

“How the Lord Knows Suffering in the Life of the Believer, Part 2”
The Normal Christian Life – Paul's Testimony Still Speaks, Part 6

Review: “How the Lord Knows Suffering in the Life of the Believer”

- ***Our Privilege As Sons Is to Suffer and to be Glorified Together With Christ***
- ***Our Sufferings Today Are Nothing Compared with the Coming Glory!***

- ***Our Privilege As Sons Is to Suffer and to be Glorified Together With Christ***
 - We are no longer debtors but sons indeed, and therefore privileged to walk in newness of life. The very Spirit of the living God dwells within us as well as the Father and the Son, praise God. We are the temple of God!

However, there is another part of this story that comes next, and that cannot be left out. The former may seem rather “doctrinal”, but this part is “practical”. It has to do with our suffering. Paul writes of it in his first letter, the letter to the Thessalonians, in his last letter, 2 Timothy, and in many others as well. Paul writes of this suffering in our passage here in Romans 8 in the verses we studied last time:

Romans 8:15-17

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

- So God’s ending for us is glorious indeed. But the pathway there is also ordained, he writes, but it will include our suffering. The Lord always knows the end from the beginning, for he has planned and engineered our salvation, our lives, and our glorious eternity! And he knows our road to that glory as well. This is a precious thought and worthy of our consideration. We have an intimate relationship, he writes here, and we therefore have no reason to fear due to our previously unsaved condition of spiritual bondage to sin and death. Why? Because of the intimacy of our new relationship with the Trinitarian God as revealed here, all in three verses. Here it is with the Father, our heavenly Father! Then it is with the Spirit and finally with the Son. And our blessed Lord Jesus is right in the middle of it all, most wonderfully. We are so blessed together with him, even in his sufferings! See Colossians 1 for that teaching in all of its power.

- And now the wonderful promise and one that includes not only our future glorification together with Christ but also our current trials and burdens of suffering, but, as he writes, also “together with him”, praise God!
 - The whole point of the apostle’s teaching here is what this all means (or should mean) for us, considering the burdens we do bear here and especially as we live godly in Christ Jesus. And we are called to live godly, are we not?
 - These verses speak of a serious engagement in living the normal Christian life, one that is so visible that the contrast with the world and its ways is undeniable. But there are consequences of such living as we will again be seeing today in our studies here.
- ***Our Sufferings Today Are Nothing Compared with the Coming Glory!***

Romans 8:18-21

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the **earnest expectation** of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

- This is the teaching now that underscores verses 15-17: To summarize, we now learn the facts presented and the reckoning as our example through Paul (as before his testimony was also so important, wasn’t it?).
- In one sentence, he presents the facts as he knows them: “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”. And don’t forget, this is his testimony. Is it ours? And then he explains this further in verses 19-21:
 - The whole creation and we ourselves surely “wait” earnestly and expectantly “...for the manifestation of the sons of God”: such a hopeful expectation indeed is ours, IF we will receive it and reckon on it! The Greek word translated “earnest expectation” here (and also in the other place it is found) means to “stretch out the neck in anticipation”! To repeat, one cannot reckon upon what one knows nothing about!
 - So we have the ultimate expression of this critical truth, that Paul is our example of how God is working today under grace. It was Paul’s “earnest expectation”, with outstretched neck in

anticipation, that made the difference for him, and that is his testimony here in the Romans. Is it ours?

- And now he goes even deeper in his explanation (note the word “for”). First, the statement of fact and then the details needed for our understanding: “For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope ...”. First, the statement of hope, if we are willing to by faith receive it (so we therefore can reckon upon it):
 - For despite Adam’s Fall and its consequences for him, Sara, and their offspring, and the entire creation as well that has been tainted with its many effects, there is nevertheless hope, he writes here. Any why?
 - “... Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” A glorious future indeed awaits the creation, and we ourselves, who are not only a part of that but the central focus of the work of God under grace. Praise God for such a positive and encouraging hope!
 - “... because ...”, verse 21: As a critical part of God’s plan of the ages is this, that the culmination of it all and therefore the implied purpose and final end behind the Lord’s judgment and curse upon Adam and the creation itself, is the removal of the curse and an ending so glorious that the justification of it all will be clearly revealed. Imagine the singing of the elect angels of God when that occurs!

The mark of hope for his final resolution is there, and the word of hope opens our hearts and minds to it. Amen.

This is indeed the hope against hope, the hope in the unseen, our ultimate deliverance into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Amen. Encouraging?

Transition:

[READ] 2 Timothy 3:10-12

10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.

12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Colossians 1:21-29

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight:

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Our Outline Today: "How the Lord Knows Suffering in the Life of the Believer, Part 2"

- ***Does Paul's Testimony Regarding Our Suffering with Christ Still Speak?***
- ***The Depths of Paul's Testimony of Suffering with Christ Are Great Indeed***
- ***The Logic of Paul's Teaching Regarding His Suffering Explains Our Own***

I. Does Paul's Testimony Regarding Our Suffering with Christ Still Speak?

[READ] 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

...

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

- OK, many will say, that was for Paul because Christ spoke directly with him. But for me, I have an entirely different set of issues and burdens,

and it is not enough for me. His grace is good, but it is not enough. Have you ever thought that?

The real issue for us is gaining a proper understanding of the power of the enemies we face and how easily we fall to their attacks. Amen?

- And we need to know well that this is all about our motivation ... For our own carnality so easily hides behind our religious nature with its works, which are deceitfully so often of the flesh. We think they are good works, of course.
- Have we learned what Paul had?? Let's find out in what follows in Romans 8:

II. The Depths of Paul's Testimony of Suffering with Christ Are Great Indeed:

- We begin with verse 22, where the depths of Paul's suffering with Christ are revealed. So this is all about what is occurring "behind the scenes", as it were.

[READ] Romans 8:22-27

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 **But if we hope for that we see not, *then do we with patience wait for it.***

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God.*

- Verse 24: What is this hope our apostle highlights for our understanding and life, here? The hope for our deliverance. But deliverance from what? And to what? According to verse 23, it is deliverance or salvation from the corruption in the creation, which extends to our mortal bodies. That will be accomplished, of course, at the rapture of the church. Amen.
- Verse 25: If our hope is real and sincere, then our patience in waiting should be as well, but therein is an issue. We see that it is not so often, since we are anxious and may have little true patience at all. That is the indicator that our hope is not what it should be.

- Verse 26: But here is “where the rubber meets the road”, so to speak. Do we hope for what Paul did? Knowing that it will lead to our suffering?? If we do have a proper hope, then ... But if we do not, then Some knowledge may be lacking permanently. Paul would not have written here what he did if we normally received what we pray for. Right? Verse 25 implies that as well. We don't, so we need patience. Otherwise, our hope is tarnished and misguided. I believe with all my heart that that is the teaching here. And it should be clear, therefore, that we do not know how to pray, and this section is not teaching us how to correct that condition, but rather how to accept it as “the will of God”. This is the divine logic. Our apostle is attempting here with the words the Spirit of God has chosen to change our way of thinking, isn't he?

Now I am NOT saying that our prayers do not need to be reformed according to godly principles. Paul does write about that in several places and, in addition, often gives us his own example for us to follow. That is a different subject. But the key is always first praises and thanksgivings, and afterwards, our requests, Philippians 4:4-7. The priorities are so very important.

- Verse 27: We must know this well if we are to proceed as the Lord intends, since all is determined by it from here on in this teaching. Our prayers are not, therefore, what the Lord God is especially listening to; rather, it is to the Spirit's prayers that he hears. Why, because they are in accord with God's will and ours are not...

So the purpose of our prayers is not as we may have thought. What is their purpose from God's point of view? Have we ever understood these words? Perhaps today we may gain an understanding better than ever before. That is my hope and prayer.

Has this teaching transformed us all yet?

III. The Logic of Paul's Teaching Regarding His Suffering Explains Our Own:

[READ] Romans 8:28-30

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

- Verse 28: This begins with the word “and,” since all will now be based on what has been written here earlier. The teaching in verse 28 is always

true because it is based on the Spirit's working and not on our own works.

- The simple, yet profound workings of the mind of God are exposed here so powerfully. But have we considered it well? Have we dwelt here in these words enough for their meaning to lodge firmly in our hearts? I thank God that my youth was affected by them. For my mother taught them to my sister and me often so that they became our family's verses.
- These verses and their teaching are fundamental for all that follows, so we will be back here next time. But for now, what we need to remember throughout this week is this: Our Lord God knows the end from the beginning, for he is administering his plan, and that plan includes us individually and personally. So that is the most essential teaching here. All that follows from that is summarized and then explained more fully as we proceed in the chapter until its glorious endpoint:

Romans 8:37-39

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- But, you might say, how can that be? For that leaves no room for our free will. And how can that fit into such a plan? But, I could interject, and I think the Lord would as well, for where would our free will lead us, if not influenced by our Lord God? Doesn't our experience teach us anything? Are we still so blinded?

There are other verses as well that are based on this same truth. Verses 29 & 30 declare the truth so well, and the others follow from that:

Romans 8:31-35

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth.

34 Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

- So does God work all things together for our good? This question is for us all.
- Praise God for his unlimited grace and all that it brings so abundantly. Amen and amen!

Conclusions / Exhortations:

- We must conclude from our study today that in the redemptive plan of Almighty God, even our sufferings are part of his eternal plan of glory. God's workings are focused on us, his people, the Body of Christ, but verse 20 says this: "... by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." So our coming glory is the harbinger of what, in God's perfect timing, will also deliver the entire creation from the effects of the curse that is upon it.
- Our Lord God has a purpose, therefore for everything, even our suffering. Amen. So be it.