

Future glory of the children of God

Today we learn a grand worldview about the 'consummation of salvation'. Creation, mankind, and the Holy Spirit are mourning, groaning and praying, waiting for the completion of our salvation. We want to study this amazing truth together today and examine our worldview and responsibilities as Christians.

Verse 18: I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

As we know that we have become adopted children of God the Father and have been given the privilege of calling Him 'Abba Father'. The Holy Spirit continues to testify with our spirit that we are children of God the Father. So, we should be spiritually awake (Romans 8:16). As God's children, we are entitled to inherit the Kingdom of God. An inheritance is every blessing from God. And ultimately, we are entrusted with the glory of inheriting the Kingdom of God. For this, the Bible teaches that we also inherit 'sufferings' without exception. **When we inherit both 'blessings and sufferings', we become joint heirs with Jesus Christ** (v. 8:17). So, the Bible says that what we suffer now is not worth comparing with the glory from God that we will see in the future.

Verse 19: For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

Suddenly the Word's gaze shifts to the natural world as the creatures of this world long for the reveal of the children of God. The reveal of God's children is an event that will occur at the second coming of Jesus Christ. I was surprised that the creation is waiting this.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** prophesies that 'the children of God' will be resurrected and appear on earth at the second coming of Jesus Christ. **"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. (v.16) After that, we who are still alive and them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will be with the Lord in forever. (v.17)"** The children of God who were born throughout all history at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ will be raised and live with Him forever. We believe this.

By the way, why is creation waiting for the reveal of the children of God?

v.20-22: For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as the pains of child birth right up to the present time.

The Bible says that the animals and plants of this natural world are suffering and mourning. Have you ever felt that way? I was always home alone when I was little and always watched TV. One of the shows that always shocked me was 'Animal Kingdom'. That showed the tremendous way of life of wild animals that I couldn't see in zoo. There was a newborn baby deer being eaten by a lion. Week after week, as I watched the harsh lives of the animals, I was relieved to know that animals were born to be eaten and I was in relief that I was lucky to be born human.

You all know very well how this horrendous situation came to be. Genesis 3:18 tells us that the land was cursed by God because of man's sin. The disobedience of the first man, Adam, to God has had a negative effect on the natural world of this world, and God has cursed them. All creation is suffering because of our sin.

The creatures are still suffering and looking forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ when the children of God will be transformed into a glorified God's image. What will happen to all of creation at that time? Isaiah 11:6-9, "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den, the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." In the more than 10 years I have lived in Okinawa, the most frightening thing I have encountered has been 'Habu', which is a viper in Okinawa. In fact, some toddlers stuck their fingers into holes in the walls of the Shuri Castle and were bitten by Habu, spreading a deadly poison that sent them to the emergency. However, Isaiah 11 describes that the infant will play near the cobra's den, the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest when the Kingdom of God will come. And also, everything will be new when Jesus Christ returns (Revelation 21:5).

Verse 23-25: Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies (23). For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? (24). But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently (25).

What is the firstfruits of the Spirit here? 2 Corinthians 1:22, "set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." The word "firstfruits" means "seal of ownership, a deposit and guaranteeing" and refers to the Holy Spirit's residence in our hearts. It is also said to refer to the church born of the descent of the Holy Spirit.

We Christians ourselves are certainly groaning and waiting for the second coming of Jesus Christ. For on the day, we will put off this flesh and become glorified, becoming fully the children of God. We have received the Holy Spirit as a sign of guaranteeing of salvation now. But we realize that we are still living in a world of sin in this world. Therefore, we are looking forward to the day of redemption when our minds and bodies will be changed into a perfect form with no sin at all like Jesus.

So far, we have considered the groaning of the creature and human being. Next, we come to the climax, the groaning of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 26: In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

The Holy Spirit hears our groans and helps us in our weakness. Sometimes we pray to God without knowing what we really need. That is why that we may be praying about what to eat or what to wear, not paying attention to what God has planned for our lives, because we can only see what is right in front of us. But the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, prays for us of our weakness.

I would like to think about what the Holy Spirit prays for us here. Normally, human beings pray to gods. People buy some products in the temples, give offerings, donate in order to have their wishes fulfilled by gods. This is the normal religious exchange. However, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit, the God of creation, the Almighty God, prays for us, human beings, who are creatures.

I have heard this word so much in the past that I simply wondered if it was the Holy Spirit's job to pray for me. In a way, is the Holy Spirit below me? Is it on the level of an angel? However, when I examined this word carefully, I was surprised to find that the one who was praying with deep groaning, praying with sorrow, and praying with worry for a small person like us was 'God Himself'. Who is always praying for us all? Probably our mother or even our father. I think parents wish the most for the happiness of the children they have borne in the world. In this way, the Holy Spirit loves us so much that He prays for us with groaning like our mother.

Verse 27: And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

The prayers of the Holy Spirit are the prayers of the Trinity God. Who is the One who searches our hearts? It is Jesus Christ who came to this world and was crucified on the cross. Jesus Christ is the One who experienced and lived through all our earthly sufferings. He is the one who suffered so much that even He died on the cross. Jesus Christ is now seated at the

right hand of God the Father, but He knows well the thoughts of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is now working in our hearts with the groaning for our weaknesses. The Holy Spirit also follows the will of God the Father. When the Holy Spirit prays for us in intercession, we know that He is not praying alone, but He is praying with Jesus Christ and God the Father.

Verse 28: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

This verse is so well known. Do you love God? Yes, you do. Then, do you believe that God has a plan for your lives? What does it mean that we are called according to God's purpose and everything will be good for us? 'In all things' includes not only happiness but also hardship and trials.

When I was going through a divorce or having a difficult time raising my children, I would remember this verse and think to myself, "Why does my life continue to be in struggle? What is God's plan for my life?" I wondered that God's plan for my life is that I will receive a call from God to become a missionary in North Korea or my children to grow up and become presidents in the company." However, I could not see God's plan at all. In reality, God's plan became more and more distant from what I had imagined. And I was even angry and wondered that God has really his plan for me all the hardships that I was going through.

The apostle Paul confessed that he knew, but I did not. When I didn't know the answer to this question, I thought that it seemed like this. "It will all be profitable. That's the life. You are not alone. Whether you are a believer or a non-believer, all people will have to go through hardships. If you live long enough, there will come a time in your life when it will be good. Time will tell you the answer. And when you see your grandchildren, you will be able to say, 'Oh, it was all for the good.'" But I thought that this answer is powerless and meaningless.

I have puzzled for many years because I could not find the meaning of this word Roman8:28. But this time, as I prepared the message, I found the answer.

v. 29: For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

What is God's plan for our lives? To my surprise, it was to become perfect children of God like Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is our firstborn brother and we are His younger brothers and sisters. I would be totally transformed in mind and body like His Son Jesus Christ when He is coming again. This is God's plan in my life! I am so amazed about that!

All of you here love God. God's plan for your life is that you will become perfect as His children, so perfect that you will inherit the Kingdom of God. You are to be God's children in the likeness of Jesus Christ, perfect and holy without blemish. It is to have a perfect adoption. This is God's plan. Our lives take different many ways and forms, but the final goal is the same.

Verse 30: And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified, he also glorified.

This verse is really powerful. God has set it in our hearts that we are to be His children. And he has justified us through faith in Jesus Christ. This promise of salvation is not our will. It is God's unilateral will and decree. **Therefore, there is no change or cancellation of our salvation. God will carry out His own will and plan for our salvation.**

**Another amazing thing is that God says that he has already given us the glory.** We have already received it! We are living now with this wonderful promise. I have sometimes thought like this before. "God is good enough for me to have a happy family. God can do this for me easily. But in my case, both my parents' home and my own home were broken terribly". I thought to myself, 'God the Father! Was my wish not normal? Couldn't God have done the least I could have asked for?' I felt sad. But I realized that God would be saying to me, "Yoko, I understand your sufferings. Your wish is not a wrong. I can listen to your pray too. But my purpose in your life is not to have a happy family only. You are my child who will inherit my kingdom in the future. So, I will not compromise my plan in your life. This sinful world will be a training ground for you to become a child of God. I will involve and work in your life until you to be glorified as a perfect child of me."

**God does not compromise in our life.** God uses everything in our lives to make us into perfect children of God. He uses divorce, abusive parents, hard parenting, disabilities of family, hopeless diseases, workplace harassment, war, natural disasters, crimes, doubt, betrayal, and even unbelief to work with everything **until we become perfect children of God.**

The way Jesus Christ lived, even on the cross, was all in obedience to God the Father's will and accomplishing God's plan. For many years, I wondered why Jesus lived His life according to God's words in the Bible which were prophesized. **But now I realized that we, like Jesus, should be proactive in accomplishing God's plan.** Many Christians lived like Jesus in this way

As a nearby example, last week, I went to a memorial service for Mr. Sanehiro Kanamaru, one year after he was called to heaven. After the service, I talked a lot with Mrs. Noriko's granddaughter, Yumie. Her mother, Mrs. Megumi, has a disability of hearing. So, Yumie grew up in a different environment from other children. I imagine that she must have had many hardships in her whole life. However, she was very close to her mother and helped her mother interpreting with sign language. Yumie told me that she had chosen to major in speech-language pathology at university to pursue a difficult national certification as a speech-language pathologist. She said that she wanted to be a professional that helps people with hearing and speech disabilities like her mother. Now she was also studying anatomy like a

doctor would study. I was really impressed for her efforts. Yumie was doing her best to make the most of her life. It is not easy to lead such a life. However, the Holy Spirit within her is working, and I can see that her faith is working together with her ambition. **I realized that Yumie is making good her life like Jesus.**

As we learned the other day in Romans 8:16, the Holy Spirit and our spirit together testify that we are God's children. And we live in hope of being glorified at the time of the reveal of the Son of God, and we live in hope of that time when all will be good.

Let's pray together.