

# Romans

## Bible Study

### More Suffering Romans 8:17—30

We are living in a world that is groaning under the effects of sin. We are also affected greatly by Adam's sin having to deal not only with our sinful nature, and the sins of those around us, but also with a world that is not functioning as originally created. Death, illness, disease, toiling, godless activity and mocking are all things we will probably need to deal with at some time during our life. Everything is cycling down, decaying and dying. The whole creation groans and travails in pain together (Romans 8:22). As believers, we are not immune to any of these things. In fact, we grow and mature spiritually as we learn to handle the sufferings that are a part of every believer's life.

#### **Hope** (verses 18—25)

We groan within ourselves knowing that there is a future waiting for us that will be so much better. We look heavenward for the redemption of our body, for our adoption as sons, when we will finally escape this world. Having such a great and sure hope allows us to handle the suffering that comes our way. Instead of looking at all these problems, we need to learn to look at the hope we have in Christ. This is how the Apostle Paul handled the incredible amount of suffering that he endured. He was fortunate enough to have been caught up into the third heaven to caught a glimpse of his future with Christ. The beatings, whippings, shipwrecks and imprisonments were nothing compared to his glorious future. He called these afflictions short-lived and light (2 Corinthians 4:17). He had learned to keep his eyes on the eternal, not the temporal.

#### **Holy Spirit** (verses 26—27)

But there are other helps given to us by God as we navigate through the sufferings that are characteristic of this age. In the same way that focusing on the hope we have in Christ, and our glorious future we look forward to, the Holy Spirit makes it possible for the believer to hold up under the tribulations we will go through. We have a sure hope of glory because we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us. He is our seal who guarantees that our relationship with God will never change (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30).

Looking back a few verses, verse 14 shows that the Spirit guides us. Verse 15 shows it is by the Spirit that we have been adopted. Verse 16 gives us the assurance of our salvation by bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Verse 17 shows that we are heirs with God and joint heirs with Christ through the Spirit. Understanding and meditating on these blessings will certainly help us get through this life because they lift our sights upward, changing our focus from this earth to heaven. But there is even more, for according to verse 26, the Spirit helps us in our weakness in knowing how we should pray. Although I've taught in the past that the Holy Spirit takes what we pray and brings our request to the Father, it now seems more likely that as we walk in the Spirit and meditate on God's word that we now, through the Spirit, are able to pray properly and in line with God's will.

It is possible for us to pray improperly when we use the wrong teaching. For instance, praying the so-called Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9—13) is not a prayer that we should be praying in this dispensation of Grace. We also are not to pray James 5:15 (and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him) or 2 Chronicles 7:17 (if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land). Praying according to incorrect teaching will only lead to great disappointment.

Instead, we need to pray according to Paul's doctrine concerning this dispensation of Grace. When we take in God's word, and study it rightly divided, the Holy Spirit gives us understanding in how to pray

properly. Praying for wisdom in applying God's word and having a deeper understanding of Him is what God's will is for the believer today (Ephesians 1:18; Colossians 1:9). We are also to pray for each other (Ephesians 6:18) and for opportunities to be ambassadors in spreading the Gospel of Grace (Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 4:3). The Holy Spirit is instrumental in us having a proper prayer life. When we are walking in the Spirit we are now able to pray in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). The Spirit helps us to know the mind of God so that we are able to pray the way God wants us to pray. In similar fashion, Jesus taught the Disciples to pray according to the "Lord's Prayer." They knew how to pray because Jesus told them. We know how to pray because we have God's word and the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Please note that when we pray in the Spirit, it does not have anything to do with spewing nonsensical words and claiming you are speaking in tongues. The gift of tongues is always about speaking in a different, but known, language and was always to be done in the presence of an interpreter. Praying in the power of the Holy Spirit as we walk in the Spirit has nothing to do with speaking in tongues.

### **All things work for good** (verse 28)

Romans 8:28 is perhaps the most quoted and most misunderstood passage of Scripture in the whole Bible. Most people think this verse promises that everything will work out for my good because I am a believer. Most people interpret their good as being what they want. However, this verse must be viewed from God's perspective for a proper understanding. All things will work out, but it will be in accordance to His will, and will always bring Him glory. God is the focus, not the believer. Just as the Holy Spirit moves us to pray proper prayers that are in line with God's revealed will, God will work out all things to conform to His will. Ultimately, God's workings will also work out to be best for all believers. Notice that the verses following verse 28 give all believers the absolute assurance that they will end up being glorified. This certainly is God working all things together for good.

### **He also glorified** (verses 29—30)

Paul always finds a way to emphasize our eternal security. With these two verses he lists how God has dealt with members of the Body of Christ. Each word is past tense indicating they are a done deal. Paul is focusing on the group called the Body of Christ, not upon individual believers. Any person is able to join the Body of Christ by reaching out to Christ in faith.

Christ foreknew the Body of Christ, planning it before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). Before man was created, before any sin was committed, God had already crafted His plan of salvation that would be offered to all people. He predestined this group of believers to conform to the image of His Son. Jesus Christ was the Firstborn of many who will follow Him in rising from the dead and we will be like Him (1 John 3:2). This will be true of all saints, however, the Body of Christ will be the first group to be changed en masse.

The Body of Christ is also called out from the world to believe. This is a general call that can be accepted by all. This call is nothing more than the sharing of the gospel of Grace. All those who are in the Body of Christ have not only heard God's call, but responded positively to it. This has nothing to do with being specially called by God to be saved because you happen to be one of the elect. This Calvinistic idea does not conform to Scripture because election is always about service, not salvation.

Since members of the Body of Christ have accepted God's call, we are all justified, declared righteous. This was covered in detail in Romans 5. Finally, we are all glorified. Notice that all of these words are in the past tense indicating that they have been accomplished. We are so secure in our salvation that God sees us as having been glorified. We are already seated with Christ in heaven (Ephesians 2:6). How wonderful to be so completely secure in our position in Christ!

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