

*It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.*

## Weekly Edition – April 24, 2015

### Paul's Letter to the Romans

#### Life Through the Spirit (con't again!)

<sup>14</sup> For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup> The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

<sup>18</sup> I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

<sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope

<sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

<sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

<sup>26</sup> In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

<sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

#### Outline of Romans

1. **Paul's credentials** (1:1-1:18)
2. **Justification by Faith (1:18-11:36)**
  - a. **Sin – the "need" for Salvation**
    - 1) of Gentiles (1:18-2:16)
    - 2) of Jews (2:17-3:8)
    - 3) universal need for Salvation (3:9-20)
  - b. **Justification by Faith - the "Provision" made for Salvation**
    - 1) God's Righteousness through Faith (3:21-31)
    - 2) Abraham as an Example (4:1-25)
  - c. **Freedom - the "Result" of Salvation**
    - 1) Freedom from Wrath (5:1-21)
    - 2) Freedom from Sin (6:1-23)
    - 3) Freedom from The Law (7:1-25)
    - 4) Freedom from Death (8:1-39)
  - d. **Jew and Gentile - The "Scope" of Salvation**
    - 1) God chooses to save Believers (9:1-33)
    - 2) Israel trusted their own Righteousness (10:1-21)
    - 3) Jew and Gentile can have Salvation through Faith (11:1-36)
3. **The Transformed Life (12:1-15:13)**
  - a. In relation to overall conduct (12:1-21)
  - b. In relation to civil authority (13:1-7)
  - c. In relation to fellow man (13:8-14)
  - d. In relation to weak brethren in the Body of Christ (14:1-15:13)
4. **Concluding remarks, instructions and benediction (15:14-16:27)**

#### Freedom from Death – a fourth "Result" of Salvation

- 1) We are continuing our study of the "Gospel" or "euaggelion" in Greek – literally "good news." In Romans Paul sets forth this Good News, such as would be expected from God – it is God-like Good News.
- 2) Paul has defined what he means by God's Good News back in chapter one.

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- 3) Paul has convinced us that the only way of salvation is to be justified by grace, through faith. Now over the course of the next few chapters, he is showing us the practical benefits of standing justified before God. The scope of these benefits is simply amazing. Over the past few weeks we examined what God's Good News means in the life of a believer:
- 4) **Freedom from Wrath** - Since we now stand justified (the penalty for sin is removed) we are no longer under God's wrath and we may live in peace with God; (Romans 5)
- 5) **Freedom from Sin** – Yes, the penalty of sin is removed, but the reign of sin is still a reality in my life. Paul shows that we can be free not only of the *penalty* (justified: that part is done) but also from the *reign* of sin our lives (sanctified: still a work in progress) – yes, little by little through sanctification we can become so Christ-like that sin no longer reigns in our life. We can be as *selfless* in Christ as easily as we were *selfish* in Adam. (Romans 6)
- 6) **Freedom from the Law** – No longer bound by the law, we live under a newfound freedom in Jesus Christ. (Romans 7)
- 7) Now in this present Chapter 8, we will explore the fourth “result” of our justification in Jesus:
- 8) **Freedom from Death** – Speaking of Satan, Jesus said, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”* (John 10:10) Jesus died for us so that we may have abundant life. In Him we are freed from the bondage of death in this life and in the life to come. Paul now goes on to describe the full dimensions of our new life-to-the-fullest in Christ Jesus, our Lord:

### **The Christian Journey – Pilgrimage from Suffering to Glory**

- 1) Last week we examined the nature, sources and benefits of suffering as revealed in Holy Scripture. We observed that Paul speaks of us being “joined to Christ” in suffering when we suffer in faithful obedience to Jesus.
- 2) Paul also introduces us briefly into the mystery of suffering. Because we are in Christ, we are also called to share in His suffering. God's children are not immune from suffering. Life in the Spirit enables us to understand and endure suffering.
- 3) Paul goes further still (verse 17): if we share in Christ's sufferings, we also share in His glory! Our sharing in present suffering is a *condition* of our future glorification.
  - a) It is all part of the same package of sonship; The proof of my adoption into God's family and that I am indeed an heir of future glory is that I share in the suffering of Christ now, but I will also share in His glory later.
  - b) The problem is this: our flesh wants the inheritance *without* the suffering.
- 4) Paul was intimately familiar with suffering, trials and hardships. The descriptions in 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 and 11:23-33 suffice to show that Paul spoke on the basis of authoritative experience when he declared with certainty that no sufferings can separate us from Jesus Christ.
- 5) Jesus Christ has lordship over whatever powers there are in the universe. Hence, Paul makes appeal to the redemptive powers of Jesus already at work in the universe as a means of substantiating his claim that our Christian journey here on earth is a pilgrimage from present suffering to future glory. This is the basis of Christian hope.
- 6) The lordship of Jesus can be known and in some measure experienced here and now, even as Paul had experienced it, and this is proof that Jesus is in touch with His creation; Jesus is the vital link between creation and redemption. He is present and active. He is a God of relentless pursuit.
  - a) Our faith is grounded in physical reality. Our faith is a physical faith. Jesus ate. He slept. He was thirsty. He was hungry. He was cold. He suffered. He laughed. He made kick-ass wine.

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- b) Our hope is not merely an attitude of being “mindful,” or a philosophy of “thinking right thoughts,” but it is grounded in physical reality – even our flesh and bones.
  - c) This is among the reasons Paul believes Jesus has something to say about man’s decision-making in day-to-day life. His words are Spirit and truth, not just nice axioms for living. (John 14:16-18) Jesus has authority over all creation.
- 7) In Paul's analysis, the present suffering and our future glory cannot be compared to each other.
- 8) Paul was not *ignorant* or *blind* to the sufferings of human existence; he experienced more of it than most of us. Yet he still considered that the future glory far outweighed the present sufferings.

### **Future Glory to be Revealed In Us**

- 1) Without a heavenly hope, Paul considered the Christian life foolish and tragic. (1 Corinthians 15:19)
- 2) Yet, in light of eternity, it is the wisest and most completely sane choice anyone can make.
- 3) This coming glory will not only be revealed to us, but it will actually be revealed in us.
- 4) God has put this glory into the believer *right now*.
  - a) When we are in heaven, the glory will simply be *revealed*.
  - b) The glory will be *revealed*, not created. The implication is that it is already existent, but not readily apparent.
    - i) The fact that I cannot see the far side of the hill doesn't mean it isn't there; it simply hasn't been revealed to me until I summit the ridge and can see what was previously hidden from my view. Hence summiting the hill reveals the other side which was always there.
    - ii) When we are raised with Christ into our new life, what has been shrouded from our view here and now will be revealed to us – and it is so glorious, so amazing, so beyond anything we can imagine, that Paul, having the privilege of sneaking a peak says that there is no basis of comparison between the present suffering and the future glory!
      - (1) *“What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”– the things God has prepared for those who love him– these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.* (1 Corinthians 2:9 quoting Isaiah 64:4)
- 5) All of creation is awaiting and anticipating this coming glory (knowingly or unknowingly).

### **New Life in Christ – The Result of Salvation**

- 1) Our new life in Christ (Romans 5-8) is a substantial life, the reality of which:
  - a) Is not threatened but strengthened by the struggle to do God's will; (7:13-25)
  - b) Not threatened but strengthened by the sufferings of life in this world; (8:17-39)
  - c) Which involve putting to death the deeds of the flesh. (8:13)
- 2) This strengthening is certain not because of the efficacy of our struggling and suffering, but on the efficacy of God's work in Jesus Christ our Lord who loves us and suffered the Cross for our benefit.
- 3) The movement from suffering to glory is not illusory but an established fact, for *“God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.”* (5:3-5)
- 4) Were it not for the Lordship of Christ at work in and for the new life of a Christian, there would be no meaning in our individual suffering, no hopeful waiting of creation, no effective prayer, no good end in everything for those who love God, no God “for us,” no overcoming the vicissitudes of life. All are bound

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together in Christ who loves us – and all of this makes us debtors (in our own experience) to the Holy Spirit whose law of life works “in Christ Jesus” (8:2) who is “our Lord.” (7:25; 8:39)

- 5) This is the basis of our hope! This is the basis of our confidence in faith.

### **Creation was Subjected to Futility**

- 1) Paul asserts that this was God's master plan from the beginning.
- 2) Only God could subject creation to frustration (rendered *futility* in most versions). This was not the work of sinful man nor of Satan. The Greek word is *mataiotēs* and it means “what is devoid of truth and appropriateness; perverseness, depravity; frailty, want of vigour.” God subjected creation to these limits.
  - a) None of the perverseness or frailty which we readily observe and experience in this life will have a part in the resurrected life with God.
  - b) Creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. God loves us so much that He intends to ground us in a new physical reality!
- 3) The glory promised to the children of God is not only to the benefit of God's children themselves, but also benefits *all* of creation. Until that day, creation groans and labors with birth pangs awaiting that coming glory in hopeful expectation.
- 4) Sin did not upset God's plan for creation. His plan for creation was transitory – it is a waypoint, a touchstone on the way to something even better – the future glory that awaits us who believe on Jesus and the entirety of creation.
  - a) Creation will also be redeemed. There will be a new earth, for the old will have passed away.
  - b) In asserting that this was God's master plan all along, Paul teaches us that the new creation is the fulfillment of the one we know, experience and touch in this life.
    - i) There is no “dualism” (i.e. one good, one bad) between the first creation and the better one that awaits us; rather history and eschatology (meaning the system of doctrines concerning last, or final, matters, as death, the Judgment, the future state, etc.) are never separated but are essentially and vitally linked together and the lynchpin is Jesus Christ.
    - c) *Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. (Revelation 21:1-3)*
- 5) Finally, we would readily observe the amazing hope that is ours in Jesus: – creation does not groan and labor in *death* pangs, but in *birth* pangs. A birth is a cause of celebration, of life, of continuance and newness.
- 6) Creation is headed towards a birthday party, not a funeral.

### **Discussion Questions**

- 1) Paul's hope (*elpis* in Greek) means a joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation. In our popular culture *hope* means the feeling that what I want can be had or that somehow events will turn out for the best (as in maybe it will; maybe it won't). Does my Christian hope closer resemble Paul's joyful confidence, or is it more like our cultural “anxious maybe?” Discuss.
- 2) Why would God subject creation to futility? What might His purpose be?