

***YOUR PERSPECTIVE: The Purpose for the Tough Stuff***

Romans 8:18-39

VIDEO [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=50&v=ucM36yED4v0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=50&v=ucM36yED4v0)

Those with insight, in every generation, have consistently noted the critical role one's chosen "perspective" plays in a person's outlook. Chosen perspective. Consider these ideas:

**Henry David Thoreau:**

It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see.

**Albert Einstein:** There are two ways to live your life:  
one is as though nothing is a miracle,  
the other is as though everything is a miracle.

I've learned that two people can look at  
the exact same thing and  
see something totally different. (anonymous)



you decide.

So when it comes to the tough stuff in our lives—the tough stuff in your life--what's your perspective? It's quite easy simply to recite an idea, that

***In a world of unavoidable tough stuff,  
We are unbroken conquerors when  
woven together with God and godly companions.***

But how do we know? How confident are we that in the most unexpected, or difficult, tough stuff, there truly is a wise and powerful Father who has specific, good purposes which He is working out in my life?

No chapter in all of Scripture addresses these questions so helpfully as the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. Join me there. Let's begin by reading Romans 8:16f thoughtfully:

Romans 8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are **children of God**,<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to

us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

These verses, this chapter of the Bible, is a seminar crafted by the Holy Spirit with one purpose. It is to infuse us with PERSPECTIVE. It's a perspective that may need to replace one we already have.

A perspective for reshaping what we may have already concluded. The Spirit seeks to endow us with a new set of eyes about the things which our Father calls us to face, designs that we live through, and purposes for our good. Here's the PERSPECTIVE:

**OUR DIFFICULTIES PURPOSELY PREPARE  
US TO INHERIT AND EXPERIENCE  
INCOMPERABLE GLORY**

Of course (today), if you are a Christian here to worship this morning, you can personalize this:

**MY DIFFICULTIES PURPOSEFULLY  
PREPARE ME TO INHERIT AND  
EXPERIENCE INCOMPERABLE GLORY**

Will you please note 6 features of this perspective.

**#1 This PERSPECTIVE is for CHILDREN OF GOD**

Romans 8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are **children of God**,<sup>17</sup> 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.

These verses beg the question, “Who are the children of God? Aren’t we all children of God?”

And the answer, of course, is “yes” and “no.”

Yes, the Bible affirms that all humanity is, in a real sense, the “offspring” of God. When addressing the philosophers in Athens, Paul said, “God is actually not far from each one of us, for *in Him we live and move and have our being*, even as some of your won poets have said, *For we*

*indeed are His offspring. Being then God's offspring..." Paul acknowledged. Every human being is God's child in this sense: each derives his/her every moment life from God. Every person is actually that dependent on God for every moment of life.*

But the Bible clearly makes a further distinction. Not all human beings are God's born-again-by-faith, indwelt-by-God's-Spirit children. Each of God's human children *must* hear the gospel, must respond in faith, must be born again ("from above), or they will "not see the kingdom of God" (acc. to Jesus in John 3). John the Apostle put it as plainly as possible (1 John 5:11-13):

*Now this is the testimony, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know you have eternal life.*

We begin HERE. The confidence that all my difficulties purposefully prepare me to inherit and experience incomparable glory is afforded to Christians, to those who have been born into God's faith-family trusting alone in Christ, following Him. May I stop here just a moment to ask you?

## **#2 This PERSPECTIVE embraces a remarkable supernatural OUTLOOK**

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us

I want to be careful in what I say next (because many of you carry *hurts*). But I also want to be absolutely true to what Scripture repeatedly echoes.

- Peter writes we are "grieved by various trials *for a little while* (1 Pet.1:6)
- He echoes that the God of all grace will usher us into eternal glory after we have suffered *a little while* (1 Peter 5:10)
- Paul describes our sufferings as "slight momentary affliction" (2 Cor 4:17)
- Here, Paul describes our sufferings as "not worth comparing" (cf. 2 Cor 4:17-18 "preparing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison...as we look...to the things unseen.")

Yes, the sufferings are real. Yes, they linger. Yes, they leave scars. Yes, they create loss. Yes, they damage. Yes, they seem to destroy what could have been. And yes, they may embitter the heart.

On the other hand, Paul (by the Spirit) says, "I've seen glory...and there isn't anything that

should be or will be mentioned when God reveals glory to us.” While our heavenly Father does not dismiss our sufferings, He also cautions us not to make them more than they actually are...and when compared to the coming, unimaginable glory, they are not much. That’s our very real, supernatural perspective.

### #3 The WHOLE of CREATION shares this PERSPECTIVE

<sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

Next door to our home on Cypress Circle lives a dog named Louie. Without fail, every time Louie is out in his front yard and I arrive home, Louie locks on to his next-door pastor. **He immediately barks to signal his eager expectation.** What Louie expects is that I disappear for about 15 seconds into my garage, and emerge with something hidden in my hands. When I reappear, and walk toward Louie, he hunkers down on his haunches, his tail wagging wildly. I want to talk to him for a second, to ask about his day, to rub behind his ears and deepen our relationship. But Louie has something else on his mind. It’s what’s hidden in my hand, a medium-sized Milkbone treat...and after just a bit of teasing and waiting, I reward his eager longing. And...should for some reason my Milkbone box be empty and we do not complete the expected routine...my entire circle of neighbors hears Louie’s full throated, intensely sharp barking.

Louie always reminds me of vs. 19. *For the creation waits with **eager longing** for the revealing of the sons of God.* FF Bruce puts it so beautifully:

It is not only Christians who have this hope of glory. All creation is waiting with earnest longing for the day when the sons of God will be manifest in glory...this state of frustration and bondage is only temporary. Just as man at present falls short of the glory of God, so creation as a whole cannot attain the full end for which she was brought into being. Like man, creation must be redeemed because, like man, creation has been subject to a fall.<sup>ii</sup>

### #4 This PERSPECTIVE is INTENSIFIED in us by the INDWELLING SPIRIT OF GOD

<sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

### #5 EMPOWERING this PERSPECTIVE requires the cooperative teamwork of the HOLY SPIRIT and our FATHER

<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in

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order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

You know, I can't read these verses without thinking about what I see in the best of families. Look, if you are growing up in a family, and you've got a parent or a set of parents who are godly, following Jesus, and praying for you, observing what's going on in your life, talking about you, even annoying you at times with their curiosity and directions... so that they can as a team shepherd you through your developing years...man, if you've got that going on in your life, sometime soon wrap your arms around their neck and say, "Mom, Dad...thank you! I need what you know about me and about life."

'Cause that's what I read here goes on with God the Father and the Holy Spirit and me.

- The Spirit knows (better than I do) where I'm weak
- The Spirit knows (better than I do) what needs to be prayed
- The Father searches the hearts of his children, and knows the Mind of God's Spirit
- The Father and the Spirit talk about what I need
- The Father and the Spirit know how to move me more toward Christlikeness
- As I love Him, the Father works **all things** in my life together for the good

You got good, godly parents who are a team? Let them know what they mean to you. We who are children of God have a team who architect my difficulties to prepare me in inherit and someday experience incomparable glory.

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**#6 By FAITH, GOD'S CHILDREN embrace, no-matter-what,  
A CONQUEROR'S POSTURE: "GOD is FOR us! "nuf said."**

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

<sup>37</sup> **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> 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.

You heard the "perspective" phrases there, right? John Stott<sup>iii</sup> identifies what he calls the "Five unanswerable questions" –

- #1 If God is for us who can be against us?
- #2 If God didn't spare his own Son for us, how will He not give us all things?
- #3 Who can bring any charge against God's chosen children?
- #4 Who has any right to condemn us?
- #5 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Answers: No one, He will, No one, No one, and No thing.

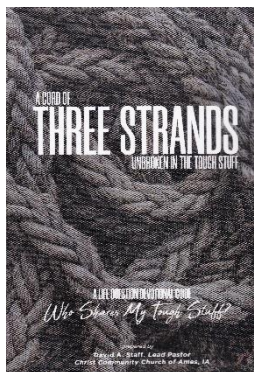
## CONCLUSION

You and I are one of the strands in a 3-fold cord. As a strand, I need perspective, in the good times and especially in the tough times. That perspective? God is always purposefully preparing me and you to both inherit and fully experience what the Bible can only describe as incomparable glory...and that forever. 'Nuf said. G.K. Chesterton said it, "A man can see great things from the valley, and only small things from the peak."

If you're not a child of God today...I ask you not to delay in wrapping your heart and life around Jesus Christ by faith. Start your "cord of three strands."

If you are God's child today, go back and review the territory we covered today. Spend some time with God and with others over it. Discuss it in your Connect Group. Your cord will get stronger.

Today, as you leave, you'll have an opportunity to pick up the **A CORD OF THREE STRANDS** devotional. Here are a couple of suggestions:



#1 Understand that this Devotional is designed to strengthen us in our 3<sup>rd</sup> life question: Who shares my tough stuff.

#2 Also, understand DEVOTIONALS are presented TOPICALLY. You may want to start in a section that is not at the front. Use this as is most helpful to you...and be sure to use the personal response pages. Doing that increases the value of this tool in a big way.

#3 At the conclusion of each section, there are pages for you to draw out the key lessons the Spirit has impressed on your heart. Again...slowing down and spending time in that summarizing can really help your heart grow in the Lord.

| USING THIS DEVOTIONAL                                |   |
|--|---|
| SECTION 1 – HOPE FOR THE TOUGH STUFF                 | Highlights the resources in the Lord Jesus and the Gospel for the difficult things in our lives.  |
| SECTION 2 – WHY THE TOUGH STUFF?                     | Highlights the challenging difficulties sin presents as well as the challenging opportunities God has for us as we navigate through life's tough stuff. |
| SECTION 3 – WHAT QUESTIONS ARISE IN THE TOUGH STUFF? | Addresses some of the common questions we have when the tough stuff happens in the course of our lives.   |
| SECTION 4 – WHO ELSE FACED THE TOUGH STUFF?          | The experiences of Job, Ruth, Daniel, and Christians in the early church are noted in this biographical section.  |
| SECTION 5 – INTERWOVEN STRENGTH IN THE TOUGH STUFF   | Woven together with the Lord and His resources, we find unique strength for what challenges our journey.  |

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<sup>i</sup> Paul uses this term ἀποκαρδοκία only twice in the NT, here and Philippians 1:20, "According to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that by all means, Christ shall be glorified in my body, whether by life or by death."

<sup>ii</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Tyndale NT Commentaries), 168-169.

<sup>iii</sup> John Stott, *Romans – God's Good News for the World* (IVPress, 1994), 254.257.