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The Promise of Glory

Romans 8:1-27

In 586 BC, the Solomonic temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. Talk about a tragedy! It began with so much promise. At the completion of the Temple in 959 BC, we read this:

2 Chronicles 7:1-2: "Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of

the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house."

Such a wonderful beginning. Upon the completion of the temple and its dedication, the glory of God descended upon the building. So great was the glory of God that the priests at this time could not enter! That is why we are shocked to read...

2 Kings 25:8-9a, "Now on the seventh day of the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. And he burned the house of the Lord..."

And yet, as horrible as it was that the temple lay in ruin, the real tragedy lay in the REASON: God Had abandoned His Sanctuary!...

Lamentations 2:7, "The Lord has rejected His altar, He has abandoned His sanctuary..."

We read about this abandonment in Ezekiel 10-12! And though the temple would be rebuilt, we are never told again that God dwelt in the Temple as He did before the exile.¹

This raises the question: Why? Why would the glory of God NOT return to the temple upon the repentance of His people? There are many possible answers, one of which is that:

1. The Temple was a picture of the abode of God in the heart of man!

1 Corinthians 6:19, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?"

2. And so, as a shadow of this dwelling, the temple served its purpose! For when we come to the New Covenant, we find that the priority no longer is the physical temple in Jerusalem, BUT the temple of our bodies in which the Spirit dwells! And thus, we read in the NT regarding the glory of God and the Temple of our bodies...

2 Corinthians 3:18a, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding [reflecting] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory..."

See while the glory of the Lord departed from the Old Testament Temple, the process of growth in the life of the Christian can be likened to the glory of the Lord descending upon His Temple... with the ultimate goal of the full manifestation of God's glory in our lives in the age to come- which is the focus of the Sixth Benefit before us...

Romans 8:18, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to [εἰς (eis)] us.”

Truly, when we enter into the final state, we shall partake in the glory of Christ!

Philippians 3:20-21a, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory...”

And what does Christ presently look like? What will He look like in the next age?

Revelation 1:14-15, “And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet *were* like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice *was* like the sound of many waters.”

This is the sixth benefit that flows from the cross of Christ: The Promise of the Glory of God in Us. Paul here breaks down our future glory into manageable terms — which brings us to the content of our future glory. Notice the first aspect of this glory is the revealing of the sons of God.

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God: What does this mean? “Reveal” is translated as “uncover” or “unveil.” It references a “revealing of something for what it truly is.”² And so used here it implies that our status as God’s sons has *YET* to be revealed in full. This raises the question, “In what way is our sonship hidden and thus able to be more fully revealed?” To answer this, notice two passages...

Colossians 3:3-4, “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”

1 John 3:1, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”

The world does NOT comprehend who/what Christians really are and for that matter, neither do we! When the world looks at us, they simply see us a “religious” people and so lump us together with the Buddhist, Muslim, and/or any cult member. Accordingly, we are the object of their jokes, ridicule, and laughter.

And yet mark it, on the Last Day we shall be “glorified with God” which according to v. 19 means that everyone who has ever lived on this earth someday will witness an

unveiling in which God's love for us and the blessings He has planned for us will become a matter of public knowledge (cf. Matthew 13:43). Indeed! God's people will be on display such that all will see NOT ONLY whose we are BUT ALSO what God has wrought in us and for us!

That is what is involved in Paul's reference in v. 18, "...the glory that is to be revealed to us." On the Last Day, we will be on display as the people of God! And to understand this, think of Queen Elizabeth's Coronation. All of England lined up to see it. And such will be the case someday when all who have ever lived are lined up to behold the enthronement of Christ and His bride as the rulers of creation!



This brings us to a second element of our promised glory, the completion of our adoption as sons.

The Completion of our Adoption as Sons, v. 23b.

Romans 8:23, "And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons."

So NOT ONLY are we waiting for our status to be plainly revealed, we also are waiting for the consummation of our adoption as God's children — which is rather confusing. In vv. 14-17, Paul addresses the issue of the Christian's adoption and there he states that the person who comes to Christ:

1. Becomes a son of God, v. 14,
2. Receives the spirit of adoption (v. 15) as well as
3. The testimony that he/she is a child of God (v. 16), and finally,
4. The promise of an inheritance as God's son/daughter (v. 17).

The latter part of our Sonship is the focus here. Speaking of Christ, Paul said

Ephesians 1:13b-14, "...you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge [down payment] of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory."

It is in light of this truth that John wrote this;

Romans 8:17a, "And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ..."

Galatians 4:7, “Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.”

Sonship includes the idea of a future “inheritance.” And thus, though we are children of God in the fullest possible sense in this age, it will NOT be until the age to come that we experience the fullness of the benefits that Sonship brings³- which involves enjoying both (1) the glory of Christ (v. 17a) as well as (2) an intimate love-relationship with God the Father (v. 17b)!

That is what is being spoken about in v. 18 when Paul references, “...the glory that is to be revealed to us.” According to v. 23b, it includes the fullness of the benefits of Sonship! Notice a third facet.

The Redemption of our Body, v. 23c.

Romans 8:23c, “and not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”

From the perspective of the culture of Paul’s day, this is a concept full of meaning. Recall that to redeem literally means “to buy back” specifically in the context of slavery or imprisonment. In the Old Testament, “redemption” was used to refer to the release of a captive under a sentence of death by the payment of a price.

Exodus 21:29-30, “If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring, and its owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death. If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him.”

In the New Testament “redemption” was culturally in the context of slavery. In the Apostolic age the Roman Empire had as many as six million slaves, and the buying and selling of them was major business. Accordingly, if a person wanted to free a loved one who was a slave, he could buy that slave for himself and then grant them freedom, testifying to the deliverance with a written certificate. The word used in this certificate to designate the freeing of a slave was “Redemption.”

Whether you reference the Old Testament or the culture behind the New Testament as the background for this term in our text, the result is the same: Redemption carries the idea of purchasing out of imprisonment/slavery!

And thus, an element of the promised glory awaiting us is the Lord redeeming/buying our bodies out of its imprisonment/slavery! This raises the question: In what way is the Christian’s body enslaved or imprisoned? To answer this, we need only consider a few

passages.

Romans 7:14, "For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin."

Romans 7:18a, "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh..."

Romans 7:23, "But I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members."

Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please."

This leads to the conclusion that though we have been redeemed by the cross and thus have received new life in Christ, our bodies still await their final redemption in which they once-for-all will be purged of the presence of sin.⁴

Taken together, this is the picture when it comes to our future glory: Though we have been saved by Christ, you'd never know it looking at us. Because of this, it is easy to look upon the Christian with vanity... even scorn!

- a) *You say that God loves you and that you are saved, but where is the proof?*
- b) *If my father loved me, was filthy rich, and had unlimited power, you can be sure he wouldn't allow me to struggle as do you! So, if you are His child, why the struggle?*
- c) *Your religion is nothing more than "pie in the sky"!*

It is easy to take these criticisms and begin questioning our place in God's kingdom as well! Yet Christian, by faith accept this incredible message:

- Yes, today "our lives are hidden in Christ" such that the world does NOT see NOR respect that we are Sons/Daughters of God Most High. BUT SOME DAY THEY WILL!
- Yes, at times even we might question God's purpose and intention as our status as children of God hasn't resulted in tangible blessing in our lives... BUT JUST WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW!
- Yes, as Christians the battle is fierce as we endeavor to live as God's children. More than anything else, our flesh/bodies betray us and make us miserable. BUT THE DAY IS COMING WHEN ALL OF THAT IS GOING TO CHANGE!

Christian, like our fathers and mothers in the faith before us, CAN YOU SEE IT FROM AFAR? This truly is the battle ground for each of us today, the war zone of faith! In light of this let me encourage you: hold on to these truths and never let them go. To do so

will change your life. Recall the question posed in Luke:

Luke 18:8b, "...when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Like any relationship, a love-relationship with God requires work in which we guard our hearts from doubt and the fleshly thoughts that would destroy them. Accordingly, we are called to "think the best" (Philippians 4:8) when it comes to God- that is what love does (1 Corinthians 13:7a)! Notice the impact this had on the lives of those who have gone before us.

Hebrews 11:13-16a, "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own."

And so they lived as aliens and strangers in this world... suffering on account of their faith. Yet notice why they did it...

Hebrews 11:39-40a, "And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, [Why? Because they were unworthy? Was it their sin? NO! It is...] because God had provided something better for us..."

In ages past, our fathers and mothers in the faith lived as they did because they understood and accepted the truth detailed in our text this morning: Ours is a glorious future!

End Note(s)

¹ Of course, years later at the time of Christ, "the glory... of the only begotten from the Father" (John 1:14) entered into the temple many times in His earthly ministry!

² For example, in Matthew 10:26 we read, "Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known." To a persecuted people, Christ said, "Listen! The day is going to come when all will be seen for what they really are!" Speaking of the mysteries of God that have formerly been hidden from mankind, Paul writes, "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit..." (1 Corinthians 2:10) Peter wrote, "But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation." (1 Pet. 4:13) In Christ's first advent, Christ forfeited His glory (Philippians 2; John 17). At His 2nd coming, His glory will be fully seen! That is the idea behind the word used in this text- the revealing of that which is hidden.

³ And what are these benefits? (1) Final cleansing from all sin, Revelation 21:3-4. (2) Full conformity to the image of Christ, Philippians 3:20. (3) Participation in the judging of this world, 1 Corinthians 6:2-3. (4) Immortality, 1 Thessalonians 4:17. (5) Unhindered fellowship with God, Revelation 21:3-4.

⁴ What a glorious thought! Isn't our lifelong bane as children of God or fleshly lusts? Christ saved us and for that we love Him. But then we turn around and trample underfoot His cross again and again! Who here can't identify with Paul's words in Romans 7:24, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" Yet behold! The third and final element to the Promise of Glory that awaits us in Christ is the Redemption of our Bodies! There will come a time when we love Christ with a love untainted by sin! When Christ returns, He will,

“...transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory...”
(Philippians 3:21) Elsewhere, Paul put it this way, “For indeed in this house [our present bodies] we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven [our glorified bodies].” (2 Corinthians 5:2)