

Sustained in Suffering

Text: Romans 8:15-27

Introduction:

1. Romans 8 – a great victory chapter. We are “more than conquerors” (Vs. 37)
2. In the previous verses the Apostle Paul has dealt with the victory over sin the believer experiences through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Now he looks at the victory we can know in the trials and tribulations of life.
3. There are three anchors in these verses that will sustain us in suffering. We are blessed with...

I. The Holy Spirit of Adoption (Vs. 14-17)

A. The Adoption of the Spirit (Vs. 15)

1. “spirit of bondage” = our former state before salvation
2. “Spirit of adoption” = ‘adoption’ is made up of ‘son’ and “to place”. Thus, the Holy Spirit is the One who places children of God as adult sons in a legal standing before God.
3. “whereby we cry Abba Father”
 - a. ‘Abba’ = Aramaic equivalent to our word ‘daddy’. Word used of Christ in His Gethsemane prayer (Mark 14:36).
 - b. The desire and ability to call God Father comes from the Holy Spirit. Note: This is not just a mechanical recitation of a prayer with the words “our Father” but a ‘cry’, signifying the fervent, from the heart prayers of a newborn child of God.

B. The Assurance of the Spirit (Vs. 16-17)

1. The inner witness of the Holy Spirit (Vs. 16)
 - a. “beareth witness” = present tense. Ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit. He is consistently assuring me of my salvation.
 - b. “our spirit” = our spirit cooperates with this testimony of the Holy Spirit
 - c. Remember Vs. 9 – “Now if any man have not he Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”
2. The inheritance of the saints (Vs. 17)
 - a. Heirs together – “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ”
 - i. Roman law made all children including adopted ones’ equal inheritors
 - ii. We have been “...*blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*” (Eph. 1:3)
 - iii. Christ will always be “the firstborn amongst many brethren” and the one who is to have the “preeminence” (first place) but we have been made to share in the inheritance of Christ our Heavenly Brother

The Gospel of God – Romans Series

- b. Trials together – “suffer with him”
 - i. Trials and afflictions are our companions in this life as we await the future glories of our inheritance. But we are not alone in these suffering! We suffer “with him”
 - ii. Illustration: Dr. Helen Roseveare

Helen Roseveare served for twelve and a half years in Zaire, Africa before being captured by the rebels in 1964. She and her coworkers were thrown into five & a half months of unbelievable brutality and torture. On one occasion she was on the verge of being executed but a 17-year-old student defended her and was mercilessly beaten and left for dead. For a moment Helen thought God had forsaken her, even though she did not doubt his reality. God then made His presence known to her in a wonderful way and said something like this: “Twenty years ago you asked me for the privilege of being a missionary, the privilege of being identified with me. These are not your sufferings; they are my sufferings.” Helen Roseveare’s sense of identification with Christ, of union with him, was elevated by her suffering, and she rejoiced. Paul likewise rejoiced in the sublime oneness he sensed as Christ participated with him in his sufferings...Every blow that fell on him fell on his Master, and thus bound them even closer together in mutual suffering. R. Kent Hughs (Commentary on Colossians).

II. The Hope of Glorification (Vs. 18-25)

A. The Estimation of Suffering (Vs. 18)

1. ‘reckon’ = translated ‘impute’ in chapter 4. Means to calculate, to think, to reason. This perspective arrived at through a process of careful reasoning.
2. “sufferings of this present time” = the trials and tribulations connected with our earthly pilgrimage
3. “not worthy to be compared” = they will fade into insignificance when compared with the future glories that are in store for the believer
4. Perhaps as you endure life’s trials the question comes to you, “Why is it that I suffer so much as a Christian? Is it really all worth it?” The answer is expressed so well in the words of the hymn, “It will be worth it all when we see Jesus, life’s trials will seem so small when we see Christ, once glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase so bravely run the race till we see Christ.”
5. 2 Cor. 4:16-18 *“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. **For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.**”*
6. “shall be revealed in us” = future aspect of our salvation. The complete transformation of our entire person.
7. Phil. 3:20-21 *“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: **Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,***

The Gospel of God – Romans Series

according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

8. 1 John 3:2 *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”*

B. The Illustration of Suffering (Vs. 19-23)

1. The sighs of creation (19-22)
 - a. Creation anticipates the future unveiling of the children of God. “earnest expectation” has the idea of watching with the head erect and outstretched, hence a waiting in suspense (19)
 - b. Creation was made subject to the curse on account of man’s sin but it will also be liberated from bondage. Note the conditions in the Millennial reign of Christ where the curse is removed (Isaiah 11). Also 2. Peter 3:10-13
 - c. Creation presently groans and travails in pain as it anticipates and awaits that future liberation. Note the birthing language. The pains of birth come with hope and anticipation of blessing that is to come (Vs. 22)
2. The sighs of the Christian (23)
 - a. “firstfruits of the Spirit” = O.T. Background. The Holy Spirit is referred to as the “earnest of our inheritance” in Eph. 1:13-14. Webster: Earnest refers to the first fruits; that which is in advance and gives promise of something to come. It’s the first payment or deposit giving promise or assurance of full payment. The Spirit is given to the saints, as a pledge or assurance of their future enjoyment of God’s presence and favor.
 - b. “groan within ourselves” = the sighing of our hearts in sufferings. 2 Cor. 5:4 *“For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”*
 - c. ‘adoption’ = we are already adopted (Vs. 15) but the future deliverance of the body is in view. Note: In Roman times there were two aspects to an adoption – the private adoption and the public adoption.
 - d. “to wit, the redemption of our body” = “to wit” means ‘specifically’. Clarifies what Paul means by waiting for our adoption.

C. The Anticipation in Suffering (Vs. 24-25)

1. Hope is directed to something future and unseen
2. Hope is directed to something certain and guaranteed
3. Hope is coupled with patience

The Gospel of God – Romans Series

III. The Help of Intercession (Vs. 26-27)

A. The Spirit's Power in us (Vs. 26)

1. "likewise...also" = in like manner. As we are sustained and supported by hope in our sufferings, so also the Spirit of God ministers to us, sustaining us and helping us in the trials we face
2. 'helpeth' = means to lend a hand together with, to take hold with another, to come to the aid of someone. Same word used of Martha in Luke 10:40 where she desires 'help' from Mary.
3. 'infirmities' = weaknesses (note plural. Many in number!)
4. "we know not" = specific weakness in view. In our trials and struggles, we so often are ignorant of how we are to pray. Sometimes the Lord has to say to us as He did to James and John, "Ye know not what ye ask." (Matt. 20:22)

B. The Spirit's Pleas for us (Vs. 26b-27)

1. They are fervent pleas – inexpressible groanings (sighs). Note the picture. Creation groans (22), the Christian groans (23), the Comforter groans (26)
2. They are perfect pleas – His intercessions are according to the will of God.

Conclusion:

1. Have you been adopted into the family of God? Are you saved?
2. How are we responding to our trials? Have we allowed our vision of our glorious future to be clouded by the present problems?
3. Hymn: God will take care of you (487)