

**Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church**  
**Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter 8, Verses 18-30**  
**Notes from Tuesday December 7, 2010**  
**Last Revised on December 7, 2010**

**Songs**

**Opening Prayer**

**Introduction**

This evening we continue our study of the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

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Last week we we read through Verse 17 of Chapter 8

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Tonight we will continue reading at Verse 18.

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But first let's review very briefly.

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Please open your text now to Chapter 1 and follow along with me as I review.

**Review**

Remember the **overall** theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is ... the **gospel**.

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After the first 17 verses or so, which contain important introductory material, Paul begins in **Verse 18** of Chapter 1 to examines the **ungodliness** and **unrighteousness** of men. This examination continues to the end of Chapter 1.

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In **Chapter 2 and the first 20 verses of Chapter 3**, Paul argues that such ungodliness and unrighteousness has **always** pervaded **all** of humanity, including **even** the most **law-abiding Jews**.

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The point, as Paul explains in **the remainder of Chapter 3**, is that nobody can be saved from sin and death, **except** as a **free** gift of God, which gift we come to receive through **faith**.

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That this has always and everywhere been true, as Paul illustrates in **Chapter 4**, which is all about **Abraham**.

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In **the first 11 verses of Chapter 5**, Paul speaks of the peace, joy, hope, and love we experience as we come to understand that God in Christ came down to **suffer, with us** and **for us** while we were **still** his enemies.

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In the remainder of **Chapter 5 (Verses 12-21)** Paul explains how God in Christ has overcome the Fall of Man, of which we read in Genesis, Chapter 3.

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**In Chapter 6, and in the first six verses of Chapter 7**, Paul makes it plain that the gospel is not an invitation for Christians to continue sinning, but just the opposite.

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**In the remainder of Chapter 7** Paul explains how the law **helps** us to understand our sinful nature and cannot itself be blamed for our sin.

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In **Chapter 8**, which we continue to study this evening, Paul speaks much of the **Holy Spirit**.

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In the first 17 verses, which we have covered carefully already, Paul makes it clear that God's **children** are those in whom his **Spirit** dwells.

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The indwelling Holy Spirit makes them **aware** that they are his children, gives them faith and hope

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and **leads** them to life according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh.

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Life lived according to the Spirit is characterized by **suffering**, after the example of Christ.

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We **rejoice** because of such suffering because we know that it is inexorably bound up in the process that leads to glory.

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Any questions before we read on?

### **Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 8, Verses 18-30**

Will someone please read Romans, Chapter 8, Verses 18-30 in Japanese.

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Thank you. Now will someone please read those verses in English.

**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.**

**20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope**

**21 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.**

**22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.**

**23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits 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?**

**25 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.**

**27 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.**

**29 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.**

**30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.**

Thank you.

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Verse 18 reads:

**(Verse 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.**

This looks back to Verse 17, where it is written that God's children shall be glorified with Christ, proved that they suffer with him.

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Clearly God's children do suffer in this present time

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as do all men,

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but in the face of such suffering, God's children should not despair,

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because such suffering is as nothing compared with the glory that is to be revealed...

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The ESV translates revealed "*to us*"

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but the more traditional and probably better translation is "*in us*" (AV)

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In any case, our future shall be glorious eternally

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whereas the suffering of this present time shall be, however difficult, very brief

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Verse 19-30 are (I think) a poetic expansion of the idea expressed in Verse 18.

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We will not understand Paul rightly here, I think, without a poetic sensibility.

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Verse 19 reads:

**(Verse 19)**

**For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.**

Q. What is "*the creation*?"

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A. Everything that God created, as expressed in the first two Chapters of Genesis.

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A. The Heavens and the Earth and all that these contain.

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A. Angels and Men and other living creatures and plants and inanimate objects and time and space, light and darkness, matter and energy, and etc.

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It is (I think) easy to understand most if not all parts of creation as "waiting" ... in a sense

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Even the ocean and the mountains and the sun and the stars and the moon are, in some sense, "waiting" for how things will be....in the future.

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Simply to exist in time, as do all things in creation, is to wait for future times.

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Conversely that which does not wait in time, does not exist!

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OK. So basically everything in some sense "waits"

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and it all waits, Paul says, “*for the revealing of the sons of God.*”

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Q. Who are “*the sons of God?*”

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A. Those in whom the **Spirit** of God dwells... who **suffer** with Christ in this **present** time ... and who are fellow **heirs** of God with Christ. Christian **believers**. Even **us**.

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Q. What is meant by the **revealing** of the sons of God? (Are we hidden?!)

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A. I think this refers to the time of the **parousia**, when the glory of Christ and those who belong to him shall be fully revealed.

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So I think Paul is saying that **all** of creation waits **for ... that** (i.e. for the parousia),

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which means that all of creation **exists** until ... **then** (i.e. the time of the parousia)

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and I think this also means that **everything** in all of creation, including our suffering, finds its **goal** and its **purpose** in the parousia.

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We can understand, then, why the sons of God “*wait with eager longing*” for the parousia.

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Q. But what about the **rest** of creation?

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Q. What does it mean for an **animal**, or a **plant**, or a **stone**, or a **moonbeam** to wait with “*eager longing?*”

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A. This can **not** (I think) be taken to mean **literally** that every element of creation is capable of human thought and emotion.

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A. This is, rather, as suggested previously a bit of **poetic license**, a **figure of speech**, an **anthropomorphism**, which is intended to convey why the Heavens and the Earth, and all which they contain, continue to **abide**, as if they were somehow good for something and even “hopeful” of some happy future outcome, despite the transitory and ephemeral aspect of all things we can see.

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The universe generally seems to be running down some dark and pointless path toward oblivion while, at the same time, it everywhere exhibits a tenacious hold on life, and light, and the execution of its own physical laws and properties: almost a **will** to exist and to survive, in the face of a tendency not to exist and to die.

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What continues to **animate** and **preserve** all of creation is, I think Paul means to suggest, the same One who continues to animate and preserve the Sons of God

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It all continues to exist because God (having withheld his hand in the time of Noah) continues to sustain it!

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Such is the **work** of the Holy Spirit.

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But **why** does he do it?

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Verse 20 says:

**(Verse 20)**

**For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope**

Despite the positive aspect that we, especially we Children of God, can see in the created universe, we also see the transitory and meaningless aspect, as well as much that is cruel and ugly and grotesque and frankly evil.

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Something is terribly **wrong** in the universe around us,

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as if nature were suffering some terrible **curse**,

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and indeed the Bible teaches that the Earth **is** cursed, and that it is cursed by **God** Himself.

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This is not the **fault** of nature, as if nature apart from Man, somehow had the **capacity** to sin.

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Nature **has** no **will**, and therefore no such capacity for sin..

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Only man **could** will, hence only man **could** sin, and that is what we **did**. The Bible tells us so.

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Therefore God Himself **cursed** the universe

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Q. Why? For what purpose?

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A. For our **benefit**.

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A. God cursed the universe for the same reason that God created the universe in the first place, in preparation for “*the revealing of the sons of God.*”

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He did this “*in hope*”.... (Verse 21 continues)

**(Verse 21)**

**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.**

When the **children** of God are revealed with Christ in glory,

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then **all** of creation will become perfect **with** them.

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That is the **hope**,

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and this hope is **certain**,

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because the **present imperfection** of the universe is a **part** of God's **plan** and **purpose**,

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**whereby** his children shall be revealed with Christ in glory.

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and that is precisely the sense of **Verse 22**, which reads:

**(Verse 22)**

**For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.**

My understanding of this passage is that **the whole of creation throughout all time** constitutes that procession and process whereby the children of God are finally revealed with Christ in glory.

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Like **childbirth**, this process is drawn out, messy, mysterious, wonderful, painful, bloody, difficult, frightening. It evokes **groaning** and finally is the **only** way in which children can be produced.

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To skip the **groaning** is to forgo the **children**!

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God **himself** in Christ personally, existentially, participated in the groaning!!!

**(Verse 23)**

**And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.**

Just as the **creator** and **all** of his creation groan together, that God's children may be

revealed,

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so do each of us, his children, groan as we await our revelation, or adoption as sons of God,

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which is the redemption of our bodies,

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### **(Verse 24)**

**For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?**

It was said earlier, that God subjected the universe to futility “*in hope*” that the creation would be set free with the revealing of the sons of God.

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Here in Verse 24, similarly, he says that in this hope we were saved.

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In both cases (i.e. our salvation and the restoration of all creation) the thing hoped for is certain.

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And yet neither of these things has yet been seen.

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The meaning of the word “hope” Paul points out, is that we eagerly wait for that which we have not yet seen.

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Once that for which we have hoped has been seen, then business of hope is finished.

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It make no sense to say that we hope for that which we already fully possess.

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Notice that hope and faith are similar in this respect.

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Hebrews 11:1 reads:

### **(Hebrews 11:1)**

**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**

Once that for which he have hoped has been seen, the business of faith is finished too.

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That is why, I think, we read in 1 Corinthians 13:13 reads:

### **(1 Corinthians 13:13)**

**So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.**



Faith and hope are very great, **greater** than every good work and pious sentiment,

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Faith and hope abide **long!** ... from the moment of our salvation until the final day, when that for which they wait has been fully possessed.

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But love **abides** longer than that.

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Love abides **forever**. Love abides **eternally**. God **is** love.

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And I dare say that love not only **survives** faith and hope but is their **origin** as well.

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Love contains faith and hope, which can **exist** only in **time**,

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this **present** time of suffering, while we **wait** for the revelation of the glory of the sons of God.

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On **that** day faith and hope will be **finished**.

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And only **love** will remain.

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Verse 25 reads:

**(Verse 25)**

**But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.**

We were saved by the **grace** of God, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who **gave** us faith and hope in that which we could not see, and who does now **dwells** in us, sealing our faith until the last day, and leading us safely home to be with God in Christ.

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We know that the basis for our hope, that for which we eagerly wait, is on the **other** side of death!

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We are therefore willing and able, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to endure **suffering** in this life.

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Our faith did not **depend** on sight in the first place,

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And it can never by **any** means be **proven** in this world of sight.

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The Spirit **Himself** preserves our hope.

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He preserves our hope until **death**.

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And **beyond** death.

But that is not all. Verse 26 reads:

**(Verse 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.**

In this life God's children **suffer** together with the whole universe of which we are a part.

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We **ask** God, our Father, to make things less difficult for us, and such prayers are generally OK.

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Christ **himself** asked (three times) that the cup might pass from him.

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But **finally** Christ accepted the will of his Father, to do an impossibly difficult thing, which he has expressly asked God to remove from him.

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And in this **too** we are expected to follow Christ.

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Many of our prayers to the Father, although lawful in themselves, will be **refused**, because what we have asked is **contrary** to his will.

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and the Holy Spirit **leads** us and **helps** us to pray for the **right** things, as we ought to do.

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The Holy Spirit **even** helps us to articulate prayers that are hard to put into words,

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including our **deep** needs and problems which we cannot identify or describe, or think of any possible solution for.

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God **knows** and helps us to **express** all of these things!

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Without the operation of the **Holy Spirit**, we cannot pray at all.

**(Verse 27)**

**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.**

Here we come close to the heart of the **mystery** of prayer.

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And prayer is a very **great** mystery.

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The Spirit **knows** better than we do, what we need to pray.

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He helps us to **express** these need to God, our Father,

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God our Father surely understands because He and the Spirit are **One**.

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God surely answers our prayers, and answers them "**yes**," when we pray in the Spirit.

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The answer to our prayers is only "**no**" know when we pray for the wrong things,

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meaning when we pray in the flesh, rather than in the Spirit.

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This is easier to understand in view of the following Verse 28

**(Verse 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.**

We may wonder why God's children **suffer**,

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and why they suffer despite diligent **prayer**.

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Here is the answer!

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**All** suffering and, indeed, all **things** work together for **good** for Gods children,

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who are described here as those who **love** God and who are **called** according to his purpose.

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Child of God: do you suffer despite your diligent prayer that such suffering be removed, then know that such suffering is for your **benefit** and for the benefit of other members of the family of God.

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Christ **Himself** models this.

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He did not wish to **suffer** and die on the cross.

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He **asked** to be spared this.

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Yet finally he **bowed** to the will of God.

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 knowing God's will to be good.

---  
 Indeed Christ was born for the very purpose of going to death on the cross, that good would come of it for all of God's children!

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 The cross was in view on that that day, and long before and after that day, when the angels said of the birth of Jesus, "behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy!

---  
 And every misery of every child of God in this present age is working toward that same joy which is made possible by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

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 We share in his suffering that we may share in his glory.

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 Thus Paul can say, "*we rejoice because of our suffering.*" (Rom. 5:3)

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 All of this is further explained in Verses 29 and 30.

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 Verse 29 reads:

**(Verse 29)**

**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.**

Here again Paul is speaking of God's children.

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 He reminds us, as we read elsewhere, that God knew his children before they were born and, indeed before there was a universe.

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 But please note carefully: God knew his children then, prior to their birth, not as a reality outside of his own will but, rather, as the object of his own creative affection.

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 He knew them as, in the fullness of time, he would make them to be.

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 And how he would make them, would be in the image of his Son.

---  
 And the process would be similar also, as we discussed, involving much trial and suffering.

---  
 It is through suffering that all of God's children, including Jesus Christ, are perfected, in the sense of being made, through suffering, as God purposed and therefore foreknew them to be.

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In this way, Jesus Christ would be the **firstborn** among many brothers.

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If our eldest brother **Jesus** was perfected through suffering on the cross, we should not be surprised if a certain amount of suffering is involved in **our** perfection as his brothers and sisters.

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Finally Verse 30 reads:

**(Verse 30)**

**And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.**

From God's perspective, so to speak, every aspect of the creation and existence of his children is connected and under **his** control.

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But God does not operate on us, as it were, without our **knowledge**.

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He makes us aware of at least some aspects of his activity where we are concerned, by **calling** us to faith in himself through Christ Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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All who are **called** to such faith are **justified** by it, as Paul has explained at length in this letter before now.

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And all who are **justified** are finally **glorified**.

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In **time** from a **human** perspective, it seems that we can speak of such things separately and in a certain order: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, sanctification, glorification.

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But in eternity from God's perspective, I suppose they are all woven together.

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A key point in Paul's exposition, just here, would seem to be the fact that our **suffering** cannot be separated or spoken of separately from our glorification.

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Christ **without** the cross would not **be** Christ.

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A child of God without **his** share of suffering would not **be** a child of God.

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So we rejoice **because** of our suffering.

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Questions or comments?

**Closing Prayer**