

Sonship From Suffering to Glory

Romans 8:17b-30

Romans 8:17b-30: "... if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us. For the anxious looking out of the creature expects the revelation of the sons of God: for the creature has been made subject to vanity, not of its will, but by reason of him who has subjected the same, in hope that the creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now. And not only that, but even we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, we also ourselves groan in ourselves, awaiting adoption, that is the redemption of our body. For we have been saved in hope; but hope seen is not hope; for what any one sees, why does he also hope? But what we see not we hope, we expect in patience. And in like manner the Spirit joins also its help to our weakness; for we do not know what we should pray for as is fitting, but the Spirit itself makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. But he who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for saints according to God. But we do know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose. Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren. But whom he has predestinated, these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified; but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified."

Let's have a word of prayer:

Lord, we are so grateful today we could be in Your presence remembering You. What a joy it is to always have a place at the King's table. We bless You and thank You. What a joy, oh Father, to return and thank You for that unspeakable free gift of Christ, when our brother Josh said, "You gave everything. You withheld from us nothing." Now as we turn to Your Word, we are asking for a special blessing, that You would open our eyes, not just our natural eyes, but the eyes of our heart, to see what is in Your Word, You would open our ears to understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches, that You will grant us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of You to understand Your Words. Your Words are Spirit and life. We are agreeing together in the name of our Lord Jesus that you would release those Words. We ask this together in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

I sent out an email to you, and I am changing something already. Forgive me; but as I was meditating this morning I expanded the title by one word. Remember I told you it would be "From Suffering to Glory;" but I want to insert a word because you will see it is really the heartbeat of these passages, "Sonship From Suffering To Glory." I think that is a better title, so if you will forgive me for inserting that.

Introduction

We have read the text, and we will look at four areas. I think it breaks down in this way at least in the way I see it. First of all, "Suffering and Glory." There is much we need to understand about our calling and what it includes in verses 17b-18. The largest part is "The Travail of Creation and the Creatures." There is something happening in the universe, waiting, if you will, for the manifestation of the sons of God. It is a groaning; it is an agony, a spiritual agony, and we must see that in verses 18-25. That is what is going on in both us as creatures and the creation. The third thing is that we need to see the unspeakable aid that God has given to us to be made sons; this is "The Aid of the Holy Spirit." And I will have one other thing to say in verses 26-27. Finally I think in the clearest way we see "The Great Purpose" in the last three verses, 28-30. So we will look at those.

As we begin this morning, I want to remind you that we have come to the height of the book of Romans. Chapter 8 is the summit. We have reached the mountain top of God's revelation of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot get any higher than this. And I remember that I used to be sort of a National Geographic freak. I would love to get the National Geographic publications, and for years we kept the copies. I would pour through those copies, and I was always interested in Mt. Everest, the highest summit on earth, 29,032 feet. People have risked their lives, and many have laid down their lives trying to go up that summit to put down a stake and say, "I was here." Well, our summit is far greater than Mt. Everest. That is just a small hill compared to the summit of God that we have been brought to, and that is what we should understand when it comes to this.

We see God's great purpose in this chapter, which is His highest thought for man. We see the portion we have in Christ Jesus, an unbelievable portion. We see in these thirteen and a half verses something so comprehensive, which is sonship, and how we come into being made sons of God. Now for you that have not understood somewhat of my outline, this second part of Romans after justification is sanctification, and sanctification in the end can be best described as the making of sons or the perfecting of sons. So that is what these thirteen and a half verses deal with.

It talks about suffering to glory. Now sometimes, I think we as believers focus on our suffering. This is not focused on our suffering, but it does not ignore our suffering. However, what it does focus on is the glory, and what we have to see as believers is the glory that is set before us. So I think that is an important point as we begin with an introductory thought.

We have been given aids beyond anything that the angels could comprehend. The Holy Spirit of God is that indwelling power to the making of sons. We see this great purpose of God that from the beginning He was looking for many sons to be brought to glory. Oh, how He loves His Son, and we have heard that He gives His Son everything. But He had another thought, an unspeakable thought. Again, the angels were jealous of us. Do not ever think that you want to be like the angels because they will never be sons. They will only be ministering servants, as Hebrews says in chapter 1:14. But you and me, brothers and sisters, will literally be the sons of God made in His image to express who He is for all eternity. How marvelous and glorious that is! I think we see the grandest imaginable purpose where it says in verse 29: "That we are to be conformed to

the image of His Son.” If I were telling you that, and you did not have a Bible, you did not know this verse, you have not been taught this verse for so many years, you might be provoked to call me a liar. But when you look at the Word of God, this is the end purpose of God, which is His Son, who fills everything, and many sons—us. Now that is glory. You want a definition of glory? That is glory. His Son, the all-glorious One, and the many sons that reflect Him through all the years; that is glory; so it is from suffering to glory. I think you understand that this is our glorious end. May the Lord help us.

Suffering and Glory (8:17b-25)

I know people think suffering is such a negative thing, but for ones being made sons, suffering is a necessary thing. We need to understand that. I am not sure it is taught to believers. Many who used to be with us would say, “Christians should never suffer.” I do not know where they get that from. If you read verse 17: “If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him.” How marvelous! Notice that it is with Him. Sometimes we are so focused on what we go through in such a negative way, all we can consider is our sufferings, but these are not just ordinary sufferings. These are sufferings with Him, and this is the emphasis. And this is glory with Him as the emphasis.

I like the way Darby explains it. In his notes he says, “This is co-suffering that we might be partakers of co-glory.” That explains everything you will go through in life as a believer, one who is being sanctified, one who is being made a son of God. Now notice this: it is very clear that our Christian life is not absent of sufferings. We have to understand that. In every Christian who knows the Lord, who walks with the Lord, who has the indwelling Spirit, will certainly go through difficulties and sufferings. You cannot deny that when you read it in the Bible; it is apparent in the Bible. It is not just apparent in the Bible, it is necessary in the transformative work from making us just children of God (I say just children, I think it is wrong to say, but I think it makes the point) to fully matured sons of God reflecting the glory of the only begotten Son.

I remember when Paul spoke out to his beloved son in the faith in his last letter in II Timothy 3:12 (KJV): “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

If the Lord was persecuted, we will be persecuted. The Lord said, “If they hated me, they will hate you.”

Do you remember when Saul and Barnabas said to those Asian believers in Acts 14:22: “Through many tribulations we shall enter into the kingdom of God”?

It was our Lord’s way, and it shall be our way. Do you understand this? I do not want to just give a negative view of this, because I believe if you understand all these thirteen and a half verses you will never look at them as negative again. You will be transformed, seeing the glory that has been reserved for you as a child of God to be made into a full-grown mature son. I think it was the Lord’s way.

In Hebrews 2:10 we read of the One who suffered, but did not deserve it, the One who never did anything wrong; it was clearly His way when we read the Word of God.

“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, (and notice what it says.) in bringing many sons to glory, to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings.”

His path is our path. Please understand that. Now let me get to the positive part. Suffering is necessary to transform us into sons of God, but suffering is not the end. Please remember this if you do not remember anything else I say to you. Suffering is absolutely necessary to transform us into sons of God, but suffering is not our end.

Brothers and sisters, this verse I had in the beginning tells us that our end is glory; our end is not suffering. How encouraging that ought to be to you and me! As a matter of fact, verse 17b begins with suffering, and verse 17b ends with: “That we may also be glorified with him.” And this whole section is dedicated to sonship and ends in verse 30: “These also has He glorified.” How wonderful that is! Glory is our end, and I think that is so precious to realize.

Glory is our certain destiny; suffering is not our destiny. Suffering is a means to an end, but it is not our destiny. Paul contemplated this truth, and if you read verse 18, he came to a grand conclusion. It says, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us.”

I like the way the King James Version puts it. I have to admit that every once in a while I refer to it. “The glory to be revealed in us.” It is so much better I think. I thank the Lord that this is our determined destiny. Paul contemplated the sufferings. No one had these sufferings as a human being like Paul. No one! You remember when he was called on that road to Damascus, and Ananias who was fearful about going to pray for him, and he questioned God: “Did God realize who this dastardly man was, who was ravishing His church?” God said, “Oh, I realize; I know, but he is a vessel, an elect vessel, and I will show him how much he will suffer for my namesake.” That is Paul’s history.

Look at Paul’s autobiography. Now a biography is someone who writes about you; an autobiography is when you write about yourself. And if you want to really understand the Apostle Paul, you need to meditate on II Corinthians which is Paul’s autobiography. I have never forgotten those words of our beloved Brother Kaung who said when he was going through each book of the Bible, and we were seeing Christ in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, he said these words to me as a young Christian, (younger than many of you,) “This is Paul’s autobiography.” So if you are going to know Paul, read II Corinthians. And if you read chapter 4 you will find those unbelievable sufferings that he went through. He cited to them those many sufferings, very graphically in chapter 4. If you read chapter 9, you will find those tremendous perils he went through. It is unmistakable that this man suffered more than any man for Christ, but his focus was not on the sufferings; that is what is so beautiful. As he contemplated, he knew there were certain things he would go through, but he reckoned that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the coming glory to be revealed in us. Isn’t that wonderful? Have we made that calculation? You know that word “reckon” that we have talked about many times, is a particular Pauline word, and it is particular to Romans. He reckoned, and it is a calculated word. For you people who are accountants and like those kind of things, you actually make a calculation. And when you make a calculation, you arrive at a conclusion of

comparison, and that is exactly what Paul did. He reckoned, he calculated, he methodically thought about all those things, and he came to the conclusion that the sufferings could not compare to the glory that was about to be revealed in us. I think that is wonderful. I think that is what it means—suffering to glory.

William R. Newell explains this, and I like how he interprets it. He said, “The word ‘reckon’ is a favorite word of Paul’s; it represents faith in action.” But is it a calculated, particular action of faith? You look at things as they are, and then you make a conclusion based on what these things are. And that conclusion, which cannot be contested, is the glory that is prepared for us. It is incomparable to the sufferings. There is no connection.

I remember a book that I have mentioned before by J. Oswald Sanders. I like this book which is an old book, but I am an old person, so what difference does it make? It is “The Incomparable Christ.” I always loved that title, and I have always thought much of that title. He understood the incomparable Christ, and Paul understood the incomparable sufferings that make us into sons of God. I think maybe you get the idea. I think it is so beautiful.

II Corinthians 4:17-18, remember this is Paul’s autobiography. He said this: “For our momentary and light affliction ...” I do not know if when you go through sufferings in the Lord, (and I will say it the way Paul said it, ‘with the Lord.’) if your estimation of these momentary and light afflictions is the same as Paul’s estimation. It was what Paul saw and what Paul reckoned, and I think in this walk as a pilgrim this ought to be our estimation likewise.

“For our momentary and light affliction works for us.” Did you notice that phrase? Paul did not sort of sit around thinking, what words can I add here to make this sentence sound complete? He said, “These things work for us.” They work for us “in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory. (Not just a weight of glory, an eternal weight of glory.) while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen eternal.” What a perspective! When you walk in this life as a believer being sanctified and made a son through all of God’s dealings, this must be your perspective. Or you are going to be looking at your sufferings and saying, “Why me? Why, Lord?” Well, I hope you get the point.

Peter did the same thing in the last things that he wrote to the church in I and II Peter. Do you know the context of I and II Peter? The context is to a suffering church. It is the diaspora; they were driven out by persecution into places far flung, and one thing that Peter wanted to do is give them the highest assurance that these sufferings were not in vain and they produced an eternal weight of glory.

In I Peter 5:10-11 he said, “But the God of all grace who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, (notice what he says) when you have suffered for a little while, (isn’t that beautiful?) himself shall make perfect, stablish, strengthen, ground: to Him be the glory and the might for the ages of the ages.” Amen. How beautiful that is!

Our sufferings are these momentary and light afflictions. Our sufferings are working for us an eternal weight of glory. Our sufferings are just for a little while.

It seems just like yesterday I was twenty when I was saved. You can please tell me later where that fifty-three years went. It was a moment, a moment. And you ask me to recall all the things I have gone through, I could not. But I would say, "Thank God!"

There is a brother in the Lord I want to mention to you, Paul Billheimer. He is a dear brother and he is really famous for two books. Now I know he must have done much more in his ministry. My knowledge certainly can be limited. But Paul Billheimer wrote two books, "Destined For the Throne;" that is what you are as a son of God. You are destined to the throne to reign with Christ, to rule with Christ for all eternity. And the second book he wrote is, "Don't Waste Your Sorrows." This is the companion book. This is one who understood the necessity of sufferings and the coming glory. And they were tools that actually enabled us to reign with Christ. And without that intervention of God in sorrows, we can never reign with Christ fully. I recommend this book. How encouraging the Word is! It is not the suffering; it is the glory. Once you have tasted the glory to come, the glory that is yours in Christ Jesus, you will never faint again. These sufferings are beyond anything imaginable, even if they are. I think there is a reason Paul began with this.

The Travail of Creation and Creatures (8:18-25)

Let's look at the travail of creation and the creatures in verses 18-25. These verses give divine insight into what is happening in this present evil age. Now that is a phrase out of Galatians 1:4. We live in a present evil age. The whole world lies in the evil one. Do not think for a moment this world is your home. Do not get so comfortable that you will spend all of your life and your energy making a place here. Remember, it says of the Lord Jesus when He walked upon the earth, "Foxes have holes, birds have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head."

Brothers and sisters, this is not our home. Our home is an unspeakable glory, glory that cannot be imagined, glory that cannot be explained, glory that can only be entered into as we yield to the work of God who uses all these things to work for us an eternal weight of glory.

I think, as you begin to go to the second part, you begin to say, "A travail." You begin to see a travailing, and you begin to see the word "a groaning." The creation itself and the creatures (that is us. I am not calling you a dog or a hippopotamus, but you are a creature.) are groaning from within for the manifestation of the sons of God. Only then will the divine plan be complete. That is what it clearly says. It is their great expectation. It is their earnest expectation; it is their longed-for expectation when you think of these verses.

Verse 19: (KJV) describes this travail, this groaning, this agony, this childbirth, this waiting to produce something, and it says, "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

That is a complete explanation. How wonderful that is! They are groaning, they are waiting. It is their greatest expectation, their earnest expectation, their longed for explanation that ultimately we will be done with this present evil age and there will be manifest fully with that only Son, those many sons that He has brought to glory. That is what this means.

I remember laboring in school when I was a young man, trying to read "Great Expectations," by the famous author, Charles Dickens. I did not read the whole book; I never could. Have any of

you actually read “Great “Expectations?” Oh, my goodness, poor soul. There was 480-500 plus pages. My Bible is only 1,510 pages. I determined to read this many times, but I never will read “Great Expectations.” Nevertheless, I remember that I actually got an A in English. Of course, Linda does not believe that, but I did. In every English course that I took, I got an A in it. Miracles do happen, and that is my only testimony about it.

So we had this book “Great Expectations” that we had to go through, and I do not know what year or grade it was, but I am sure we did not read all of it, but I can guarantee that I did not read it. I think I must have had the “CliffsNotes,” those wonderful little yellow books before you had the internet. You could seek in this book and act like you understood the whole subject and the theme, the beginning and the end. Then you could get up and give those dreadful oral book reports, acting like you had read the book.

However, it is a book that I think is a good illustration of what God is doing in us. There is Pip, who is an orphan, a very poor orphan, and he was in an awful orphanage, nothing luxurious about it. He suffered in this awful orphanage, but eventually, Pip was adopted. He was actually destined to be transformed into a gentleman of class; so you can see the illustration. Do not take it too far because it is a dreadful book in so many ways. But here is this orphan, who was totally lost, with no hope without God in the world. Then he was rescued out of that orphanage, and he was transformed into a person, a gentleman of class. Well, it did not work out so well, if you read the book. He found that his great expectation in the end was not so great.

But when we get to the end, in our great expectation we will see it is the most glorious thing that God has ever imagined. His only Son will finally be revealed in all of His glory with His many sons reflecting the glory of His only Son. That is our great expectation. Is it your great expectation? It should be. That is what this second part of groaning, the travail, the waiting, the longing for the manifestation of the sons of God is what we need to see.

When you look at verse 20, it speaks of the curse that God put upon the world after Adam and Eve sinned.

Verse 20-21: “For the creature has been made subject to vanity, not of its will, but by reason of him who has subjected the same, in hope that the creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.”

That is what happened in Genesis. You remember when Adam and Eve sinned, they were cursed, not only were they cursed, it says in chapter 3:14-19, (we will not read it,) that God Himself pronounced the curse: “Cursed be Satan; you shall crawl upon your belly; cursed be creation, and the ground would yield thorns and thistles, and cursed be man and woman, who were subjected to vanity, not of their own will, but because of their own actions.”

However, there is the greatest hope. That is why Paul begins to focus on this word “hope,” and now with the start of these verses, beginning with verse 20, you see hope a lot of times. The greatest hope comes out in Genesis, chapter 3, in the pronouncement of this curse. It says, “The seed of the woman, (meaning Christ, and this is where He is cursing Satan) shall come forth out of the travail of childbirth, and He (Christ) shall crush your (Satan’s) head, and you (Satan) shall crush His (Christ’s) heel.” The cross crushed Satan’s head, and Christ’s heel was crushed, that part

which touched the earth, as Christ walked on the earth. Christ crushed Satan's head, and the curse was gone, because as we read in Galatians 4:13, "He became a curse for us," and we are ones that are to be made sons of God. It is so clear about this hope.

Verse 22: "For we know that the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now. And not only that, but even we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, we also ourselves groan in ourselves, awaiting adoption, that is the redemption of our body." Now this word "adoption" was mentioned before in verse 15 which we have talked about.

Romans 8:15: "For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption whereby we cry 'Abba, Father.'"

In Brother Darby's notes, that word "adoption" in Greek is the same as "sonship." This is what the whole creation is longing for, is groaning for, is travailing for, that one day there will be the full manifestation of the sons of God. Do you understand how important this is? In his summary chapter on the gospel in chapter 8, Paul is saying, "This is what is happening in the world. This is the reason things are happening in the world. This is the reason for the suffering that has gone on from creation because God, in the end, is wanting something spectacular and full of glory, and that will be the full manifestation of the sons of God." I think this is wonderful and beyond anything that we can imagine!

Verse 24: "For we have been saved in hope; (this is our hope) but hope seen is not hope; for what any one sees, why does he also hope? But if what we see not we hope, we expect in patience." Now underline that word in your Bible; "We expect in patience."

This is the part that is written in the Word of God—their earnest expectation. Is this your earnest expectation to be a fully matured son of God, reflecting the glory that is only in the beloved One, Son of God? This is what we expect in patience.

This is our grand hope; this is our great expectation. Pip had nothing on us. As a matter of fact, he ended up in not such a good place in the end, disappointed. But we will never be disappointed. The glory that has been revealed to you and for me is certainly incomparable.

The Aid of the Holy Spirit (8:26,27)

To make sure this happens, God does some things, because if it depends on you, it will never happen. If it depends on me, you know it will not happen, and if you want any proof, go talk to Linda. If it depends on brothers, do you think it will happen? It must depend upon the Lord. The Lord did the unthinkable to this groaning creation and these groaning creatures. He put the indwelling Holy Spirit into those ones who has the charge to transform you into a son of God; not yourself. This is the most wonderful thing. What could be more wonderful than God, the Holy Spirit dwelling in you? What could be more wonderful! In Corinthians it says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." God the Holy Spirit, who is one of the triune God, is in you as the expert to take up the charge and transform you from an ugly caterpillar to a beautiful butterfly. I think butterflies are one of the most beautiful creatures on earth. I love all the people that have all these insect collections, and they stick needles in all of those butterflies. And who could have thought of those glorious colors

but God the Creator? So beautiful, so magnificent, so graceful! This is the word used when it talks about us being transformed (“metamorpho,” the Greek word). It is metamorphosis which means when the caterpillar and moth is transformed, eventually there is this beautiful butterfly. When you see it fly, when you see it light, you see something of the glory of creation. That is what God is doing. Who has been put in charge of this? It is God the Holy Spirit who dwells in you. Our problem is that we often ignore God the Holy Spirit; He is such a gentleman. If you stop listening to Him, He will stop talking to you. There is an awesome warning in the Bible: “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.” This is your way out. This is the way you will be transformed into the glory that is only in the Lord Jesus. That is why He has put Him in us. He knows that we are but dust; He knows our weaknesses. As a matter of fact, Psalm 103:14 says, “For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are but dust.” He knows our weaknesses, and the Holy Spirit is put within us to overcome those weaknesses.

Now there is a certain thing that is brought out. It says, “For we do not know what we should pray as is fitting,” right? That is the weakness, and that is pointed out, but that is not your only weakness. You have legions of weaknesses, but in Romans chapter 8 this is the weakness that is pointed out. So God the Father puts within you the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit to live there and to dwell there. If you read John’s epistles, particularly I John 1, you begin to discover how important it is to listen to the unction of the Holy Spirit. You will never be made a son, you will never be transformed, metamorpho (Greek), unless you begin to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. That is chapter 8, and that is the theme.

“Those who are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.” And that Holy Spirit, the abiding Holy Spirit, the indwelling Holy Spirit is making you a son, bringing you into the fulness of glory. He is our intercessor on earth. When you read these verses, it says in verse 26: “And in like manner, the Spirit joins also its help to our weakness, for we do not know what we should pray for as fitting, but the Spirit itself makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered.” Think of that! You have within you a divine Intercessor, living in you, interceding for you according to the will of God. He knows the will of God. He knows the end of God. He knows the purpose of God and all of His energies to be dedicated to transform you and me from what we were to what we shall be in the Lord Jesus. This is so beautiful.

This is a divine Intercessor, whom we can depend on. We can turn to that divine Intercessor, we can live by that divine Intercessor’s unctions and leaning, and if we do we will become sons, mature sons, grown-up sons.

He did not just give us a divine Intercessor on earth. In Hebrews 7:25 it is talking about the great high priest, and it says, “Wherefore, He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” You know that verse; you should know that verse. That was the high light when he went into this Old Testament illustration of a high priest and the function of a high priest who was human and failed, and he had to make offerings for even his own sins. But here we have in us not only a divine Intercessor on earth, we have a divine Intercessor in heaven, the Lord Jesus. Now do you think God could have done more? He put the Holy Spirit in you, and He is called the guarantee, the seal of the inheritance to bring you to that place that He is determined to bring you. Not only that, He Himself at the right hand of the Majesty on high is ever living and praying for you that you will be transformed from a

caterpillar, an ugly thing, hairy thing, to a butterfly. I do not like caterpillars, but I love butterflies. That is the transformation work He is doing. Praise the Lord for that! This is the aid of the Holy Spirit, the earthly Intercessor that lives in us. Then we have the Lord Jesus, a heavenly Intercessor that makes sure all of the groanings which we cannot utter will be brought to the Father. And do you think for a moment the Father will deny those requests? Impossible! Impossible! This gives me hope that you and I can be transformed from glory into glory. Why would God do such a thing? How did He come up with it? To me, it is spectacular. Oh, what glory that we can think of!

There is an author that I like, maybe you have never heard of, James Denny. He is an old Scottish theologian. He talked about this glory that we are being transformed into, and he called it a “reflective glory.” I like that. Some things he says on Jerusalem are tremendous. I used it in those messages, “Onward Towards Jerusalem.” The thing he said about glory was so spot on. He says that it is never your glory; it is never my glory; it is always His glory. The only illustration I can think of that comes close enough to this is in Genesis 2, that I said earlier was chapter 3 which was wrong. In chapter 2, when the Lord is doing His work of creation and the Spirit is hovering over it, he said, “Let us make two great lights. One to rule by day, the great light, and the small light, one to rule by night.” The great light is the sun; the small light is the moon. When you think of the moon, which is just a big rock, bigger than a big rock, but you get it. It has no glory in itself; it has no light in itself; it has nothing. If the sun were not there in the sky, the moon would never glow, but the moon glows. I love a full moon. Linda is so tired of me saying this. Every time there is a full moon, and I look out in the yard, and it is bright with light. And I said, “Did you see the full moon?” “Yes, Kenny, I saw the full moon; you mention it every time.” It shines and lightens the earth, but it is not its glory; it is reflective glory. Moon light is reflective sun light. Now I am getting to the point, which is Son. It will never be our glory. We make a mistake. It is manifested glory indeed, but it is glory that comes from the only begotten Son of God and shines out through us as we are transformed from glory to glory by the Spirit beholding the glory of the Lord (see 11 Corinthians 3:18). That is from suffering to glory. I think that is beautiful. It is something we need to see.

The Great Purpose (18:28-30)

In verses 28-30 we discover a great secret. It says in the verses preceding it: Verse 26: “We do not know how to pray as we ought,” speaking of the Holy Spirit. In verse 23 it says, “We ourselves groan in ourselves, awaiting adoption,” or being manifested as sons of God. You know, brothers and sisters, God hears the groanings of His people, and He will never neglect the groanings of His people. I think of Exodus, that beautiful book, which is a roadmap for us in the Old Testament, a living illustration of what will happen to us. He calls a people, the children of Israel, out of bondage. He delivers them with a great deliverance, and they were under terrific difficulties under Pharaoh and the children of Egypt. It says in Exodus 6:5 which is God’s response to them: “And I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians have forced to serve, and I remembered my covenant.” Isn’t that beautiful?

He hears our groanings; He acts upon our groanings. He determines that which He has always purposed will come to pass. I think that is more than wonderful.

In verse 26: "For we do not know what we should pray for as is fitting." That is when God gives us that Intercessor, that earthly Intercessor now in us. We have an earthly Intercessor.

Verse 28: Notice these phrases. "But we do know." Isn't that beautiful? In other words, verse 26 says, "We do not know." We would be ignorant if left to ourselves, but the Holy Spirit is within us. Then, when it comes to verse 28 it says, "We do know." Isn't that beautiful? "But we do know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

That is such a beautiful verse. This is God's great purpose. Often I think we have wrongly used that verse when we encourage someone who may not know the Lord. But I do not have a problem with you using it when trying to encourage someone to come to the Lord. I am all for that.

But we say, "You do know that all things work together for good." Now this is a specific promise or assurance that is reserved not for the people of the world, but for the people of God who are being transformed into sons. It has two conditions, "to those who love God." Until we were saved, we did not love God; we loved ourselves. "and to those who are called according to purpose." I think we should read all of this verse if we read it at all. But here is God's great purpose. For those of us that are called to be sons, for those of us who are called according to this highest purpose that has ever been imagined, the purpose of all eternity, sons and many sons, everything works together for good. I think that makes this verse beautiful. May the Lord help us to know that.

I remember Oswald Chambers, who only lived until he was forty-three, a very short life, but he did a great work. One of his greatest works is his devotional, "My Utmost For His Highest." I cannot think of a more beautiful phrase, or that we as the people of God are being sanctified and made sons. We have that utterance of groaning in our heart, and we would say, "My Utmost For His Highest." There is nothing I could spend and be spent on more important than that single great ambition, that great expectation.

I remember as a young engineer struggling in my career being given two books by Oswald Chambers, all of his works put together in quotes. A dear brother in the Lord came to our home and presented me with these two treasures. I will never forget as I started reading through them he made a statement that I will never forget. He said, "God engineers our circumstances." He calculates it; it is a precise thing on His part. It is something that is intended to present that final design He is looking for. I think we should understand that.

Verses 29-30 tell us what He will do. Verse 28 is His purpose; He has purposed a great purpose. Do you think it will come to pass? I do not think you need to question that; it is absolutely certain. Verses 29 and 30 tells us in addition. This was Paul's encouragement in his summary not only what God has purposed but what God will do, and there are five things which he says God will do.

Verses 29-30: "For whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren. But whom he has predestinated, these he has also called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified, but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified." Isn't that beautiful?

It is not only what He purposes, but to give us the assurance that our destiny in glory is certain, He said, "I purposed this great purpose, and I determined to do these great things." How marvelous it is! He has known us from the foundation of the world, (see Ephesians 1:4). Before the world ever was, he foreknew us. Isn't that beautiful! Before you were thought of, before you were conceived He knew you.

Not only does He do that, but He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. This was His eternal intention. Now do you think with that predestination it will not happen. I hardly think so. I think it is certain that it will happen.

"For whom he has predestinated, those he has also called." You remember what Paul said in Romans 1:1: "Paul, called apostle." Verse 6 is speaking of those in the church at Rome: "Whom also ye are the called of Jesus Christ." You remember what the name of the church is, the assembly? It means, "The called out ones gathered together," and the reason they are gathered together is that they may be manifest in the end, sons of God reflecting the glory of the only begotten Son.

But he said something else. "Those he has called, he has justified." We looked at the first five chapters that talk about our justification. Not only did He purpose it, but He will do it. And not only did He call you, foreknow you, predestinate you, but He justified you, and God sees you in Christ as righteous. He does not see you as righteous; He sees you in Christ as righteous. Christ our righteousness, (see I Corinthians 1: 30-31). But He did more than that. Not only did He justify us, and it is amazing to me that he leaves out sanctified here. I wish I could counsel Paul. Maybe one day I will say foolishly, "Why didn't you say in another verse, "He who is justified, he sanctifies" because if you read the last phrase, "but whom He has justified, these also He has glorified." To God the work is done; to us it is not done. God sees it complete. He sees the work of sanctification fully done. We do not see it that way because we are being made sons. But He sees it that way; He is certain of it. So you notice that Paul put it in the past tense. He did not say, "will be glorified." It is remarkable to me how the Holy Spirit is very careful with the words that He gave to the Apostle Paul. "These also He has glorified." Isn't that beautiful? Brothers and sisters, this is sonship from suffering to glory. Can there be a higher purpose for mankind? Can there be a glory that could ever compare to this glory that we will manifest fully who the Son of God is through that reflective glory. This purpose can never fail. This purpose is an absolute certainty. This purpose has been purposed by God, and then he adds at the end of it five things He will do to insure that it is done. And because of that, in the end, we will be many sons conformed to the image of the only Son.

Conclusion

How we need to bow before Him because this was written for us. How we need to worship the Lord that these words were left for us, that the Apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit penned these things for us. Is our hope uncertain? Never! Is our glory questionable? No, because He has purposed it! And He said, "I will do it," and He says it in the past tense. That is what we should do, bow in worship to this One who is doing a work in us to sanctify us or to make us sons.

Let's pray:

Lord, I think sometimes these things are too hard to explain, but I am so thankful they are true. Where would we be without Your Word? Where would we be without this hope? We do not see it manifest yet, but we see the One who purposed it. We see the One who planned it. We see the One who has given every aid so it would be accomplished, and in the end we see the One that does it and we rejoice. And we groan in travail until that day fully comes, and Your Father has His only Son and His many sons. Bless the name of the Lord forever. Amen.

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