

The Gain of Glory

Scripture: Romans 8:17–18

Code: 45-60

INTRODUCTION

Every Christian lives in the hope of glory to come. Our hope is best summed up in 1 John 3:2: "When [Christ] shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." David said, "I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). Our great hope is to be in heaven in God's presence and be like Christ. The theme of Romans 8:17-30 is our hope of such glory.

REVIEW

In Romans 8 the Holy Spirit confirms our no-condemnation status before God. He does that by freeing us from sin, enabling us to fulfill God's law, changing our nature, empowering us for victory, and confirming our adoption.

LESSON

The climax of it all is that the Holy Spirit affirms we will not be condemned by guaranteeing our heavenly glory. He does so by giving us confidence in our hearts and confirmation in our minds. Romans 8:30 sums up verses 17-29: "Whom [God] did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Whoever is justified (made right with God through Jesus Christ) will be glorified. That's what Jesus meant when He said, "This is the Father's will who hath sent me, that of all that he hath given me I should lose nothing" (John 6:39).

There is no salvation without glorification. One of the tenses of salvation is future: a person's salvation is not real unless it embraces the future. Some claim a person can become saved but lose his salvation, thus forfeiting glorification. That's not possible because inherent in the truth of salvation is a guarantee of future glory. Romans 8:29 says, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Before you were saved, God planned to save you and conform you to Christ's image. Thus glorification completes the reality of salvation.

The goal of our salvation is eternal glory. The Holy Spirit confirms that truth by placing hope in our hearts--we are saved in hope (Rom. 8:24).

Restoring Our Glory

Man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). Therefore he had a glorious beginning. He was honored and respected. He was without sin and radiated the essence of God's Person. But when man sinned, he lost his glory, dignity, and honor. He lost the beauty that was his in creation. That's why Romans 3:23 says man has "come short of the glory of God."

I believe we all know instinctively that we are devoid of glory (cf. Rom. 1:18-21). That's why so many seek self-esteem, expending tremendous effort to find self-satisfaction and gain respect. As comedian Rodney Dangerfield says, "I don't get no respect!" Innate in man is a longing to get back the glory he senses is missing. In his quest he fills himself with ambition, pride, and jealousy. He tries to rise above others but still cannot regain his former glory. Post-Fall man cannot know pre-Fall glory. But in Christ that glory is restored.

One day we who are Christians will be transformed: we will fully reflect God's glory and be found in His likeness (Ps. 17:15). We will be like Christ. We won't return to Eden but will go beyond Eden, for perfection is better than innocence. We will know a radiant glory that far exceeds the glory Adam and Eve had before they sinned.

The great British preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones rightly observed, "Salvation cannot stop at any point short of this entire perfection" (*Romans*, vol. 6 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980], p. 7). Man, in Christ, is reserved for glory (Rom. 8:29-30). Romans 8 concludes that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (vv. 35-39). No one will be able condemn us (v. 34) or "lay any thing to the charge of God's elect" (v. 33). Whomever God justifies, He glorifies (v. 30). There's no such thing as salvation without glorification.

Second Corinthians 3:18 says, "We all, with unveiled face [nothing hindering our vision] beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." As we gaze at the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from one level of glory to the next. While we are on earth, the Holy Spirit takes us through different levels of glory. He lifts us up by restoring our dignity. Little by little, as we look at the glory of the Lord, the Spirit restores the honor we lost in the Fall. That is a constant work until finally, when we see Christ, we reflect His full glory. Salvation is the path to glory. Once you begin that path you must come to its end, because the essence of salvation is being conformed to the image of Christ.

I. THE INCOMPARABLE GAIN OF GLORY (vv. 17-18)

"If [we are] children, then [we are] heirs--heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ--if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Paul introduced the theme of glorification by linking it with the prior passage dealing with our adoption. Romans 8:14-16 affirms that we are children of God. Verse 17 builds on that: "If children, then heirs--heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." "If" (Gk., *ei*) is not an expression of doubt--it is a first-class condition in the Greek text, something that affirms the reality of a statement. The best translation for *ei* is "since." Since we are children of God, we are also heirs. Galatians 3:26 specifies exactly who the children of God are: "Ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus." If you put your faith in Christ, you are a son of God and an heir. It is impossible to be a son of God and not be an heir. You will receive what has been promised to the heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

A. The Heirs of Glory

Hebrews 1:14 describes angels as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Christians are "heirs of salvation." James 2:5 says, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" Colossians 1:12 says that the Father has made Christians "fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

When you were saved, you were made an heir. God is faithful; He never disinherits anyone.

Philippians 1:6 says to be "confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." There is an assurance that if you have been saved, you will receive glory. If you sense the leading of the Spirit and His affirmation that you belong to God, you can be confident that you are a child of God and an heir.

Can a Christian Lose His Inheritance?

When Paul wrote Romans 8 to the church at Rome, he had in mind the Roman custom of adoption. When a child was adopted into a Roman family, he was not considered inferior to any other child of that family. In fact, sometimes the father would consider the adopted child to be superior to the other children. In Jewish culture, the firstborn child received the largest inheritance in the family--a double portion of everything. However, the Roman custom was to give all the children in a family an equal

portion of the inheritance--even the adopted children. When Paul said we are all heirs, he was saying we will all receive an equal inheritance. According to Roman law, what a person inherited was considered more secure than anything he had purchased. Paul used Roman customs regarding inheritance to illustrate the security of our no-condemnation status. God will not disinherit one who is His own (cf. John 1:12).

Galatians 3:29 says, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." If you belong to Christ and manifest the same faith that characterized Abraham, then you are an heir. Galatians 4:7 says, "Thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

B. The Source of Glory

Romans 8:17 says that we who are the children of God are also "heirs of God." God is the source of our inheritance--we receive it directly from Him. Colossians 3:24 says, "Of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance." God gives us the inheritance, and He gives it at His own sovereign discretion. One day the King shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). God prepared the kingdom as an inheritance for us before the creation of the world! Because He never changes (Mal. 3:6; cf. Ps. 90:2) we can be sure He will keep His promise. Some of us are heirs of people who don't have much to give. But as heirs of God, we will possess more than we can ever imagine!

The psalmist wrote, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Ps. 73:25). Jeremiah wrote, "The Lord is my portion" (Lam. 3:24). That's the mature perspective on our inheritance: in the midst of all that God possesses our most treasured possession is God Himself. Revelation 21:3 says that in the New Jerusalem, "The tabernacle of God [will be] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." The best part of the inheritance is God Himself.

C. The Extent of Glory

Romans 8:17 says we are joint heirs "with Christ." We will receive an inheritance as extensive as the one Christ will receive. That's a staggering thought because everything will be brought into subjection to Christ.

Paul said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3; emphasis added). God will "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him" (v. 10). Ultimately everything belongs to Christ, and that is the extent of our inheritance.

1. It is equal

Hebrews 1:1-2 says, "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things." Since Christ is heir of all things and we are joint heirs with Him, we too are heirs of all things. That is strictly an act of grace because Christ has a right to His inheritance but we do not. We receive it only through Him.

Romans 8:17 says we will be glorified together with Christ. Paul said, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Jesus prayed, "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). We will receive that same glory. We won't be equal to Christ in terms of deity, but we will be equal to Him in the sense that we will inherit all that He possesses. You won't find any "No Trespassing" or "Forbidden" signs in heaven! Jesus also prayed, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them [his disciples]" (John 17:22). That includes us (v. 20). We ought to think about our future inheritance more often. It's easy to become bogged down with earthly things. Instead we should dwell on heavenly things (2 Cor. 4:18; Col. 3:2).

2. It is endowed

The greatness of our inheritance is beyond human comprehension. We received it by grace, not by good works (Titus 3:5-7). We didn't do anything to deserve it. Far from starting off as children of God, we were of our father, the devil (1 John 8:44). We had to be adopted to become heirs, and God adopted us by His sovereign will (Rom. 8:30). Titus 3:7 says, "Being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Hebrews 9:15 says Christ died so that "they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

3. It is eternal

First Peter 1:4-5 says we have been promised "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God." Everything on earth grows old, becomes defiled, or fades away. But the believer's inheritance is incorruptible and eternal. We who are saved don't need to work at staying saved; we are kept by God's power. We will receive the inheritance promised us them before the world began (Eph. 1:3-4). That is truly cause for rejoicing (Rom. 5:2)!

D. The Proof of Glory

Paul said, "If so be that we suffer with him ... we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:17). Where is the proof that we will be glorified? It comes through suffering. We endure persecution, mockery, scorn, and ridicule because of our union with Christ. You can recognize those who are children of God because the world doesn't like them.

The persecution Christians receive goes to many extremes. Some Christians receive light affliction while others are martyred. But we have all been ostracized or looked down upon for our faith in Jesus Christ. Those who suffer for Christ are the heirs of God (Rom. 8:17). You will be glorified with the Lord if you are suffering for Him.

1. The fact of suffering

Romans 8:17 is better translated, "Since we are children, we are heirs--heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ--inasmuch as we suffer with Him." Paul assumed that Christians would suffer. As he said in 2 Timothy 3:12, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." There's no way around some form of persecution--it's part of being a Christian. It's proof that we belong to Christ. Suffering is a necessary element in our lives.

In 2 Timothy 2:11-12 Paul says, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with [Christ], we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." The hostile, God-hating, Christ-rejecting world doesn't like believers because they live in contrast to their sinfulness. Therefore we shouldn't be surprised when we endure persecution. Jesus said, "If [since] the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). Don't run from persecution and compromise the gospel. Too much of that goes on today in Christianity. Many are unwilling to pay the price for their faith.

2. The result of suffering

The more you suffer, the more you grow. First Peter 5:10 says, "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile, [will] make you perfect." The more you grow, the more you are able to glorify the Lord. Why do we have to suffer? Because the more we suffer here, the greater will be our capacity to glorify God in eternity.

a) 2 Corinthians 4:8-18 Paul said, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (vv. 8-10). Paul and his companions lived on the edge of death. He continued, "We who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.... Death worketh in us, but life in you" (vv. 11-12). There was a cost in spreading the gospel. Paul and his companions suffered that others might benefit. Nevertheless, "though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (v. 16). Those who suffer for Christ receive an inward dose of divine strength. Paul continued, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (v. 17). The more you suffer now, the greater will be your capacity for glory in the life to come. As believers we will be rewarded (1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor.

5:10). I believe those rewards are capacities to radiate the glory of God, serve Him, and take in the fullness of our inheritance--all based in part on how much we've suffered for Christ. The more you suffer here, the more you learn about God, serve Him, bear persecution for His sake, are infused with His strength, and are fit to bear an "eternal weight of glory." That puts suffering in a whole new light. Since we will be spending eternity with God, we want to glorify Him as much as possible, so that gives us incentive not to fear suffering. Someone once said to me, "I would like to join your church, but I'm afraid of what my mother would say." Scripture teaches that whatever ostracism we experience now is only "light affliction" that works in us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). Paul ended 2 Corinthians 4 with these wise words: "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" (v. 18).b) 1 Peter 1:6-8 Peter said, "In this [our inheritance] ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold trials, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom, having not seen, ye love." Our suffering will pay off in glory when Christ returns. Our eternal capacity to glorify God depends on our willingness to suffer now for the sake of Christ. Those most capable of glorifying God in eternity will be those who suffered the most for Christ.

3. The consolation in suffering

Second Corinthians 1:5 says, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." The degree to which you suffer is the degree to which Christ brings peace to your heart. There's no need to fear anything.

Some people are afraid to suffer for Christ because they think they won't be able to handle it. People wonder how I can stand the criticism I receive for upholding biblical truth. I do receive negative mail, but for every negative letter I receive, I enjoy the consolation of God's Spirit. I wouldn't trade that for anything. I'd rather say what needs to be said and get persecuted than not stand firm for Christ.

When I take a stand for Christ, the light affliction I receive confirms that I will have a greater capacity to glorify the Lord. That's why Paul said he longed for "the fellowship of [Christ's] sufferings" (Phil. 3:10). To the Galatians he said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (6:17). To the Colossians he said, "[I] fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (1:24). He considered it a privilege to bear the blows of the One who suffered so for him.

Suffering for Christ in this sin-cursed, Christ-hating world is normal for Christians. We should be willing to endure persecution because through it, we not only receive the consolation of the Spirit, but also acquire a greater capacity to glorify God in eternity. Romans 8:17 ends by declaring that we will be glorified together with Christ. He suffered, so we will suffer. He is glorified, so we will be glorified with Him. There's no health-and-wealth or peace-and-prosperity doctrine in Christianity. Christians who avoid conflict with the world limit their potential for reflecting the glory of God for eternity.

E. The Comparison of Glory

Paul was willing to suffer because he was convinced "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). The Greek word translated "sufferings" (pathema) refers to the suffering of persecuted Christians in 1 Peter 5:9 and the sufferings of Christ in Hebrews 2:10. Our current sufferings for the cause of Christ are not worthy to be compared to what we will receive in the age to come. Any suffering in this world is trivial when compared to future glory. That's a comforting thought in the darkest hour of a trial.

When unbelievers suffer, they have no hope. I've seen non-Christian mothers who lost a baby look into the casket, lift the baby out, and cling desperately to him, fearing they will never see him again. They have no hope because they don't know Christ (1 Thess. 4:13). Unbelievers have no just anticipation for the future. But those of us who are believers know everything will be right in Christ's kingdom. We know that there will be justice, riches, and no pain. We live in light of that hope.

Because we know the glory to be revealed in us is far beyond anything that pain could give us, we consider the suffering we endure not worth worrying about. Instead we dwell on the "eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit tells us we are sons of God. He confirms that by giving us the freedom to cry, "Abba, Father" and assuring our spirits that we belong to God (Rom. 8:15-16). Since we are children of God, we are His heirs. And since we are heirs, we will inherit glory so magnificent that it makes everything in this life of pain fade into utter insignificance. In light of that may "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:23-24).

Focusing on the Facts

1. What does every Christian live in the hope of? How is that hope best summed up?
2. How does the Spirit affirm our future glory?
3. Can a person become saved and never become glorified? Explain.
4. Why do so many people in the world today seek self-esteem?
5. Explain 2 Corinthians 3:18.
6. Who are the heirs of glory? Explain.
7. Does God ever disinherit anyone? What assurance do we have of that.
8. From whom will we receive our inheritance? Support your answer with Scripture.
9. What is significant about being joint heirs with Christ?
10. How did we receive our inheritance (Titus 3:5-7)? Explain.
11. How does 1 Peter 1:4-5 describe our inheritance?
12. What is the proof that we will be glorified (Rom. 8:17)?
13. What Scriptures support that fact that Christians will suffer persecution?
14. Explain the comparison Paul made in 2 Corinthians 4:17. What is its significance?
15. According to 2 Corinthians 1:5, what will we receive along with the sufferings we endure for Christ?
16. Why should a Christian be willing to suffer (Rom. 8:18)?

Pondering the Principles

1. Some people teach that just because a person is saved, that doesn't necessarily guarantee him future glorification. But the Holy Spirit repeatedly assures us in the Bible that whoever is saved will also be glorified. Read Ephesians 1:15-18; Colossians 1:3-5, 27; and Titus 1:1-2; 3:4-7. What relationship do you see between salvation and glorification in those passages? What effect should the knowledge that you will someday receive glory in heaven have on your life? What effect should that knowledge have in your relationship with God?
2. Second Corinthians 3:18 declares that the Holy Spirit is changing us from one level of glory to another. As we behold Christ, the Spirit makes us more and more like Christ. In what way is it possible for you to limit the Spirit's work in your life? How can you prevent that? What characteristics in your life have been changed since you became a Christian? What characteristics still need to be worked on? Are you willing to let them be changed? Thank God for the Holy Spirit's work in your life and don't hold back from Him the things that need to be worked on.
3. In Romans 8:18 Paul says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." How much do you suffer for Christ's sake? Have you ever been overwhelmed in your suffering? What do you focus on when you suffer for Christ, and what kind of attitude do you have? It's easy to feel like you're drowning when

enduring persecution. What should you focus on in times like that? Write down Romans 8:18 on a small card and put it where you will see it frequently during this week. Let Paul's words become ingrained in your heart so that when you suffer for Christ, you will be comforted from dwelling on the "glory which shall be revealed in us."

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