**What can separate us from God’s love**

**Romans 8:18-27**

Today’s passage deals with the difference between the life lived in sin and the one lived under the influence of the Spirit. This is a theme which Paul deals with in other chapters and in some of his other letters also. In 1 Corinthians 2:14, 15 Paul speaks of ‘the man without the spirit’ and the ‘spiritual man’. A life lived according to the flesh is one of fear, condemnation, slavery, despair and death. (Romans 6:23).

Paul's concern here is to lift our eyes above current circumstances - the opposition of living in a fallen society, the difficulties of everyday life, the smallness of our churches and so on - to see where we're headed, and where we are taking the rest of the creation. So our overall goal in this study is to come out of it with more understanding of the awesome thing that we're a part of, with our eyes lifted above today's problems, and with a greater awareness of our heavenly home.

The Christian life is not easy. Fighting sin is not easy. Enduring persecution is not easy. Coping with day-to-day life in a fallen world, with corruptible bodies, has its difficulties. Nevertheless, Paul says, “our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (verse 18). Just as there was for Jesus, there is joy set before us — a future so wonderful that our current trials will seem minor.

Paul’s words in verse 18 are consistent with this biblical principle: First suffering, then glory. It was true of our Lord Jesus. He was first to suffer and then to enter into His glory. This puzzled the prophets of old who did not know that this principle would require two “comings” of the Messiah.

Paul introduces in this paragraph the concept of “groaning” (verse 22). Here Paul refers to the “groaning” of the creation. In the verse 23 he speaks of the “groaning” of the Christian. And finally in verse 26 he speaks of the intercessory “groanings” of the Holy Spirit. What is groaning? Groaning is a deep, inward response to suffering. It is both personal and intense, an agony so deep it cannot be put into words. Groaning is a universal language. Groaning will be swallowed up by the glory of the sons of God which is yet to come. For the Christian, groaning directs our hope heavenward to that which is not yet seen. Groaning is the universal experience of all of God’s creation. It cannot be avoided. In verses 19-22 Paul therefore informs us that our groaning is a part of the bigger whole- the groaning of all of creation.

The suffering and groaning the Christian is said to experience in verse 23 is linked to the believer’s possession of the Holy Spirit. This groaning is not the full manifestation of the fruit which the Spirit produces, but it is a part of the first fruits. Apart from God’s Spirit, the groaning of which Paul speaks would be impossible for any man. This groaning is due to sin and its consequences. The Spirit within us bears witness that we are sons of God. He also bears witness that the world in which we now live is surely not the kingdom of God. The Spirit’s presence and power produce groaning in the Christian because we understand not only what we now are, but what we will someday be. Presently we are aware that something is very wrong with the way we are and the way our world is. The Spirit testifies to this, producing groaning from deep within us.

Life lived in Spirit puts to death the misdeeds of the body. A spirit filled life leads us from fear to courage, weakness to strength, slavery to ‘son-ship’ and from despair to hope. We are no longer the ‘hired ones’ but the ‘heirs’.  We are led from condemnation to justification. Those who respond to the call are justified and glorified. One can easily approach God calling Him ‘Abba!’, ‘Father!’. The glory that is to be revealed is great when compared to the present suffering. This hope helps one to suffer any persecution.

The life in the Spirit is a process. The change does not begin or end in a day. Our lives are being transformed every day. The power of the spirit is so strong that adverse circumstances such as persecution, famine, etc. will not be able to separate us from God’s love. Life threatening forces too cannot deter us from following Christ.

***Prayer:***  *Lord, help me to surrender myself to your Spirit so that I may experience the power of your love and live in the hope of glorification. Amen.*