

We left off last time in chapter 8, verse 18 – lets read 8:18-25

Vs. 18-25 are often cited under the heading “The Glorious Future”. In these verses Paul tells us, it is a wonderful thing to be part of God’s family. To be (vs 17), “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ”, we can now approach God without fear, we can say (vs. 15) – “Abba Father”, which means “daddy”. This was undoubtedly shocking to all Jews who lived partly in fear of God because of His holiness and their knowing their sinfulness.

8:18-19 – Paul reminds us that life in this world is difficult. We will suffer in our earthly existence and pilgrimage. There is no escaping this for any of us. But then Paul tells us – “the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing to the glory that awaits us and will be revealed to us”. In Vs. 19-27 – there is a 3 fold testimony to the future transfiguration that is now unfolding in history.

1. Vs. 19-22 – the sighing of creation
2. Vs. 23-25 – the yearning hope of Christians themselves
3. Vs. 26-27 – the intercession of the Holy Spirit

Paul is saying that suffering is the path we must walk until we move through it to blessings and glory. But as suffering is a part of our lives, it is glory that awaits us and unlike our experience of suffering, the glory to be revealed will last for all eternity. These words, which contrast suffering with glory must have been especially meaningful to the hearers. The members of the early church were being put to death for their faith. Paul says that the sufferings are “not worth comparing” to the glory to come.

Vs. 21 – Paul says the creation itself will be set free from the affect mankind’s sin has on it.

Vs. 22 – The whole creation is groaning in travail until now. The birth pangs of the Messianic Age have come. A new world is being birthed in Christ.

Vs. 23 – Paul says – not only will the creation emerge without sin, fresh and new – we ourselves will each become a new creation, by the work of the Holy Spirit. We await our own adoption as sons (and daughters) and the redemption of our bodies.

Vs. 24 – For in this hope we are saved. Salvation comes of course by faith in Christ, but our death will be the event that ushers in that salvation. And so Paul is pointing us to the future. So we live with hope, for that day. We look forward with hope for the full realization of what Christ has done for us. Paul says: “hope that is seen is not hope, because it has been realized” Hope by definition points to a future event. The fullness of God’s glory awaits us down the road, after we die.

Vs. 25 – So we must wait with patience for that which as of now we do not see. The author of Hebrews perhaps said best what Paul is saying. Read Hebrews 11:1 – “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”.

Vs. 26-27 deal with the Holy Spirits intervention.

Vs. 26 – The H. S. helps us in our weakness for we do not know how to pray. The Holy Spirit helps and gives us aid. Our weakness is not a sin. It reflects our human condition. Human nature is weak. No wonder we don’t really know how to pray, or what to pray for. The Holy Spirit intercedes and prays for us – “with sighs too deep for words”. The Holy Spirit takes our inadequate prayers and makes them adequate.

Vs. 27 – Paul says that God – who alone searches the hearts of men, knows the mind of the Holy Spirit, which is interceding for us, because our prayers are inadequate. So Paul is saying in effect, take heart my children, all you who struggle with your prayer life. The Holy Spirit is helping lift your thoughts to God, interceding on our behalf. This for me is very comforting to know.

Vs. 28-30 – God’s purpose is stated.

These are three remarkable and important verses. In these verses Paul now turns to the way the purposes of God are worked out in the lives of believers. They are a bit complicated and difficult to fully understand and are the cause of theological debate about the theological idea of predestination. Paul begins these verses with a powerful sense of conviction about the truth of them.

Vs 28 - He begins: “We know that”. So, Paul thinks what He is about to say is certain, without question. What do we know? “In everything God works for good with those who live Him and are called according to His purpose.”

God doesn’t dictate what happens to us in life, but Paul contends He is present in all that happens to us in life. God is with us in our moments of suffering, in our moments of tragedy. He is not pulling the strings of our life events and causing them to happen. So, **he didn’t cause** your spouse to die, but He is there with you in that tragedy. And He is working for some kind of good to come out of your moments of brokenness. He is with you always, even to the end of the age. If you love God, Paul says, you have been called according to his purpose.

Vs 29 – “Those whom he foreknew” This takes down the path of reflecting on the subject of “election” or “predestination”. Paul breaks it down this way:

1. Those he foreknew (God is omniscient) – He does not cause what happens to us in life, but He knows what will happen in our lives. We make our own choices – free will.
2. Those who choose to follow Christ - He predestined to be conformed to the image of His son – he wants us to be more Christ like every day – sanctification.
3. Those whom he predestined to be formed in the image of His Son, he called.
4. Those whom he called, he justified (justification)
5. And those whom he justified He will glorify (glorification)

Chapter 8 – Vs. 31-39 – are often called “The Christians Triumph Song” - while it cannot quite be determined these verses are an early hymn of the church many scholars allude to them. They are often read at funerals in the Episcopal and Anglican tradition, and when you read them you can easily see why they might be thought to be a hymn of the early church, especially as their fellow family members and friends who are believers were being put to death as martyrs for their faith. Read ch 8 Vs 31-39.

We will pick it up with chapter 9 next time.