

The Prayer of the Spirit

Romans 8 v 18-30

Context:

In this post-Pentecost season we are exploring some of the aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit as revealed in Scripture. In today's study we discover a surprising and often neglected part of the Spirit's work in our lives, but one we desperately need. In the first half of his letter to the church in Rome, Paul has been reminding them of the glorious facts of the Gospel – that though all people, Jew and Gentile alike, are sinners who fall short of God's glory and are consequently heading for his eternal wrath and judgement, nevertheless, because of his great love for us, Christ died in our place, so we can be forgiven and reconciled to him, becoming heirs of God's promised eternal inheritance in heaven. In Chapter 8 Paul expounds the role of the Spirit in the life of the believer, and it is here that we discover this surprising but desperately needed help the Spirit provides to all who are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. So, let's dig in.

Observation:

1. What does Paul say our present sufferings are not worth comparing with in v 18?
2. What is creation eagerly waiting for according to v 19?
3. What happened to creation in the past according to v 20?
4. What was the purpose of this according to v 21?
5. How is creation described in v 22?
6. How are Christians described in v 23?
7. What does Paul say about hope in v 24-25?
8. How does the Spirit help according to v 26-27?
9. What wonderful truth is declared in v 28?
10. How does Paul expand on this truth in v 29-30?

Meaning:

1. What is the glory to which Paul refers in v 18 and how might v 19 shed light on this?
2. How can this future promise encourage and strengthen us in our present sufferings?
3. Read Genesis 3 v 1-21 and discuss how this passage helps us to understand Paul's words in v 20-21.
4. In what ways do Paul's words in v 22 express both the reality of present pain and the hope of future blessing?
5. To what extent is v 23 true to your own experience of life?
6. How can v 24-25 sustain and support us in this present veil of tears?
7. What do you think Paul means in v 26 and how does this work in practice?
8. How do v 26, v 27, and v 28 fit neatly together and build on each other to help us understand the work of the Spirit in prayer and its effect?
9. How does v 29 clarify and amplify the glorious promise of v 28?
10. Discuss what each of the terms Paul uses in v 30 actually mean: predestined, called, justified, glorified.

Application:

1. Does thinking about your future inheritance in heaven help you cope with your present sufferings? Why/Why not?
2. Have you ever experienced the help of the Spirit in the way Paul describes in v 26-28?
3. To what extent does it help you to know that God is working in your suffering to make you more like Jesus?
4. Read the following texts and discuss how they connect with today's study: 2 Corinthians 4 v 16-18, 2 Corinthians 1 v 3-7, Romans 5 v 1-5, James 1 v 1-4, 1 Peter 4 v 12-19.

Pray:

- Thank God for the work of the Spirit in our sufferings.
- Pray for grace to hold onto the hope of future glory.
- Pray for the eyes to see the ways God is at work in our suffering to make us more like Jesus.