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Romans 8:14-17. This is segment number 12 on the subject of the children of God which is dealt with in this passage.

**Reasons for Undeserved Suffering**

Although Christians are the children of God and they are joint heirs with Jesus Christ of an heavenly inheritance, Christian are not exempt from suffering here on earth. Jesus Christ Himself experienced undeserved suffering, and we Christians now share that kind of suffering with Him. Undeserved suffering, we have found, has certain values for the believer.

One, it demonstrates man's mortality and the need to preserve one's life by using it to store treasures in heaven. What, the scriptures ask, shall it profit a man if he gained the whole world in every respect possible and then lose his own life? And that's talking to Christians. Christians who will lose their lives because of what they have done with them in terms of the time that God gave them here on this earth. It is suffering that reminds us that we are not going to be here forever.

Secondly, suffering to the Christian reveals the holiness of God which reminds us that He must punish sin. And in the carnality and the reversionism of the Christian, there is destined the punishment of God because He is holy. We deal with God as a holy God, and we can't ever forget that.

And third, it has the value that it forces us to make decisions, positive or negative, toward God, toward doctrine, rather than to drift in neutrality. It is the spirit of our age to drift in neutrality. It is the spirit of our age not to be against the things we oppose and not to be in favor of the things we stand for. It is to be neutral. That is the curse that is upon mankind today. It is suffering that forces us to realize you have to take a stand.

**Reasons for the Suffering of Christians**

Now, this morning, we follow this up with some reasons more specifically for Christian suffering. It is not uncommon when Christians come to points of crises and suffering for the question to be asked, "Why is this happening?" There are reasons.

Reason number one is to restore us to temporal fellowship. All of you know that at the point of salvation, we enter a status of eternal fellowship with God. We are born again. We are in the family of God. It's a secure position.

We like to illustrate it with the large circle that tells us that this is eternal fellowship out here. We have come via salvation into that fellowship. However, there is another fellowship, and that is fellowship in terms of time, and that is an inner circle of fellowship. And to this fellowship, we can step out via sin. We step back in via confession. Sin takes us out; confession takes us back in. That's why confessing your known sins is critical to personal stability and to forward progress in the Christian life. Now, when we step out of temporal fellowship, that is a problem.

This is the area of the wasted life, and this area out here is where most Christians spend most of their lives. They don't really understand what it is to get back in fellowship. They don't know how crucial it is, and this is the area in which you will waste your life. This is the area in which you will lose your life.

So, the reason for Christian suffering, first of all, is to get us back into that inner circle of fellowship. And one way that God does this is by bringing to bear upon us various mental, emotional, and physical afflictions. Hebrews 12 points this out in verses 6 and 7 where we read, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?"

So that when suffering comes, one of the points of wisdom to ask yourself, "Is there a reason that God is bringing this upon me relative to my fellowship with Him? Is there something in my life where I am out of step with His plan and His thinking?" And get back in step. That is the first thing that the wise Christian asks himself when things begin to come apart in his life.

The psalmist in Psalm 119, that very long psalm, puts it this way beginning in verse 67, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. [Verse 68] Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes. [Verse 71 says] It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."

And there's the whole thing in a nutshell. Before I was afflicted, before you brought suffering, I went astray from doctrinal principles, and I didn't care. But now I want to learn the statutes, the principles of God, and you God can teach them to me. I'm listening now. Your affliction has caught my attention.

So, God's pressure of affliction is brought upon us to bring us back into that inner circle, and if we refuse, if we reject, if we resist, He gradually turns up the heat. The smart Christian gets back in, straightens it up, gets back to the Word of God.

Of course, the ultimate suffering for reversionism, the ultimate suffering that God imposes, is physical death itself. In 1 Corinthians 11:30, this is pointed out to us. In describing this context people who are in sinful conditions, Christians, verse 30 says, "For this cause many are weak [the causes that you will not judge yourself]

So, verse 30 says, "For this cause many are weak [that is, emotionally distraught] many are sick among you [physical breakdowns], and [ultimately] many sleep [that is, as Christians, they're taken home into heaven; they die physically]."

In 1 John 5:16, we read, "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin is not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." There are times when the sin is unto death and there's no reversal. Confession of known sins, of course, is the means for changing sufferings into blessings. 1 John 1:9 tells us that. The way we change suffering into blessing is confession of sin.

The second reason for Christian suffering is to enable us to learn about God's grace. Godly, obedient Christians are placed under suffering to learn by their personal experience how magnificent is the grace of God.

One of the all-time great examples of that that we have in scripture is the Apostle Paul himself. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-8, this man who bore a physical ailment which God would not remove from him, in 2 Corinthians 12:7-8, we read, Paul says, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me." He's referring to the fact that he has had an experience of being taken into heaven and seeing what heaven is like.

"There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me [something that Satan was permitted to do to him], lest I should be exalted above measure [the way Satan was able to bring a physical ailment upon Job]. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. But the Lord's response was, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. [Paul says, "If this is going to work the power of God through me, I'll take the thorn."

Then, in verse 10, he makes that statement which is a reference to the spiritual maturity structure of the soul that we looked at last Sunday night.] Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

So, the grace of God shines through like a blazing sun in a life which is suffering various needs God alone can supply. You do not learn the grace of God when you're hungry and you pull out your fat billfold and have a sumptuous meal. But when you pull out your skinny billfold, and it is empty, and God gives you a sumptuous meal, now that is grace in action. Where you cannot supply and God comes through, that's the thing that suffering produces. The capacity to bear suffering reveals our strength in God's power so that we are courageous in the angelic conflict. When we have developed, through suffering, the capacity to bear under the burden, then we are the more effective in the angelic conflict.

Acts 5, beginning at verse 40, concerning the apostles, we read, "And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

So, to learn God's grace by suffering is an honor in itself. The third reason that Christians face suffering is to develop in them the suffering of Jesus Christ. God the heavenly Father made His son Jesus Christ the pattern for all of His children. Ultimately, we are going to be like the Lord Jesus.

1 John 3:2 puts it this way, "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as he is." That is the objective: to make us like Christ. Now, suffering is part of what God uses to do exactly that. It gives us the opportunity to respond in the same pattern that Jesus Christ responded. We learn through suffering to exercise love and sympathy for other sin grief as Jesus did. It is much easier to sympathize and to bear with another person's suffering if you, too, have been through it.

In Hebrews 2:17-18, we read therefore, "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to help them that are tempted."

He in His humanity bore all the temptations of the world of the devil. He did not bear the temptation of the sin nature, but He bore the temptations of the world. He bore the temptations of Satan, and He knew how attractive and how appealing that was. He knew how to commiserate and to help and to sympathize with those who are facing the same thing.

Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet apart from a sin nature. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." There is a God who is ready to help, and the afflictions that we have are those that develop in us the very character of Christ.

One more scripture, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

The character qualities of Jesus Christ - humility, patience, thankfulness, joy, self-control and persistence - are learned in the school of suffering. When we have learned them, we're in a position to help others in the same way.

A fourth reason that the Christian suffers is to prepare him for greater service to God. Trials prepare the Christian soldier for more intense fighting in the angelic combat. It is the sufferings that we go through that we don't deserve that shape us up for that angelic combat. It is the soldier who has once been in combat and who has been under fire who therefore by that baptism of fire is infinitely more effective on the field of battle. The life of the Apostle Paul was therefore one of suffering from the very first, and he grew more powerful all the time in defeating Satan and accomplishing the will of God.

The infirmities suffered by believers over the centuries have produced some of the greatest Christians ever. We have only to think of one: poor John Bunyan. All he wanted to do was to preach the simple gospel, and yet he was in a country that said, "No, you cannot tell people that they can go to heaven simply by trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior. Unless the Roman church brings them into heaven, they will not be in that heaven." John Bunyan says, "You're wrong. The Word of God contradicts you."

And he continued preaching, and they threw him in prison for something like twelve years. What an intense punishment for doing a good thing. But during that period of time, he wrote the magnificent "Pilgrim's Progress" which has excited the imagination and the Christians through the centuries now. It is suffering that produces some of the finest in the believer when it comes to the service of God. It gives us that divine viewpoint frame of reference.

And finally, number five, the Christian suffering is to complete, the Bible says, the sufferings of Christ. We suffer to fill up the sufferings of Christ. Christians now bear the attacks against the Lord Jesus Christ as He offers eternal life to the lost. Colossians 1:24 puts it this way, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church."

What a fantastic statement. Obviously, our suffering does not contribute to our eternal life, but the hatred of the world against Jesus Christ cannot go directly to Him. Once He left the Mount of Olives, He was beyond human reach. So, therefore, the attack now is on those of us that are Christians, those of us who make up the body of Christ. And I want you to know that every time the body of Christ is attacked, the Lord Jesus Christ is attacked. If the world understood that, they might be a little more careful of how they treat the Christian, because to attack a Christian is to attack the Son of God.

Acts 9:4, in the case of the Apostle Paul on the Damascus road who was one of the great persecutors of Christians, when the light hit him and he fell to the ground, Acts 9:4 says, "And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?' And Paul said, '[Persecuting you? Who are you?] Who art thou, Lord?' The Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.'"

Now, when did Paul ever persecute Jesus Christ? Never directly, but he had persecuted all those Christians who form the body of Christ. You see, to be a member of the royal family of God is to be under the direct supervision of the king of that family. To attack any member of that royalty is to attack the sovereign Himself.

So, it is good to know that every time a Christian, for the Lord's sake, is beaten, every time you are hated, every time you are spit upon, every time you are misrepresented, every time you are just plain ignored, every time you are treated with condescension, every time you are viewed with contempt, I want you to know that the Lord Jesus Christ feels it, too. And that's good news to know, because ultimately, they are directing that attack at Him and not at us.

So, our sufferings are part of the sufferings against Jesus Christ that have not yet been completely fulfilled. The sufferings of Satan, the attacks of Satan and his world system against Jesus Christ are the sufferings that we fill up relative to the Savior.

**Sharing in Christ's Glory**

Now, getting back to Romans 8, the Apostle Paul says this suffering is going somewhere. It's not just going nowhere. And in the last part of verse 17, we have a fantastic connection. Verse 17 says, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ [and we've seen something of what that means]; if so be that we suffer with Him [and we've seen something of what that means], that we may be also glorified."

The word "that" looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's the Greek word "hina." It introduces, it's a conjunction, introducing the purpose of undeserved suffering. We translate it, "in order that." It has the word "also" which is the word "kai," another conjunction. This is connecting suffering to another experience with Jesus Christ. We suffer in order that we may be connected not only with suffering relative to Christ and share in that with Him in the sense of undeserved suffering, but sharing something else which just about blows the mind of any rational person, and that is that we will be glorified together.

The Greek word looks like this: "sundoxazo." "Sundoxazo" means to experience glory along with someone else. The word "sun" means "with," and the word "doxazo" means "glory." Glory together. In the Greek language, this is in the aorist tense, which means that at some point of time, we enter a status of glory with Jesus Christ, and that point of time is out in the future in the rapture. It is passive voice, which tell us that you cannot glorify yourself. This is something that God does to us. And it is in the subjunctive mood, which means it's of potential experience for each Christian. It is part of that heavenly inheritance to be glorified with Jesus Christ, to be sharing His status of glorification.

In the Old and New Testaments, the word "glory" has a specific meaning. And, you know, we knock this word around, and most people don't really know what glory means. They couldn't really define it. They don't have a really clear image of what the Bible means when it says, "We are going to be glorified with Christ." What it means in the Old and New Testament, it refers to a visible, dazzling brightness of majestic splendor and beauty reflecting the essence of God. The glory deals with the worth of a person. That's what the word used to mean, basically. It is the worth of the essence of God.

Everything that He is, and all those attributes that we know about Him, and all those fantastic qualities that characterize Him (and His love and His eternal life and His absolute righteousness, His sovereignty, His omniscience, His omnipotence, His omnipresence, His immutability, and all the rest of them), all of these things that make Him a distinct, unique person in the universe, that is His glory. And that quality of absolute perfection is visible by a dazzling light, a light of enormous beauty. You have to put all these pieces together to get the concept of glory. Glory connotes something impressive that sets one person apart from another person.

The fiery cloud in the Old Testament which accompanied the presence of God was that kind of a visible demonstration of glory. Later, after biblical times, the Jews gave a name to that glory cloud that appeared like with Moses at Sinai, as it went before the Israelites through the wilderness, and most important as it dwelt in the Holy of Holies in the temple. That brilliant glory light. The Jews called it "the shekinah glory," and this to them is still a very precious term. The word "shekinah" means simply "dwelling in glory." Shekinah glory, the dwelling in glory.

And this was the reference to the glory of God as it would appear in Old Testament times. And it's a good word because it aptly describes God whom the Bible calls the King of Glory. In Psalm 24:7-10, we have that reference made: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD."

And in your Bible, you will know that it's a capital L, a capital O, a capital R, a capital D, which stands for the sacred Tetragrammaton YHWH, which is the most sacred name of God among the Jewish people. The name of God as the holy law-giver related to the people of Israel and to the earth. Who is this King of Glory? It is the LORD, the one who has those absolute perfections of the essence of God.

"Strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." There is no greater glory in all the universe than that of God, because there is no one more perfect.

Satan, the Bible describes, as an angel of light, but that's his cheap imitation to try to look like God. That's why Satan surrounds himself with light. And people who have occult experiences and see glowing lights - very often the charismatics will talk about, "I am lying here on my bed of sickness and all the sudden, this glowing light appeared down at my feet, and I rose up and said, 'Oh, speak to me, glowing light!'" And, don't just slough that off as being a bunch of foolishness. They did see a glowing light! It's what the Bible says. Satan comes along and he surrounds himself with a counterfeit light because he's trying to look like the Lord of Glory, but it's a cheap dime store imitation. It's something that anybody can pick up at K-Mart. But the real thing, the real thing is not so easily come by. It comes only from the One who has it, which is God Himself.

Romans 3:23 tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And, you see, when you understand that glory is the brilliant, external reflection of the essence of God, then you say, "Now I see what the problem is! The reason I can't go to heaven is because I'm not as good as God. I do not have His holiness." Now, your own your road to finding the narrow gate through which you can get the holiness of God given to you as a gift via acceptance and trust in Christ as Savior. Through the gospel, we are therefore told, God has provided a means for we lost sinners to secure, of all things, the very glory of God for ourselves.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 puts it this way, "Unto which He called you by our gospel [our good news: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ], to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." The gospel is the means to obtaining that, and the agent that brings us into sharing the glory of God is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Hebrews 2:10 puts it this way, "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Jesus was brought to maturity through sufferings, He who was the captain leading all the rest of us into God's glory.

1 Peter 5:10 says, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." So that through the gospel with Christ as the agent, it is possible for us to experience the glory of God.

**The Transfiguration**

Now, to try to crystalize and to make this more realistic, would you turn to Matthew chapter 17 in your Bible to the record of the transfiguration experience of the Lord Jesus Christ? As you know, while the Lord Jesus was here upon this earth, He looked like any other ordinary human being. But because He was God, He retained all of the qualities of His essence, and He had, consequently, the glory of God. He had the brilliant, dazzling, Shekinah glory right with Him. He never lost that, but it was shielded by His humanity. His body acted like a temple.

You couldn't see the Shekinah glory of God when you approached the Jewish temple because it was in the Holy of Holies and it was hidden from sight. But once a year when the high priest walked around that curtain with the blood of the animal for the annual atoning of the sins of the people, and he walked into that Holy of Holy, his eyes were practically knocked out of the sockets by the brilliance of the light in that place as he walked into the presence of the shekinah glory of God. Now, the Lord Jesus shielded that, and this is the record of one time when He let it shine through.

Matthew 17:1 says, "After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain privately, And He was transfigured before them: and His face did shine like the sun, and His raiment was as white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three booths; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'"

Now, that's not entirely as foolish as it sounds, because Peter was acting upon a piece of doctrinal understanding. Where does the Shekinah glory of God dwell? It dwells in a temple. It dwells in the encasement of the temple in Jerusalem. So, he said, "Here before my eyes, I see the glory of God. Let us make a booth, a temple, a house for this glory to dwell in."

"While he spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.' And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were very much afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, 'Arise, and be not afraid.' And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, except Jesus only."

Jesus had taken these three men up to the mountain. The other gospels that tell us this same incident tell us that they fell asleep at the top. Jesus proceeded to pray. Suddenly, His flesh and His clothing became brilliant and radiant as the sun. It woke up the disciples. They looked, and they fell down in fear.

This display of the glory of God came from within Jesus Christ Himself. It was not an external addition as it was with Moses on Mount Sinai when he came and he was all illuminated like a neon sign after he'd been in the presence of the glory of God on the top of the mountain. Jesus, because He was God in human form, had the Shekinah glory. It was always present with Him. Now, he let it shine through. And, He is the radiance of God Himself for the simple reason - and I stress this - for the simple reason that He is God. He has the essence of deity.

Hebrews 1:3 says, "Who [referring to Jesus Christ] being the brightness of His glory, 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." Being the brightness of His glory, Jesus Christ, having the essence of God, possessed the Shekinah glory. Moses and Elijah were standing there discussing the imminent death of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world, and they too shone with the Shekinah glory. That's what really struck the disciples. It did not surprise them to see that Jesus shone with the glory of God, but to see Moses and Elijah, two human beings that they knew well from scripture, to be shining with that glory, that caught their attention. They disciples in this went into fear, but the Lord said, "Don't be afraid."

And their experience was the experience of what happens when a Christian dies. When a Christian dies, you know, the angels come, and they take the soul and spirit of that believer and they escort him into heaven. Now, when that Christian walks in there, one of the things he is impacted with immediately is the Shekinah glory of God.

Now, can you imagine what it is like to be unconscious in a hospital bed and suddenly to have the soul and spirit leave the body, death ensues, and you come back to consciousness, and there you are standing in the brilliance of the enormity of the Shekinah glory of God in heaven. And, to take a look at yourself in that intermediate body that you get at that point in time to substitute for your physical body until you come back to it, you look at yourself, and you see yourself glowing with the glory of God as the disciples saw Moses and Elijah. Their experience was a microcosm of what every Christian experiences at death.

This, of course, was the preview of the second coming of Jesus Christ to the earth in the Shekinah glory. He had told the disciples they would see Him coming some day in that kind of brilliant glory. At His trial before the Sanhedrin, He told them that they would see Him coming back to earth in the Shekinah glory. Well, when He said that, the high priest screamed, "Blasphemy!" Because here's a person that they considered a man and said, "You're going to see Me coming down from heaven some day with the Shekinah glory of God."

What was He claiming? He was claiming deity. So, for you to be told that your suffering in time with Christ is going to lead to another step, your glorification with Him, your sharing this brilliant illuminating display of the essence of God, is beyond human comprehension. It is obvious that something tremendous must take place within us or we could not demonstrate this kind of glory.

You are going to be perfect. You are going to be just as perfect as God, and therefore, you will be fully at-ease in the presence of that glory. When the Lord Jesus comes to earth, this glory will be demonstrated, and we who return with Him will be sharing that glory.

Matthew 24:30 talks about the sign of the coming of the Son of Man. This is the sign: the Shekinah glory. This is why when that glory fire breaks out there in outer space, all the world will see it. It will not be a secret coming. And this is what Jesus told His disciples: "There's going to be all kinds of kooks coming along claiming to be the Christ. Don't believe them. They are not that. When I come, you will know it." Why? Because the Shekinah glory is going to illuminate the whole sky, and all of humanity will look up, and they will see Him coming. And they'll know who it is.

John, themselves, later referred to the vision on the Mount of Transfiguration as a display of the Shekinah glory of Jesus Christ. You can read about that in 2 Peter 1:16-18 and John 1:14. And in 1 Corinthians 2:8, the Apostle Paul described Jesus Christ to the rulers of Israel as the One that the crucified was the Lord of the Shekinah glory. The Lord Jesus when He was here on earth prayed that this glory that He once knew would be the glory which His humanity would return to once more in heaven. John 17:5, and this is what He was referring to. There is now in heaven a man who reflects the Shekinah glory of God. He reflects it on the one part because He is deity, but He reflects it on the other part because He is humanity to whom it had to be given just as it will be then to us. So, He is the pattern to all the rest of us.

When Stephen, the first Christian martyr, faced death, one of the things that was enormous comfort to him in his final moment before they crushed the life out of his body was that he looked up into heaven and he saw the Lord Jesus Christ, and he saw Him standing in the shekinah glory, in the glory of God. Acts 7:55, "But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God."

And the Son of Man was a technical term that all the Jewish rabbis understood. It was a technical term taken from the Book of Daniel that referred to God. He said, "I see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God," and they knew he was referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. So, they rushed upon him, the stoned him to death, and in the next moment, Stephen, in his human spirit and in his soul, stood in that shekinah glory brilliant light himself and became part of it.

On the day of Pentecost, you remember that two tongues of flame appeared over the heads of every one of the believers. That flame was the Shekinah glory of God which came down upon the believers so that it signaled that what Jesus had promised would happen had taken place. He had told the disciples, "Not many days after my departure, God the Holy Spirit will come to replace me as your Comforter and your Guide. And He will indwell you forever."

And, on that day of Pentecost, that's exactly what happened, and this was the signal that the body of Christ began through the baptism of the Holy Spirit which took place instantly at that time as it does for every believer at the point of salvation. Our bodies, therefore, the Bible says, are the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Shekinah glory dwelt in the temple of the Old Testament. That glory now dwells in each of us.

The gospel, of course, is the means by which we secure that glory. Jesus Christ is the One who brings us into that glory. The Christians hope one day of shining with that tremendous splendor is absolutely certain. He can't lose it. It cannot be lost. And someday when he comes into his resurrection body, he will be shining with that glory.

1 Corinthians 15:43 puts it this way. 1 Corinthians 15:43 says, "It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." A body is buried in weakness. It is buried in the dishonor of death, but it's going to be raised in the Shekinah glory of God, and it is going to be raised in all the power that that connotes. Our minds don't begin to imagine the tremendous power that is going to be ours as Christians because we have been regenerated by the work of the Holy Spirit because we're part of God's family. We who are justified will inevitably be glorified, and the Lord Jesus Christ is going to make it possible for us someday in our bodies to radiate His glory.

**Comparing Present Sufferings to Future Glory**

And so, in Romans 8:18 that we look at next makes the summary statement that now may be easier for us to understand. In 8:18, Romans, Paul says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

And you're right, Paul; it isn't. You see the connection between suffering. No matter how intense it is, no matter how tragic it is, no matter how sorrowful it may be, no matter how painful it may be, no matter all those things even if it's not physical suffering that we bear because we are Christians, none of that is important. There is no reason to whine. There is no reason to complain. There is no reason for self-pity. It is nothing compared to what God is going to transform you into someday when we come into His presence.

Therefore, you and I as believers should be the kind of people who live in the light of that truth. We should live as people who understand that we will bear upon our physical bodies the very glory of the living God. The glory that comes from the fact that God is perfect and that we are just as perfect through Christ as He is to bear that glory.

1 Thessalonians 2:12, therefore, admonishes us, "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory." That's well put. That you Christians would walk worth of God. After all, you're members of the royal family. You're the aristocrats of all the believers that have ever lived through all the ages. You are the body of Christ. That you would walk worthy of God who has called you into His kingdom and into His glory. Christians are so to live that they display the holiness of the God who indwells them.

Ephesians 1:4 puts it this way, "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Before there ever was a world created, God had chosen you. Remember that. He had chosen you out of the mass of humanity to come through that narrow gate, and He chose you to come through that narrow gate to live a life which was compatible with God's holiness.

In Ephesians 2:21-22, we add, "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." We have become now as believers the very temple of God. And if we are the temple of God, it should be treated as a holy place.

And in 1 Peter 1:15, "But He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of life." He who has called you has called you to a holy manner of life. Now, holiness is not what you think or what I think. Holiness is what the Bible declares is holy. Holiness is what the Bible says is right, what the Bible says is wrong. So, you see, we've come full circle back to the doctrines of scripture as the basis of where it all begins and where it's all sustained.

So, we ought not to act in all the debased and corrupt and cheap and little ways that is characteristic of the people of the world. We are royalty, and we bear the very glory of the King of Kings and Lord of Lord upon us. May He help us to rise to our position moment by moment, each day where we have fallen down, where we have been out of line, forget the past, confess, get up, move on, shake the dust out of your royal robes, straighten the crown on your head, and walk out tall and straight. The glory of God, which is now hidden in you, will one day amaze all of us.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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