“No Pain, No Gain; Know Pain, Know Gain”
Romans 8:18
April 5th, 2020

It was Palm Sunday, but because of a sore throat, 5-year-old Johnny stayed home from church with his mother.

When the rest of the family returned home, they were carrying several palm branches. Johnny asked them what they were for. “People lay them on the ground as Jesus walked by,” his father told him.

“Wouldn’t you know it,” Johnny fumed, “the one Sunday I don’t go and He shows up.”

Haha! Fortunately, God shows up every Sunday as His people gather together to worship Him. And, though it’s harder to see it, God shows up each Sunday as we participate in live-streaming worship like we have the last few weeks.

For the past 7 months – since the first of last September, we’ve been working our way through the New Testament book of Romans. Romans is the Apostle Paul’s *magnum opus*; it is chock full of familiar verses and deep doctrine. As commentator Leon Morris observes, “Romans is not an easy book. But it has always yielded rich dividends to anyone who has taken the time to study it seriously, and it does so still.” (Morris, 1)

I don’t often develop a sermon based on a single verse, but I’ll do so today. One of the dangers of exegeting a single verse is to explore it apart from the passage in which it lies. It can be confusing, and in some cases, even unhelpful to use a verse outside of its context.

Allow me to provide an example. If I conducted a survey of 10 Christians to list their top 5 favorite verses in the Bible, a good number, probably more than half of them, would list Philippians 4:13 in their top 5 verses. It’s a great verse, filled with hope. *Do you know it?* “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” What a great promise!

But, like real estate where the three most important factors in determining the desirability of a property are location, location, and location, so, theologically, the three most important factors in understanding a Scripture verse are context, context, and context!

*What is the context of Philippians 4:13?* Let’s look – this is the second half of verse 11 in Philippians Chapter 4, culminating with verse 13:

“...I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content; I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (ESV)

*What’s the context?* Contentment! The primary meaning of this verse is that no matter the situation, we can achieve contentment because Jesus gives us the strength to be so. Paul gives himself as an example, and we follow this instruction if we, too, wish to be content.
Before us today is Romans 8:18, another great verse with promise. But, in order to get the proper context, we’ll read the previous two verses along with today’s verse.

Romans 8:16-18:
“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.
18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

James Hannington grew up peacefully near Brighton, England, working in his fathers’ accounting office. But then he entered the ministry and offered himself to the Church Missionary Society.

His first trip to Africa was interrupted by sickness. After recovering, he made a second attempt, arriving off the African coast in July 1884. He started inland toward Uganda, but he unwittingly chose the most dangerous path imaginable. Co-workers sent runners after him, but they arrived too late. Hannington was captured by warriors of the lawless Mwanga tribe. His small diary is among the most moving missionary documents on record.

Here are several entries:

October 21, 1885. About 20 ruffians set upon us. They violently threw me to the ground. Twice I nearly broke away from them, then grew faint from struggling and was dragged by the legs over the ground, my clothes torn to pieces, wet through, strained in every limb, expecting death.

October 22. In a fair-sized hut, but with no ventilation, floor covered with rotting banana peel, leaves, and lice, fearfully shaken, scarce power to hold a small Bible. Shall I live through it? My God, I am Thine.

October 23. I woke full of pain and weak. I don’t see how I can stand all this, yet I don’t want to give in.

October 27. I am very low; it looks so dark. I don’t know what to think, and would say from the heart, “Let the Lord do what seems good to Him.”

October 28. A terrible night, first with my drunken guard and secondly with insects, which have found my tent and swarm. I don’t think I got one hour’s sleep, and woke with fever fast developing. O Lord, do have mercy upon me and release me. I am quite broken down and brought low. Comforted by reading Psalm 27.

October 29. I was held up by Psalm 30, which came with great power. A hyena howled near me last night, smelling a sick man, but I hope it is not to have me.

That was his last entry. That day they killed him.

Sometimes, God removes the suffering; sometimes He removes the sufferer.

As we look at verse 18, there are two principles I will draw from it.

MP 1 – The Road of the Redeemed is often Rocky. (Suffering)
MP 2 – The Reward of the Righteous will be Radiant. (Glory)

Paul begins by looking at the topic of suffering. The Road of the Redeemed is often Rocky.
There are sufferings we all endure which are common to the human race. These would beaches, pains, breaks and bruises – sufferings that are physical in nature. Similarly, there aresufferings that involve mental anguish. And, there are sufferings that arise from seeing lovedones suffer.

But, there are also sufferings that afflict only the children of God, believers in Jesus. This islikely what Paul addresses in Romans Chapter 8. We can see this by considering the inheritancethat is ours because God has made us His heirs, even joint heirs with Jesus as verse 17 reveals.Tim Keller asks, “Is the inheritance Christians have been given worth all the hardship andheartache of living as a child of God in this life?”

For sure, suffering is the path, the Via Dolorosa, for Christians this side of eternity.

- Acts 14:22c – “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”
- 2 Timothy 3:12 – “...All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

Paul writes about suffering from his own experience. He knew what it was to suffer. In 2Corinthians Chapter 11, Paul lists some of the sufferings he endured in verses 24-28:

“From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times Iwas beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a
day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils ofrobbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the
city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 inweariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold
and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep
concern for all the churches.”

But, Paul’s savior was even more acquainted with suffering. He was/is the Suffering Servantpictured in the Old Testament book of Isaiah. Isaiah 53:3-9 follows:

He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
4 Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.
5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.
6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearsers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.
8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.
9 And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.”
Jesus did all of this – for you!

Then, Paul writes of the topic of glory. **The Reward of the Righteous will be Radiant.** We often, appropriately sing of glory in worship:

- Today’s Prelude – the beautiful cello playing the refrain of “Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face; and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.”
- Today’s opening hymn, “All Glory, Laud, and Honor to Thee Redeemer King!”
- The last words of the second hymn we sang (“Beneath the Cross of Jesus”) – “my glory all the cross.”
- The refrain of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” “Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!”
- “The Gloria Patri” – “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.”
- “Angels from the Realms of Glory wing your flight all o’er the earth.”
- “The King Glory Comes the Nation Rejoices.”
- “To God be the Glory, great things He has done”
- “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing, ‘Glory to the newborn King’”
- “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine, O What a Foretaste of Glory divine”

“Glory is the word best used to describe God’s magnificence and therefore also the dazzling magnificence of heaven and our share in it. Glory denotes not only ‘worth,’ ‘acceptance,’ or ‘approval.’ It also denotes ‘brightness,’ ‘splendor’…”beauty.’ (Boice, 861,863)

This isn’t the first time in this letter that Paul tied sufferings together with glory. We came across a previous instance when we studied Romans Chapter 5. Remember Romans 5:3-5? “…We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

There is a parallel passage from Paul’s pen, and it is his second letter to the church at Corinth: **2 Corinthians 4:17-18** – “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Glory is another name for heaven. The joys of the next life (glory) are not worthy to be compared to the sufferings that plague us this side of glory. Even in the midst of great suffering, we must consider their reward in the next life. That is consummated at the end of the last days when Jesus returns to earth in all His glory and power.

**MP 1 – The Road of the Redeemed is often Rocky.** (Suffering)

**MP 2 – The Reward of the Righteous will be Radiant.** (Glory)
In 1820, Elias and Mary Ann Ayres, of New Albany, Indiana celebrated the birth of their first child, Mary. The next year they received their firstborn son, William. Three years later in 1824, they added another son to their family, Edward. And, in 1826, they welcomed another daughter, Caroline H.

After their fifth child, Henry, was born in January, 1829, suffering swept in. Their 3-year old daughter, Caroline H., died in August 1829. Her memorial stone reads, “She came forth as a flower and was cut down.” (Job 14:2)

Two months later, the Ayres’ buried their 8-year old son, William. His epitaph reads, “He was a precious gift. In his youth he sought the Lord God of his fathers and is not, for God took him.”

In 1830, several months after they buried Caroline H. and William, they were comforted with the birth of their third daughter, Caroline S. In August of that year, however, they laid to rest their fifth-born, Henry (20 months old).

With three of their six children gone, Elias and Mary Ann journeyed on as a family well-acquainted with grief. In March 1833, God blessed them with another daughter, Cornelia. But 16 months later, they gathered at the cemetery twice in the month of July 1834 to bury Cornelia (16 months old) and Caroline S. (4 years old).

As Cornelia’s tombstone testifies, Elias and Mary Ann were still blessing the name of the Lord even after He’d taken five of their seven children. It reads, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1:21)

Two years later in 1836, they celebrated the birth of their 8th child, their fifth daughter, Maria. The next year, however, Elias and Mary Ann laid Maria to rest.

Then in 1839, the Ayres’ buried their 19 year old daughter, Mary, and their 15 year old son, Edward, one in July, the other in December. Mary’s memorial stone declares, “Her life was hid with Christ in God, and when He who is her life appears, then shall she appear with Him in glory.” (Colossians 3:4)

With all of their children resting eternally, this couple likely visited their family plot at Fairview cemetery often, encouraged by the truth inscribed on their children’s stones. In 1842, just three years after burying the rest of his children, 50-year old Elias was laid to rest.

Mary Ann lived another 36 years, until 1878. She was 82 years old, and her epitaph quotes Psalm 4, “I will lay me down in peace and sleep.”

We can trust our God no matter what suffering we may endure because He has already endured it for us. He will help us until the day Jesus returns to earth. Until that day, we must hope in the Lord as we lift our voices to bless the One who gives and takes.

No pain? No Gain. Know pain? Know Gain!