

PRESENT SUFFERING & FUTURE GLORY

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Romans 8:18-30 (Mark 11:1-11)

Prayer: Collect for Palm Sunday.

Today's Collect in celebration of Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem has significant implications for Christians. We left off last time with the great assurance of who we are as children of God in *verses 1-17*, and we were comforted with last Sunday's Collect knowing that we will be "governed and preserved in both body and soul by the great goodness of our Heavenly Father through the Holy Spirit in Christ our King." This assurance and comfort of who we are in Christ are essential when we experience suffering in our mortal bodies. Paul is addressing the tension between present suffering and the hope of future glory; because, one could reasonably ask, "If Christians are God's children and destined for glory, why do they experience suffering? Perhaps their future is not so glorious?" While we, as Christians, are indeed adopted children of God right now in our mortal bodies, the full unveiling of this status awaits the future. Our redemption is only partially fulfilled in the present, and we await Christ's Return to experience the fullness of the glorious resurrection-lives we possess in the Holy Spirit Who is our down payment for the future. Paul wants us to apply our assurance of who we are as children of God with hope for our future glory as we experience suffering in the present. As *children of God*, we are promised a co-ruling inheritance with King Jesus, and, when He Comes Again, we will reign with Him in resurrection bodies like His - even judging the rebellious angels; because, as the Father's Children, we are heirs. However, as heirs, we still await this inheritance, and waiting will involve suffering in our mortal bodies, just as our King did on our behalf. ***Romans 8:17 (READ)/Collect (last sentence)***

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The Christian is expected to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Who suffered *before* He was glorified as King. This glorious reign in a resurrected body came *after* His suffering. Christians who follow King Jesus will not have it any differently. This is a great source of confusion and stumbling for many professing Christians today as it was for the Jews who hailed Jesus as King on Palm Sunday. They, too, failed to grasp that Jesus must suffer a humiliating death before ascending in glory as God's Anointed. The people hailing Jesus expected the ushering in of the promised Davidic kingdom in precisely this way; with a triumphal entry resulting in a glorious reign. If there was to be any resistance, certainly the King Himself would not suffer, be defeated in humility and then die shamefully. This was unimaginable, but this is how 'the world' evaluates success; all glory without the cross, or, more precisely, no cross, no suffering at all, is the glorious goal. This is the marketing strategy behind all the pharmaceutical companies. Nevertheless, Jesus knew the path pleasing to His Father that would also save us sinners. He would have to endure suffering in the present, but He was confident in the future glory promised to Him by His Father that would far surpass even the horrors of the crucifixion.

Because Jesus willingly chose to suffer before enjoying the glory promised to Him, we, as children of God, have His Spirit to lead us in obedience to this pattern of teaching and to comfort us in our own suffering. We can be confident, as the author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote (**READ *Hebrews 4:15-16***). This is precisely what we do when we sincerely pray today's **Collect (Re-READ *relevant portion*)**. Therefore, King Jesus' suffering *before* being glorified is held up as the pattern for His sanctified servants, and this is what the Apostle Paul is highlighting for the Christian today, our **Present Suffering and Future Glory**.

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1. Eager Expectations (Verses 18-25 READ)

- a. Verse 18: Present suffering as God's children cannot compare to our future glory. This glory is the wonderful end-result of our present transformation from the inside-out by the Holy Spirit realized in our glorious resurrected bodies.
 - i. Illustration/Application (FCF): "Sufferings" include all types of trials such as sicknesses, death of a loved one, financial failures, loneliness, educational / employment disappointments, poverty, relationship conflicts.
 1. What are you suffering now? What comfort do you find in knowing that Jesus suffered in His humanity and understands what you're experiencing? What confidence do you find in knowing that what you're currently suffering does not come close to comparing to your future glory?
- b. Verses 19-21: The future glory of God's children will liberate creation's bondage to decay.
 - i. Again, this refers to the future "unveiling" or "full manifestation" of who we already are "in Christ" by grace through faith. This is the completion, or consummation, of God's work already begun, and, although we experience tension between the "now but not yet" status of who we are in Christ, we can be confident that what God has begun in us, He will bring it to completion.
 - ii. But our future glory will also liberate creation from its present frustration. After Adam's transgression, God ceased bringing about creation's fully ordered potential that He initiated and intended. Not only did God allow Adam's disobedience to halt the ordering of our world, Adam's sin also introduced disorder. We, as humans, were created to rule with God over a finely tuned worldwide Temple, but this intention for creation was disrupted, and creation is waiting for the ultimate

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fulfillment of its intended purpose, which is to be our well-ordered and finely tuned place of resting reign with Yahweh.

- c. Verses 22-23: God's children groan, with creation, in labor pains (not "death throes") for our hope of complete redemption.
 - i. Because we understand these groanings to be caused by "labor pains" NOT "death throes", we remain "*patient*" in our hope for the unseen future; because, we know that from these labor pains new glorious life will come forth; glorious life for our bodies and for all of creation.
 - ii. Actually, we enjoy the "first-fruits of the [life-giving] Spirit" NOW *to assure us that we are indeed children of God*. This offers us great...
2. ...Spiritual Support (Verses 26-27) The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and weariness as we endure these labor pains by:
 - a. "Interceding for us in Our Ignorance" (Verse 26 READ) [with His own divine groans within our hearts]. Our spirit and the Holy Spirit together 'groan' "*Abba, Father!*" while we endure suffering awaiting our future glory.
 - b. "Interceding according to God's Will" (Verse 27 READ)
 - i. What a blessing to have the Holy Spirit as our Intercessor as Children of God! Talk about blessed assurance. He has us covered, and by His interceding ministry, we can pray with complete confidence that "God's will will be done", and this is what we set our minds on; because, this is what the Spirit desires, so that we may bear fruit for God as His slaves – slaves to righteousness.
 - ii. We, as children of God, trust in our Father's will, and know that His will for us, even amid suffering, is good for us and will bring Him glory. This is what is articulated in our concluding section on God's...
3. ...Predestined Purpose (Verses 28-30 READ)

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- a. Verse 28 "in this time of suffering and expectation the Spirit helps us by interceding for us AND, by God's providence, 'all things work together for good'" (Moo, p. 527).
- b. Verse 29 Paul's emphasis here is our destination as God's adopted children. We will "be conformed to the image of His Son [our King] Jesus" who is the first born of resurrected and glorified humanity. Jesus is the first among many brothers and sisters who are adopted children of God. This is God's purpose for us, and He will accomplish it. This process toward our glorification has already begun, and it will be completed upon Christ's return.
- c. Verse 30 "God's intention, Paul emphasizes, is to bring to glory every person who has been justified by faith in Jesus Christ. Our assurance of ultimate victory rests on this promise of God to us" (Moo, p. 536). This future glory is just as certain as God's past calling and our present justification by faith in that call.

If we ever question our status as children of God; because, we are suffering, we can be assured that such suffering is actually expected in the life of a Christian. If we ever wonder how in the world could God work the suffering and mess of my life for good, just look at the shameful suffering and death of Jesus. That is the ultimate example of how God took the worst atrocity in the world, our human rebellious desire to kill His King, and work it out for our good salvation. Not just our salvation as in being delivered from the just punishment we deserve for our rebellion, but a promise of glorious reign with Him; the One we killed. That's a powerful and merciful God whose wisdom and strength far surpasses anything comprehensible in this world. We can trust in Him and believe that our present suffering is only labor pains that come before the incomparable glory of new life ruling over our promised inheritance of a New Creational Kingdom with Christ our King. AMEN.