

Hope in the Midst of Suffering

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. (Romans 8:18)

As we transition into Romans 8:18-25, note how frequently the pronouns “us,” “we,” and “our” are implemented. These pronouns are major players when pursuing proper definitions of terms such as “foreknew,” “predestined,” “called,” “justified,” and “glorified” found in Romans 8:27-30.

Paul’s maturity allowed him to perceive his “sufferings” as unworthy “to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). Abundant “glory” will “be revealed to” the New Testament believer as a result of being part of Christ’s body and the Father’s family. When God’s presence is manifested, glory is exhibited. In fact, glory can be defined as “the physical manifestation of God’s presence.” This truth is exemplified vividly in Exodus 3 (God’s glory was in the “burning...bush”) and Exodus 20 (God’s glory descended on Mount Sinai in the form of “thunder,” “lightning,” “the sound of a trumpet,” “smoke,” and a “thick cloud.”) In each case, man was awestruck by His presence due to His impeccable nature and character! To state it differently, God is so perfect that glory manifests itself when He appears (as in the tabernacle in Exodus 40:34-38 and later in the temple in 1Kings 8:11 and 2Chronicles 5:14). Jesus is the “glory” of “the Father” (John 1:14) and lives “in” us (Colossians 1:27), meaning that His “glory” is “revealed to us” (Romans 8:18) as we pursue His heart! How exciting!

The King James’ rendering of this passage differs from the NASB, for it communicates that much “glory” will “be revealed in us” (the NASB uses “to us”).

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. (Romans 8:18 KJV)

No problem, for this interpretation also agrees with the full counsel of God’s Word. In fact, when we return as Christ’s Bride (and body) at His Second Coming (Revelation 19:11-14), having previously received our glorified bodies (mentioned in 1Corinthians 15:50-55) at the Rapture of the church, we will bring much “glory” to the Father. Can we even begin to imagine the glory manifested when Jesus returns as the glorified Son with His glorified body, the church? Also, the Second Coming of Christ will occur when the earth is experiencing devastating darkness unique to that day alone:

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:29-30)

We can only imagine the thrill of returning with Him in this magnificent state of glory—to be witnessed by every individual inhabiting the earth, believers and unbelievers alike!

Whether Paul is addressing the “*glory that is to be revealed to us*” (Romans 8:18 NASB) or “*the glory which shall be revealed in us* (Romans 8:18 KJV), his statement is extraordinary considering the extreme persecution he encountered while preaching the gospel. Hence, 2Corinthians 11 and 12 are required reading when our difficulties seem overwhelming. 2Corinthians 4:12 is required reading as well, for Paul states:

So death works in us, but life in you. (2Corinthias 4:12)

Paul taught that the suffering he bore worked “*life*” in his readers. They were significantly encouraged, mesmerized in fact, by the grace Jesus supplied in the midst of Paul’s pain. What hope he possessed (Romans 8:18)! In fact, his life was explained in terms of Jesus alone. Paul was severely persecuted, but he considered his “*sufferings*” as nothing compared to “*the glory*” that would follow (Romans 8:18), as evidenced by 2Corinthians 4:17-18:

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2Corinthians 4:17-18)

And yes, this “*glory*” that Paul and all church saints possess will be fully manifested at Jesus’ Second Coming! Truly, what a magnificent day that will be!

Paul had a superb example to follow, having witnessed Stephen’s death (read Acts 7:54-60). God’s grace exemplified through Stephen’s bold (yet loving) stance for the gospel greatly impacted “*Saul*” (Acts 7:58), who would later be known as Paul. Stephen, in fact, was a visible expression of Hebrews 12:3:

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:3)

Stephen, as a result of considering Jesus in the midst of his brutal treatment, “*endured*” (like Moses), “*as seeing Him who is unseen*”:

By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. (Hebrews 11:27)

Paul had to be forever changed through Stephen’s powerful witness.

The Creation Waits

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. (Romans 8:19)

“Creation” is waiting “*eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.*” Therefore, “creation” knows about Jesus’ Second Coming! How it possesses this capability is difficult to fathom. We do know, however, that the “*invisible attributes*” of God, “*His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made*” (Romans 1:20). So somehow, through some means, “creation” knows that Jesus will return. From the day that Adam sinned, “creation” has lived in agonizing pain. Hence, the “creation” longs for the Second Coming, when Christ returns with His body (the church). It longs due to the curse it received through Adam’s disobedience.

The Creation Possesses Hope

For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope (Romans 8:20)

God’s curse upon creation was not administered void of “*hope.*” The reason for this “*hope*” is given in Romans 8:21:

that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:21)

“Creation” lives in hope because a day is coming when it will be released from its present “*slavery to corruption*” (Romans 8:21). Yes, “*corruption*” (stemming from sin) brings about “*slavery*” (bondage). In fact, Isaiah 30:23-26, Isaiah 35:1-2, and Ezekiel 36:28-38 (only a few of the many verses that could have been cited) describe the degree to which creation will be blessed (and “*set free*”) when Christ returns with His bride, the church, at His Second Coming.

The phrase, “*the freedom of the glory of the children of God*” (Romans 8:21), brings amazing comfort. God, who possesses “*glory,*” is totally free. He is unrestricted by sin and its resulting corruption due to His holiness. Thus, when He appears, “*glory*” is manifested. Therefore Jesus, who is God (Hebrews 1:8), and the “*glory of the...Father*” (John 1:14), is not only “*free,*” but capable of giving all who repent and believe while depraved this same freedom:

“If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. (John 8:36)

Because the greatest freedom experienced by man is found in Christ, we can walk in that same freedom due to living “*in Christ*” (2Corinthians 5:17), the “*glory as of the only begotten from the Father*” (John 1:14). For this reason Paul states:

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)

We are free indeed! However, if we desire to walk in God's power, this "freedom" must never be used as "an opportunity for the flesh":

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
(Galatians 5:13)

The Creation Groans

For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. (Romans 8:22)

"...*the whole creation groans and suffers.*" In fact, it "*suffers the pains of childbirth*"! Having witnessed this pain firsthand (when Kim birthed our son Benjamin), I can't imagine living in such discomfort (flat-out agony) one hundred percent of the time. Yet, the creation endures this agony every second of the day. Although presently cursed, the creation remains an incredible invention of God. For instance, the earth is tilted 23 degrees in respect to its orbit. Should it tilt just one degree either side of this mark, we would either (1) die due to frigid temperatures or (2) be consumed by the sun's heat. Truly, God is an amazing architect.

The pronoun "we" plays a major role in how verses 26-30 are to be interpreted!

We Groan

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. (Romans 8:23)

We, as New Testament believers, "groan" along with creation. We who possess "*the first fruits of the Spirit*" (God's divine engagement ring) "groan" because we are "*waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.*" In other words, we "groan" because we live in bodies that will die, bodies housing the power of sin. We learned earlier that the new self (the new man—the real us—our soul and spirit) is already redeemed, perfect, holy, blameless, and more. Our bodies are not yet redeemed, for they are mortal and will one day return to dust! Think about this truth for a moment. At the point of physical death, our brains will die, and our ungodly habit patterns will become extinct. Only then will the power of sin cease sending thoughts into our minds, thoughts that sometimes deceive us into believing that error is truth. Thus, only after our physical bodies cease operating will we be perfected in our behavior.

Paul taught that the phrase, "*our adoption as sons*" (Romans 8:23), points to "*the redemption of our body.*"

"...waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." (Romans 8:23)

This truth proves that the day we receive our glorified, immortal bodies will be the day we are adopted in the fullest sense. We will then be holy, perfect, and blameless, in spirit, soul, and body—not just in spirit and soul as in the present. All church saints, the church having begun in Acts 2, will receive their glorified bodies (and the “*adoption as sons*”) at the Rapture of the church (1Thessalonians 4:13-17). Also, the phrase, “*adoption as sons*” (Romans 8:23), is a major player in properly defining “*predestined*” in Romans 8:29-30!

Some theologians argue that “*our adoption as sons*” occurred when we were justified/saved. The verse cited for support is Galatians 4:5:

in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:5)

This argument seems valid at surface level. Yet, when studied in depth, we find that “*receive*” is in the subjunctive mood in the Greek—making it impossible to pinpoint the timing of “*the adoption as sons*” using this passage alone. However, Romans 8:23 reveals the timing as being when we receive our glorified bodies—totally negating the idea that “*the adoption as sons*” occurs at justification/salvation.

Don’t misunderstand. We became “*sons*” of God at the point of justification/salvation:

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:6-7)