

## The Fellowship of His Sufferings

July 4<sup>th</sup> 56 who signed the Declaration ... Your liberty is free but it did not come cheap nor did your freedom from the slavery of sin

### Read Romans 8: 15 - 17

“You have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father. For His Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm we are God’s children.”

<sup>17</sup> And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. **But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.**

**Adoption & suffering** seem like a strange connection

Daily Bread ... The World’s Children

Philippines 3:10 “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings ...”

**Suffering** - not a popular topic to talk about in church; we want to hear about the blessings of God not the suffering!

But we understand suffering, all too well. Life is challenging sooner or later trouble and suffering will find us – **We’re not strangers to:**

- Family problems
- Illness and disease
- Broken hearts
- Financial damage
- Personal attacks
- A past that haunts us
- Thieves and robbers

### Nature Groans **Read 18 - 23**

<sup>18</sup> Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.

<sup>19</sup> For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. <sup>20</sup> Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, <sup>21</sup> the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. <sup>22</sup> For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> And we believers also

groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children' including the new bodies he has promised us.

**All of creation is waiting** for a future day ... forced against its will to be subjected to the curse under sin. All of God's creation – what a thought!

**Gnats at the beach** ... Yesterday morning at local beach, Great South Bay, we planned to enjoy a few moments of rest and beauty at water's edge. It was not to be ... attack of the gnats – within a few moments, of a perfect breezeless morning they were all over us.

Gnats don't mess around, land and bite ... short life span – How long does a gnat live? .. one person wrote as long as it take me to swat them. (Adult life is about a week) not time to waste bite, reproduce and die. Begs the question ... Why would God have created such vile little creatures? Some people might be asking the same question about us.

Fallen nature ... not the way it was designed to be ... more than instinct, God has future plans for us and all of a restored creation.

Revelation chapter 5 – Seven sealed book (scroll) may very well be the title deed to planet earth

**Revelation 5:13** “And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang: “Blessing and honor and glory and power belong to the one sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever.”

#### IV. The Spirit Helps our Weakness **Read verses 26, 27**

<sup>26</sup>”And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. <sup>27</sup> And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.”

Sometimes we don't know what or how to pray - we don't even have the will to pray but ... we are not left to our own resources... we are not alone

The Spirit prays for us and through us – with groanings – sighs or in a prayer language that we pray by Him praying through us – helping is to pray in harmony with God's will for us and others

**Romans 8:28** Mom's footstone...

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.” (NKJ)

## Two things to consider about this verse

1. Not everything that happens to us is good – but God intends to turn everything, including our suffering for our good
2. This list is not all inclusive – **not all things work together for good for everyone...** but to those who are called according to His purpose for them.

**What is God's purpose?** What does it mean to be called or chosen?

To be called means to be summoned or invited

**Jeremiah 1:5** “Before I shaped you in the womb, I knew all about you. Before you saw the light of day, I had holy plans for you...”

→ My cousin ... this past week – **a chance meeting** - discovering God's call ... as kids he always wanted to be the villain, the bad guy – never too bad for God ... no one is excluded from that invitation

## Nothing Can Separate us **Read verse 35**

<sup>35</sup> Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?

This is the difference between the *pretenses of religion* and true *relationship* with God “justification”

- Only those who have been through the fire know the sustaining, overcoming power of God
- Only those who've been knocked down, know what it is to rise again
- Only those who bear the scars of battle, can understand the grace and mercy of God to deliver them from the mouth of the Lion –

## **Read verses 36 – 39**

<sup>36</sup> (As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.” <sup>37</sup> No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. <sup>38</sup> And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. <sup>39</sup> No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Religious orders of Jesus' day told people:

- They were poor because they had sinned and were cursed by God
- They were sick because they had sinned and were cursed by God
- They were crippled or diseased because they had sinned and were cursed by God

But Jesus entire life was about ministry – healing sick and infirmed, teaching that God was there Father not task master, encouraging and lifting the burden of life off their shoulders

**This is what it Romans 8:28 means when it refers to those whom God has called according to His purposes**

His Spirit within you encouraging you as you encourage others