

Romans: Chapter Eight (2)

Romans 5.12-8.39: SANCTIFICATION (Righteousness Realised)

The Pledge of the Spirit and Inheritance (8.18-25)

These verses expand the glory of the inheritance which is ours as sons of God. **v.18:** Paul's considered and calculated conviction was that the sufferings of the present season (and the height of Nero's persecution was only seven years hence), as painful as they may be, are not comparable or equal in weight to the glory of the life to come (2 Corinthians 4.17). **MacDonald:** *Whenever Paul describes the coming glory, his words seem to bend under the weight of the idea (glory is derived from the Hebrew word to be heavy). If we could only appreciate the glory that is to be ours, we could count the sufferings along the way as trivial!* This glory will be revealed 'in' (eis) or 'towards' and 'upon' us suggesting this glory already exists and will apprehend and change us (see v.29). **v.19:** Paul heightens the weight of this glory by declaring that even 'creation' is 'eagerly expecting' or 'straining their necks on tiptoe' to see the manifestation of that glory in the sons of God. The 'manifestation' refers to the Lord's appearing in glory (not the rapture), at which we will be manifested with Him. **v.20:** It was at the fall of man and entrance of sin that creation was subjected to 'vanity' by God. 'Vanity' describes an existence of disappointment, frustration or failing to attain a purpose (cf. Ecclesiastes 1.2). Because of sin, creation is not what God intended it to be (Genesis 3.17-19). This vanity was a necessity for there could not be a fallen head over an unfallen creation. Praise God, He subjected it in hope, i.e. this condition is not permanent.

v.21: At the manifestation, the created world will be delivered from its bondage of corruption. Why must it wait for this event? **Leckie:** *Creation was delivered into its present bondage of corruption by the fall of man. So it will require man to be manifested to creation again, having been completely redeemed, to release it (liberty) from the bondage of corruption.* **v.22:** The whole inanimate and animate creation groans and suffers together, knowing the vanity to which it has been subjected. **Walter Scott:** *The whole song of creation is in a minor key, groaning of the sea, sighing of the wind, bleating of the sheep, lowing of the cattle.* 'Travailing in pain' is literally 'labour pains' which anticipate the coming glory of liberation (see Isaiah 11.6-10, 35.1; Amos 9.13-15). **v.23:** Believers also groan (not moan) for although our spirits are presently redeemed and fit for heaven, our bodies are not (Philippians 3.21). They still belong to a fallen creation and are therefore not immune from illness and decay. We are waiting for release into the fullness of our 'adoption' or sonship at the rapture. The Spirit's presence within is the 'firstfruit' or pledge that the rest of the vast inheritance which is ours in Christ will follow. **vv.24-25:** Believers were saved in hope, that is, the gospel promises future blessings which are yet to be realised in our experience. **MacDonald:** *From the outset we looked forward to full and final deliverance from sin, suffering, disease, and death. If we had already received these blessings, we wouldn't be hoping for them.* For these things we 'patiently' and 'eagerly wait' (see v.19, 23). **Stott:** *We are to wait neither so eagerly that we lose our patience, nor so patiently that we lose our expectation, but eagerly and patiently together.*

The Promise of the Spirit and Intercession (8.26-27)

vv.26-27: 'Likewise' or 'in the same way' could be referring to v.25, i.e. as *hope* sustains us in the Christian life, so too does the Holy Spirit. He helps our 'infirmity' (singular) in prayer as we endure the burden of life in an unredeemed body (cf. Acts 7.34). To 'help' denotes 'giving assistance by sharing a burden' (Vine, cf. Luke 11.40). Our apprehension of the will of God is far from perfect, so at times we simply do not know what is best to pray in relation to ourselves or others (cf. 2 Corinthians 12.8-9). **Barclay:** *We cannot pray aright because in any given situation we do not know what is best for us. God is often in the position of parents who have to refuse their children's requests because the parents know what is good for them far better than the children themselves. For our infirmities we have an intercessor above on the throne (Hebrews 4.14-15); for our infirmity we have an intercessor below within the heart.* His intercession is accompanied by groanings 'which cannot be uttered' (wordless). It is probably not that the Holy Spirit groans, but He identifies with **our** groans and interprets and presents them before God on our behalf, and in accordance with His will.

The Eternal Purpose of God (8.28-30)

v.28: 'But' (*de*), even though we do not know what to pray for as we ought, we do know that God is working 'all things' according to His eternal purpose. 'All things' are not the general day to day circumstances of life. Note that v.29 begins with the word 'for' or 'because' as it is explanatory of v.28. God has beautifully blended together *foreknowledge* and *predestination* (belonging to the past); *calling* and *justification* (belonging to the present) and *glorification* (belonging to the future) to accomplish His eternal purpose. All are *aorist* – divine purpose already has believers glorified. That is eternal security! Therefore, the 'good' in view is our eternal and ultimate good, the achieving of God's eternal purpose that we might be conformed to the image of His Son. There is no distinction made in this verse between believers. Every believer is characterised as one that 'loves God' because they were 'called according to His purpose' through the gospel.

v.29: Note that Paul is dealing with the matter of eternal purpose from the divine (not human) standpoint – from eternity to eternity. In glory we stand and look backward (cf. John 1.1). **Firstly**, God foreknew believers in Christ before the foundation of the world, knowing them as the objects of His favour and purpose. **Secondly**, He ‘predestinated’ (*proorizo*, to mark out the limits beforehand) them not to *faith* or *unbelief*; *heaven* or *hell*, but to be like His Son. Conformity to Christ is the ultimate goal in the eternal purpose of God. This is not just physical, but moral; a complete inward and outward transformation (1 Corinthians 15.49; Hebrews 2.10; 1 John 3.2). The moral transformation has already begun (2 Corinthians 3.18) and reaches its consummation at the rapture. ‘Image’ signifies what is real and permanent. Strictly speaking, God’s ultimate purpose is not that we should be like His Son, but that Christ might be the ‘Firstborn (*prototokos*) among many brethren’. Firstborn has no thought of first to be born or created, but pre-eminence and supreme rank. Although we bear His image, He is not one amongst equals, but supreme above them all. **Gilliland:** *God is so pleased with His Son that He seeks to fill heaven with many sons.* **v.30: Thirdly**, God ‘called’ every believer through the gospel, thus bringing eternal counsel into time. **Fourthly**, the call was heard and heeded resulting in justification, the great theme of the epistle. **Finally**, every believer is assured of glory as an accomplished fact. **Phillips:** *God brings us into the sphere of His wisdom (foreknowledge); under the sovereignty of His will (predestination); under the sound of His word (called); under the shadow of His wing (justified) and into the splendour of His world (glorified).*

The Permanent Persuasion of Paul (8.31-39)

v.31: What can we then say to all ‘these things’ (vv.29-30)? Nothing. God’s grace leaves us speechless. Words fail us. The conclusion is clear – God must be for us; He must be on our side. Who then can stand against us? It is not that we have no enemies or opposition, but none can be successful in opposing our eternal security and promised glory. **v.32:** Further evidence that God is for us is that He did not ‘withhold’ or ‘spare’ His *own* Son. God has sons by creation (angels) and sons by adoption (saints), but only one, unique, eternal Son – His own peculiar and precious possession. God delivered Him up to a sacrificial death on the cross (cp. Galatians 2.20). Paul now argues from the greater to the lesser. If God has given us the greatest of all gifts (His Son), then all other lesser gifts (such as justification and glorification) are assured! **Bonar:** *The gift of gifts, all other gifts in one.* **Wesley:** *Thou O Christ, art all I want; more than all in Thee I find.*

v.33: The scene is that of a courtroom. The defendants are God’s elect ones (those that love God and are called according to His purpose, v.28). Who can legally bring a charge or accusation against such individuals? Perhaps the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12.10). Yet, **God** is the one justifying (*present tense* = eternal security). There is therefore no charge for the defendants to answer. They are acquitted of all guilt! See Zechariah 3 for a beautiful illustration. **v.34:** Who then can condemn? Condemnation is the pronouncement of a sentence of guilt. Perhaps the accuser is now sin or the law, but every believer is free from condemnation in Christ (Romans 8.1). He is the One who died at Calvary to procure our justification, and who now is raised and seated in a position of great dignity, honour and power at the right hand of God. It is His position here which proves the satisfaction and efficacy of His sacrifice. Here He makes intercession for us. This is not His praying as Great High Priest (Hebrews 7.25), but His making intercession by His very presence at God’s right hand. Here He stands in the acceptability of His sacrifice as our assurance that every claim has been met. He is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2.2).

v.35: The scene now changes from a judicial court to the wilderness. Saints are being viewed as defenceless sheep (**v.36**). Thus, it is no longer standing before God or eternal security in view, but our present Christian experience. Given the persecution the Roman saints were experiencing, they may have been tempted to ask whether they were divinely loved at all. Paul assures them plainly – nothing and no-one can separate (divorce) us from the love of Christ. His love remains undiminished, unchanging, constant and sustaining despite our experiences. Thank God the proof of His unchanging love is not our experience, but His **word** (Stifler). In this verse Paul enumerates *seven* forms of trial which are all-embracing. He had personally experienced all of these trials (including ultimately the sword at the hand of Nero, cf. 2 Corinthians 6, 11, 12) and knew they could not separate him from the constancy of Christ’s love. **v.37:** But there is greater grace still! Christians are ‘more than conquerors’ (super victorious) *through* Him that loved us. The thought seems to be that through the sustaining strength of Christ’s love, saints emerge out of these tribulations stronger than when they went in. Faith is strengthened and anticipation of future glory grows (see Romans 5.3-5).

vv.38-39: Paul now moves from *visible* (physical) to *invisible* (spiritual) dangers, and the love of *Christ* to the love of *God* in Christ. What double security! Paul’s unalterable conviction and authoritative apostolic judgment was that there is nothing in all creation or the entire universe that can affect the magnitude and constancy of God’s love toward us. Such love is ours ‘in’ (*en*) Christ Jesus our Lord. He is the worthy and all-glorious object of the love of God. If Christ can be removed from the sphere and embrace of His Father’s love, then so can we. If not, then we are eternally loved in Him.