

The Glorification of Man

📖 Romans 8:23-25

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I mentioned last week that the millennial earth would be like the Garden of Eden and I cited Ezek 37. I was a few verses off, it's Ezek 36:35, and in that passage, when God restores Israel it says of the nations "They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.'" A renovated earth is coming and that renovation begins with the land of Israel. Also I found Isaiah 51:3, "Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like Eden; And her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in her, Thanksgiving and sound of a melody." So a time is coming when there is this tremendous restoration that is coming and I put that before you as a vision of the future; not man's vision but God's vision and He will do it.

Now last week we entered into a new but short section in Paul's epistle to the Romans on glorification. Note the four verses that speak of glory. In Romans 8:17 he states that we suffer "with Christ so that we may also be *glorified* with Him." In 8:18 he says that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the *glory* that is to be revealed to us." In 8:21 he looks to a time when "the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the *glory* of the children of God. Later in 8:30 he says, "...these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." Four verses that clearly focus our attention on the doctrine of glorification. So we should look at the word to get a definition. The Greek words translated glory and glorified are *δοξα*¹ and *δοξαζω* respectfully. They have a wide range of meaning, too wide for us to discuss in this class. Glory has historically been too abstract for most people to conceptualize. It is often thought of as light or splendor. The rabbis taught that Adam and Eve were originally glorious, meaning clothed in light and splendor. Without going into tons of detail it is probably sufficient in this context to say that *glory refers to the essence of a person or thing as it is originally intended to be, in its new, untarnished condition*. That's just my description from the word study. Zodhiates says, "The glory of God is what He is essentially, the glory of created things including man is what they are meant by God to be, though not yet perfectly attained (Heb 2:10; Rom 8:18-21)."² Glory is a difficult thing to grasp but if we think of the three basic categories; God, man and nature, then we can envision that each has a glory or essence. When we talk about God we're talking about who He is, His essence, and usually we say God is SRJLOOOIE, and

we go in and describe each of these attributes; God is sovereign meaning He controls whatsoever comes to pass; God is righteous meaning His character is the standard for what is right and wrong, God is just meaning that His judgment is fair no matter who might be involved, God is loving meaning He gives Himself to us and so on and so on. So when we talk about the glory of God we're talking about who He is in all His majesty. And seeing that He is immutable, His glory never changes. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. When we talk about man we're talking about who He is, His essence, and we say that God created man in His own image so that man's attributes are finite analogs of God's attributes and we go in and describe man; if God is sovereign then man has choice, if God is righteous and just then man has a conscience, if God is love then man has a finite analog to that love and so forth and so on. And these combined would all refer to the glory of man. But man is not immutable, he's mutable and so his glory can change. And when Adam sinned God's image in him was marred such that we don't express these attributes normally. Our glory was downgraded. But in redemption we are restored in part so that we can live by the Spirit and glorify Him, which essentially means to reflect His essence. Finally we come to nature and nature is distinct from man. Nature has characteristics that were created by God such that they reflected His glory, that is, they manifested Him by showing clearly His handiwork. Nature had a glory to it. But when man fell God cursed nature and the glory of nature was damaged so that it doesn't entirely reflect God's glory to the extent and manner that it did originally. So both man and nature are not what God originally intended them to be and because of that there is still a glory of man and nature that are reflected but they are imperfect, that is why there are things that seem to have mal-design, there is design and mal-design and part and parcel of the mal-design, which is a distortion of the original design, is suffering and a longing to be set free from this suffering. The doctrine of glorification is the truth that God's original intent for man and nature to be perfect again will be achieved. This occurs in stages, starting with man and His redemption and consummating with His resurrection and the restoration of all creation in the eternal kingdom. When that time comes God's ultimate aim of dwelling with man will be achieved.

In Romans 8:18 Paul reminds us of the temporality of our sufferings relative to the eternal glory that is to be revealed *to us* in the glorification of nature and *in us* in the glorification of man, and in particular, believers who will dwell with God in the coming kingdom. In 8:19 he narrows in on the glorification of nature saying that there is an "anxious longing of the creation," awaiting eagerly "for the revealing of the sons of God." As if nature was a person Paul portrays creation as presently raising its head with eager suspense awaiting the unveiling of the sons of God. 8:20 explains the yearning, "For the creation was subject to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it." Because of Adam's rebellion and our rebellion in Adam, God subjected nature to a state of rebellion, yet the end of verse 20 says, "based upon hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." Nature in addition to the children of God will be set free from the present corruption into a state of freedom when we are glorified in the world to come. 8:22 explains, "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." The word "know" is perception, we see by perception that the whole of nature, like a person, groans

and suffers great pains until now because until the sons of God are revealed in the kingdom, the curse they are both under will not be lifted.

In 8:23 Paul turns to the glorification of man and this refers to the resurrection, it is the glory in 8:18 that is to be revealed *in us*. However, as often as we speak of resurrection relating only to the physical body, we should not make that mistake. Since we also have a sin nature which is not a physical entity but a disposition to do evil, then the removal of this disposition must also be included in the event called resurrection. So when we are resurrected two things will happen; the desire to sin will be removed and the mortal body will be transformed into an immortal body. Mention should be made of the fact that the resurrection body is both connected to this present body and disconnected. The connection is in the fact that you are yourself, not somebody else, and the nature of the resurrected body is related to your life now. The disconnect is in the fact that the body is immortal, not subject to death. So resurrection is not reincarnation, which is coming back as something else that is mortal, which is the opposite of resurrection. And so we refer to the resurrection as a transformation from this body to the next body.

He starts in 8:23 with a phrase of addition identical to that used in 5:3, **And not only this**. This phrase emphasizes that a parallel situation exists among men that was found in nature. **But also we ourselves, we** being believers in the context because he says we are the one's **having the first fruits of the Spirit**. Unbelievers will be raised too but that's a subject found in other contexts. Believers are in view in this context.

Now when I read the expression **having the first fruits of the Spirit** I thought Paul might be talking about having the fruit of the Spirit produced in our life like he said earlier, but when I looked closer I noticed that in the Greek it is a genitive of apposition. This means that the first fruits are the Spirit and this, of course, has an implication of more to follow. A. T. Robertson says, "The genitive of apposition." Wallace translates, we have "the firstfruits, namely, the Spirit."³ The BKC says, "This is an appositional use of the genitive and means that the Holy Spirit is "the firstfruits" (*aparchên*) of God's work of salvation and re-creation in believers."⁴ In other words, when we first believed the gospel God gave us the Spirit as a kind of firstfruits. The concept of firstfruits comes from agriculture in OT Israel. "A farmer's "firstfruits" were the initial harvesting of his first-ripened crops." "God commanded the Israelites to present a portion of their harvest that ripened first as an offering to Himself (Exod. 23:19; Neh. 10:35). This offering acknowledged that the whole harvest was from Him and was really His."⁵ "This first installment was a foretaste and promise that more harvest was to come."⁶ By parallel, when we first believed the gospel and God saved us He gave us the Spirit as a kind of firstfruits, a first installment, a foretaste and promise of a further salvation to come. This reference to the Spirit given as a kind of firstfruits is nowhere else used in the NT. However, it seems to be parallel to His sealing and being given as a down payment until the day of redemption, when the final aspect of our salvation will be fulfilled. The end of this verse ties this firstfruits of the Spirit to **our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body**. There are three passages which make these same connections. First, turn to Eph 1:14. Eph 1:3-14 is a single sentence in the Greek text, and the longest

sentence in the entire NT. In it Paul discusses the Trinity and the plan of salvation. In 1:3-6 he speaks of the Father as the planner of salvation, in 1:7-12 he speaks of the Son's execution of salvation and in 1:13-14 he speaks of the Spirit's application of salvation. In verse 13 he says, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession. To the praise of His glory." The verb "you were sealed" is an aorist tense and looks back to what the Spirit did at the moment we believed the gospel. What He did at that time was seal us in Christ. The Spirit is then said in verse 14 to have been "given as a pledge." The Greek word "pledge" means a "first installment, a down payment or deposit." This first payment relates to the reception of our inheritance. At last he declares that our inheritance as related to "the redemption of God's possession," which is our body. So the concept of the Spirit as a pledge assuring more to come at redemption in Eph 1:13-14 is the first passage that parallels the concept of the Spirit as firstfruits assuring more to come at redemption in Romans 8:23. Second, turn to Eph 4:30. "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption." Again, the Spirit sealed us and this has effect unto the day of redemption. Here the application is to the importance of the believer not grieving the Spirit who sealed us. So this seems to parallel the concept of the Spirit as firstfruits assuring more to come at redemption in Romans 8:23. Third, turn to 2 Cor 1:21-22. Here Paul says, "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge" or "down payment." The idea of the pledge is that there is more to come and this parallels the concept of firstfruits in Romans 8:23. So I take it that the concept of firstfruits of the Spirit in Romans 8:23 is parallel to the concept of the Spirit being given as a first installment, the final installment of which occurs on the day of redemption, which is when God gives us a resurrection body.

Let's turn back to Romans 8:23. The Spirit that God gave us at the moment of faith in Christ is sort of a first payment or installment in our salvation ensuring that there is more to come in the future. In Romans 8:23 Paul then says, **even we ourselves groan within ourselves**. There's a sense in which we groan because we have the Spirit and now that we have the Spirit we know what life by the Spirit is, but we still have the flesh and the flesh keeps us from continually living by the Spirit and so we are in a frustrating situation. We know what life can be like and we experience that life when we are led by the Spirit, but we don't always allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit, so we **groan**. We're tired of this back and forth experience of victory and defeat, life and death and so we want to be rid of this body because it's this body that the flesh dwells in and it results in all kinds of suffering. And so the same root word used of nature groaning in 8:22 is used of man groaning in 8:23. And not only is that same root word used of nature and man but also the next word, **waiting eagerly**, is used of nature in 8:19 and man in 8:23. Nature is "waiting eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God" and we are **waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body**. Here the adoption is defined as **the redemption of our body**.

It is interesting that Paul uses **adoption** in 8:23 of something yet future because he used it in 8:15 as something present. There are two aspects of our **adoption**. In 8:15 the Spirit's initial adoption of us at the moment we first

received Him. Therefore, in one sense we have already been adopted. The initial adoption secured our legal rights and privileges to inherit everything the natural Son, Jesus Christ, inherited; we are co-heirs. The Spirit was given to us at that time as a guarantee of receiving a future inheritance. Here in 8:23 he looks to a future adoption when we receive that promised inheritance and describes it as **the redemption of our body**. **Redemption** is *απολυτρωσις* and refers to “the release” of the body “from its captive condition.” It is taken captive by the flesh to fulfill the will of the flesh when we don’t live by the Spirit. So there is both a past aspect of our adoption and a future aspect. Witmer says, “In one sense each believer has already received the adoption because he has “received the Spirit of sonship” (lit., “adoption,” Rom. 8:15) and is a son of God (Gal. 4:6–7). At the same time, as Romans 8:23 states, believers still anticipate their adoption in its completeness, which is said to be “the redemption” (*apolytrōsin*; etymologically the Gr. word describes a release or deliverance or manumission achieved by a ransom payment [*lytron*]; cf. comments on 3:24) of their bodies. This is called the revelation of the sons of God (8:19) and “the glorious freedom of the children of God” (v. 21).”⁷ Paul doesn’t state when it will occur here, only the fact that it will occur because we have the firstfruits of the Spirit as a guarantee.

In 8:24 he shows this same past-future aspect of salvation. **For in hope we have been saved**. The past tense is **have been saved**, the **hope** is clearly looking to the future. The translation **in hope** is debatable. In the original the case of the noun **hope** could be locative, instrumental or dative. If it is locative then it is defining the location where we have been saved as **in hope**. This doesn’t make much sense. If it is instrumental then it would be translated **by hope** and be defining the instrument by which we were saved as **by hope**. This also doesn’t make very much sense. Probably it is a true dative and should be translated as **with hope** which would define the purpose for which we have been saved as **with hope**. In other words, when we were saved, part of what was included in our being saved was **hope** that our salvation would be completed with the reception of a new body. Thus, I would translate this **For with hope we have been saved**.

This hope is not something we can see yet. As Paul says, **but hope that is seen is not hope**. Paul virtually defines hope here in future terms. His point is that if we could already see it it would not be classified as **hope**. He then explains, **for who hopes for what he already sees?** Once you have or acquire something the hope of having it vaporizes. Since we don’t yet have a resurrection body then we still **hope** for it. When we get it we will no longer **hope** for it, for we will already have it.

In 8:25 he shows how we hope. **But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it**, using the same word for **wait eagerly** that he used of us in verse 23 and of nature in verse 19. Here is not the question of whether we will wait for it **with perseverance** but it is a 1st class condition and may be translated “since.” Since we hope for what we do not see, **with perseverance we wait eagerly for it**. The noun translated **perseverance** is *υπομονη* and may be translated as “perseverance or endurance.” But more likely in this context is “patience.” Perseverance gives the sense of continuing through a struggle. Patience is not too far different in that it is a kind of relaxed mental attitude through a difficult situation. Both ideas are not far from the context.

The context is suffering. Ever since the Fall we have lived in a suffering situation. Since we have the Spirit of God already as a kind of firstfruits then we groan inwardly longing to have the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection body. We patiently wait for that day. When that day comes we will no longer hope for what we already have. In the meantime we wait eagerly for it. We have a kind of patient expectation for that day to arrive so our body can be set free from captivity to the sinful nature to do its will. When that day comes our body will always and only be used by our new nature to do the will of God. Then we will be free indeed. Nature will see the sons of God revealed and will itself be set free. This time is coming when the first resurrection is complete at the initiation of the Messiah's kingdom.

Now you might start to ask yourself, what am I supposed to do with all of this? I was once condemned in Adam and under sin and a slave to sin but now I am justified by God, baptized into Christ by the Spirit of God who resides within me and lives through me as I depend upon Him. I am a son of God, adopted into the family of God so that I can cry out, "Abba! Father!" in time of need. The Spirit testifies with my spirit that I am a child of God. As a child I am an heir, an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ. I suffer, the whole creation suffers, but that is incomparable to the glory that is coming in the kingdom. Creation groans and I groan but I have the Spirit as a down payment, a guarantee of entering into my full rights as an adopted son, the redemption of my body. This is my hope and with patience I eagerly wait for it. If all of this is true then surely God is for us and if God is for us then who can be against us. This is the logical conclusion Paul is taking us too and which we will unfold in coming weeks.

¹ The word basically means "light, splendor, radiance." It is of some value to see a connection to the verb δοκεω which means "thought, opinion," and thus leads to the concept of the opinion which others have of another's "reputation" and thereby the "honor or praise" due them. But it is more valuable to see the connection to the Hebrew kabod as "weight, heaviness" and metaphorically "worthiness." God has infinite worthiness and it is His evaluation of us as worthy that is absolute whereas man's evaluations are relative.

² Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000.

³ NET Bible.

⁴ John A. Witmer, "Romans," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 472.

⁵ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ro 8:23.

⁶ John A. Witmer, "Romans," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 472.

⁷ John A. Witmer, "Romans," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 472–473.