

(18) For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us!

(19) For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility --- not willingly ---but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons -- - the redemption of our bodies.

(24) For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

(26) Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the Will of God.

(28) And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified.

Think on These Things

- 1) Last week's lesson (vs. 1-17) concluded with the truth that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of belonging to His family, and we can call Him, "Abba, Father." Now we are heirs with Jesus, sharing in His suffering and His glory. What kinds of sufferings do we as Americans experience today, and what ideas do you have about the glory to come? See Ecclesiastes 3:11, Habakkuk 1:5, and 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Americans don't really suffer much for being Christians, at least not like in other countries where faith can result in persecution affecting oneself or one's family or job, including death! Sometimes, believers become social outcasts. In America, Christian standards are more and more being contradicted by new laws. Sometimes we are scoffed at --- or just plain ignored.

As for glory to come, in Ecclesiastes Solomon stated that God has made everything "beautiful." In Habakkuk, we are told to look and see the wonder God says will astound us. And 1 Corinthians adds that no eye has seen nor ear heard, nor any man imagined, the things God has prepared for those who love Him.

- 2) V. 19 speaks of creation being subjected to futility. This futility is explained as slavery and decay. What caused creation to be in this state? What will be creation's deliverance (v. 19b)? What is the believer's "guarantee" that deliverance is coming (v.23)? (Remember Ephesians 1:13-14)

Adam's "fall" in the Garden of Eden resulted in a cursing on the earth (Genesis 3:17-19). When God identifies (selects) His chosen, nature will be delivered of the curse (v. 19b). V. 23 says that men are waiting, too --- having been born again by the Spirit --- awaiting the redemption of their bodies. Ephesians says the Holy Spirit is God's guarantee of a heavenly inheritance.

- 3) Believers live in "hope." Do you hope for the car you own or the house you live in? As a believer, what do you hope for? How does Paul say we wait for it?

Vs. 24-25 say that we live in hope for our salvation --- and that with patience!

- 4) Who does Paul say is your advocate, the One who comes to your aid? Do you know your own weaknesses? What does Paul say your advocate does when you are at wits' end with your failures, financial pressures, family stresses, death or sickness of loved ones, and don't know how to pray to God? Does your advocate know how to pray successfully for you? Why is this?

In v. 26, Paul says it is the Holy Spirit who helps us in our personal weaknesses. Most of us know our own struggles.... When we don't know how to pray, it says the Holy Spirit Himself intercedes for our inability to even come up with the right words to express ourselves. We know the Holy Spirit is effective because He intercedes for saints according to God's Will (v. 27).

- 5) V. 28 is the beginning of a very important --- and challenging --- passage of scripture. Let's keep in mind the big picture as we dissect the verses a bit: God will glorify those He has chosen! So, God makes everything "work together" for their good for people with two qualifications. What are the two qualifications in v. 28? Can you share anything from your past that supports this?

The two qualifications are that: 1) the individuals love God; and 2) the individuals are called according to God's purposes and intentions. Hopefully, some of the class members can reflect on times things happened that distressed or challenged them, but, looking back, they were able to see the hand of God using the event(s) to improve their faith and Christian walk.

- 6) We won't argue about the sequence of God's provisions in these verses: believers are predestined, called, justified, and glorified. The key interpretation --- sharply dividing Calvinists and Wesleyan-Arminians --- can be simply stated as defining "who" is predestined.

Calvinists say God predestined "who" will and will not be saved. If God did not select you before your life began, you cannot be saved. Wesleyans say God predestined that those who hear the Gospel and "believe in Jesus" will be saved.

The implications of these positions are that Calvinists believe once you are saved, you are always saved; God will never allow you to fall away. Wesleyans believe that Christians retain God-given free will (to walk away from faith...if that is their ultimate choice!), but they must live faithfully to the end of life to be saved.

The people who concern both sides are those who appear to believe and come to faith, and then just kind of drift away to lives apart from God and His Church. You know them --- they may even have come here to this church with you! What happened to them? What are they doing now? What will happen to them come Judgment Day? --- What do you believe?

Personal opinions. The main idea is that sometimes people walk away from the Lord and His people. Did they do this because they weren't truly saved in the first place (Calvinism) or because they just decided to change their minds (Wesleyan-Arminian)? With either view, however, the conclusion is that they will be damned to hell because their names won't be in the Book of Life.

- 7) On what can we all agree is the goal of God's foreknowledge and predestination (v. 29)?

God the Father's goal is that all believers will be conformed to the image of the Son, which means as believers grow from new birth to maturity, we take on Jesus' attitudes and actions more obediently in this present world. These predestined ones will be "justified" and "glorified" in His Kingdom.

People and situations I want to pray for this week: