

Notes for the Ones Called Out to Meet

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: October 4, 2015

Sharing the Pain and the Glory

by Dan Trygg

“Fortunate are the ones having been persecuted for righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:10

“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.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 us.” Romans 8:16-18

If you follow Paul through the book of Romans, note his **emphasis on what God has provided for us in Christ**. *Having believed* in Him, we *have* peace with God, a reconciled relationship with our Creator. We also *have obtained access* through Christ *to the grace* by which we stand, and **we can boast and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God** (Rom. 5:1,2). [This is an interesting concept. What does it mean that we “exult upon hope of the glory of God”? In 3:23, the apostle had identified a root problem which we all have. **Apart from Christ, we lack or are in need of the glory of God**. The Greek word translated as “fall short of” in many translations of this verse is better translated as “lack” or “are in need of”. **Without the glory or radiance of God filling and shining out from us, we feel empty. This inner emptiness causes us to become preoccupied with ourselves, and drives us to try to fill ourselves with other things**, activities, possessions, sensual pleasures, relationships, or even religious experiences (Ecc. 2:1-11; Eph. 4:17-19; Hab. 2:4-20). **It should not be surprising, therefore, that God’s salvation would include restoring to us that indwelling glory.**]

Later on in Romans 5, Paul introduced the concept of **our union with Christ**. **Jesus was somehow able to incorporate us into Himself so completely that we were fully identified with Him**. The scriptures tell us that somehow we became so fully united with Him, that **what happened to Him affected us**, as well. It was as if we were joined with Him (“co-planted” or “jointly-grown”) in His death and resurrection (6:5). Paul uses a series of verbs with a prefix attached that means “together-with” or “jointly” as a way to describe our union with Christ, and how that affects the basis of our salvation in Him. **According to Paul, we have been “co-crucified” with Christ** (Gal. 2:20). We were **“co-buried”** (Rom. 6:4), **“co-resurrected”** (Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12), **“co-quickened”** or “made-alive-together-with” (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13). **We were “co-seated”** or “seated-together-with” Jesus (Eph. 2:6) in the heavenly places, and **we are now “co-heirs”** or “heirs-together-with” Christ (Rom. 8:17). Then, in Rom. 8:17, he adds two other concepts to this list: (1.) **“co-sufferers”**, ones suffering-together-with Christ; and, (2.) **“being co-glorified”**, ones being-glorified-together-with Him.

If you look closely at the flow of thought in these verses, you will see that Paul uses a conditional clause. We are children of God and joint-heirs with Christ, *if* indeed (or, “if really”, “since”, or possibly “even though”) we “suffer-together-with” or “co-suffer” with Christ, so that we might be “glorified-together-with” or “co-glorified” with Jesus. **The primary over-arching thought is that we can expect suffering to come with following Jesus. Then there also seems to be a tie between enduring the “suffering-with” Jesus in order to experience the “being-glorified-with” Jesus**. Paul is *either* saying that we have to endure the suffering *in order to* get to the glory, ...*or*, he is saying that even though we do experience suffering-with Christ, the glory is going to come. In addition to all the other things that go along with being identified with Jesus, **we can be certain that there will be suffering and there will be glory**.

Let’s take a moment to look at **the suffering of Jesus**. In a brief word study on the times in the NT where it speaks of the “suffering” of Christ, I found 19 verses about the *necessity* of His sufferings, and what they accomplished (Matt. 16:21; Mk. 8:31; 9:12; Lk. 9:22; 17:25; 22:15; 24:26, 46; Acts 3:18; 17:3; Heb. 2:9,10,18; 5:8; 13:12; I Pet. 1:11; 2:21-24; 3:18; 4:1). **It was necessary that He suffer**. As He was growing up, being prepared for His calling, He learned obedience through the things He suffered (Heb. 5:8). The suffering in the *little tests* prepared him for His *main mission*, the cross. **Jesus’ character and His relationship with His Father were deepened and established in the crucible of testing and suffering**. Notice that Jesus’ suffering included spiritual testing (Heb. 4:15; Matt. 4:1-11), human rejection, being treated with contempt, and being called names, in addition to the physical and spiritual torment of the cross. **All of this was necessary to fulfill His mission of dying for our sins, sanctifying us to God, and bringing many sons to glory**.

When Jesus called the religious zealot, Saul, to follow Him, He appeared to him as a bright light, and what He said was, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *Me*?” (Acts 9:4) **From the beginning of his Christian experience, Saul, who became the apostle Paul, was confronted with the union of Christ with His followers, sharing in their sufferings** (Matt. 25:31-46). Of course, he was very familiar with how they were suffering for Jesus’ sake. He himself had been persecuting them, arresting and imprisoning them, torturing them and putting them to death because of their commitment to the furthering of the gospel (Acts 26:9-11). **When Ananias balked at the Lord’s direction to go pray**

for the humbled and repentant Saul, Jesus assured him that He would show Saul what was *necessary* for him to suffer for His sake (Acts 9:16). Again, just a cursory word study on “suffering” and “afflictions” in reference to Paul’s life yielded fifteen passages (2 Cor. 1:8; 2:4; 2 Tim. 1:12; 3:11; Acts 20:23; 2 Cor. 1:8; 2:4; 6:3-11; 7:4; Eph. 3:13; Phil. 1:17; 4:14; Col. 1:24; 1 Thess. 3:1-7; 2 Tim. 3:11). Another passage, 2 Cor. 11:23-29, gives us a glimpse into the kinds of afflictions this apostle endured. Again, these involved opposition, rejection, and persecution from people, including imprisonment and violence. **He endured these things in order to accomplish the mission God had for him.** He wrote, “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” (Col. 1:24). **He saw himself as a partner with Christ, enduring suffering so that the message of the gospel might go forward, and the church might be built up.**

Jesus and His apostles had much to say about the suffering of believers (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 1:4-7; Gal. 3:4; Phil. 1:29; 3:10; Col. 1:24; 1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:5; Heb. 2:18; 5:8; 10:32,33; 13:12; 1 Pet. 2:19-23; 3:14-17; 4:1,13-19; 5:9,10; Rev. 2:10), and the afflictions they will face (Matt. 13:21; 24:9, 21, 29; Mk. 4:17; 13:19, 24; Jn. 16:33; 2 Cor. 4:17; 6:3-11; 8:2; 1 Thess. 1:4-6; 3:3; 2 Thess. 1:4-7; Heb. 10:32,33; Rev. 1:9; 2:9,10). It is clear that the apostles experienced suffering and afflictions for the sake of Christ, and they *expected* this would be true of *all* believers. Jesus had talked about the cost of discipleship in Luke 9:23. **Jesus said that if any person would come after Him, he or she must take up his or her cross and follow Him. The cross certainly implied suffering and affliction.** It only makes sense. Paul said that we used to walk according to this age, according to the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience. **Now that we have chosen Jesus, God is calling us to walk differently. It is like walking upstream. Suddenly there is opposition. People who were our friends are offended by the change in our lives,** supposing that we are being “holier than thou”. We may *not* be judging them at all, but the change in our behavior exposes their own sin, and they do not like it. They will probably try to pull us back into the lifestyle they are choosing. If we do *not* go back, they may begin to reject or mock us, trying to keep us at arm’s length so that they don’t have to think about their own sin. **If we are walking with Jesus, and are filled with His light, people will hate us, and even harass us** (Jn. 15:18ff.). **They see Jesus in us, and are reacting to the change He is making in our lives.**

In addition to the passage from Romans 8, at the beginning of this study, I found five other references that speak of how **suffering for Christ is followed by glory**. (1.) In Lk. 24:26, Jesus told the two on the Emmaus road, “Was it not *necessary* for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (2.) In Hebrews 2:9,10, the writer stated that in God’s plan to bring many sons to glory, *it was fitting* to perfect (or, “mature”) Jesus, the author of their salvation, through suffering. Having suffered, and accomplished His mission, Christ is now crowned with glory and honor. (3.) OT prophets, longing to discern God’s future plans, received testimony beforehand from the Holy Spirit concerning the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that would follow (1 Pet. 1:11). (4.) Later on in the same letter, Peter encourages the believers, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 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. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, **you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you**” (1 Pet. 4:12-14). By this statement, Peter explains Jesus’ eighth beatitude. Those who are persecuted for righteousness will experience the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in a profound manner. (5.) Finally, 2 Cor. 4:6-18 speaks of how we have the light of the knowledge of the glory of God resident *within* us, and it is *made visible* by the trials and afflictions of life: “For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be made visible in our mortal flesh. ... Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For **momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory** far beyond all comparison, 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” (vss. 11, 16-18).

We have the glory within us. Perseverance in the face of opposition and afflictions provide an opportunity for the glory of God’s presence and activity in our lives to be seen. **We can expect opposition and testing. They help us grow, and they are indicative of the change we have made in our lives, and the visible present activity of the Holy Spirit.** Since the glory inside of us is the Holy Spirit, and since we experience opposition because of His activity in our lives, **there is a very real partnership in both the suffering and the glory to be revealed in us. We must choose to walk obediently to the Holy Spirit in order for the glory to be seen.** It is seen only because the Holy Spirit is *at work* within us. When we are “*led* by the Spirit of God”, people can see His activity in us. **The opposition we experience is about the Spirit of God in us, not just about us. When we choose to obey, Christ-in-us is seen, and people react to Him.** As we persevere, the old habits and character are scoured away by the trials, and the new Spirit-empowered person becomes established and more visible. We grow in grace and in glory. **Finally, when Christ returns, we will be made like Him, and will shine like the sun in the indwelling, infilling glory.**