

I. Union with Christ

A. The Course of the Gospel in Us

1. God the Holy Spirit convinces and convicts us of sin and guilt
2. God the Holy Spirit gives us faith and enables us to put that faith in Christ for salvation
3. God the Holy Spirit unites us in a real and spiritual union with Christ
 - a. We become a new creation
 - (1) **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
 - b. We begin a new life with a new future and a new hope
 - (1) **1 Peter 1:3 (ESV)** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*
 - c. Romans 8
 - (1) We are free from condemnation
 - (2) We belong to Christ
 - (3) We anticipate resurrection
 - (4) We are children of God
 - (5) We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ
 - (a) **1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV)** ³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
 - (6) We will be glorified with Christ
 - (a) **Philippians 3:20-21 (ESV)** ²⁰ *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*
 - (b) **1 John 3:2 (ESV)** *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*

B. Startling reality: The pathway to glory is suffering

1. Scripture Assertions

- a. **Romans 8:17 (ESV) *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.***
 - b. **Philippians 3:10-11 (ESV) ¹⁰ *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,* ¹¹ *that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.***
2. Purposes of Suffering
- a. Suffering proves we are children of God
 - b. Suffering solidifies our identification with Christ
 - c. Suffering works out the redemptive purposes of God in us
 - d. Suffering provides both the context and the motive for us to continually, really rely on the Holy Spirit
 - (1) For life
 - (2) For godliness
 - (3) For the daily discovery of the extent of the Father's love for us and the power of the Spirit of Christ in us!

II. What is this suffering that leads to glory?

A. The Identity of Suffering

- 1. What is this suffering we keep talking about?
- 2. **Suffering are those painful experiences caused by God or allowed by God through which God leads us to depend more fully in faith on the Holy Spirit through Whom we are changed more and more into the moral and spiritual likeness of Jesus Himself in preparation for eternal glory.**

B. Suffering of Two Types

- 1. Experiences that are Common to All Mankind
 - a. Nature Disasters
 - (1) California Wildfires
 - (a) Tens of thousands of people displaced
 - (b) More than 100 dead
 - i) Amputee and son with cerebral palsy
 - ii) 71 year old with garden hose
 - (2) Hurricane Helene (Western NC)
 - (a) People without homes
 - (b) FEMA ending some housing support
 - i) Anxiety, fear
 - ii) Disappointment, Anger
 - b. Self-inflicted Suffering: The Consequences of bad decisions
 - (1) You can come up with your own examples, I'm sure.
 - (2) Occasions when you know better but choose the wrong thing anyway
 - (a) Temptation
 - (b) Failure to weigh the consequences (or dismiss the consequences)

- (c) Willful choice
 - (d) Consequences commence
 - c. Unexpected, unsought suffering that comes from living in a fallen world
 - (1) Illness
 - (2) Accidents
 - d. Call to the Christian
 - (1) Judgment? Indifference? Anger?
 - (2) Attitude:
 - (a) **Philippians 2:5-10 (ESV)** *⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
 - (b) Look at the suffering others experience, as well as your own experience, through the eyes of Jesus, who from eternity looked at you, in your sin, and in love and mercy, gave Himself to do what was necessary to provide for you the opportunity to know and experience the eternal love and mercy and grace and goodness and life and glory of God
 - i) Empathize - **Romans 12:15 (ESV)** *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*
 - ii) Love - **Luke 10:27 (ESV)** *And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."*
 - iii) Pray - **Jeremiah 29:7 (ESV)** *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*
- 2. Experiences that are Unique to the Believing, Faithful Children of God
 - a. Experiences that come specifically because of a steadfast, active

devotion to God lived radically by faith and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- b. Experience Jesus had living a life of perfect righteousness and devotion to the Father in a fallen and sinful world.
- c. **Suffering that naturally comes when you set aside everything in order to follow Jesus and commit to the Father's will and glory in all things.**
- d. Suffering that Jesus had in mind when He said, "*Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*"
 - (1) A cross is not a temporary inconvenience or even a chronic weakness.
 - (2) A cross is the epitome of suffering.
 - (3) A cross means death: death to self, death to sin, death to having your own way, death to putting yourself first, death even to protecting your life from death.
 - (a) A cross means taking of the God's will and God's glory as the singular focus and goal of your life and holding nothing back.
 - (b) **And when you live like that through faith in Christ and relying on the Holy Spirit, you will be living like Jesus lived, and the world will hate you for it just as it hated Him, and the world will make you suffer just as they made Him suffer.**
 - (4) A cross means you have decided to pay any cost necessary in this life to gain the joy and glory of eternal life.

III. The Call to Faith

A. Call to the Cross, to Suffering, to Glory

1. The gospel is a call to assume the death of Jesus (forgiveness)
2. The gospel is a call to assume the life of Jesus (suffering)
 - a. Persecution
 - b. Purification
 - c. Training in Righteousness
3. The gospel is a call to assume the inheritance of Jesus (joy)
 - a. **Hebrews 12:1-3 (ESV) ¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.**

B. Consider Jesus

1. Put your faith in Him not to avoid pain but to gain glory
2. Put your faith in Him to abandon sin and find forgiveness

3. Put your faith in Him to leave your self-centered life and take up a life centered on Christ and dependent on the Holy Spirit.