

Romans – Bible Study – Chapter 8:18-30

As we started in chapter eight, we see the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers and the privileges that come with the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit frees us from the bondage of sin so we can follow Christ as the authority that rules our lives instead of the Law. However, Paul states that we will continue to experience a struggle with sin, a sign that the Holy Spirit indwells within us, which is also evidence that we are part of God's family.

In this study, we will continue with a theme that appears in verse 17, the idea of suffering as a Christian and how our present sufferings contrasts with our future glory.

Present Suffering and Future Glory

(Verses 18-22) Paul talks about his suffering not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed to him. What kind of suffering did Paul endure (Acts 14:19; 16:16-24; 21:29-36) in his life time? How does he respond to these sufferings when living for Christ in obedience (Acts 14:20; 16:25-34)? Paul also references creation and its expectations for the children of God to be revealed. Why is creation suffering (Genesis 3:16-19)? Is there hope for the created heavens and earth (Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 21:1-5)?

- **Acts 14:19** – He is stoned by the Jews who came from Antioch and Iconium and left for dead
- **Acts 16:16-24** – Paul and Silas are arrested and imprisoned after healing a slave girl who had a spirit of divination
- **Acts 21:29-36** – Paul is seized to be killed by the Jews in Jerusalem for bringing Greeks into the temple
- These are but examples of the type of suffering Paul endures for the sake of the Gospel, not to mention the inner suffering of the flesh and the Spirit (see chapter 7)
 - We can also see other sufferings that Paul goes through in 2 Corinthians 6:3-10
- There is this idea of 'redemptive suffering', meaning it is for the sake of Christ
- He is not minimizing the suffering of himself and believers, but emphasizing the glory to come
- **Acts 14:20** – He gets up and goes to Derbe with Barnabas
- **Acts 16:25-34** – Both Paul and Silas sing hymns while in prison and use the opportunity, when freed from their chains, to preach the Gospel to the prison guard
- Paul continues to preach the good news to the Gentiles, in spite of the suffering that he endures and does not shy away
- In fact, we see that he is joyful in some instances, praising and worshipping God
- We highlight his sufferings because he has suffered greatly for the Gospel (with his eventual martyrdom) so that others may hear
- He gives us assurance that the suffering he is enduring, he sees the glory of God as something greater
- This should be our focus as well, to look to the future glory that awaits us
- **Genesis 3:16-19** – Creation suffers as it is cursed due to the sin that is introduced to the world because of Adam's act of disobedience
- The earth is no longer the paradise it was intended to be as God has cursed it, making man's habitat a frustrating and decaying environment
- Therefore, it is not only that humanity suffers because of sin, but also creation as the results of sin is not confined only to man
- Proclamation of the Gospel is still key and what we need to do in this life, in all things we do
- **Isaiah 65:17-25** – Creation of the new heavens and earth
 - **NB** – We see the idea of 'telescopic prophecy', meaning that multiple prophecies are being told here in this one narrative. Upon closer inspection, we can see the multiple prophecies.
- **Revelation 21:1-5** – The vision that John has regarding the coming of the new heavens and earth
- This matters, in the context of chapters 6-8, because the suffering and struggles that we have in this world are temporary and that the promises of God show us a restoration that will beyond compare
- It also shows that there is hope and an end to all things that separate us from being glorified with God

(Verses 23-25) How does this passage describe our longing for the ultimate redeemed life? According to Paul in verses 24 and 25, how does Paul want us to live in this life?

- As with creation, we groan as we live out our lives in mortal, unregenerate bodies
- We realize that what God is promising is for the future and not necessarily for the present age
- God's gift of the Holy Spirit is a reminder that God will complete the work of salvation that He has started in us (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 1 John 3:2)
- Again, we will see this completed at the end of times, when Christ returns and restores all things
- We are to wait patiently, in hope, of the fulfillment of God's promises and to endure the sufferings while on this earth
- Also this hope we have is not a 'wishful' hope, but one that is grounded in knowing the fulfillment of God's promises as evidenced in His word

(Verses 26-27) How does the Holy Spirit intercede for us? What does He do so that our prayers are heard?

- Paul pictures our present state as a state of weakness
- Therefore, we need help on how to pray as we ought to
- The Holy Spirit intercedes for us by requesting the Father's help for us with deep compassion (Ephesians 6:18)
- The Holy Spirit prays for us by praying according to God's will and His mind is known by God
- The Holy Spirit also helps to shape the way we pray to God
- The Spirit prays perfectly for us in our suffering and God answers those prayers because they are in line with His will
- We can be assured that the intercessory prayers are heard as He prays according to the will of the Father
- We are to pray according to the will of God and not for ourselves
- What is the general will of God? To be more Christ like

(Verses 28-30) When Paul talks about "all things", are there any exclusions? How are we to live in light of this passage? In verses 29-30, how do we view what God is doing in our lives?

- "All things" means just that: all things. In the context these things include the adversities the believer experiences. The "good" is what is good from God's perspective, and, in view of verses 18-27, conformity to the Son of God is particularly prominent (v. 29). Those who love God could be a group of believers who love God more than others. However since Paul described them from the divine side as the elect of God, those who love God must refer to all Christians (cf. 1 John 4:19). This is the only place in Romans where Paul wrote of the believer's love for God; everywhere else he referred to God's love for the believer.
- It is important to note that God 'allows all things' and doesn't "cause all things" because the implication is that He is the source of evil and sin, which is not possible
- Therefore when tragedy touches a believer we should not conclude that this is one of the "all things" that God causes. Rather this verse says that God brings good out of all things, even tragedies, for the Christian. The causes of tragedy are Satan, the sinful choices of people, and the consequences of living in a sinful world (cf. James

1:13-14): Satan, sin, and sinners. Even though God permits or allows bad things to happen, Scripture never lays the blame for these things on God, and neither should we.

- These promises are also in context for the believer and not for everyone
- God chooses those who he wants to save
- Foreknowledge is a term that specifically describes God's decision to elect, to choose to bless someone (cf. ch. 9; 1 Pet. 1:20)
- The reason for God's choice of the elect was not human merit (Eph. 1:4), or even the faith of the elect, but God's love and purpose (v. 28; cf. Deut. 7:6-8).
- "Predestined" means that God determined the destiny of the elect previously, specifically, before Creation (Eph. 1:3-4). That destiny is conformity to Jesus Christ's image, much more than just deliverance from sin and death. God accomplished this goal partially through believers' justification. He is presently accomplishing it partially through our progressive sanctification, and He will accomplish it completely through our glorification.
- In verse 30, the acts or elements of salvation that we see are dependent upon Him
- He is the only one that can cause and complete those elements on His own without human intervention
- **NB** – It could be argued that there is some human involvement with sanctification, but everything else is dependent on the actions of God alone
- God's plans are not centered around us, but around Jesus
- God's overall plan is to provide Jesus with a family of believers who conform to His likeness, a family in which He is preeminent as the firstborn.
- This is the hope into which we were saved, is God's will, and it is in accordance with this that the Spirit prays for us
- Salvation is the work of God and not our own, so that no one should boast

Paul states that none of our present sufferings, while we live in mortal bodies in a decaying world, can compare to the glory that awaits for us in the future. There is eager expectation in creation for the release from bondage, to be brought into freedom and glory. This is also true for God's children, who wait for the day when the final redemption of their body is complete.

We also see the work of the Holy Spirit, who intercedes on our behalf in our prayers to God, so that we may pray and do the will of God. As His children, we can take comfort that the work God started in our salvation will one day be brought to completion through His sovereign will.

Point to Ponder: What sufferings are you facing at the moment? How can you pray for them in the light of this passage?