

From Suffering to Glory

Romans 8:17 Bible Commentary

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

There is no clearer summation of Jesus' teaching in John 12:24-26 than the teaching of the Apostle Paul recorded in Romans 8. Paul taught that as God's children, we are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, *if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*" (Romans 8:17, emphasis added).

God has ordained that every one of His children must follow His Son and be where He was (again John 12:26), in that we must and we will indeed "suffer with Him", or share in His sufferings, in order that we may also share in His eternal glory. With this teaching, given to us first by Jesus and then affirmed by Paul and other New Testament authors as well, we are given the reason for many of the sufferings, afflictions, losses and troubles that come into our lives as believers, even as we walk in obedience to the word of God.

John 12:24-26, Romans 8:17-18, Mark 10:35-45, Luke 9:23-24, and Luke 14:27 and 33 all teach us about the principle of spiritual fruit bearing that will be at work in the life of every believer. These Scriptures reveal that we must, and we will, as God will bring to pass in each of our lives, endure a share in the sufferings of Christ, becoming in some measure as He was: a man of sorrows who was familiar with suffering and grief (Isaiah 53:3). This share in Christ's sufferings is the necessary path that God has ordained for His people whereby we will bear spiritual fruit, and thereby share in the glory of His Beloved Son for eternity.

For now, we will not like the fact that this principle is at work in our life. We might ask why does it have to be this way, and why can't my life be filled with only "good things", things that bring happiness and gratification in this life? When we find ourselves asking these questions, we should realize that the reasons for the way God has ordered His creation are not always within man's ability to comprehend. When we find ourselves questioning God's ways, let

us call to mind once again Isaiah 55:8-9 where we learned that God's ways and His thoughts are not like ours, but they are above the ways and thoughts of man.

Paul also taught us about the ways of God when he exclaimed: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" (Romans 11:33). God's ways and His thoughts are beyond the understanding of man. We cannot understand why God our Father has ordained that we must share in Christ's sufferings in order to share in His eternal glory. However, it has been revealed to us through the Scriptures that indeed God has willed it to be so, and that this process will be at work in the life of every believer.

The writer of Hebrews taught us that God the Father ordained that His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, the first born among many brethren, the Author and Finisher of our salvation, would Himself be made perfect through sufferings. In Hebrews 2 we read: "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings." (Hebrews 2:10).

These are God's ways, and they are above our ways. God is working in the life of every believer to conform us to the image and likeness of His Son, as Paul taught in Romans 8:29. And as He does so, we will all in some measure drink from the cup and be baptized with the baptism of Christ's sufferings. Knowing that God's ways and thoughts are above ours, let us not question them. Rather let us be thankful that He has called us to be one of the many sons who will be brought to glory through the blood of Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins.

Paul encouraged us when he wrote: "For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ." (II Corinthians 1:5). Things are hard for now, but the time is coming when our days of sorrow will end (Revelation 7:17, Isaiah 65:17-19). Let us look forward to the day when God will wipe away every tear from our eyes brought about as we shared in the sufferings of the Man of Sorrows (Revelation 21:4). Until that day comes for us, we can take comfort in Jesus' promise of His grace and strength, which will be given to us in a measure sufficient for our every need and weakness as Paul learned through his own affliction (II Corinthians 12:9).

Jesus said: "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:29-31). God is intimately familiar with everything that happens on earth and with every detail of our lives. Nothing in His creation, not even an event as small as the death of a sparrow, happens apart from His sovereign will. The things that happen to us happen as part of God's will for our lives, and the Bible teaches us that through all of these things God is working for our good and for our eternal glory together with His Son.

Consistent with His teaching in Luke 6:20-26, Jesus taught us in John 16:20 that during this present time of our lives on earth, we as His people will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. This will be our experience as we share in His sufferings. But with these sufferings we

have the promise that our Heavenly Father, the “Father of mercies and God of all comfort” will provide His comfort to us (II Corinthians 1:3).

We can take comfort as believers, knowing that every wrong we have suffered, God will avenge, and that every affliction, difficulty, hardship or loss that God has allowed to touch our lives has eternal value. God is at work in our lives doing exactly what He said He would do in His Word: He is conforming each of us to the image of His Son Jesus Christ as He brings about in each of our lives a share in His sufferings. As we experience our share in Christ’s sufferings, we can be certain based on the authority of the Scriptures that these present sufferings will bring about for us eternal glory and reward.

Understanding this spiritual principle will not take away the pain we are enduring; we will still grieve and mourn as a result of our losses and troubles. However, it will provide for us some understanding as to why undeserved sufferings come into our lives as God’s people.

When we have suffered a great loss in life, and we feel ourselves doubting the love and the goodness of God, becoming angry and disillusioned over the suffering that has come upon us, let us realize that through the sufferings that our sovereign God has allowed to affect our lives, we have been brought into the company and fellowship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Himself. It has been given to us not only to believe in Him, but also to experience “the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Philippians 1:29, 3:10).

Through our sufferings we have also been brought into the company of the saints whose lives and experiences are recorded in the Bible. Their lives and what God chose to accomplish through their sufferings demonstrate the timeless and universal principle of spiritual fruit bearing that Jesus taught in John 12:24-26. Just as God brought forth life and good through the “death” that their sufferings wrought in their lives, so He will also do the same through the sufferings that we endure in our lives.

And also when we have suffered a great loss, let us run to the throne of grace, and let us avail ourselves of the mercy and help that is ours in Christ Jesus. The author of Hebrews encouraged us when he wrote: “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15-16).

God did not spare His own Son from sufferings, and we can see from this passage of Hebrews that our faithful High Priest endured every form of temptation that we would endure. Jesus was “tempted in all things as we are”. This means that Jesus also endured the temptation to become angry and disillusioned with God His Father over suffering that He could have prevented in His life, but did not, according to His will, plan and purpose (Mark 14:33-36, Matthew 27:46).

God loves His people with an unfailing, unconditional, and everlasting love, and He will *never* let go of any of us, regardless of our failings during some time of great trial in our lives. (John 6:37-39, Romans 8:38-39, many others). Only those who have been called to faith in Jesus

Christ will one day realize a share in His glory, and the necessary path to this glory, as God has ordained it to be so, is a share in the experience and suffering of the Man of Sorrows, who was Himself familiar with grief. Until that day, let us rely fully upon the promises of God's help, comfort, deliverance, provision, and sustaining grace, as they are given to us in His word. Let us also do as the author of Hebrews exhorted us, and let us "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."