

## Our Future Glory, and Our Present Groaning in the Spirit

Rom. 8: 18-27.

W. Kelly.

It is comforting and instructive to notice the way in which the expected glory utterly outweighed the sufferings in the mind of the apostle. It is not that he did not suffer — we must suffer, and sufferings are not pleasant; but suffering is soon over! "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." It is not merely that he knows he will then get rest and glory; but what a sense of the glory he has now, with his sufferings, of what he here calls the manifestation of the sons of God! Like a person you may have seen in the world, so filled with the bright hopes of to-morrow, that he is getting through today as fast as he can. It is "The glory which shall be revealed in us." It is our glory and yet God's glory. He counts it but fair that, if we are in sufferings, we should be in the glory too. "If so be we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." If ours is the suffering, it is also in respect of ourselves the glory is to be revealed. While Christ (the Son) reflects the glory of the Father, the woman (the Church) reflects the glory of the man. Then there is the sense too, by the power of the Holy Ghost, of its belonging to us — that it is really our own. If a man has the sense of its being his, there will not be the turning his back on what he knows to be his own, but the getting towards it as fast as possible. If his heart is in that state, filled with the Holy Ghost, he will pass on through the world, as an angel would pass through it. Do you think, if Gabriel were sent on a message into this world, he would desire to stop here? No, he could not stay where all is defiled. It is this "present evil world;" so he does not linger, but is in haste to get through. But it is a much higher principle we enjoy than can be enjoyed by an angel, and so there never can come out of an angel's heart the same song of praise that comes from the believer's heart. Though it has been lately remarked, that the angels are never said in Scripture to sing, they are said "to speak" — "to say" — "to talk," but they do not "sing." There could be no harmony in an angel's song compared with ours, their hearts not being exercised with trials like ours. Never having sinned, they cannot know what the joy of salvation is; or what it is to be strengthened when weak, or lifted up when failing, or comforted in suffering. They laud, and praise, and bless God; but they cannot know the new song that they sing who passed through it all. The four living creatures rest not day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty;" but their subject is *creation* - "for thou hast created all things; for thy pleasure they are, and were created." (Rev. 4) But in Revelation 5 it is *redemption* - "And they sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy: for thou hast," etc.

Then you see how strong St. Paul's personal realization of it was; he says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." How much he must have had the glory present to his soul, to prefer it to "present things!" Now, he had suffered much; but it only brought the glory the brighter before him, and shows how the glory of the cross filled his soul.

The words "this present time" are striking. His mind is full of the future — absorbed with to-morrow — like the boy at school looking for a holiday, who can think of nothing else. The glory is so present, that he calls it but momentary — "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment." For if you talk to one whose mind realizes eternity, about this present evil world, eternity is too big to allow of room for any thing else. We never realize eternity, till we fill it with the Father's love and Christ's glory. If we think of it otherwise, we only look into a mere vacuum. We are confounded on the one

hand, and filled with glory on the other. Finding ourselves in the glory of God, we hardly know how to grasp it — "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." It is a blessed thing that it is ours, so that we can get near it in that kind of way. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us;" it is not to become proud with the "glory which shall be revealed in us;" it is not a change of time, but the glory is present to his mind, and he realizes the glory. Then he opens it out doctrinally: "For I reckon" — not "we teach" — "that the sufferings of this present time," etc. — the present sufferings had lost their hindering power, because he saw the power of God in them and endured afflictions according to the power of God. He does not say it is received, but "revealed in us." It is wonderful how the Holy Ghost uses that word "us." It is the common course of all the promises of God, "to the glory of God by us." "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length," etc. The great thing is to get the heart into conscious association with all this fair scene. And if we have our hearts always occupied with Christ and glory, there will be such a sense of it that we shall be always there. So that if I look at the stars in the heavens — though I admire them and gaze on them with wonder and delight — they do but remind me at once that I am one with Him who created them.

It is amazing how the soul becomes soft when happy in the Lord! How it removes all roughnesses. Saints cannot quarrel about being happy in the Lord, though they may quarrel about doctrine or discipline. We ought all to look onward, and have the heart filled with the glory. The effect of this is to put us into suffering, though we can say it is not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. It is not the divine essential glory, of course, but the manifested glory, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Verse 19 shows the sons exhibited in the family glory. In the world it is known by the dress of the children what is the wealth and grandeur of the father. It is the parent's pride and delight to deck them out and show them forth. Well, God has children, and He must display His sons in His glory. When He transfigures them, He manifests them. It is then, and not till then, the creature is introduced into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. This, as far as creation goes, is not intelligent, for it has been brought by man's sin, unwillingly, into all misery and bondage. It must also wait, for it will not be brought back until man has been. If a chain were suspended from the ceiling, and the first link be broken, which connects it with those below, the whole chain would immediately fall to the ground.

When man fell, all creation was involved. It has often struck me how as all the misery of the creature, sickness, bodily suffering, etc., came by man, so all the deliverance comes by man. There will be a blessing on the fruit of the ground and not a curse, by and by, certainly in Jerusalem. The Cain-curse it is that was taken away by the flood, as Noah (i.e., "this shall comfort us"), the name given by Lamech to his son, seems to imply. It is not that they get rid of labour, but they get comfort in it. No doubt there will be very great fertility and fruitfulness; not that there will be no labour needed there, but they shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; but they shall build houses and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." It is clear that "the creature" goes beyond our bodies; the creatures outside our bodies are groaning. There are two curses spoken of. The first was spoken to Adam, the second to Cain. The first was on the earth in general, but the second did not extend beyond the family of Cain. The two curses are very different. Cain was a tiller of the ground — "Now art thou cursed from the earth. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not yield unto thee her strength." It is true Cain had the earth, after it was cursed, after he had killed Abel. The two presented, as heirs of the earth, were Cain and Abel. These were two parties, and they soon showed who should get on in it — the righteous man or the vagabond — for Abel is slain; but Cain takes possession, builds a city, and makes

progress in it. God blessed Israel in the earth; but what do we see? The godly forced up to heaven, because the ungodly were in prosperity, and this, too, while prosperity was the mark of God's favour to the righteous; and so David says, "This I understood not, till I went into the sanctuary of God." Well, they will have the heavenly blessing. The temporal promises were not even possessed by Abraham. God's temporal government was blessing on the earth. (See Ezra, Nehemiah, etc.) Solomon did not get higher than earthly blessing. The prophets rise up to heavenly blessing; not that they reach to the heavenly Bride — the body of Christ; for the Church never was the subject of prophecy or promise. The Church is founded on the defacing the difference between Jew and Gentile. Now to have attempted to deface the Jew before, would have been wicked. It was done in the cross. Meanwhile the Christian suffers. But, see how the energizing power of the Holy Ghost fills him with this "earnest expectation." He so sees the love of God and thought of God in the thing that is coming, that his neck is stretched out, as it were, looking for it. God is a faithful Creator, and so He will bless according to God. The intelligence does not know the remedy, though the heart feels the groaning. Paul knew God in the sorrow pressing on his spirit. If he links it with the glory, it never can come till the manifestation of the sons of God, when the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is not liberty by grace, but the liberty of the glory; "for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected the same." My will was concerned in it; if it had ruined itself willingly, it would have remained; but God is there, and He is good. The creature offended; then the Holy Ghost inspires the whole creation with hope, so that all are looking out for the manifestation of the children of God. That is what they wait for. They groan, but not intelligently. We have the key to the groaning. The text may be read thus: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God, in hope that the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God; for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that subjected the same." There is a parenthesis. If it had chosen all, then there would have been no hope of recovery; but it is "waiting in hope," and not only they, but we ourselves also wait, because we have the creature about us; "even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption." "The Spirit itself maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to God." It is recorded in the history of the experience of an old saint, that he had lain a whole day groaning, without uttering a word, and, at the close of the day, there came out simply, "My God!"

"The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption." Everything connected with it — sickness, death, suffering. It was "made subject to vanity." He calls it all *vanity*. Take the flogging of horses in an omnibus to see how fast they can go, or how many they can carry, calculating the cost, what they shall gain by the journey, and the like. What is all this but "creature" groaning and vanity? Unless God sustained them, how could even the angels bear to look on and to witness it all? Look at what is called military prowess. Think only of 20,000 men being killed by their fellow men in a single fray! Man walks in a vain show, and toils for death; thus spending all his strength to die! The creature is subject to vanity, and cannot get out of it, until brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. There is more villainy and misery, I suppose, in Manchester or London, than anywhere in the world, even where men are still in a mere state of nature. Blessing of another nature, doubtless, comes in; but that is another question. Civilization has pushed men even to the extremity, so that they are at their wit's end — up to such a point that there must be a break out at last, which men will find out to their cost. Luxury, indulgence, and pride have crept in, living for comfort, without any regard or care for the poor: men everywhere are feeling it, and evil passions are

breaking out and showing themselves in various forms. God has mercifully spared this nation, because they do care more in this country for the poor than in any other; there are poorhouses, or unions, hospitals, and infirmaries. This is not the case in other countries of the world, where the people are kept down by mere power or influence, by the priests or the army; only let these be removed, and all goes. Men are saying, Peace, peace, and all the while trembling with fear, looking for those things that are coming on the earth, for come they must; and God alone knows what will turn up in a year's time. It is not because "signs" are not properly meant for us, that we are not to discern the signs. The Lord said, rebukingly, "How is it ye do not discern the signs of the times?"

"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together." How astonishing it is that Christians can go on trying to better the world, with so many positive texts of Scripture against them! "The whole creation groaneth," etc. What an amazing difference! He is speaking of "the weight of glory" which shall be revealed in us; and then at once turns and says, What a groaning creation I am in! It is his realizing the glory that fits him to enter into the sorrow of the groaning creation around. Christ, coming in glory, lifts him above it all. When Christ was here, every outgoing of His heart was stopped (except that grace would make a way): they turned away from Him and rejected Him; though He had cast out a whole legion of devils out of their land, they could not endure His presence, but "besought him to depart out of their coasts."

The groaning goes beyond the saints — the whole creation groans. If I have the Holy Ghost, I may be full of joy and full of hope; but this does not hinder my groaning as a creature; the more I joy, the more I feel this wretched body is an earthen vessel that cannot hold the treasure. We have but the "firstfruits of the Spirit." We have already the sprinkling of the former rain; when we get into glory, then will come down the latter rain.

There is no groaning in my connection with God; it is all rejoicing, and nothing else, in that respect. "Rejoice in the Lord always." I am not waiting for the redemption of my soul (that is the state of the quickened man in Rom. 7), but for the redemption of my body; we have redemption by blood already, but not so as to glory; we are quickened in our souls as His children, but God will never have us as He wills until we are conformed to the image of His Son — this cannot be to what Christ was in the grave, but to what He is now. Christ is a glorified man. (There is no such thing as a glorified spirit, as some speak; there may be a glorious spirit, but a glorified spirit — what is it? who can tell?) Just as the coming of the Lord, as a hope, had been suffered to drop out of the Church, so the hope of being conformed to the likeness of Christ has been allowed to vanish. Now the evil of this is, it dissociates from Christ the spirit in heaven and the body in the grave; it is as Christ was before He rose; but the moment I get my mind filled with the thought, "I am to be conformed to Christ as He is in glory," it associates me with Him now. The thought of His coming makes me happy. There is such a thing as delighting in God; but Christ fills up the scene between. He may make the person of the Lord precious to me — not merely His work but Himself; and then I shall not be talking about the immortality of the soul! (however true this may be, as indeed it is, but my body is mortal), I shall be waiting to have "this vile body changed and fashioned like his glorious body." There is *no* hope but that of being conformed to Christ. Death is not a hope. "Our conversation is in heaven," and there we hope to be. My hope is to be with Him in heaven, bodily. I have all for my soul now in Christ.

"We ourselves groan within ourselves." It is very experimental to see all this groaning, provided I see the hope that enables me to go on. The Lord groaned deeply at the grave of Lazarus, but He had power to carry it in spirit to God, and was strengthened. He came to the place of death and found all sealed up, and a stone laid upon it; and He groaned in spirit. Men put away their dead as loathsome — to get rid of them quickly.

The apostle had received the Spirit of adoption. Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead;" so we are declared to be sons, and are waiting to be raised up bodily by Christ. We must never confound the groaning here spoken of, with the groaning of the soul for its own salvation, which we have already; but the *redemption* of the *body* is our hope, for Christ is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Redemption comes last, as in itself comprising all, and not of the soul only. When they talk of hope among men, there is uncertainty always attached to it; as, one may ask, Do you expect to get this, or that? The reply is, I hope so; but meaning to imply uncertainty as to its being realized. Now this can never be the case with regard to our hope, for there is no uncertainty if God has said it. The full result is salvation; I have only the earnest of it now. I must wait patiently for it. Abraham had not a place to put his foot on, though God had given him the whole land: "He looked for a city," etc. When hope is settled, you go on quietly today, expecting Him to come. The Holy Ghost has fixed our hearts on this hope, and we are waiting for it. Whilst we groan, the Holy Ghost itself groans, so that while it is a groaning creation, that is not all. If you groan, your groanings are according to God, and are as divine as your hopes, though in a different way. But as the Son became a man, and, as a man down here, had these feelings, so the Holy Ghost (He does not become a man) dwells in me; and these groans are precious, because in these groans it is the positive intercession of the Holy Ghost; and "He who searcheth the heart, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit," so that if God searcheth my heart, He finds the Holy Ghost there.

It is wonderful how God has insinuated Himself into every thing: filling us with His hopes, His sorrows, and affections. If it is God who listens, it is God He hears. How thoroughly He is come in to possess man's soul! It is God's love outside us, and His love is shed abroad in our hearts. We dwell in God, and God in us. He has given us His thoughts and feelings, so that we are wrapped up in God, "Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." God's love! if it is not His love, it is of no use; if it is not in me, it has no reality. Scripture sometimes speaks as if it was of us, and at other times as of God. Thus it is my heart groans, while it is said, "The Spirit maketh intercession" — Oh! the wondrous ways of God! "Have I been a wilderness to you?" It is a great comfort to know they are not selfish groans in me, because while I am groaning with all around me, I might have the thought, "Take care there is no unbelief there," but it is the Spirit's groan in us. Selfish groans we find in Rom. 7. There it is all I, I, I, — no Christ, nor Holy Ghost, until the end of the chapter. Rom. 8 is full of Christ and of the Spirit.

W.K.