**The Hope of Future Glory**

September 5, 2021

Romans 8:18-39

Key Verse 8:23 “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.”

Romans 8 is a remarkable chapter. It is a chapter basically dedicated to the ministry of the Holy Spirit who secures our no condemnation status until we obtain eternal glory. It begins with, “No condemnation,” and it ends 39 verses later with, “No separation.” It is a promise of the eternal security of the believers. We will never be condemned, because we are in Christ, and he was condemned in our place; and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. This no condemnation, no separation status, this life of protection that brings us from justification to glorification is the work of the Holy Spirit. Last week we learned of the Holy Spirit’s work: free us from sin and death; enable us to fulfill the law; change our nature; empower us for victory; and confirm our adoption to sonship. In today’s passage we learn two more works of the Spirit, namely, He guarantees our future glory and He intercedes for us. The freedom we enjoy from sin’s dominion as Christians, the ability to do what is truly righteous, the desire to mind the things of the Spirit, the power to overcome the misdeeds of the flesh, the sense of belonging to God as beloved children, all these culminate in the wonderful work of the Spirit by which he guarantees our eternal glory. Then in verses 31 to 39, we have the great song of praise, the great benediction, the great affirmation that nothing ever can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**First**, the future hope of God’s glory. Look at verse 18. “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” In this life, whether we are a believer or not, we will suffer. Unbelievers suffer from their ego, pride and sin in general. They hope to catch the rainbow, such as winning the lottery. But in the end, they die without hope because their hope is in the perishing world. Believers suffer from trying to live a godly and holy life like Jesus Christ in this godless world. They struggle to be like Jesus and give up many things. It looks like their suffering is in vain. But not so. This is because we who believe will have the glory of the kingdom of God. One day we will behold Christ in all his glory. One day we will be honored by God in his kingdom and hear his voice say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” We will then all receive a beautiful crown of life and we will shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father. One minute of the glory of heaven will make us forget all our troubles and hardships in this life.

Look at verses 19-22. “The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of him 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. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” According to these verses God subjected the whole creation to frustration. When did this happen and why? According to Genesis, when man disobeyed God’s command. Once God said of the world and all that was in it, “It was very good.” But after man disobeyed, sin came into the world. Then the world and all its creation was not good because of sin. God cursed both man and the creation. Since that time, all of creation suffer to live in a world of sin. “Survival of the fittest” is not only man’s motto but also all the animals and even the plants motto. Animals struggle to survive, only to get eaten up by other animals. Have you ever seen a lion sneak upon a helpless young zebra? It attacks it without mercy and bites into its jugular vein in its neck, killing it instantly. When the mother zebra sees this, it cries and cries that it has to live in a sin cursed world. All of creation is frustrated from living in a world of sin where they have to struggle to survive. The creation is eagerly waiting for the day when it will be liberated from the curse. Zebras and all creatures are longing for the day when there will be peace and no violence, when zebras and lions play together (Isa 11:6-9). Until then, we will hear a lot of groaning of animals and creation.

Look at verse 23. “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.” Firstfruits was the little bit of the crop that the farmer pulled first, the first part that came in while the rest was still reaching its full bloom. The Holy Spirit is the first fruits of the full crop that God has prepared for His people. He is the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until we are fully redeemed in our bodies. Our soul is already redeemed. When we came to Jesus Christ by faith, we received the redemption of our soul. The old inner man has gone. Now we are a new creation. But our body is still a problem. We still have a flesh, sinful nature. Paul calls it the body of death in chapter 7. So, even though we have had adoption in terms of our soul, we await for the adoption of our bodies. In other words, our adoption process has started, but it will be complete when we receive our glorious resurrection bodies.

Look at verses 26-27. “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 through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.” God does everything to give us hope and strength. God knows that we are weak while we live in this weak body of flesh. God through his Spirit wants to encourage us to pray. Sometimes we feel too tired to pray. Sometimes we don’t feel inspired to pray. But when we ask God to help us to pray, God inspires us and intercedes for us through his Holy Spirit. Sometimes all we can do is groan to God because of our unfaithful Bible students or our many mistakes and weaknesses. Nothing seems to come out of our mouths, except groaning. We say only, “Lord, have mercy.” But God knows what we are groaning because he has the Spirit interpreting our groans to God and prays in our behalf.

**Second**, God works for the good of those who love him. Look at verse 28. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Because we are the children of God, God works all things for our good. What are these “all things”? In all things mean not only in our success and victory, but also in all our sufferings, hardships and trials. In all things means in every and in any situation. This is because God has sovereign ownership of our lives. Nothing happens in our life without his purpose behind it. God has a good purpose for everything that comes in our life. So there is no failure and there is no fatalism in God’s children if they accept that God is working his good purpose for them. A good example of this is the life of Joseph. When he was seventeen years old, his jealous older brothers sold him as a slave. In Egypt, Joseph suffered from separation anxiety, language barrier, and culture shock. Later he was put in prison even though he did not do anything wrong. So he could have questioned, “Why?” Why did all of this happen to him? All of it happened because God had a plan for Joseph’s life. By God’s providence, he became a prime minister of Egypt. Later Joseph realized that in all things God was working for his good to make him a source of blessing and an instrument of salvation for his brothers. He said, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” (Gen 50:20)

In the moment of our troubles and trials, we cannot see the end from the beginning. When we are suffering heartbreak, tragedy and disappointment, we wonder what good can come out of it. But we need to accept that God loves us and has a greater purpose and plan for our lives in our moment of sufferings. Whatever God permits to come into our lives is designed to conform us to the image of his Son. Look at verses 29-30. “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” Therefore we should not complain when we go through life’s difficulties and trials. Instead we should praise God and thank God and say, “Thank you Lord, for you want to conform me to be more than a conqueror like Jesus.” It is really a sign of God’s love that he in all things is working out his good purpose in our life through good times and bad times. Our lives are not controlled by impersonal forces such as chance, luck or fate, but by our wonderful, personal God.

Look at verses 31-32. “What then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all---how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” What must we remember when we go through the ups and downs of life? What is the most important thing? It is to remember that God loves us unconditionally and absolutely with no strings attached. The best expression of his love is that he did not spare his own Son, but graciously gave him up for us all. He bled for our sins and was crucified for our sins. When we are faithfully serving God and we lack something, God who gave his one and only Son, will graciously give us all things. His love for us continues through our whole life. He never stops loving us. Look at verses 33-34. “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” Sometimes we feel lonely in doing the work of God and in following the way of Jesus. When no one accepts our invitation to Bible study, we can often feel that everyone is against us. When students become nasty to us and say “No,” even before we open our mouths, we feel rejected. I felt that University of Toronto was against me. I felt as if U of T was saying to me, “What are you doing here? Get out of here!!” However, through this passage I realized that God loves me and it did not matter what anyone says. God loves us! No one can condemn us because Jesus was condemned for us. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We can go to the throne of God freely and express all our troubles and problems in prayer. Through Jesus we know that we are in the right and those who do not believe are in the wrong. Through Jesus we know that there will be a day of judgment and a day of wrath and anger on those who do not accept the gospel. They will be condemned, while we who have believed and have been faithful will be honored with the crown of life.

Look at verses 35-36. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” Paul believed that Christ’s love for him was like a vine and branch relationship. He believed that no matter where he was or what happened to him, God loved him through Christ. We can see what Paul thought mostly about. He did not think about his sufferings and his poor life. He did not think about those who left the church to follow their own way. He had no bitter thoughts or vengeful thoughts. He did not become angry at those who tried to kill him. He did not think about what his life might be like if he retired and just gave lectures at Jerusalem University. No, Paul only thought about the love of Christ. Paul thought about how great the love of Christ was. When he thought more and more about the love of Christ, he became stronger and stronger. Look at verse 37. “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Paul could only conclude that he and all who believed the love of God were more than conquerors in this life. This was because he knew that God was working out all things for his good. He believed that God was sovereign and the owner of his life. He never doubted God’s love. It is not simply that we triumph over these formidable forces, but in doing so we bring glory to God, and a blessing to others. A great conqueror, Napoleon said of Jesus, “You speak of Caesar, of Alexander, of their conquests, and of the enthusiasm which they enkindled in the hearts of their soldiers; but can you conceive of a dead man making conquests, with an army faithful, and entirely devoted to his memory? Alexander, Caesar, and myself founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone founded his empire upon love; and, at this hour, millions of men would die for him.” Jesus is more than conquerors. In Jesus Christ, we are more than conquerors too. All of this is not through our own strength, but through him who loved us. Only the love of Christ can bring sweetness out of bitterness, strength out of weakness, and triumph out of tragedy, and blessing out of heartbreak.

Look at verses 38-39. “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” There are many things that try to separate us from the love of God, both good and bad things such as school studies, jobs and children. If we don’t accept God’s sovereign love, we can lose our heart to these things. As long as we have faith that Jesus loves us, nothing will be able to separate us from the love of Christ. Nothing in all creation. Let us remember that God is working in our lives for our good because he loved us. May God help us know God’s love in Jesus Christ newly so that we may be more than conquerors.

Big Idea: The hope of future glory enables us to be more than conquerors