

The Hope of Eternal Glory

(Romans 8:17-30)

Intro: Romans chapter 8 you recall sets forth God's provision for the believer's righteous living. Faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord has delivered us believers from the tyrannical power of our old sin nature. Paul explained that the Holy Spirit of God, who indwells every true child of God, provides victory over the repressive power of sin. Believers are no longer obligated to live as slaves of the flesh, for we have received the Spirit of adoption as sons of God, by which we cry out Abba! Father" (vv. 12-15).

The gracious act of God, which places every born-again believer into His family, makes them heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (v. 17a). Just think of it, brothers and sisters, you and I will share in the inheritance of the spiritual riches of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The promise of a future inheritance is one of the many promises God makes to us in the Bible. But the concept itself is difficult for us to comprehend. One way to think about it would be to turn to some familiar names across the pond.

When Princess Diana died in 1997, she left a sizeable inheritance for her two sons, William and Harry, in the amount of \$20.4 million. With investments and interest, that amount has grown to around \$31 and-a-half million. But the provision was such that William and Harry were only able to inherit this considerable inheritance on their 30th birthdays. In June of 2012, William turned 30 and inherited his portion. Harry recently inherited his portion on his 30th birthday as well. The inheritance is theirs. It had been promised to them. Each has inherited all that Princess Diana had bequeathed to them.

In the same way, Paul informs us in **Romans 8:15-17**, that as followers of Christ we have a glorious inheritance reserved for us by God. The moment we trusted in Christ as Savior we received the Spirit of adoption, as sons of God we cry out "Abba! Father!" According to verse 15, believers have been set free from their former slavery to sin. Whereas I was previously held in bondage to sin, and fearful of God's condemnation because of my sin, when I placed my faith in Jesus Christ, I was set free by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit adopted me into God's family. I am now a son of God, who no longer fears God, but can address Him intimately as Abba! Father!

Paul explains in vv. 16-17 that the Holy Spirit Himself bears witness or confirms to our spirit, to our conscience, that we are children of God. v. **17a** “And since we are children, we have been made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”

The apostle John states in his First Epistle chapter 3, verse 2, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”

How rich is the promise that as believers in Christ we have been adopted into God’s family, and as sons of God, we shall share in all the eternal blessings of Christ. Things are moving toward a great and glorious day, but it is not here yet. In fact, the next thing Paul wants us to know is that “as co-heirs with Christ, we may be called on to suffer with Him, in order that we may also be glorified with Him” (v. 17).

This 17th verse links together two truths we generally don’t put together: sufferings and glory. Paul makes it clear, that sharing in the sufferings of Christ leads to sharing in His eternal glory. In light of the suffering all believers will face in this life, Paul provides believers with three grounds for hope: (1) the glory that will be revealed (vv. 18-25); (2) the help provided by the Holy Spirit (vv. 26-27); (3) the believer’s assurance that God is working all things together for good (vv. 28-30).

I. The Glory That Will Be Revealed (vv. 18-25)

v. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Paul lived his Christian life with an eternal perspective. He considered the suffering of this present time as nothing to be compared with the glory that God is going to reveal to us. Paul was well acquainted with suffering. In defense of his apostleship, he reminded the Corinthians that he had suffered much for the Gospel of Christ—beatings, imprisonment, sleepless nights, hunger, and shipwreck (2 Cor. 6:4-5; 11:23-28). Yet he considered these trials as nothing in comparison with the glory that God was going to reveal to him.

I am certain that we would all agree that believers share in Christ’s sufferings. We all have to put up with the difficulties and the hardships and the sufferings

that daily life brings our way. Perhaps you have lost your job because of your Christian profession. Maybe you have had family members or friends turn against you because of your love for Christ. There were several young men at Dallas Seminary who had their wives leave them because they didn't want to be in ministry. You may be experiencing some life threatening illness. Paul's point here is to provide hope in the face of suffering. Regardless of what a believer might suffer, they can rest assured of sharing in God's eternal glory. Our focus as believers needs to be on things above, spiritual concerns that result in eternal blessings.

Creation joins with believers in groaning for God's glorious deliverance.

A. Creation groans (vv. 19-22)

19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. **20** For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it

All of creation anxiously longs for the revealing of the sons of God in glory. When Adam disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit, God cursed the ground so that man would have to labor to bring forth bread to eat (Gen. 3:17-19). Thorns, thistles, decay, and death were brought to bear on creation.

21-22 Creation looks forward to being set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. **22** For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

The day is coming when God's glorious program of salvation for people is completed, and the children of God experience their glorious freedom from sin, Satan, and physical death and decay. Then Creation will experience liberation from its subjugation to corruption. John describes this glorious event in **Revelation 21:1-2** And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. **2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

Not only does nature testify to this bondage, bearing witness to the hope that is coming, but, Paul says, we ourselves groan for God's deliverance, vv. 23-25

B. Believers groan (vv. 23-25)

23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Having received the Holy Spirit, as the first fruits of our complete redemption, we groan within ourselves. Having tasted of the grace of God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, believers wait eagerly for God to complete our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body when Christ returns for us (Phil. 3:20-21). This is the thrilling climax to our adoption as sons of God. It will occur at the Rapture of the church, when Christ will return on the clouds and believers will be raised and transformed with glorious bodies.

Paul describes this spectacular event in 1 Cor. 15:51-54 and 1 Thess. 4:13-18

1 Cor. 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. **53** For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. **54** But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.

1 Thess. 4:13-18 We do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. **14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. **15** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. **16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. **17** Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. **18** Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The promise of future glorification is the believer’s hope, vv. 24-25,

24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? **25** But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

As believers we look for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus (Tit. 2:13). The Holy Spirit provides us with assurance, that what God has promised He will bring to fruition.

Not only does the Holy Spirit provides believers with assurance, He intercedes on our behalf with groanings too deep for words, vv. 26-27

II. The Help Provided By The Holy Spirit (vv. 26-27)

26 And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; **27** and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

The apostle says that when we don't know how to pray as we should, the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. The Spirit is putting our prayer into a form which God the Father, who searches the heart, understands. The Spirit asks God the Father for something concerning the situation that we are trying to pray about. **The Spirit's prayers on our behalf move God to work all things together for our good, vv. 28-30**

III. The Believer's Assurance That God Is Working All Things Together For Good (vv. 28-30).

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

The believer knows, is confident of the fact, that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. No matter what trials or tragedies may come into our lives, as believers we can rest in the knowledge that God is permitting it for our good and for His glory.

When a cowboy applied for an insurance policy, the agent asked, "Have you ever had any accidents?" After a moment's reflection, the cowboy responded, "Nope, but a bronc did kick in two of my ribs last summer, and a couple of years ago a rattlesnake bit me on the ankle." "Wouldn't you call those accidents?" replied the puzzled agent. "Naw," the cowboy said, "they did it on purpose!" In the same way, God has a purpose in allowing us to experience

suffering. This cowboy's story reminds me of the biblical truth that there are no accidents in the lives of God's children. I am reminded of how Joseph interpreted his tragic experiences. He had been thrown into a pit and then sold as a slave. This was a great test of his faith, and from the human standpoint it appeared to be a tragic case of injustice, not a providential means of blessing. But Joseph later testified to his brothers, "As for you, you all meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20). God sent me here before you to preserve life (Gen. 45:5, 7).

Are you passing through the deep waters of trial and disappointment? Does everything seem to be going against you? These apparent misfortunes are not accidents. The Lord allows such things for a blessed purpose. So patiently trust Him. If you know the Lord, someday you will praise Him for it all! Again, God's ultimate purpose is our glory, to conform us to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ, **verses 29-30**

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;

Believers are described as those God foreknew. Divine foreknowledge results in God's calling us to faith in Christ. Paul explains in Ephesians 1:5 that God predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the kind intention of His will. His ultimate purpose is our glorification. To conform us to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.

The believer's future glorification is so certain, that it is described as an accomplished fact, v. 30

30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Conclusion:

Paul makes it clear, that sharing in the sufferings of Christ leads to sharing in His eternal glory. We need to develop Paul's eternal perspective. So we can too can view our present sufferings as nothing in comparison to the eternal glory that awaits us as Christians. Instead of complaining when we face difficulties let us praise God that we have been counted worthy to suffer for Christ's name, that we may also share in His glory that is to come.

Applications:

1. As believers, we need to be like Paul, who considered trials as nothing in comparison with the glory that God is going to reveal to us.
2. Regardless of what we might suffer, we can rest assured that God is working all things together for our good and ultimately so we can share in His eternal glory.
3. Our future glorification is so certain, that it is described as an accomplished fact.

Closing prayer:

Father, may you help us to understand that You are in control of everything. That there is absolutely nothing that happens apart from Your sovereign will. Help us to look forward to the day when You will astonish our minds and our hearts by what You have prepared for us. We pray that we may come to truly understand this, and thus be able to endure patiently and with thanksgiving what we are going through now, knowing that our present sufferings will to our sharing in Your eternal glory. We ask this in Jesus' blessed name, Amen.

Closing Song: *His Eye Is On The Sparrow*