

19. ROMANS SERIES: Sonship in the Spirit

Romans 8:14-25

It is the Christian only that can please God, for it is he who has the Spirit of God within, therefore actually having the ability to obey the requirements of God (8:4). Not only do Christians have the ability to obey, but we also have an obligation to obey (8:12,13). It is only these who walk in the Spirit, obeying the Lord's will in their daily struggle with the remaining sin principle within, that are truly His.

In this passage Paul acknowledges that we will indeed suffer in our daily lives before our final glorification is reached. Our suffering comes not only as a result of being persecuted for Christ's sake in all its various forms, but also in the various bodily afflictions that come upon us as a consequence of sin. Then of course there is also this daily struggle with sin itself.

But encouragement is to be found in the wonderful glory that awaits the children of God. It is a glory that is not for us alone, for it is also a time for which creation also longs, for it too will be freed from the terrible effects of sin at that time.

In this section Paul opens up to the Romans (and to us) more fully, the wonderful glory that awaits the children of God, and how this glory so much outweighs all our temporal sufferings.

Please Read Romans 8:14-25

Verse 14: The word *'for'* connects this verse with the previous two (8:12,13), this verse explaining how it is that we are able to kill the corrupt deeds of the body and enjoy life to the full. The Christian is able to do this because we are now the sons of God, being led by His Spirit. Previously we had no such ability, but now that we have the Spirit of God we are able to do so.

To be led by the Spirit, is to have the Holy Spirit control our thoughts, feelings and behaviour (2 Pet 1:21), enabling us more and more to kill the corrupt deeds of the body

and to walk in God's way. To be led by the Spirit is the same as being in Christ Jesus (8:1), to walk according to the Spirit (8:4), and to be Spirit indwelt (8:9,11).

Believers are those who are so led by the Spirit, being the children of God. To be a son of God is to have a title of peculiar dignity and to share a similar character and nature as God (Mt 5:9,45; Jn 1:12; 1 Jn 3:2).

QUESTION: What difference is there between believers and unbelievers? What makes this difference occur?

Verse 15: The word *for* again shows a connection with the previous verse, explaining that because we are children of God we no longer are filled with the spirit of slavery and dread (1 Cor 2:12; 2 Tim 1:7), but are now able to see God as our Father. The fear of judgment is gone, and no longer are we the slaves of sin, for now we are the sons of God by adoption.

To be adopted means to be placed in the position of sons. As believers we have been given the right of sonship, the mark of an enemy being replaced by that of sonship. In place of fear and dread with regards to God, is now intimacy and joy.

The Holy Spirit enables us to live as the sons of God, to share God's nature in Christ, and to call God our Father (Gal 4:6). The word *'Abba'* is an Aramaic word denoting filial tenderness, trust and love. It is a very personal title, describing our intimate spiritual relationship with God, as that between children and their father.

Verse 16: The Holy Spirit and our spirit together bear witness that we are the children of God (2:15; 9:1). The Spirit testifies of this fact through direct influence to our regenerated consciousness, applying the Word of God to our hearts and minds (Jn 8:47; 16:13; Gal 4:6). The Spirit gives us an assurance of our sonship, giving us a firm conviction of our salvation.

Verse 17: Not only is this testimony directed toward our being children, but also toward us as being heirs, joint heirs with Christ. By being joint heirs we will inherit glory by grace, that glory which is Christ's by right (Jn 17:22-24).

As Christ suffered, so believers will suffer, and as Christ is glorified, so we will be glorified. Those afflictions and trial which destroy the body are the means that the Holy Spirit uses to sanctify the inner man, until at last the body dies and the inner man is completely formed after the image of Christ (2 Cor 4:10-16), having been fully glorified at the last day.

NOTE: INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY QUESTION HERE: What is 'the glory which shall be revealed in us' in Romans 8:18?

Verse 18: The word *'for,'* indicates that this verse is a further explanation of the previous, and especially of the glory that is to come for believers. It is such a wonderful glory, that in the light of it, all our present sufferings are nothing in comparison.

Paul is convinced, having weighed up both the glory to come and the present sufferings of this age (8:19-23,28,38,39), that these temporal afflictions fade into insignificance when placed alongside our future glory (Lk 6:22ff; 2 Cor 4:17; 11:23-28). All these current sufferings are temporal, the future glory is eternal, and there is no comparison.

Though undoubtedly including the temporal sufferings that are common to all men, Paul has especially in mind the sufferings that are unique to the Christian. What are these unique sufferings? These are the sufferings due to the battle with sin, the world, and the Devil.

The glory referred to is not the intermediate state that is entered in upon death, but that final glorification (8:19,23), when our bodies are transformed and our characters perfected. It is the time of the final consummation of all things that is in view (Philip 3:20,21; 1 Thess 4:13-18).

Verse 19: Again the word *'for'* indicates the further explanation of that which has gone before in this verse. This verse will explain how this glory does indeed transcend our present suffering, for it also involves the whole of the natural creation, which longs with great earnestness for our glorification. This it does, for its own restoration is tied up with the believer's.

It will be only at that last great day of the Lord that it will be clearly revealed to all just who are the actual children of God (Philip 3:20,21; 1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Jn 3:2).

Verses 20,21: Again the word *'for'* is used, for Paul is building his case as he moves along, further explaining all that he has to say. Why does creation wait for the revealing and glorification of the children of God? It is because creation through no fault of its own, was subjected by God to corruption and decay as a consequence of the curse placed upon man for his sin (Gen 3:17-19). This state was not to be its permanent condition, for it was subjected to corruption in hope.

The hope that creation has is that it will also share in the glory of the children of God, for it will also be transformed at the same time as the children of God (2 Pet 3:7-13; Rev 21:1-5).

Verse 22: That this hope is true is something we know, for the present order cannot go on in its current condition, for creation is longing for the new order. The present afflictions currently imposed upon creation are really the pains of birth, as it awaits the final deliverance of the new order.

NOTE: INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY QUESTION HERE: What are the first fruits of

the Spirit (8:23)?

Verse 23: The created order is not alone in its groaning and longing for the new order, for Christians do the same thing.

Even though we have the first fruits of our future harvest (11:16; 16:5; 1 Cor 15:20; 16:15; Jam 1:18), which is the first instalment of heaven, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, we long for the rest. Yet having the Spirit does assure us that we will also have the rest (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13).

This longing of the Christian for glory is within ourselves, chiefly because of the internal struggle with the remaining principle of sin within (7:25), though it does also include general afflictions (2 Cor 4:16-5:2). Because of all these afflictions, we look forward in hope to better things. With the first fruits being so good, we truly long for the full harvest.

Though already adopted (8:15,16), the full manifestation of our position as children of God, and the receiving of our inheritance is still future. It is then that we will receive the full transformation of our bodies (8:11; 1 Cor 15:50-55; 2 Cor 2,3; Eph 4:30; Philip 3:21; 1 Jn 3:2).

Verse 24: Again we have the use of the word *'for'* as Paul moves on to further explain verse 23. Salvation is a present reality, but its fullness is still a matter of hope and future expectation and consummation. We were saved with many more blessings to come and it these that we hope for, not with empty desire, but with the conviction of absolute certainty.

Fullness in salvation is clearly not a present reality, for if we had it all now, there would be no reason for hope. Hope is not so much the exercise or practice, but rather the substance of the thing hoped for (Eph 1:18; Col 1:5; Heb 6:18-20). There is little point in hoping for what we already have, for it would then have ceased to be a matter of hope.

Verse 25: If we hope for the unseen and future, then it is something for which we still wait (2 Cor 4:18). Suffering in this present world is not out of place, for the fullness of our salvation and blessing is yet to come, it is not yet. Because it is future, we set our face toward it with steadfastness, enduring all suffering with the joyful expectation of a better day to come.

INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY

What are the groanings of verse 26?

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