

Glory awaits. Sufferings are for the present time. But it is suffering with Him. Certainly not punishment for our past deeds in the flesh not even for present sinful acts. The Father (Abba) lovingly disciplines us if we need it, if we willfully do not turn back to Him when astray. Suffering with Christ is what we experience because we are faithful Christians. We voluntarily suffer with Him. But that is temporary as well. The sons of God are going to be manifested [publically displayed]. The children of God will be freed from the vanity [futility and meaninglessness], of living in the creation today.

When Adam sinned God drove the couple out of the garden and subjected the whole creation to vanity [uselessness, profitlessness, purposelessness]. It became what seems like a hopeless drudgery of endless cycles and generations, each species reproducing itself in a desperate instinctive drive to survive extinction. All that God created is in ruin (though we still can detect glimpses of its original order and beauty), ruin brought about by the fall of Man, Adam. Since then it groans and travails in pain together. But the present state of the earth is not permanent. The cycles of life and death are not endless, nor ever intended to be. But God in His grace subjected the Creation to this futility to contain, control and prevent runaway corruption, premature destruction and subsequent extinction of every living thing. Those who today fear for the survival of the earth's ecology and environment are not without cause, but hopeless if they ignore the real cause, SIN! And God has indeed intervened from time to time (the Deluge, Babel, Israel, the Exodus, the conquering and possession of Canaan, the judges, David and other godly kings, the prophets, successive world powers, wars, famines, plagues, etc.) to further slow the inevitable mad, suicidal rush to oblivion ready to roll out upon a world of sin. The Cross was the ultimate intervention, essential to present mankind a way out of the meaningless existence he woke up to every morning. God did (does) all this in **HOPE**. Therefore our earnest expectation (hope) is for His final intervention. This is the earnest expectation of the whole Creation. It is awaiting deliverance from the bondage of corruption. We are too. So we also groan. And deliverance of the Creation from vanity rests directly upon our deliverance from vanity and from our bodies of humiliation as Paul puts it

Philippians 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Unsaved, we didn't recognize it for what it was. Now that we have the firstfruits of the Spirit we feel it, the empty futility of life without Christ. Having life in Christ, we groan

within awaiting the redemption of our bodies. The body of sin betrays me, my mortal body that ages and dies or dies prematurely of sickness or less natural causes. A body said to be in the bondage of corruption. A body that now spontaneously generates sinful desires and responses. A body that, once it dies, decays back to dust.

All creation will be delivered from the awful condition now tormenting it. It will be delivered when we are. The cry of the frustrated believer, "Who shall deliver me from this body of sin?" (7:24) is echoed now in the groans of the whole creation and our own groans for deliverance from the physical infirmities, fears and travails that are now common to all creatures on earth. We are indeed waiting. Awaiting the redemption of our physical bodies. We ourselves have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb of God. We have been born again, given a new nature, one that cannot sin. But we have not yet dispatched the old nature from our bodies. And we await the promised redeemed and changed body we are to be clothed with as we rise bodily through the skies with the Lord to heaven, 2 Corinthians 5:1-9. That is our hope. Our sure hope, our sure expectation. We have the firstfruits of the Spirit as proof. The evidence to faith that our hope is sure. His being with us, actually in each of us, is a foretaste of more to come for us once in heaven. And He is with us forever.

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Only the date and hour of this fulfillment is unknown to us. So we in faith maintain enduring patience. And we pray. We have the continuous resource of prayer. For while we suffer we are to pray. The Holy Spirit in us helps us. He not only moves us to pray He intercedes for us with groanings. Groanings that cannot be uttered, too deep for human expression. He picks up our innermost heartfelt feelings and thoughts and conveys them directly to the Lord Jesus in Heaven. Feelings and thoughts stimulated within each redeemed soul through the interaction of the Holy Spirit and our spirit. These prayers are received on high by the Son. He intercedes there for us.

Verse 34. It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

There is a wonderful insight into the heavenly intercession in Revelation 8:3.

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much

incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. {offer...: or, add it to the prayers} 4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

No chance of a “dropped call” in this divine communications system. The Spirit here on earth in us, and the Son in glory presenting our Spirit-led prayers to God the Father. WOW! Does God hear us? For sure!

Are groanings and pain God’s original plan for his creation? Is death? Evolution? Survival of the fittest? Competition? Rivalry? Preying upon others for food, shelter or resources? Is a “food chain” composed of living creatures, not just plants, His original plan? No! But we can easily observe that His creation was fashioned to have a remarkable resiliency and symbiotic interdependence of species for them to survive in the worst of all imaginable conditions imposed upon it by sin. So much so, that many scientists (and even believers) marvel at the present state assuming it is the way it is supposed to be. Verse 22 debunks that notion. Furthermore the record of the creation states that plant life was to be food for the animals and humans. The prophecies for the golden age of the Messiah’s reign refer to the lion eating straw and declare “they shall not hurt or destroy on my holy mountain” (Isaiah 11:9). The present “food chain,” though fascinating and effective, is not God’s preference.

(This despite the not so subtle pictures of Christ in the sacrificial character of animals suffering in the wild. Each lives in fear of a violent loss its life to facilitate the survival of an undeserving other. Yet even this graphic type is only meaningful in the context of the creation ruined by sin.)

But back to our prayers and life in this wilderness scene. Given the violence and corruption sin has wreaked upon the whole creation what are we to think? Has God lost control? Why do bad things happen to “innocent” people and creatures? What good can come of that? Paul give the reassuring words for faith to lay hold upon and rest upon. These well known words are often quoted to someone who is suffering some awful misfortune. Words so easy to say and so hard to accept and believe. But words that bring peace of heart upon their wings when contemplated by faith

**And we know that all things work
together for good to them that love God,
to them who are the called
according to his purpose.**

God is orchestrating all things in the universe to work together for our good, our blessing, and thereby His glory. For them that love Him. Not necessarily for our immediate satisfaction and contentment but for our good, long range and short range. This is for us. **We love God!** It is for

those that are the called. We were called according to His purpose, not whim but purpose, His **eternal** purpose, Ephesians 3:11. We are termed “the called.” Not a random picks of unseen objects out of a murky bucket of liquid but an “eyes open,” intelligent selection of a few from among many. Why? Not for any deserving merit in us. It is God’s omniscience is in action. His foreknowledge. Foreknowledge that we would receiver the Gospel and repent? No. Though He knew I would repent, He didn’t pick me because He knew beforehand I would. Then my choice as a creature would be determining and controlling the Creator’s will. Not so! He chose me solely out of love; love willing to show His good pleasure in blessing a poor undeserving rebellious sinner with eternal life and continual blessings in His presence. He made me an offer no right minded person would refuse. But no sinners are right minded. So He gently but firmly somehow forced me in. I don’t know how. The offer of grace is genuine and presented to all. None are ready or willing to receive it. The feast is all prepared (Luke 14:16-24), the invitations delivered. No one is interested, too busy, taken up with more important duties or pleasures. In order to fill His house He sends out messengers to recruit guests. Any who hear and come, come by the working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts to convict and bring about repentance. Me! You, if you are saved! If not, Come! Come and be saved! Paul speaks of this marvelous outreach of God toward lost sinners in Romans 10:8-17.

12 . . . for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

So God chose us, and recruited us through preaching, but had predestined those whom He foreknew would believe to be conformed to the image of His Son. Chosen to be saved! Predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son! Adam and Eve were created in God’s image, Genesis 1:26-27. We are still responsible to behave as God’s image but can’t while lost sinners. But God will have His will done. Adam’s sin could not permanently derail God’s original intent. Satan thought he had won. But God’s plan was for another Man to redeem lost ones of Adam’s race. Who? Jesus Christ, Who truly is the image of God (Colossians 1:15). We have been incorporated into a new race headed by Christ. A new race of mankind, conformed to His image. God in His infinite wisdom and grace turned what looked like total defeat, into immeasurably greater blessing than ever

possible under Adam, even if he had not disobeyed God. Mankind will indeed be found to be conformed to the image of God for eternity. Christ is thereby firstborn [foremost] among many brethren all conformed to His image. That transformation has already commenced. We are being changed now. We will be completed upon the resurrection and the rapture of the saints.

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The Holy Spirit, who is in each of us is gradually transforming us, step by step, from glory to glory, into the very image of the Lord as the Spirit fixes our eyes upon Him by faith, through the scriptures. Be sure you fix your eyes directly upon Him as revealed by the Spirit in the Bible. Concentrating on any distorted image will distort our view of Him and we risk becoming distorted representations of Christ before God and before the world. Avoid

sentimental tales and meditations, not supported by scripture, and especially pictorial representations of Jesus.

But to go on. For there is more! We see again that God's view of bringing about our salvation is not "me" based but "Him" based. We have been called so we could be conformed to the image of His Son. Once called we have been justified. We have been justified so we could be conformed to the image of His Son. Once justified we have been glorified so we could be conformed to the image of His Son. There is a divinely appointed progression in implementation of God's plan that we be conformed to the image of His Son. He being Eternal ("extra-temporal," outside of time) God looks upon us as already glorified although from our perspective that is yet future. On the other hand we too, by faith, can look upon it as so sure it is as if already accomplished.

By Ron Canner, November 7, 2007

Scriptures relating to man in God's image:

Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Genesis 5:3 And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Genesis 9:6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

1Corinthians 11:7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

1Corinthians 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Colossians 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

Colossians 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Hebrews 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;