

Romans 8:18 -27

We live in difficult times. Times like this tend to open up the fault lines in people's lives. And what these difficulties reveal is what really drives people – the basis for their decision making and their consequent choices.

Clearly, as Christians, what we believe about where we find ourselves and who and what we can rely on to help us thread our way through those circumstances - are key.

- I am sure all of us would agree – we need all the help we can get?
- And a primary source of help is the work of the Holy Spirit

Romans 8:18 -27

Romans has much to say about the work of the Holy Spirit

1. In Romans 1 he is called “the Spirit of Holiness”
2. In Romans 8 he imparts life, He bestows freedom
2. In Romans 8 :11 He is referred to as the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead
3. In Romans 15:19 He is the Spirit who supplies the power to make the gospel message effective

The work of the Holy Spirit is all embracing in the life of the believer and in the Church

The two sources of support :Romans 8

We all know Romans 8 ends with an oft quoted, climactic passage. In verses 31 -39 we are shown how nothing can separate us from the Love of God.

And we often turn to these verses in difficult times. They are a huge source of encouragement for all of us.

But there are important reasons behind why these verses appear.

They appear because the whole of this letter is leading up to this “ declaration of God’s unfailing love”. and the work of the Holy Spirit in support of this love is vital.

In this section there are two references to this work we are going to stop at and reflect on

What Paul is sharing with us about the work of the Holy Spirit

“18.This is how I work it out. The sufferings we go through in the present time are not worth putting in the scale alongside the glory that is going to be unveiled for us. 19.Yes , creation itself is on tiptoe with expectation ,eagerly awaiting the moment when God’s children will be revealed..... 22. Let me explain. We know that the entire Creation itself is groaning together ,.....23. Not only so, we too, we who have the first fruits of the Spirit’s life within us ,are groaning within ourselves as we eagerly await our adoption , the redemption of our bodies.

(Forgive me but I have to make a short detour here to look at two little words in 18, because they are so sublime and significant. Did you see the “for us” in verse 18?)

“the Glory - for us – and beyond ”

Its not “in us” – where we look at ourselves in a mirror in a pleased kind of way and admire God’s glorifying handiwork

Its not “to us” – as if we were spectators at some spectacular “sound and light show”

Its “for us” As NT Wright puts it. “the point of Glory is that it means glorious sovereign rule, SHARING the Messiah’s saving rule over the whole world”.

And that is what creation is waiting for – its true rulers – to be revealed. Does that not blow you away?” It should. Paul is making it quite clear : we are both participants in and beneficiaries of this entire restorative action on God’s part – to restore and extend his creation.

Paul is also making it clear that we have already commenced to live in this “restoring time” – which has a present and future outcome - and so we “are” both saved and “being saved”. That means we “live in hope” –not an indefinite or “vague, or “possible” outcome – NO the outcome is sure = a sure and certain hope that we don’t see - but we await it patiently – because it will happen.

“Prayer support and engagement like no other”

- Now, finally , we can turn to the “who and what” link to the Holy Spirit which we started with.
- The key verses in this regard are found in 8: 26 and 8:27.

“26. In the same way , too , the spirit comes alongside and helps us in our weakness. We don’t know what to pray for as we ought to ; but that same spirit pleads on our behalf with groanings too deep for words. 27 And the Searcher of Hearts knows what the spirit is thinking ,because the spirit pleads for God’s people according to God’s will”.

Support like no other in difficult times

- 26 – not only does creation and believers groan eagerly for liberation *but Christ's own spirit groans with us in our sufferings – eager for our deliverance.*
- Isaiah 30 vs 18 makes this clear : “For the Lord *longs to be gracious to you ; he rises to show you compassion. Blessed are all who wait for him*”
- Remember how the Israelites groans counted as prayers in Exodus 2:23? The Spirit offers an inarticulate prayer when we are hard pressed by our difficulties.
- We don't need to recognise this prayer – we just need to know its happening!

And the Searcher of Hearts does even more

- As the Spirit intercedes within us – even though we don't understand the prayers (8 : 26) , and we also know that Jesus intercedes for us at God's right hand (8: 34)
- But there is even more for us to be found here in verse 27.
- The Spirit who knows God's heart (1Cor 2 :11) prays and intercedes for us "according to God" (8 :27) - this is an idiom for what is God's will.
- Believers never have to worry about the effectiveness of this intercession by the Holy Spirit , because it is born of God's own presence in them , working to bring about His purpose. (8:28).
- We should never forget that you and I are accompanied on this journey by one who searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts(1 Chron 28 :9)

Supported by Lord of ALL

- I want to suggest to you that its not enough to just read these verses. If we want them to become part of us – we need to step aside as individuals – and ask God - as the Jews say “searches hearts” to speak into our hearts and situations these verses and the truths they contain.
- You and I are not the victims of mindless fate. We trust in the benevolent design of God - even when it seems hidden from us for the present
- If as it seems we are people who are destined by grace to live in hope, lets be encouraged and encourage others to seize this opportunity with both hands in these difficult times.