

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

¹² Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. (NIV84)

Theme: Incomparable Glory Awaits

This life isn’t always what it’s cracked up to be. As fantastic as this life is at times, it often isn’t pleasant at all. The world beats you down. There certainly isn’t a shortage of problems that you face on a daily basis. Maybe you have problems at school or work. There are things you don’t understand or can’t quite grasp, and your teacher or boss is getting frustrated. You have issues with others. Someone is picking on you. No one at work takes you seriously. Maybe you have some sort of family strife going on. You said something that was interpreted and taken the wrong way and ended up offending someone. Maybe you can’t find a job. Or you aren’t able to work. And things are getting tight, you are struggling to make ends meet. You suffer through much in this life.

And there is all the sickness and diseases in the world today. Some of have cures. But it may require a painful surgery, medications that may mess with the rest of your body, or may result of a great deal of pain—

like going to chemotherapy. Others don’t really have a cure. The best the doctors can do is to make you life more tolerable.

And it’s not just all the ailments you go through. But also what your loved ones have to endure. Maybe it’s a sickness like dementia. That person you love is no longer himself—like a shell of what he used to be. It’s hard to see them go down hill, first forgetting things, then not being able to do something they have done their whole life, and finally they can’t even hold a conversation. It’s pains you to see someone suffer—to see someone in pain. And when they suffer, you suffer too.

And then there is death. And the longer you live the more times you see the effects of sin first hand. It’s hard enough when it happens in order. First you say goodbye to your grandparents. Then your parents, aunts and uncles. Soon you are burying your brothers and sisters. Maybe even your spouse. But sometimes this order is interrupted, which causes even more pain. When you have to bury your child or grandchild—or perhaps a spouse or sibling. And that reminds you of your own death. It could come at any time. It may be quick and painless, or a long drawn-out process with years filled with pain, tears, and a great amount of suffering.

You suffer much in this life. So what can you do? Well, you can complain. We all seem to be pretty good at that, right. You complain to no one in particular—or to everyone you meet. You complain that your life is horrible and that you are suffering through this or that. You complain that life isn’t fair. You are getting the short end of the stick. That you deserve better than you are getting. You may even complain to God that he isn’t watching over you. That he isn’t blessing you enough. Why does he treat you this way? Why does he always seem as if he is holding you down? Why doesn’t he just give you a break?

You can complain all you want, but eventually you realize that all the complaining in the world won’t do you any good. So you pull yourself up by the bootstraps. You strive to make your life better. You do all you can to improve. So you work hard so that you can get a job. Perhaps you can get a good paying job so you can pay off your bills,

afford health insurance, and simply live a comfortable life. After all, you are talented. You can do whatever you want if you put your mind to it and try hard.

Besides, you are all you've got. You've learned throughout your years that you can't trust anyone. You've been burned way too often to rely on someone else. People you knew mistreated you. God doesn't seem to care. You are all you've got. It's you against the world. So you have to rely on yourself to get things done.

But soon you realize something. Even if you are successful, even if, by your hard work, you have everything you have ever wanted—you still can't take care of everything. You are still going to get sick. Even with all the medical advances, you will still die. And here is nothing you can do about it.

So you eventually give up. What's the point? Everything is meaningless. You suffer through many things. And no matter how hard you try, you will still suffer. And so you fall into despair. You think that all is lost. Life is hard; it gets you down. You suffer much in your life, and it seems too heavy to bear.

But then you look at Jesus. He lived on this earth like you and me. He saw the effects of sin first hand. He was always coming into contact with those who had sicknesses and diseases. People were brought to him who were blind or crippled. Others were possessed by demons. And what did Jesus do for them? His heart went out to them and he healed their diseases. The crippled walked, the blind were given sight. Demons were cast out. Jesus proved that he had power over sickness and disease—the things that cause death. And if he has power over the things that cause death, then he must have power over death itself. And as we read in our gospel, he proved that too. His friend Lazarus had died. Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters, were understandably upset. They had been mourning for four days. And their eyes were still filled with tears. Jesus tried to comfort Martha by saying, **I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?** But she didn't quite understand. Then Jesus went to the tomb and called out to Lazarus—who walked out of the tomb! Jesus proved he has power

over death by just his words. The sorrow of Mary and Martha and all of those who loved Lazarus was gone because of Jesus and his power.

He saved others, let him save himself. That was an insult the people hurled at Jesus as he hung on the cross. Jesus suffered through much on the cross. Of course there is the physical pain. Nails were pounded through his hands and his feet. Before he was beaten, struck with rods, punched in the face, crowned with thorns, and flogged. There was the emotional pain as well. Jesus suffered when he was betrayed by one of his disciples, denied by another, deserted by the rest. He suffered when his own country men who longed for the Messiah accused him of blasphemy and gave false testimony against him. But the biggest thing Jesus suffered through came at the hands of God himself. God forsook Jesus because he took all our sins upon himself. And so Jesus suffered through the pain and agony of hell. And after Jesus was finished suffering through everything and paying for our sins, he died. But what happened to him then? Three days later he was raised from the dead. Jesus didn't stay dead. God raised Jesus from the dead. And he still lives. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but eventually Lazarus would die again. But not Jesus ascended into heaven where he still lives and rules over his whole creation.

And because Christ lives, we know that we too will live. God promises us so. As Paul said in verse 11, **And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.** Because Christ lives, you too will live. To paraphrase Jesus' words to Martha, we will live even though we die. On the Last Day Christ will come again. And when he does all bodies will rise from the dead. Believers will rise to eternal life and live with him in heaven forever! God will do for you what he did for Christ. Because like Christ, you too are God's child. The Holy Spirit has worked faith in you through the gospel. And through faith you are God's child and his heir. You are in heir just like Christ. As Paul says in verses 16 and 17, **The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.**

Christ became our brother by becoming one of us and living in this sin-filled world. And so he shared in our sufferings. He suffered just like you and me. And at times we suffer for him. There are times when we suffer because of our faith. So we share in his sufferings. But if we share in his sufferings, we also share in his glory. Paul makes this point in verse 17. **If indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.** As God's child we share everything with our brother, Jesus. We share in sufferings and we share in glory. Jesus gives us his glory. In heaven we will be perfect and holy. Free from sin and its effects.

So you share in the sufferings of Christ, but also in his glory. One can't compare with the other. That's Paul's point in verse 18, one of the most comforting verses in all of Scripture. **I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.** Heaven is so great and so wonderful that we won't care about anything that happened to us on this earth. Because heaven is that much better. It's a life free from sin, sorrow, or pain. In heaven we get to live side by side with our fellow believers singing the praises of our one and only Savior. Better yet, we get to live with God himself—and see him in his divine glory! So whatever you suffer through in this life it cannot compare to the life that awaits you. Paul makes a similar point in 2 Corinthians chapter 4. **We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.** Notice that Paul calls what we suffer through, **light and momentary troubles.** They are light in respect to the glories that we have. They are momentary in comparison to the eternal glory that we will enjoy. It doesn't matter what you suffer through. It's only temporary. Even if it's some debilitating disease. Something painful that will last you the rest of your life. Eventually you will die and go to heaven and have a perfect life. And what you thought was unbearable couldn't compare to the joy you now share with Christ. There was a motivational saying that was really popular in the 90's when I was growing up. It was used by coaches, athletic companies, and many others. "Pain is temporary, pride is forever." The message of course is simple and clear. Work hard, fight through the pain—for

that pain won't last forever, but the pride you have by working your hardest, never giving up, and perhaps winning a championship, will last forever. A similar thing can be said about our life on earth and our life in heaven. This life on earth is full of pain and sorrows. But they are only temporary. But the glory that we have in heaven will be forever. Our troubles are light and momentary. But our glory is eternal.

And so we don't lose heart. This life isn't all there is. There is more to come. Something better—something greater. So as you live on this earth, you long for that day to come. You eagerly anticipate the coming of Christ. You can't wait for your eternal life to begin. And you keep that hope front and center in your heart and mind. It's what gets you through your day. When life gets you down, you don't turn to yourself or fall into despair. You look to Christ. You see him on his cross. He suffered through much. But he was raised from the dead. The same stands for you. You may suffer now, but look at the incomparable glory that awaits you! Amen.