of Jesus when you're in the chair of anguished prayer? That's exactly what Paul answers here.

And gives great comfort to us here in Romans chapter 8. Now before we dive in, we don't like to just jump in midstream to a passage. Or we just parachute in to chapter 8.

Like, what is Paul doing? Well, first of all, Paul writes this letter to the church of Rome. I went to seminary for that. It's called Romans. Whatever, right?

[17 : 08] He wrote to the church of Rome. And interestingly, Paul had not visited this church yet. But Paul was always like receiving updates and news and the goings-on of the different churches and the different regions.

And so he knew a lot of what these Christians in Rome were experiencing. You can actually read about it in the book of Acts. And they were facing a lot of persecution.

Now, it wasn't at this particular writing, it wasn't persecution to the level of death. We haven't gotten to Nero yet, where he will kill a lot of Christians. But this particular persecution that Paul is writing to is happening under an individual by the name of Claudius.

Claudius, when he was emperor of Rome, gave a decree that actually expelled, it got rid of, all the Jews in that particular area of Rome, which included Jewish Christians.

So many of these Christians are facing social isolation. They've been removed from their homeland or kicked out of their communities, which certainly impacted them economically and financially.

[18 : 23] as well as relationally. And then when the decree ended in 54 AD, these Jewish Christians returned to Rome. And what do you think the churches are filled with if the Jews have been removed?

Gentiles. There's only one other category, right? Gentiles. And so now you've got these racial tensions that are taking place because the Jewish Christians have come back to mostly Gentile churches and they're struggling to get along.

And so there's social isolation and there's fighting and there's division and there's all this taking place. Not to mention the fact that Rome looked at Christians with a very suspicious eye in this time because Christians wouldn't participate in the pagan practices of the day.

Are you with me? And so they are suffering. They're facing persecution. And that is why one of the themes that Paul addresses in the book of Romans is how do we deal with suffering in the life of a Christian?

How do we handle these kinds of conflicts and difficulties and challenges as believers in Jesus Christ? And it's why Paul writes this, verse 17.

[19 : 44] And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we what? Suffer. With Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

For I consider that the, say it? Sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Now, these verses, I know they're familiar to a lot of you, but these verses, they're so important.

I'm going to say that like 15 times tonight. Because what they do is they give us Paul's worldview. And it's the Christian worldview. That is, Paul has been shaped, his mind has been shaped by the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament.

And he has a particular way of viewing life, of viewing the world around us. He has a particular lens through which he sees reality.

Is everybody with me? And what this worldview is, this way in which Paul views the world and views life, is there's two ages or two times.

[20 : 54] The first is what he will call the present age. And the present age is marked by suffering. It's marked by suffering.

And the second age, if you will, or the second time, is what he will call the future age. And that's marked by glory. Is everybody with me? Just see how obvious this is in the text.

If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him, in order that we may also be what? Suffering and glory.

And then keep reading. For I consider that the, say it, sufferings of this, come on y'all, the present time. So there's the suffering of the present time.

And this present age is not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Does everybody see that? Like, he has a worldview. And there's a present age.

[21 : 54] And that age is marked by suffering. And there's a future age. And that age is defined by glory. And so what Paul wants us to do, and this is so critically important, I cannot tell you how theologically rich this passage is and practically important.

Paul says the only way you're going to make it through this present age is if you view this present age through the lens of a future one.

If you think this age is all there is, you're going to despair. And you will not have the hope that you really should have if you're a follower of Jesus.

Now, where does Paul get the idea of these two ages? Well, the answer to that is like the very first page of your Bible. Romans chapter 8 is dripping with Genesis 1 through 3.

Like, the whole background of Paul's understanding here is found in the very first verses of the Bible. You know how the story goes. We talk about it all the time because it's the worldview of the Bible.

[23 : 02] Namely, that God creates the world. And what does God declare the world to be? I'll give you a hint. He says it seven times. It's what?

It's good. It's good. In fact, it's very good. So God creates a good world. Amen? He creates a good world. And He puts that good world under the stewardship of human beings, us, that have been made in His image.

And we're to reflect His glory in the way in which we steward His good world. The problem, of course, is that human beings decided that they would define what was good and evil for themselves, rather than the way God had defined it.

And the result of that, the result of that ushered, are you with me? Are you with me? That result ushered the world into the present age.

An age that's marked with suffering and difficulty. And this is not just a human reality. This is a creation reality. It's not just a human problem.

[24 : 13] It's a creation problem. Look at verse 19. For the creation. That was good. Keep it up, right? 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, obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation, or you notice in a pattern, has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. So in other words, God's good world, as it was created in Genesis, was brought into a present age, a time of suffering.

And Paul describes the state of creation, the state of the world in which we live, with words like this. Futility, which always makes me think of my good friend Koelith.

I'll never get rid of Koelith, right? In Ecclesiastes. Vanity, vanity, says the preacher. Words like frustration, bondage to corruption, death, groaning.

[25 : 27] Okay? Come here, come here. Has that not been your experience in life? Of course it has. Absolutely. And it is also the experience of the world around us, is it not?

I will always, like, balance this by saying it this way. The world is beautiful, but the world is broken. There are so many beautiful things in this world. There are so many experiences of God's good grace. But it is broken.

And what I mean by broken is this is not how it's supposed to be. It wasn't created to be this way. Sin ushered us in to this present age.

And it is still beautiful, but it is very, very broken. And because Paul views the world this way, Paul's essentially telling us that because of this reality, there will be times when you're going to end up in the chair.

[26 : 39] Groaning. In anguish. Crying out to God. And there will be times when you will feel the weight of a broken world.

Amen? Am I being real or am I being real? Right? Right? And, like, if you don't like this kind of talk, like, this is part of our culture at Faith Family. Amen? Is being willing to enter into the reality of the brokenness of this world.

So we have to acknowledge this. You cannot stick your head under the sand and ignore this reality. Amen? It is a central part of the Christian worldview.

It is a central part of Paul's worldview. But not only is that a part of Paul's worldview, and this is really important. Are you with me? Are you with me? Will it be this way forever?

No. It will not. Look at what Paul says. And if children, then heirs, and heirs of God, fellow heirs of Christ, provided we suffer with Him, in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

[27 : 55] I consider that the suffering of the present time is not worthy compared to the glory that's going to be revealed to us. And then look at verse 21. Creation itself will be set free.

Yes. Yes. From its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. And not only the creation, but we ourselves.

We have the first fruits of the Spirit. We groan eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.

In other words, Paul wants to make clear that we have to be honest about the world we're in, but we can also be hopeful because of Jesus.

That we are not in this broken world without the hope of the gospel. And so we acknowledge the harshness of the present age, but also, like, Paul wants these Christians in Rome, and he wants Christians in Burnsville, and Lakeville, and all the South Metro, and all around the world, to not let this present age steal your hope.

[29 : 15] And here's why. Notice it on the screen. One day, this present age of futility is going to be replaced by an age of freedom.

And think about the language Paul is using. Now creation is in bondage. One day it'll be free. It'll be free. Or think of it in a different way. Here's another way of saying it. Life, the very life that we're in, it is moving in a direction. And that direction is from groaning to glory.

That's the destination. That's where we're headed. And now once again, I'm saying that this is a reflection on Genesis. I mean, Paul has Genesis 1 through 3 in the back of his mind when he's writing this.

And the reason that I believe that's the case is because what he's saying we're going to is what God created in the beginning. This place of glory and goodness and freedom was God's design in Genesis 1 and 2.

[30 : 30] Amen? This isn't a new idea. It's an old idea. We're going back or we're going forward to the past. We're going to a place of paradise and glory.

Now how do I know that Paul is reflecting on Genesis? There's another clue here. Look at verse 22. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of what?

Childbirth. Have I taught you by now that Paul does not use metaphors randomly? When you see Paul use an illustration or a metaphor, your antenna should go up and say there's meaning behind that.

And here Paul is using a very vivid metaphor of a woman giving birth to a baby. Now why in the world would he use, of all the different illustrations that he could use, why would he use this one? Two reasons at least. Number one is practically. Practically, this illustration is an illustration of great pain. Of great pain. Sorry there were no epidurals in Paul's day, right?

[31 : 39] There was nothing to ease the pain here. This is, so I'm told, an extremely painful experience. I should not be the one on the stage giving this illustration, okay?

So I'm doing my best. Because if you've experienced this, like firsthand or secondhand, you know that this experience can turn the nicest woman you know into an axe murderer.

Curse words are invented in labor and delivery. Amen? Like it is enormously painful, but what follows that pain?

And the answer is new birth. Life. Listen to me. Listen. Literally a new creation.

A new creation. And so Paul uses this metaphor because it perfectly illustrates the point that I just said. That he's talking about now we live in a present age of suffering, but one day that's going to give birth to an age of glory.

[32 : 47] And the way he illustrates that is beautiful and profound, namely that of childbirth. Do you see that? So practically, it really fits the point he's making.

But theologically, what it means, because Paul could have used all kinds of painful metaphors. Like he could have said, it's like getting punched in the stomach and then feeling better later.

Or it's like, you know, going through surgery and then later healing. But he doesn't use those examples. He uses this. Why? Because Paul has in mind, are you listening?

A return to Genesis. A new creation. That just as you had creation, we're going back to that in a new creation. Notice it on the screen. A Christian is someone who knows the suffering of this creation, but has the hope of salvation in a new creation.

That's Paul's point. And if you know your Bible, you know that Paul will use this kind of language frequently, right? 2 Corinthians 5, 17, talking about salvation.

[33 : 52] If anyone is in Christ, he's a what? A new creation. The old is past. Behold, the new has come. Everybody still with me?

You're like, are you ever going to talk about the Spirit? Chill. We'll get there. This is my sermon, not yours. All right, so I'm laying a foundation which will then make that even more, I hope, profound. Why would Paul have this worldview? Why would he have this view? We'd say, well, obviously he has it because of Genesis. You've just laid that out. But I would say it's not only Genesis. Notice this. It's Jesus. This is so important. Lord, plant this in our hearts. Paul has this view of life not just because of Genesis, but because of Jesus.

Notice the language he uses. The redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.

[34 : 59] We were saved. Paul mentions salvation. So, how is salvation brought to us?

Lord, help me communicate this clearly. Follow the flow. Follow the flow of the argument. You have a present age marked with what? It's going to give way to a future age marked with...

I'm going to illustrate that. Labor pain, which is marked with... Which gives way to birth... Glory.

Glory. Because what is the very thing that brought about this promise of salvation?

The cross, which was marked with suffering, that eventually gave way to resurrection, the hope of glory.

Here it is. Here it is. Here it is. I hope you see this as profound as I do. Notice it on the screen. This means that salvation is not just an event in history.

[36 : 09] It's a way of viewing history. Do you see that? The cross and resurrection is not just an event in history.

It's the whole way I view life. This present age is a cross. It's beautiful, but it is broken.

But that cross will give way to resurrection. Like, that's my worldview. It's not just an Easter celebration.

It's the lens I put on my eyes every day when I live in this world. I'm a Christian.

Or let me say it this way. Notice it on the screen. The cross and resurrection is not only hope for your life. It's how you should view your life.

[37 : 12] Which means when you suffer, you're not surprised. It doesn't mean you enjoy it. But you're not surprised by it. Why?

Because you live in the present age and you are followers of a crucified man. And it frees you to be honest about the anguish and trials of life while maintaining hope in future glory.

I find that to be so profound and incredibly practical. Amen? That the resurrection of Jesus opened up a whole new chapter in the book of world history.

What it means is the end game is not suffering, bondage, and death. The end game is new creation and glory and freedom.

To wrap it up and not the sermon. You wish, right? To wrap this point up, it's essentially saying this. By living life with this worldview, I realize that right now I'm living in Friday.

[38 : 28] Sunday. But I know Sunday's coming. I know Sunday's coming. And that's the hope that I have that is the salvation of my life.

Who's encouraged? Okay, good. Good. The rest of you, I don't know what else to do. Right? I'm trying my best. I'm trying my best. And now you're like, but what about the Spirit?

What about the Spirit? But I think you have to have that foundation to understand what Paul says in this passage about the Holy Spirit. Notice it on the screen here. There is, this is like a summary.

There is the present age of suffering. We know that. There is also the future age of salvation. And here's the comfort. The comfort is in the now, as you live between these ages, what you've been given, who you've been given is the Spirit.

Present age of suffering, future age of salvation. And in the meantime, the comfort we have as Christians is we have the personal presence of Jesus.

[39 : 48] Verse 14. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are what? Sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons.

By whom we cry out, say it with me, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

What wonderful truth. What wonderful truth. That we live in a present age of suffering, waiting, like the rest of creation, for the future age of salvation.

And in the meantime, we take comfort in the fact that we have the Spirit. Well, what's the comfort? Or why is that even a comfort? There are three. There are three. I'll do them briefly the way I define that.

Three assurances. Three assurances in the present age that we have because we have the Spirit. And here's what I want you to see. Here's what I want you to see. I hope that the last several weeks of me laying this biblical foundation is going to just cause you to see this differently.

[41 : 02] Because every single assurance that we are given here as a result of the Spirit has to do with Jesus. And you're going to see even more how the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is the personal presence of Jesus.

Number one, the Spirit assures us that we are what? Sons. Paul says because we have the Spirit, we are now sons.

He does not, I'm sorry, He does not say sons and daughters. He does not say you're a part of the family. He purposefully says you are sons.

And being a son because you have the Spirit is what enables you to cry out, Abba, Father. Father. Now why would Paul use the language of sons in relationship to the Spirit?

And here it is. Because the Spirit is the personal presence of the Son of God. So, come on now, come on.

[42 : 23] When you have the personal presence of the Son of God, that makes you what? A son. Adopted sons.

And you are able to cry out to God, Abba. Father. This is, this is, in the same way that Jesus can call out to the Father, you, because of the Spirit, can call out to the Father.

Because you're a son. Your son's adopted into God's family. Your identity is the very identity of the Son of God.

We have the inheritance of the Son of God. And do you know the comfort that is, is this, notice it on the screen, that regardless of our suffering, the Spirit assures us that we are sons.

Because here's what's going to happen. What's going to happen is in your suffering, you're going to think God has abandoned you. Why would I be going through all this if, if God were really with me?

[43 : 47] And what the Spirit, the very personal presence of Jesus will remind you of is, you belong to God. And if you were to learn to view life through the lens of the gospel, you would see that suffering is not abnormal.

Certainly in this present age. And as the Son was crucified, you will take up a cross daily and follow Him. You will suffer, but that suffering does not mean you are not sons.

You belong to a Father who loves you. Well, that's not all.

That's not all. Verse 22. We know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves. We have the what?

That's interesting. Firstfruits of the... And we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

[44 : 57] Secondly, the Spirit assures us that we're saved. The Spirit assures us that we are saved. Paul mentions here, I want more time on this, but I don't have it.

Did I tell you how important this passage is? You ever just like really studied a passage and you're like, this is unbelievable. Unbelievable how rich this is. I'm going to try my best to simplify it.

Paul uses a word, firstfruits. The firstfruits of the Spirit. Which is another reference to Genesis, by the way. Because what is the Ruach of God? What is the Spirit of God doing in Genesis 1?

Creating. Bringing life. What is the Spirit doing here in Romans 8? Bringing life. Salvation. What did Jesus say?

We looked at this in John chapter 3 with Nicodemus. It's the Spirit from above. You have to be born from above. Which is the Spirit being poured out and that gives you life. Right?

[45 : 55] So Paul here is echoing back to Genesis. Now, why does he use the word firstfruits? Have any of you ever heard the phrase fruit of the Spirit?

That was a joke. That was last week's sermon. You better have heard of that, right? The fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit. So this language of firstfruits or fruits of the Spirit is not new.

It's Galatians 5. The question is, what are firstfruits? Firstfruits are not apples. Some of you are like, well, that's not a picture of a fruit. Well, firstfruits aren't apples or bananas or whatever.

Firstfruits, you know this, right? Firstfruits are the initial showing of the harvest that's coming. Right?

It's the firstfruits. It's the first part of the harvest that lets you know the harvest is coming. That there's more on the way. Is everybody with me? So how do you know that you're saved?

[46 : 59] How do you know that you have salvation? Well, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience. Those things are the sign now of the future salvation that is to come.

Is everybody with me? Hang with me. Hang with me. So last week we talked about the battle that takes place. That is, are there times in your life as a Christian where you do the thing you know you shouldn't do?

And all God's people said, amen. Romans 7. Why don't, I don't understand my own actions. I do the very thing I don't want to do and I do what I shouldn't, like what, I don't understand. But let's think about the other side of that.

How many of you as a Christian have ever had those moments where you didn't say the thing you shouldn't say? And that used to be the thing you'd always say.

Are you with me? That is, you actually, by God's strength in you, did what you should do.

[48 : 05] And you didn't do what you shouldn't do. And that used to not be you. Little Dr. Seuss action there, right? So here we go.

What is that? It's a first fruit. It's a first fruit. What Paul is saying is that what you should see, when that, like, I can't, I, I, what?

Normally I would do that. Why did I not do that now? It's because the personal presence of Jesus is doing something in me. How do I know that I'm saved?

And how do I know that salvation in the future is coming? Look at the first fruits. Look at the fruit of the Spirit. Look at the very personal presence of Jesus that's being produced in your life right now. And, like, rejoice in that. Thank you, Lord. You know, there are times I do what I shouldn't do, but there are times when I do what I should do, and I recognize that as a first fruit of the Spirit promising me harvest is coming, that a future salvation is mine, and it's the work of the Spirit.

[49 : 24] Now, how does fruit grow? I've got to hurry. I've got to hurry. How does fruit grow? Well, in John 15, by pruning. Jesus talks about pruning. Here's Paul's way of talking about this, okay?

He says, we know, you know these verses, but let's put them in context. We know that for those who love God, all things. Now, what is Paul talking about with all things?

Suffering. Suffering. This is Romans 8. It's like the next verse. And they work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined. Paul used a bad word. You're not supposed to say predestination, except it's a Bible word.

Whatever. Anyway, that was a joke. To be conformed to the image of His Son.

Do you see this? Listen. Notice it on the screen. If salvation... Lord, help us. Lord, help us. Help me. If salvation is the lens through which you view life, then there will be no work of the Spirit without suffering.

[50 : 32] The way in which you'll be conformed into the image of Jesus, the personal presence of Jesus, which is bringing about first fruits now, on a way to the harvest of being conformed fully to the image of Jesus.

that process will not come without suffering. And when you see the fruit produced in your life by the Spirit, even through suffering, you rejoice because you're saved.

Amen. Amen. One more? One more. Are you just too encouraged right now and can't handle anymore?

So let's do one more and we're done. Verse 26. Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our what? Our weakness. For we do not know what to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

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. What amazing verses those are.

[52 : 02] Amen. Now follow the flow. This won't take a second. Listen. What does Paul say is a part. Come on. If you've zoned out, what do you do? What does Paul say is a part of the present age?

Creation. Suffering. Yeah. Creation groans. Verse 22. We groan. Verse 23.

And what is the Spirit doing? Groaning. Verse 26. Groaning here is not.

It is not. Not in this passage. It is not a special prayer language. That's not what groanings here is. Here's what groaning is. The groaning of the Spirit.

Groaning is a picture of the Spirit suffering with you and praying for you.

[53 : 03] Just let that land. When you're groaning and you're in anguish, guess who's with you groaning as well?

The very personal presence of Jesus. Paul is saying that in the midst of your suffering, when you feel like God is absent, what you need to know, Christian, is that the personal presence of Jesus is in the chair of anguished prayer with you.

And when you don't know how to pray and you don't know what to pray and all you can do is just groan, the Spirit takes that and intercedes on your behalf according to the will of the Father.

This and I'm done. Listen. Who does that sound like? Listen. Think about the role of the Holy Spirit in the verses that we just read and ask yourself, does that sound like anyone else?

Hebrews 2, verse 18. For because Jesus Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.

[54 : 51] And then look at this language and tell me it's not the exact as Romans 8. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our...

What did Paul say in Romans 8? The Spirit helps us in our weakness. And here we have a high priest who is able to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin.

So I'll wrap it up. Why are we sons? Because we have the personal presence of the Son in us. Why are we saved?

Because we have the personal presence of the true vine in us. Why are we supported and encouraged? Because we have the personal presence of our great high priest who intercedes for us in us.

at some point in your life, and for some of you it's right now, like Vincent Van Gogh, you are going to find yourself in the chair of anguished prayer.

[56 : 05] When life is hard and the path forward seems impossible and you're crying out to God, but Christian, when you're there in the chair, know that there is a real personal presence with you, the Holy Spirit.

And the personal presence, the Holy Spirit is the personal presence of the one who sat in the chair of anguished prayer himself.

He is the one that not only knows the suffering of this present age, He has guaranteed us the glory that is to come.

And all God's people said, Amen. Let's pray. Lord, I don't even have the words to pray in gratitude for truth and comfort like this.

And so we just collectively say thank you that you have given us your Spirit in this present age when we groan and when we suffer and when we hurt and we have no idea if we'll ever even get out of the chair.

[57 : 40] We are not without hope. And it's not just a hope that is to come, though that's true. It's a hope right now in your presence with us and in us.

And this evening we come now to a time of remembrance. A very important one. When in light of the suffering of this age, we look upon and we remember the greatest act of suffering in this present age.

The crucifixion of the very Son of God. And help us tonight, Lord, not only see that as an event in history, but a way of viewing history.

A way of viewing life. knowing that we are in Friday, but Sunday is coming. And may we rest in that great truth tonight.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen.

[59 : 09] Thank you.