**Romans**

***How to be a Christian without Being Religious!***

**Lesson 14: The Coming Glory! (Romans 8:18-27)**

In the next section of Romans 8, Paul moves from his discussion on living in the power of the Holy Spirit to the coming glory that will be revealed in believers. Paul has already expressed some incredible truths regarding those who are in Christ. For instance, believers are no longer under condemnation; they have been set free from the legal requirements of the law and from the power of sin. Now, in Christ, believers are free to live out the righteous requirements of the law through the power of the Spirit. As children of God, controlled by the Spirit, their minds are occupied with heavenly thoughts—the same thoughts that occupy the mind of the Spirit, which are the very thoughts of God. Believers are led by the Spirit because they are the true sons of God. Why? Because those who are in Christ have been adopted into God’s family. He is their heavenly Father, “Abba,” Daddy. Believers have the assurance and security of knowing they belong to God as the Spirit “testifies” with their spirit concerning this reality. As adopted “sons,” they are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. What a privileged position, which merits an additional comment from theologian Sinclair Ferguson:

*The notion that we are children of God, his own sons and daughters…is the mainspring of Christian living…Our sonship to God is the apex of creation and the goal of redemption*.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Paul concludes the first section of Romans 8 with a subtle reminder that believers still live in a fallen world that is in rebellion against God. For this reason, they should expect to suffer just as Jesus suffered. Scripture confirms, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, **if indeed we share in his sufferings** in order that we may also share in his glory” (verse 17). Jesus warned his followers that the world would hate them just as it hated him (John 15:18). And, because of this hatred, Jesus warned followers to expect persecution (John 15:20) and trouble in this world (John 16:33). But, Paul also encourages believers by reminding them of this certain hope—just as they shared in the sufferings of Christ, they will also, one day, share in his glory. This promise of coming glory, for which believers long, is foremost in Paul’s mind as he begins the next section of Romans, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us”(verse 18).

Even though believers suffer, sometimes considerably, their sufferings cannot compare with the coming glory that will be revealed in them one day. This idea parallels with the following passage from 2 Corinthians,

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* (4:16-18).

Imagine this—the glory of God is going to be revealed in and through believers one day. I don’t know exactly what this entails. No one does. We cannot conjure up the glory of God, even in our wildest imagination. It is beyond us. All we can do is wait—in hope—and imagine. With this great hope, believers are to live each day knowing that despite the severity of their trials, glory is coming. So, believers are to shift their eyes away from what is seen to what is unseen. Not only will God’s glory be revealed in and through believers but also the glory of God will be revealed in and through creation. Paul continues,

*The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God* (verses 19-21).

Wow! Romans is full of wows! Creation is personified in these verses. Paul speaks about creation as if it were a person standing on tip toes and looking into the future. For what does creation wait? For the “sons of God” to be revealed. Nowadays, it is often difficult to determine whether or not people are truly God’s children. For instance, many unbelievers act nicer than believers, and many believers live according to their sinful nature; thus, they don’t look or act like children of God. As a result, it can be extremely difficult to distinguish between believers and unbelievers. But one day, that will not be the case. When Jesus returns to earth, he will separate the sheep from the goats, and those who belong to him will be clearly seen by a surprised, watching world.

In the meantime, creation waits. It has been waiting for a long time, from the very beginning when it was “subjected to frustration.” Creation is not what it ought to be. It lives under the curse of God. When Adam and Eve sinned, God cursed the world in many ways. People began to die. Women began to experience pain during labor. Relationships became fractured. Work became toilsome and frustrating. The ground began to produce thorns and thistles. Decay and rot became commonplace. The whole universe began to decline and, slowly, to disintegrate. The world around us was dying and still is. Likewise, creation is still waiting. This was not creation’s choice. It was subjected to frustration by the one who subjected it, namely, God. However, there is hope that one day creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay. One day, death will come to an end, and the glory of creation will be fully and wonderfully restored. Creation will be set free to flourish and, ultimately, to be enjoyed by the children of God.

In addition, believers will, one day, be given glorious, heavenly bodies (1 Corinthians 15:35-57). And, on that day, Jesus will return and restore this old dying earth to its former glory or perhaps an even greater glory. The glory of God will be revealed in his children, who will shine forever like the brightest stars in the galaxies. Scripture reveals,

*Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true”* (Revelation 21:3-5).

This is the day for which Paul yearned as should all believers. Believers need to know and understand that their present sufferings cannot begin to compare with the glory that will be revealed in them. God’s glory is coming! And that should give every believer great hope. In the meantime, we groan, along with creation, as we wait for the coming glory of God. Paul writes,

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not have, we wait for it patiently* (verses 22-25).

If you are really quiet, you will hear creation groaning. A tree in the forest eventually gives way to decay and a large thud is heard as it hits the ground. A car crashes into a pole. A baby cries. A bullet hits its target. A tornado rips through a community. Lightning strikes a home. The sounds of groaning are all around us, sounds that have been heard since a barricade was placed at the entrance to Eden. And, they continue right up to this moment. At the same time, believers around the world enter their prayer chambers, fall to their knees and begin to weep. The sounds of groaning are heard everywhere—on earth and in heaven. Yes, God hears, and I believe he weeps (John 11:35). The Spirit himself groans on our behalf. Every created thing, every believer, and even God himself groans as the universe awaits the final adoption of God’s sons. What an incredible day that will be!

You may be curious, saying: “I thought believers had already been adopted by God!” Well, they have. Stott explains,

*“We have, of course, already been adopted by God (v 15), and the Spirit assures us that we are his children (v 16). Yet there is an even deeper and richer child-Father relationship to come when we are fully ‘revealed’ as his children (v 19) and ‘conformed to the likeness of his Son’ (v 29). Again, we have already been redeemed, but not yet our bodies. Already our spirits are alive (v 10), but one day the Spirit will also give life to our bodies (v 11). More than that, our bodies will be changed by Christ to be ‘like his glorious body. ‘Bondage to decay’ will be replaced by the ‘freedom of glory’” (v 21).*[[2]](#footnote-2)

This is the great hope of every believer—the hope of glory—the hope that fills our hearts and minds as the day steadily approaches. We wait with great patience and, while we wait, we pray. Paul writes,

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will* (verses 26-27).

We are weak and fallen, but as Christians, God’s true children, we are indwelt by the Spirit of Jesus (John 14:18; Acts 16:7). His Spirit helps us in our fallen and weakened condition. Even when we don’t know how or what to pray, we simply kneel silently before our heavenly Father, and his Spirit in us prays for us. The Holy Spirit actually intercedes on our behalf! Are you getting the picture? The believer, though weak, finds strength in God’s Spirit. While we long to be liberated from this body of death and as we wait for the world to be restored, we confidently place our hope in the promises of God. We know the glory of God is coming. In the meantime, we watch and pray, knowing that One greater than we are prays with and through us.

**DAY 1**

1. Read chapter 6, pages 74-76, in *How to Be a Christian without Being Religious*.
   1. Ridenour writes, “The Holy Spirit does still more for Christians. Through the Spirit Christians have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”
   2. For what is all of creation waiting?
   3. What do we, as Christians, do while we wait to be released from pain and suffering? Explain.
   4. How does the Holy Spirit help us?

**DAYS 2** **and 3** Read Romans 8:17-21

1. Verses 17-18 say, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”
   1. If we are followers of Jesus Christ, what should we expect to experience?
   2. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-29 and 12:7-10.
2. List some of the “sufferings” Paul experienced.
3. There are many televangelists who preach what is commonly referred to as the “prosperity gospel.” The prosperity gospel essentially teaches that God saves us so that he can prosper us with health and wealth. According to John 16:33, 2 Corinthians 4:16-17, and Hebrews 11:32-40, why is the “prosperity gospel” false?
   1. Paul writes, “Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” He points to the coming glory that will be revealed in God’s true children (believers). This glory should be seen from God’s perspective in order to convey the value that he places on his children, his acceptance of them, and his personal delight in and approval of them. It will include honor and reward that will be displayed in them as they share in the glory of Christ. Now, state what you learn about his coming glory from the following verses.

Romans 5:2

Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:40-42

Colossians 1:27

Hebrews 2:10-11

Revelation 21:10-11

1. Verses 19-21: “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.”
   1. Who are the “sons of God” (Galatians 4:4-7)?
   2. What do think Paul means by stating that “creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed?”
   3. Who subjected creation to frustration?
   4. According to Genesis 3:17-19, when and why did this happen? Explain how this was a loving act.
   5. What promise is given regarding creation?
   6. Read 2 Peter 3:10-13 and Revelation 21:1-5. When is the Lord going to liberate creation from its bondage to decay?
   7. Using your biblical imagination, what do you think the re-creation of the world will entail? (READ ALL REFERNCES: Psalm 102:25-28; Isaiah 32:15-20; 65:17-25; Matthew 19:28; John 14:1-4; Acts 3:19-21; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Ephesians 1:10; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21)

Stott writes,

*The expectation that nature itself will be renewed is integral to the Old Testament prophetic vision of the messianic age, especially in the Psalms and Isaiah. Vivid images are used to express Israel’s faith that the earth and the heavens will be changed like clothing; that God ‘will create new heavens and a new earth,’ including a new Jerusalem; that the desert will blossom like the crocus, and so display the glory of Yahweh; that wild and domestic animals will coexist in peace, and in that even the most ferocious and poisonous creatures ‘will neither harm nor destroy’ throughout God’s new world… The general promise of the renovation and transformation of nature is plain, including the eradication of all harmful elements and their replacement by righteousness, peace, harmony, joy and security. But we should be cautious in pressing the details. The future glory is beyond our imagination. What we do know is God’s material creation will be redeemed and glorified, because God’s children will be redeemed and glorified.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

**DAYS 4** Read Romans 8:22-25

1. Verse 22: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”
   1. Paul presents the image of creation groaning as if she is a woman in labor about to give birth. Read Matthew 24:4-8 and Luke 21:10-11, 25-28. What do you think Paul means by “creation groaning?”
2. Verses 23: “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”
   1. What are, or rather Who is, the firstfruit(s) of the Spirit?

Stott continues,

*We…****have the firstfruits of the Spirit*** *(23a). Aparchѐ, the firstfruits, was both the beginning of the harvest and the pledge that the full harvest would follow in due time. Perhaps Paul had in mind that the Feast of Weeks, which celebrated the reaping of the firstfruits, was the very festival (called in Greek ‘Pentecost’) on which the Spirit had been given. Replacing this agricultural metaphor with a commercial one, Paul also described the gift of the Spirit as God’s arrabon, the ‘first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge’ (BADG), which guaranteed the future completion of the purchase. Although we have not yet received our final adoption or redemption, we have already received the Spirit as both foretaste and promise of these blessings.*[[4]](#footnote-4)

* 1. We have been adopted by God. In Christ, we become his “sons.” So, what do you think it means that we “wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-54)?

1. Verses 24-25: “For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”
   1. What is one of a believer’s greatest hopes?
   2. Read Hebrews 11:8-16.
2. To what was Abraham looking forward?
3. What do you think it means that “All these people…did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance?”
4. For what did all these people long?
   1. Do you have this hope and are you willing to wait patiently for God’s promises to become reality?

*For we are confident in God’s promises that the firstfruits will be followed by the harvest, bondage by freedom, decay by incorruption, and labour pains by the birth of the new world. This whole section is a notable example of what it means to be living ‘in between times,’ between present difficulty and future destiny, between the already and the not yet, between sufferings and glory. ‘We were saved in hope’ brings them together. And in this tension the correct Christian posture is that of waiting, waiting ‘eagerly’ (23, cf. 19) with keen expectation, and waiting ‘patiently’ (25), steadfast in the endurance of our trials*.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**DAY 5** Read Romans 8:26-27

1. Verse 26: “*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express*.”
   1. Who does God give to help us through the struggles of life?
   2. What are some other names for the Holy Spirit?

Isaiah 11:2

Matthew 3:16

John 14:16, 17, 26

John 16:13

Acts 16:7

* 1. What do you think it means that “the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express?” Why is the Holy Spirit groaning with us, and does this give you comfort?

1. Verse 27: “And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”
   1. Why do you think the Spirit searches the believer’s heart?
   2. Notice that Spirit prays according to God’s will for us. Why should this give us great peace and comfort?
2. What is the greatest lesson you have learned this week in your study of Romans 8:18-27?
3. What new discipline do you want to incorporate more into your daily life? Why?

1. Sinclair Ferguson, *Children of the Living God,* (May 1989): 5-6, quoted in Tim Keller, *Romans 8-16 for*

   *You* (Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company, 2015), 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Stott, 243. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid., 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., 243. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)