



## The Hope of Glory Romans 8:18-30

### Introduction

Paul has written of the blessings believers possess from God in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. Believers are no longer under condemnation, no longer bound by the law of sin and death, and are free to live according to the Spirit who is our inner witness that we are children and heirs of God. However, Paul has also brought up the subject of suffering, stating that we are fellow heirs of Christ *if indeed we suffer with Him, so that we may also be glorified with Him* (Romans 8:17 NASB). Having been baptized into Christ's death (Romans 6:3) with a hope of future glory, we are called to newness of life here and now. That new life includes a share in Christ's sufferings. *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps* (1 Peter 2:21).

As a believer, your sufferings bond you to Christ and work out God's purpose in your life (Romans 8:28). The New Testament clearly teaches that trials, tribulations, and persecution are to be expected as part of the Christian life here on earth. We are able to persevere through suffering because we have hope: if we suffer with Christ, we will also be glorified with Him (Romans 8:17). With the hope of glory before us, we are able to endure suffering with the comfort and help of the Holy Spirit and the sure knowledge of God's purpose in our lives. This is the continuing message of Romans 8.

### Outline of Romans 8

- I. The Glory Which Shall Be Revealed - Romans 8:18-25
- II. The Helper Who Intercedes - Romans 8:26-27
- III. The Knowledge of God's Purpose - Romans 8:28-30

#### I. The Glory Which Shall Be Revealed - Romans 8:18-25

Paul has considered (*For I consider*, 8:18) the question of suffering in the light of the glory to come. The Greek word translated *consider* implies reasoning and judging after making careful calculation. Paul has weighed the evidence and has come to a strong assurance.

- A. *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us* - Romans 8:18

glory to come, Paul finds no worthy comparison. The glory is so much greater than the suffering we endure in this world that there is no comparison. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul refers to sufferings as *momentary light afflictions* and sets these in contrast to the *eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison* (2 Corinthians 4:17). "Our suffering is minute, virtually insignificant, compared to the deposit of glory that is established on our account in heaven" (The Gospel of God, Romans, R.C. Sproul). Our suffering is not even able to tip the scales when weighed against the glory.

Furthermore, the glory is to be revealed *in us*. Believers look forward to the resurrection of our bodies and being like Christ forever. (See Philippians 3:20-21 and 1 John 3:2.) James Montgomery Boice has a wonderful section on glory in his commentary on Romans. He explains that glory begins with an inner desire to be approved by God. It is a desire which no earthly happiness can satisfy. This desire will only be satisfied when the glory which all creation and all believers wait for is revealed. Then we will no longer be on the outside looking in. We will no longer have to endure futile strivings for perfection. We will be like Christ and our longings for approval by God will finally be satisfied (Romans, Volume 2, Chapter 104). It will be glory!

#### B. Eagerly awaiting the glory - Romans 8:19-25

It is not only Christians who look forward to the revelation of this glory. *The whole creation* (8:22) waits, groans, and labors for the glory to come.

- 1. *The earnest expectation of the creation* - 8:19-22

*The creation* has an *earnest expectation*, an *anxious longing* (NASB). Most commentators take *the creation* to refer to the entire product of God's creative act (Romans 1:20), apart from men and angels. R. C. Sproul lists, "The rocks, the trees, the hills, the valleys, the seas, the plants, the animal kingdom" (The Gospel of God, Romans). John Calvin writes, "There is no element and no part of the world which, touched with the knowledge of its present misery, is not intent on the hope of the resurrection" (Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, Romans and Thessalonians).

- a. The expectation is an eager waiting for *the revealing of the sons of God* - 8:19

When the sufferings of this age are compared to the

When Christ returns in glory, those who are God's

children and heirs (Romans 8:15-17) will share His glory. The glory *shall be revealed in us* (8:18) and the creation is looking forward to that time. J.B. Phillips' translation of the New Testament expresses the idea in a picturesque way when it says that the creation is "on tiptoe to see" the coming of that day.

b. *The creation was subjected to futility* - 8:20

Genesis 3:17-18 records God's curse upon the ground because of Adam's sin. Adam's fall affected all of the creation: the heavens, earth, and all living things. The creation did not sin. It was not *willingly* subjected to futility. The creation follows the laws of God and is not in rebellion against the Creator. (See Isaiah 1:3 and Jeremiah 31:35.) It was Adam who sinned willfully and willingly and subjected the creation to futility. This means that creation can never attain perfection or fulfill its ultimate purpose for existence. All things in nature, as they are now, are transitory. They are also subject to the corrupting influences of fallen man.

But God's judgment did not leave the creation without hope. God is a *God of hope* (Romans 15:13). *The creation was subjected to futility....but....in hope.*

c. *The creation...also will be delivered from bondage* - 8:21

This verse explains the incredible *hope* (8:20) of the creation. Creation will share in *the glorious liberty of the children of God*. God will renovate, redeem, and renew this fallen world and creation will be free to fulfill its God-given purpose. *And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new'* (Revelation 21:5). See also Isaiah 11:6-9. "These verses should alert us to the fact that the Christian hope is something vastly more wonderful and more generous than our preoccupation with ourselves and the feebleness of our concern for God's glory allow us to imagine" (Romans, A Shorter Commentary, C.E.B. Cranfield).

d. *The whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs* - 8:22

The suffering of this age does not affect only mankind, but extends to the *whole creation*, causing it to groan in its *bondage of corruption* (8:21). Paul compares the groans and pangs (or pains) of creation to those of a woman in labor. It is an expectant groaning. The created world is experiencing pain and suffering, but there will be an end to it and the end result will be joy and delight in a new life. "This is a most appropriate comparison to inform us that the groaning...will not be in vain or without effect. It will finally bring forth a joyful and happy fruit" (Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, Romans and Thessalonians, John Calvin).

2. *Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting* - 8:23-25

Believers have the *firstfruits of the Spirit*, a foretaste of the blessings to come. But there is more we are waiting for. "What Paul teaches here is that redemption in biblical terms is not something that takes place all at once, but rather in stages. We have been reborn, we have experienced faith, we have been justified, and in our justification we are united with Jesus Christ. So there is a sense in which we are saved, but we have not yet experienced the full measure of our salvation. We still struggle with sin, as Paul indicates in chapter 7. We still suffer from disease, illness and death. Yet we are promised a future glorification when there will be no more sin, or sickness, or sorrow, or death. However...the future consummation of the fulness of glory is something we have not yet experienced" (The Gospel of God, Romans, R.C. Sproul).

a. *We have the firstfruits of the Spirit* - 8:23

In the Old Testament, the *firstfruits* refers to the first portion of the harvest which was offered to God (Exodus 23:19, Leviticus 23:10-11, Deuteronomy 18:4). It symbolized the consecration of the whole harvest and looked forward to more harvest to come. Paul uses the word to indicate something given to believers by God which is a pledge of more to come. What we have received, the newness of life from the indwelling Holy Spirit working within us, is a foretaste and a guarantee of what we still hope for.

b. *We groan within ourselves* - 8:23

Our hope for what God has promised causes us to groan. *For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven...For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life* (2 Corinthians 5:2 and 4, NASB).

c. *We are eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body* - 8:23

Romans 8:15 promises that we have *received the Spirit of adoption*, but there is more to adoption than what we experience now. *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is* (1 John 3:2). The fulness of the adoption will include the *redemption of our body*. Christ has paid the price of our redemption (Romans 3:24), and the fullness of that redemption will be realized when we are glorified (8:21 and 8:30). We will be fully liberated from all effects of sin and death.

d. *We were saved in this hope* - 8:24-25

Believers have been saved, but we will not experience the fullness of our salvation until we experience what we *hope* for—what we and all the creation eagerly await. We necessarily have a *hope* because we await the fullness of the promises of God. If we were experiencing the fullness of our salvation now, there would be no need for hope, *but now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known* (1 Corinthians 13:12).

e. *We eagerly wait with perseverance* - 8:25

In this present age, the Christian life is a life of waiting. We know that God is going to fulfill every promise He has made. We have *hope* (8:24) *which is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast* (Hebrews 6:19). But hope means waiting with *perseverance*. The Greek word for *perseverance* means “to stand against opposition,” or “to hold out”. It pictures a soldier in battle who continues to fight, no matter what. Christians persevere in hope.

**II. The Helper Intercedes - Romans 8:26-27**

Believers have even more than hope and perseverance to see us through this time of waiting. *The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses* (8:26).

## A. Our weaknesses- 8:26

Paul states very plainly that Christians are weak in prayer. We don't know how to pray and we don't know what to pray for. Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are God's ways our ways. "We are blind in praying to God, because, although we feel our evils, our minds are too disturbed and confused to make the right choice of what suits us, or what is expedient for us" (Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, Romans and Thessalonians, John Calvin). We need help in prayer.

B. *The Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered* - 8:26

Jesus Christ is our Advocate (Greek “Paracletos,” one called alongside to help, an Intercessor) who intercedes for us (Romans 8:34, 1 John 2:1). But while Jesus was on this earth, He promised to send another Helper (the same Greek “Paracletos”), which is the Holy Spirit who *helps in our weaknesses*. The word *helps* is a very strong Greek word which pictures the Holy Spirit taking part of our burden by lifting us up and bearing it with us. In this way, our Helper takes our weakness, confusion, and lack of passion in prayer and makes our prayers everything they should be. We don't know what to pray

for but the Holy Spirit does. He does it with *groanings which cannot be uttered*. The Spirit groans along with us in our weakness as we take our burdens to the Lord. He guides our groanings and teaches us to pray as we ought, in conformity to the will of God. Martin Luther (Commentary on Romans) believes, “*Groanings which cannot be uttered* refers to prayers that cannot be put into words and prayers which no one understands but God.” Robert Haldane (Exposition of Romans) reminds us that sometimes God's people are so overcome with troubles and anguish that they are unable to properly express their needs to God. He asks, “Shall they then remain without prayer? No; the Holy Spirit acts in their hearts, exciting in them sighs and groans.” Haldane gives examples from Scripture: Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:3, David in Psalm 77, Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:13, and Peter in Matthew 26:75

C. *The Spirit intercedes according to the will of God* - 8:27

God, *who searches the hearts*, knows the meanings of every groaning. He also knows the *mind of the Spirit* because the Father and the Spirit are one and the Spirit always intercedes *according to the will of God*. With the Holy Spirit as our Helper, believers learn to pray according to the will of God. We also learn that the important thing is not eloquence in prayer but submission to God's will.

**III. The Knowledge of God's Purpose - Romans 8:28-30**

Believers know God's purpose. “It is a knowledge of faith in which the believer both knows and applies the promises of God, and is able to say, this promise is mine, it belongs to me” (Exposition of Romans, Robert Haldane). In these verses, Paul clearly states what God's purpose is for all believers and how He accomplishes it.

A. *We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose* - Romans 8:28

God is working out His purpose in the life of every believer, using all the things Paul has just described to work together for our good. He is using *sufferings* (8:18), our *hope* and *perseverance* (8:26-27), and the help of the Holy Spirit (8:26-27) to work for our ultimate good. This means that God brings good even out of evil in the lives of believers. God uses the evil things that invade our lives and cause suffering. “He triumphs over them, brings victory out of them and adds them together for our greater glory...God redeems the evil that befalls us. So we should be comforted and consoled by the fact that our suffering is neither futile nor ultimately tragic.



It may be very painful and difficult to endure for the moment. But God stands sovereign over our suffering" (The Gospel of God, Romans, R.C. Sproul).

1. *All things work together for good to those who love God* - 8:28

What Paul is teaching is true of believers — *those who love God*. Since love is based upon a personal relationship, those who love God must have a personal relationship with Him. This is possible only through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who said *I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me* (John 14:6).

2. *Those who love God... are the called according to His purpose* - 8:28

All those who love God are *the called according to His purpose*, referring to those who have received God's effectual call. This is an inner call which enables the response of embracing Jesus Christ as He is freely offered in the gospel. There is a general or universal call in the gospel which is addressed to all men and women without distinction. But when used in reference to salvation, the word *called* in the New Testament almost always refers to the effectual call which carries with it God's enabling grace for the called one to respond unto salvation. God's purpose for calling is laid out in the next two verses which introduce five great doctrines of the Christian faith.

#### B. The golden chain of five links - Romans 8:29-30

These verses present five interconnected doctrines in God's purpose for believers. All believers are foreknown by God, predestined by God, called by God, justified by God, and glorified by God. James Montgomery Boice (Romans, Volume 2) presents these doctrines as "a golden chain of five links". Each link is forged in heaven and each is inseparably connected with the others. Each describes something God does and does not waver in doing. "Each one of these...is all-inclusive, that is, all those whom God foreknows, He predestinates, and all He predestinates, He calls, and all He calls He justifies, and all He justifies He glorifies. It is very important to understand that, in the structure of the language here, everyone in each category belongs totally to every other category" (The Gospel of God, Romans, R.C. Sproul).

1. Foreknown - 8:29

Foreknowledge begins in the mind of God and has to do with God's distinguishing love. It means that God has set His special love upon (or chosen) a certain person or people. The Old Testament equivalent is seen in Jeremiah 1:5 where God said to Jeremiah, *Before I*

*formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations*. This shows that foreknowledge has to do, not with just intellectual knowledge, but also with loving and choosing. The Jerusalem Bible expresses the meaning well: "They (that is, the ones called according to His purpose) are the ones He chose specially long ago."

2. Predestined - 8:29

Predestination means "to determine a person's destiny beforehand." The destiny of those whom God foreknew is *to be conformed to the image of His Son*. So we see in verse 29 that God loved and chose certain people whose destiny would be to be like His Son. The New English Bible states it clearly: *God knew His own before they ever were, and also ordained that they should be shaped to the likeness of His Son*.

Paul also gives the reason for this: *that He might be the firstborn among many brethren*. Colossians 1:18 further explains that Christ is the *firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence*. Christ is the firstborn in the family of God, and believers (those who are foreknown and predestined) are also children in the same family, with the same Father.

3. Called - 8:30

As stated previously, there are two main kinds of calling in the Bible. There is a "general or universal call" of the gospel which commands all people to repent of their sin and turn to God. Of their own accord, no man or woman will respond to this call because, as Paul taught earlier, *There is no one who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside* (Romans 3:11-12). However, there is also an "effectual call" which provides the ability to respond through the drawing power of God. Jesus said, *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him* (John 6:44). The calling in Romans 8:30 refers to the effectual call. The effectual call of God "creates spiritual life in the one called, and the proof that spiritual life is there is that we respond to Him" (Romans, Volume 2, James Montgomery Boice).

4. Justified - 8:30

Paul has spent a large portion of this letter teaching about justification. Justification is the just and merciful act of God by which he declares sinful men and women to be in right standing with Him on the basis of what Christ has done on the cross. Justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, and Christ alone.

5. Glorified - 8:30

Glorification is the culmination of the five links in the

golden chain. Our glorification is inseparably connected to Christ's coming in glory, *the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ* (Titus 2:13). When Christ comes again, *the glory will* be revealed (Romans 8:18) and we will experience the *glorious liberty of the children of God* (Romans 8:21), *the redemption of our bodies* (Romans 8:23). Paul speaks of our being glorified already. It is so certain that those who have been foreknown, predestined, called, and justified will be glorified, that we can consider it as having taken place already. Our hope is certain!

### Applications

1. What present suffering are you magnifying to make it heavier than it is? Will you take your eyes off your circumstances and look ahead and focus on the glory which is yours as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ?
2. Are you content with the world and what it has to offer? Are you intent upon finding your pleasure here, or are you longing for the future blessings which will be yours when Christ comes again? Remember Paul's teaching that true believers groan within themselves, eagerly waiting for the hope of future glory.
3. Do you rely upon the Holy Spirit when you pray so that your prayers might be according to the will of God or are your prayers selfish in nature? Does James 4:3 describe you? *You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.* Will you earnestly seek God's will every time you pray?
4. After studying Paul's presentation of God's purpose for believers, do you see that salvation is all of God and none of you? Will you humbly thank God for His mercy and grace in choosing you?



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## QUESTIONS

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

### Day One: Read all notes and references.

1. What impressed you about Paul's teaching concerning the creation?
2. Why do we need the Holy Spirit for our praying?
3. List the five links in the golden chain.

### Day Two: Review Romans 1 and 2.

(Before concluding our study of Romans 8, we will briefly review Romans 1:1-8:30.)

4. a. The subject of the book of Romans is *the gospel of God* (Romans 1:1). What information does Paul give about *the gospel of God* in the first few verses of the letter?
  - b. What is Paul's attitude toward the gospel? Give verse in chapter 1.
  - c. Memorize Romans 1:16-17 to recite with your discussion group.
5. a. By what means do all people have knowledge of God? Give verses.
  - b. According to Paul, how have people responded to this knowledge?
  - c. What is the result of this response?
6. a. From Romans 2:1-16, list some important attributes of God.
  - b. From these same verses, give some reasons that repentance would be wise. Give verses.
7. a. Who does Paul particularly address in Romans 2:17-29, and what special privilege did they possess? (Use Romans 3:1-3 for this question also.)
  - b. What problem of these people does Paul address?

### Day Three: Review Romans 3 and 4.

8. From Romans 3:9-20, give as many reasons as you can find which explain why all men and women need the gospel.

9. a. What good news do you find in Romans 3:21-31?

b. Which of these is most meaningful to you and why?

10. a. According to Romans 3:28, how are people justified?

b. How is Abraham an example of this?

**Day Four: Review Romans 5 and 6.**

11. List some important results of being justified by faith.

12. a. In Romans 5:6-11, how has God demonstrated his love for us?

b. From Romans 5:12-21, why was Christ's death necessary?

13. Is it all right for Christians to continue to sin? Give some verses from Romans 6 which answer this question.

**Day Five: Review Romans 7 - 8:30.**

14. a. What is a Christian's relationship to the law? Give verses.

b. What inward struggle results from knowledge of the law?

c. Who is the One who sets us free from this struggle? Give verse.

15. a. What are the two different ways of living described in Romans 8:1-17?

b. ♥ (Heart Question) Which is your way of life? What are the results or benefits of that way of living?

16. What impressed you most in Romans 8:18-25?



17. a. How does the Holy Spirit help believers?
- b. What great comfort do you have if you *love God* and are *called according to His purpose* (Romans 8:28)?
- c. What is God's purpose for those who love Him and are among *the called*?

**Day Six: Read Romans 8:31-39.**

18. a. To what do you think *these things* (8:31) refer?
- b. List the questions Paul asks about *these things* and give your answer to each question if possible.
19. Give some statements Paul makes in this passage which give you security in your salvation. Give verses.
20. a. By what term does Paul refer to Christians in Romans 8:33?
- b. What are some important things you learn about God's elect in Romans 8:34-39?