

## **Suffering, Hope and Prayer – Romans 8:12-27**

*[12] So then, brothers and sisters, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh, [13] because if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. [14] For all those led by God's Spirit are God's sons. [15] You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!" [16] The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, [17] and if children, also heirs -- heirs of God and coheirs with Christ -- if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.*

**Paul is alerting us to the activity of our identity.**

*[18] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. [19] For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. [20] For the creation was subjected to futility -- not willingly, but because of him who subjected it -- in the hope [21] that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children. [22] For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. [23] Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits -- we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.*

**Paul is using 'suffering' to speak of our most basic suffering as a Christian - the suffering of becoming more like Jesus.**

**'Co-' Words in Romans 8**

- symmartyrei (8:16; lit. "co-witness")
- sygklēronomoi (8:17; lit. "co-heirs")
- sympaschomen (8:17; lit. "co-suffer")
- syndoxasthōmen (8:17; lit. "be co-glorified")
- systemazei (8:22; lit. "co-groan")
- synantilambanetai (8:26; "co-take hold of"; e.g., "help")
- synergei (8:28; lit. "co-works")
- symmorphous (8:29; lit. "co-formed")

"This cluster of "co-" terms suggests that life in Christ is one of Spirit-enabled, intimate identification with the story of Jesus that can be summarized in the term "co-formed" or "conformed" to Christ, especially to his suffering and death in the present and to his resurrection glory in the future" (Michael Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 34).

**Our suffering is part of a cosmic suffering.**

**Creation is longing for us to become more like Jesus.**

“To participate in Christ is both to benefit from God’s mission of liberation and reconciliation and to bear witness to this divine mission — thus furthering it — by becoming a faithful embodiment of it” (Michael Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 36).

*[24] Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees?*

*[25] Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience. [26] In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings. [27] And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God...*

**Prayer is the mechanism of hope.**

To say that “prayer changes things” is not as close to the truth as saying, “Prayer changes me and then I change things.” God has established things so that prayer, on the basis of redemption, changes the way a person looks at things (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*).

**Prayer takes the future reality of hope and calls upon God to make it a present reality, and in the action itself, change begins.**

***How do we respond to the call?***

- 1.** Bring the Kingdom by Becoming More Like the King.
- 2.** Pray.
- 3.** Start the Conversations.