

Devotional/Discussion Notes & Questions

ROMANS 8: 18-25 Future Glory

[Notes partly based on Tim Keller]

Sufferings. Previously (8:12-17) we ended by seeing the wonderful privileges we have as sons of God, including a *glorious inheritance* as co-heirs with Christ. But there was also a reminder that as brothers and sisters of Christ we will 'share in his sufferings' (v.17) as we live for him and speak of him. This raises the question...

Is it really worth it? *Is the inheritance we've been given worth the hardship and heartache of living as a child of God in this life?* Some would answer 'no'; they profess faith as Christians, but later fall away. But Paul answers...

Yes it is! In fact 'our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the *glory* that will be revealed in us' (v18).

- *If you know where you are heading in the future you won't even entertain the idea that your current problems and pain aren't worth it.*

What is this glorious inheritance we are heading for?

(v.19). 'The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed'.

- *"There is a glory coming that will be so blindingly powerful that when it falls upon us it will envelope the whole created order and glorify it along with us – we will bring nature into a renewed, restored, redeemed reality. Our sonship will be publicly revealed, and we will be finally and fully 'conformed to the likeness of the Son (v.29) – perfectly holy as Christ, and thus as dazzlingly beautiful as he is. That is what glory is."* [Keller]

This is why we do not yet enjoy this glory. The human race fell into sin with Adam, and nature, the created order, shared somehow in that fall. Nature is 'frustrated' (v.20); it is not what it was created to be, but God will restore it, and so it waits 'in eager expectation' (v.19).

- (v.21). For now, creation is in 'bondage to decay'. There is pain and suffering (v.22), but this will not last... Creation will be liberated and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (v.21). Instead of decay there will be newness and strength and beauty. Instead of pain there will be only joy.

- The future for creation is glorious, and it is the same future that God's children are looking forward to! *So even creation urges us to say 'Yes, these present sufferings are worth it!'*

Present pain and future glory explain why the Christian will 'groan inwardly' even as we 'wait eagerly' (v.23), just as creation does. Creation being in childbirth (v.22) is the best picture of this.

- (v.23). We already have the 'firstfruits of the Spirit', the down-payment and pledge of our final redemption: the Holy Spirit working in us making us more like Christ. But one day we will receive our 'adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies' i.e. the fullness of our identity and status as sons of God.

- (v.24,25). We do not yet have it all, but we can look forward knowing that **all our best days lie ahead of us**, and that one day **all our painful days will lie behind us**. We wait eagerly but also patiently knowing that the pain will pass and that this life is not all there is. We will share in his glory!

Salvation is past, present and future. It is **past**, because we *were* saved the moment we believed in Jesus Christ as saviour; it is **present** because we *are being* saved day by day as we're being made more holy; but it is also **future** as we've not fully received the blessings and benefits of salvation that will be ours in the glory to come.

Q: How are you growing and becoming more like Christ? How do you need to pray to become more like him?

Q: How will you keep in mind the glory you are heading to? How will it transform your view of your life?

Romans 8: 26-27 The Holy Spirit Helps Us

[Notes partly based on Tim Keller]

Foundations for Confidence

Previously (8:18-25)... we saw how as Christians we have a great hope for the future, a glorious inheritance as co-heirs with Christ. This hope for the future is a foundation for us enabling us to face each day, and all it brings, with confidence.

In these next verses Paul points us to two more foundation stones:

- The work of the Spirit when we don't know how to pray (v.26,27); and
- The work of the sovereign God in all the circumstances of our lives (v.28-30 – see next section).

These three foundation stones – our **future hope**, **the Spirit's help**, and **God's work in everything** – enable Christians to face the sufferings and temptations of life with overwhelming confidence and a deep assurance that it is all more than worthwhile.

How the Holy Spirit helps us

v.26. *'In the same way, the Spirit helps us...'*... meaning, just as our hope helps us (v.23-25), so does the Holy Spirit. **He helps us in our praying...**

There are times when we are feeling weak and *'we do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us...'* (v.26).

For example: we might be trying to pray about a very difficult situation, or when we're facing deep personal loss, or wrestling with a life-changing decision, or confronting our own failures and flaws...

... when we are trying to pray but don't know how, or can't find the words, the Holy Spirit helps us to pray in line with God's will; and he himself prays for us, and on our behalf, from within our hearts to the Father.

- **So we should always pray**, because we have the Holy Spirit within us to help and to pray on our behalf.

[Although not the focus of these verses, the Holy Spirit also offers us a special gift, the Gift of Tongues (or 'Heavenly Languages') which is a way of praising God and praying to him without needing words. We can receive this and other wonderful gifts of the Spirit when Jesus baptises us in the Holy Spirit. Paul refers to this gift in its personal or public use in e.g. 1 Corinthians 14:2,5 and Ephesians 6:18. (For Baptism in the Spirit see e.g. John 1:33, John 7:37-39, Acts 1:4,5, Acts 2:38,39).]

The Whole Trinity is involved

v.27. *'The Father searches our hearts'* hearing the groans beneath our words, seeing where our heart lies and knowing the motives behind our request, and...

v.27. *'The Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will'*. The Spirit himself prays for us, and also on our behalf, from within our hearts (though maybe unheard) to the Father. And...

v.34. **'Christ Jesus ... is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us'**. He is defending us from all charges that might be brought against us, giving us confidence in approaching and praying to our Father.

- **Even if it sometimes feels difficult, we can always pray because we always have the help we need!**

Q: Have you experienced feeling too weak to pray, or unable to find the words? How does it encourage you to know that the Spirit intercedes for you and prays on your behalf?

Romans 8: 28-30 God Works for Our Good

[Notes partly based on Tim Keller]

The foundations we have for facing each day with full confidence, are:

- Our future hope (8:18-25)
- The Holy Spirit helping us to pray (8:26,27), and also now...
- God's work in all the circumstances of our lives (v.28-30)...

'In all things God works for the good of those who love him...' (v.28)

This promise transforms the way we look at life.

- It leads us to gratitude and joy, even for the 'routine' good things in life. Note: It does not say 'things' work together for good by themselves. Only *God* makes the factors of life turn to our good. We know that the world, and life, can be full of pain and tragedy, but we can still maintain a positive view because God is in charge.
- It removes fear and anxiety when life seems to 'go wrong'. We know we are not in the grip of blind chance or fate, but in the hands of our Father who rules the universe and works *in all things*. We can look at life's troubles and difficulties – even suffering – as part of God's loving purpose for us, moulding and changing us.
- 'In *all things*' gives us confidence that even our sin and failure cannot ruin God's good purposes for us.

But the promise is only for

'...those who love him who have been called according to his purpose' (v.28) i.e. Christians

- To 'love him' is more than just to believe in him. It is to set our heart on God so that in all we do we determine to please him. Loving him for who he is in himself is a commitment that makes us endure adversity. If we merely 'believe' in him we may bail out when suffering comes.
- 'Called according to his purpose' does not mean everyone who has heard the gospel invitation, but those whom God has brought into relationship with himself.

What is the 'good' that God is working for?

It is not that things will work out in some general abstract sense; we need to read on to v.29:

'For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.' (v.29)

- God is working in all our circumstances of life to make us like Jesus. Everything that happens to us is working out for that purpose. It's all about character change, making us as loving, noble, true, wise, strong, good, joyful and kind as Jesus is.
- God is conforming us, meaning he has a master design – his Son – and now every circumstance – 'all things' – is designed to shape, polish, melt, smooth, sculpt us into that master design to be like Christ. It is not a superficial thing but a total remake from the inside out, a likeness of essence. (See 2 Corinthians 3:18).
- When we were born again we received God's 'DNA', his very nature (2 Peter 1:4). Now God is working from that and through life's circumstances shaping us into brothers and sisters of Christ, the family resemblance.

'And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified' (v.30). This is what God has done to conform us to the likeness of his Son:

- He **foreknew** us (v.29) – God set his love on us before the beginning of time! (See also Ephesians 1:4,11).
- He **predestined** us – God planned a glorious destination for us: to be with him in glory, and to be like Christ.

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[CONTINUATION OF 8:28-30]

- He **called** us and **justified** us – God works out his plan from eternity here in time: he brought us into relationship with himself, and counts us legally righteous and blameless because of the work of Christ.
- He **glorified** us – it is certain, as if already done. God completes the plan in eternity. (See notes on 8:18-25). (v.30). This is a glorious, unbreakable chain: If we love God, we are called; and if we are called, then we are fore-loved, predestined, justified, and soon to be glorified. This is wonderful!

Q: God is working in all our circumstances of life to make us like Jesus. Is there a way in which you are seeking to change your circumstances, where you need instead to seek to change your heart's attitude toward them?

Q: How has looking at the unbreakable 'chain' of verse 30 thrilled you today?

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Romans 8: 31-34 Our Security in Christ – God is For Us!

[Notes partly based on Tim Keller]

(v.31). 'What then shall we say in response to this?' – in response to the wonderful truths in verses 28-30 (see previous section)...? That...

- 'In all things God works for the good of those who love him...'
- He **foreknew** us. • He **predestined** us.
- He **called** us and **justified** us. • He **glorified** us.

Here in the following answers is the response and attitude we should have in view of the truths in those verses 28-30. We can have absolute certainty that **GOD IS FOR US...**

v.31: 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' If the God who has planned our glory is all-powerful, why are we afraid of any opposition at all?

v.32: 'He who did not spare his own Son... how will he not also... give us all things?' If the God who has planned our glory is willing to give up his most precious possession – his Son – why worry about our needs?

v.33: 'Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.' If the God who has planned our glory has declared us righteous, why ever feel guilty or unforgiven?

v.34: 'Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died... who was raised... is also interceding for us'. If Christ who lived a perfect life and died as a perfect sacrifice for our sin is standing before the Father on our behalf, why ever feel guilty or unforgiven?

(See also the next section notes on verses 35-39).

In these verses 31-34 Paul has reminded us that **God is for us...**

- In giving his Son, he has at the same time secured for us all that we need to get through this life and attain final salvation and the glory he has planned and prepared for us.
- Noone is able to successfully bring any charge against us, to cause us to be condemned. For it is God who has chosen us and justified us, and his own Son who answers any charge brought against us.

Q: If you are feeling guilty what do you need to do?

Q: If you are feeling condemned what is the answer?

[NEXT SECTION – SEE NEXT PAGE]

Romans 8: 35-39 Our Security in Christ – Nothing Can Separate Us from His Love

[Notes partly based on Tim Keller]

Following on from verses 31-34, and the absolute certainty we can have that **God is for us**, Paul goes on to describe our security in the love of Christ.

v.35: *'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?'*

- This is the central question of the Christian life – the one that prompts all our doubts and worries and tensions: ***Is there anyone or anything that can separate me from Christ's love for me? ...***

... There are many things that could seem to. Trouble, hardship and persecution come to all Christians. Famine, nakedness, danger and sword come to many. The experience of God's people through the ages has very often been – in the words of Psalm 44:22 quoted by Paul here in verse 36 – to face death daily. There are many obstacles and much opposition, and surely any one of them could detach us from Christ's love?

No says Paul – and in fact even in these worst of circumstances 'we are more than conquerors'. None can break the chain of verse 30: *'Those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified'*.

- Christians triumph through and over the worst that life brings. Why? Because God does not lose any of 'those he foreknew'. God is always working for the good of those who love him. He is in loving sovereign control of every aspect of human history.

So we, like Paul, can be convinced (v.38) that **nothing** 'will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (v.39). That is...

v.38: • Nothing in **human experience** – 'neither death nor life'. • Nothing in **the spiritual realm** – 'neither angels nor demons'. • Nothing in **time** – 'neither the present nor the future'. • Nothing that **opposes God's people** – 'any powers'.

v.39: • Nothing in **space** – 'neither height nor depth'. • Nothing **'in all creation'**...

Nothing! Nothing can separate us from Christ's love. Why? Because God loves us simply because of his choice, not because of anything in us (which may change), nor anything around us (which may change). He loves us because he loves us.

[Keller] "Paul is stating firmly that we must face life – not only troubles but even our own sin – with a towering infallible confidence! The Almighty God of the universe has purposed to make us perfectly holy and gloriously happy (these two things are inseparably linked), and literally nothing can thwart God's purpose for us!"

We are saved totally by grace and are completely safe to face life without fear.

"With 'logic on fire' Paul is saying: *Think! Are you afraid (v.31)? You aren't thinking! Are you worried (v.32)? You aren't thinking! Are you feeling guilty (v.33)? You aren't thinking! See the logic of free grace and justification!*

"These aren't dry doctrines; these are life itself... And if you are not living with overwhelming assurance and power, you haven't really fully understood them. The remedy is to read, re-read, deeply ponder and learn to live out of the truths of verses 18-30." [Keller]

Q: How has your reading today motivated you to holiness and Christ-likeness?

Q: How do you need the truth that nothing can separate you from God's love, to comfort you today?