

Suffering in This Life
Pastor Eric Brown
Trinity, Herscher

"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 8:17

One of the grave mistakes or misunderstandings people have about the Christian faith is that they think that being a Christian means that everything in their lives will be hunky dory and awesome. If I'm a child of God, then everything should be wonderful because God will spoil me rotten, right?

Not so fast. God is not one to spoil folks, for He knows what the love of money (or the love of power, so on and so forth) can do to people. So God doesn't act like some sort of Daddy Warbucks in the Sky just showering stuff on us. But even more than that, God doesn't necessarily stop you from suffering in this life.

That sounds utterly wretched at first, but the reality is this. We are in a sinful world, and sometimes the love of the neighbor means that suffering is necessary. The great example of that is Jesus - in order to win you salvation, Jesus had to suffer and die. The word here for "suffer" is the word "passion" - His Passion was necessary for your salvation.

And in your life, you will have to deal with hardship for the good of your neighbor. A mother giving birth is going to have to deal with hardship for the sake of the kid. Right now with all this Covid stuff, we have given up some things that we love and cherish for the sake of our neighbors.

We suffer. Everyone in this world suffers - but you as a Christian have an incredible advantage here. You know the point of suffering and you know its end. You know that you suffer for the sake of your neighbor - that it's not pointless or meaningless, but even in the midst of your suffering and struggle you show love to your neighbor and proclaim the hope and love of Christ Jesus - that is a wondrous (if hard) thing. As a Christian, you see suffering differently.

But more than that, you know how suffering ends. I know a lot of folks are struggling with when all this stuff with COVID will end and when we can get back to normal. As for that, I have no clue - and not to be Debbie Downer, even when COVID ends there will be other things that go sideways and wrong: thus is life in the sinful world. But you need not see this with uncertainty or fear - you know the end. The end is your glorification with Jesus. And no suffering, no fear, no strange twist to the world can rob salvation from you. Jesus declared "It is finished" as He died - and so you will finish, you will end up with Jesus in His resurrection.

Therefore, whatever comes this week, remember that you belong to the family of God, that you are joined with Christ and a fellow heir of forgiveness, life, and salvation with Him -- and nothing can change that. You live with him, now and forever.