Suffering and Glory — Co-Suffering, Co-Glorified, and Faith in Hebrews

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Romans 8 — Co-Suffering, Co-Glorified

Romans 8:17 contains a thought that the Greek makes more precise than the English: if so be that we co-suffer with him, that we may be also co-glorified. That is J.N.D.'s note on the verse — he would have translated it that way had it been good English. The word co-suffering means that in the sufferings we endure in this life for Christ's sake, we are joined together with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And the word co-glorified means that the glory that follows for the believer is a glory wherein we are joined together with Him — not our individual glory, but Christ's glory that we are made partakers of.

The athlete who wins the race gets a loving cup with his own name on it. The second-place finisher gets only a lesser ribbon. They are not co-glorified. But Christians who suffer for Christ's sake and His name look forward to a glory in which they are jointly glorified with Him. It will not be our glory. It will be His glory that we share.

Verse 18 adds the proportion: the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us. The King James says in us, but J.N.D.'s translation has to us — a glory that shall be revealed to us, that we will enjoy and that will be presented to us. The two things — sufferings and glory — are incommensurable. In the case of the Lord Jesus, His sufferings were infinite and His glory is infinite, and the two match perfectly. Every mark of dark dishonour heaped upon the thorn-crowned brow is matched by some one of His present heavenly glories. But with us, the sufferings are small and the glory is

large. The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared.

> *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us. — Romans 8:18*

2 Corinthians 4 — Light Affliction, Eternal Weight of Glory

Second Corinthians 4:16–18 adds dimensions to this. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The sufferings are small in two separate ways: they are small in intensity (light), and they are small in duration (but for a moment). That is twice over that the sufferings are minimised. But then the glory is multiplied: not just a weight of glory, but an eternal weight of glory — not just eternal, but exceeding — not just exceeding, but more exceeding — not just more exceeding, but a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Every adjective adds more. The glory is so much larger, and the sufferings are so much smaller.

The key is in verse 18: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. A Christian lives among the things that are seen but fixes his attention on the things that are not seen. The oneness of the body of Christ cannot be seen. The headship of the Lord Jesus in heaven cannot be seen. His authority over the assembly cannot be seen. But these are eternal realities, and the Christian who lives consistently with them will be thought by the world to have something wrong — to be living in a fantasy, unable to accept the world as it is. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

1 Peter 5 — After a While, the God of All Grace

First Peter 5:10 gathers the same truth into a single verse: 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. The chronological

order is the same as in Romans and 2 Corinthians: suffering first, glory after. But the person behind it all is named — the God of all grace. Not grace for one occasion, not grace for certain kinds of trouble, but all grace. Every kind of grace. Whatever the need, whatever the character of the suffering, He is the God of all grace to meet it.

And His purpose in the suffering: to make us perfect (full-grown), to establish us (feet upon the solid rock of His word), to strengthen us in the inner man, and to settle us — to bring us to rest and peace with God's ways. Those are the fruits of suffering endured in dependence on Him.

Hebrews 10–11 — Hope, Patience, and the Faith That Trusts in the Dark

Hebrews 10:32–37 addresses those who had suffered greatly after the day of their illumination — the day of their salvation. They had been made a gazing-stock by reproaches and afflictions. They had taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Why? Because they knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and enduring substance. They gave up what was not so good to have what was very good. And on that basis they were exhorted: cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come and will not tarry.

Hebrews 11 then unfolds what that confidence looks like in practice, in the lives of those who trusted God when appearances were against it. Abel offered what was pleasing to God, looking on to the one sacrifice that would atone for sin — still speaking. Enoch walked with God and pleased God; nothing distinguished about his life that the Scripture records, yet he was taken out of the scene without death, a type of what we may experience this very day. Noah built an ark for something that had never happened before, in the face of the contempt of those

who saw only what was visible. Abraham left everything he had and went out, not knowing where he was going, and at the end of his test offered up Isaac — counting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead. He had faith in resurrection.

Isaac and Jacob are more like ourselves — not much distinguished, a lot of failure in Jacob's life especially. But the faith that is recorded of each of them was faith in a future beyond what they could see. Isaac blessed both his sons concerning things to come. Jacob, who had gotten away from God and spent his life coming back, at the end blessed both the sons of Joseph and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff. And Joseph, comfortable in Egypt, made provision not for his bones to rest in Egypt but in the land of promise. He had his heart there, not here. We never lose anything by trusting God in the dark. May the Lord give us grace to cast not away our confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

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