

In the Name of Him Who gave Himself unto death for our sins,

The past two weeks have brought especially bad and disturbing news over the networks. An Australian student athlete is gunned down by teenagers while jogging in Oklahoma. An 88-year old WWII veteran is beaten to death by more teen thugs. Hundreds of Syrian men, women, and children, have been sprayed with toxic nerve gas by their own leaders. Coptic Christians in Egypt have become the latest victims of radical Islam's continuing war against Christians in the Middle East.

But the worst thing we heard last week is not news at all, but more of the same foolishness of which the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 14. Three thousand years ago David said: "**The fool has said in his heart**, there is no God." Now again, as bad news multiplies, some are saying, "There is no God." "There can't be a God." But Paul testifies in our text this morning that

"GOD IS !

"WHAT A COMFORT FOR THE CHILD OF GOD!"

I.

Yes, there is suffering, sickness, disease, loneliness and war in the world. All of it is part of the common experience of fallen mankind on this earth. But Paul says: In suffering the child of God has the hope of glory! This glory is so great that Paul says "**the sufferings of this present time**" cannot begin to compare with our future in heaven!

So wonderful is this glory that Paul says "**the whole creation is anxiously longing and eagerly waiting for the day when the sons of God will be revealed.**" Think of what this means! The trees, the flowers, and the sky and all creation are eager for the coming of Christ that will bring God's believing children into everlasting glory!

Why is that? Because when Adam fell into sin, all creation was made subject to "vanity" and "futility." In other words, the creation was no longer able to serve man perfectly, as God had intended. For example, man eats the fruits and foods of the earth which God intended for man's life, but man dies. Mosquitos and wood ticks suck our blood and carry diseases to man. The larger animals fear man and often take his life. But none of this is what God intended in the beginning!

Paul tells us that the making of Creation **"futile"** was God's doing. Man sinned; but God pronounced that particular judgment: **"Cursed is the ground because of you," "in sorrow you shall eat of it all the days of your life."** (Gen. 3:17) Since all creation had been made for man, when man fell into sin, God put the whole creation under corruption. God wanted the creation to continue serving man in part, and also to remind us of our sin and guilt before Him, whenever we suffer from disease, bug bites, natural disasters, the sins of others, and so on.

But v. 20 says that God did this **"in connection with hope"** that when the children of God are set free from the bondage of corruption on this earth, then the whole creation will also be set free from its slavery to corruption. This will happen when Christ comes to receive us into heaven.

We know that this hope of glory is present in the creation, for Paul tells us in v. 22 that the creation **"groans"** or sighs daily under the distress which man's sin has brought upon it. I saw this groaning of creation when I took the wilted flowers off the altar this past week. But did you notice that Paul compares creation's agony with a woman giving birth to a child? When a woman is in labor there is hope that the pain will cease when a new and wonderful life comes forth.

what then about the children of God? We have an even more certain hope! Do you believe in your heart that because of the life, sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, you, a sinner, stand completely righteous and acceptable before God? If so, then God's Spirit is telling your spirit that you **"are a child of God"** and an heir of everlasting life!

Paul says that by faith you have **"the firstfruits of the Spirit"** – the down payment which assures the final ransoming of your body as an adopted child of God.

Do you also **"groan within"** and **eagerly look** for the glory to come? I hope so, for Paul says that **"we are saved in connection with this hope."** **"But hope that is seen is not hope; for a man does not hope for what he sees. But if we hope for what we do not see, then through patience we wait eagerly for it!"**

II.

Not only do we have hope, but we also have the help of the Spirit in prayer. We may become so troubled by our circumstances that **"we do not know how we should pray, or what we should pray for"**

as being necessary.”

When we pray for ourselves or others in times of suffering, we might pray for a solution which is not really a good solution at all! But the Spirit of God, Who dwells in us by faith in Christ, knows our condition. He makes up for our weaknesses in prayer. As **“the Comforter,”** Whom Jesus sent to be with us, the Holy Spirit interprets the deepest concerns of our hearts which we can’t put into words.

Even though such prayers are not heard by us and cannot be expressed by us, the Father Who **“searches the hearts,”** knows the thinking of the Spirit with that heart because the Holy Spirit makes intercession for the believer according to God’s will. So, the great comfort for you, as a believing saint and child of God is that the Holy Spirit intercedes for you from within your hearts! So wonderful is the mysterious union and communion of the believer with the Triune God – your God, Who IS!

III.

And this saving union must continue through every condition, because we have the assurance of God’s saving purpose for us from beginning to end! Paul says: **“Furthermore, we know that all things work together for good to those who love God – to those who are the called according to His purpose.”** (V. 28) If you truly love God, it’s only because He first loved you and called you to faith in Christ by the power of His Gospel. God has revealed His eternal purpose for you. This means that all things, even the worst of them, must **“work together”** for your final and eternal blessing.

This is true in the lives of all God’s believing children, whether they know it or not. Job certainly wondered how all his suffering could be for his good. Jonah didn’t expect any good thing for himself when he was thrown into the sea! But both of these men were strengthened and blessed by God through what they suffered. Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers! And yet, years later, Joseph said to them: **“You thought evil against me; but God meant it unto Good.”** (Gen. 50:20)

Who doesn’t like chocolate cake or apple pie? And yet the baker’s recipe calls for a lot of bad tasting things to be thrown into the mix! So also in our lives not everything that God throws into the mix is good and sweet to our taste buds. But your God promises that He will **“cause** all

things to work together **for your good.**"

Why will God do that for us? Because, Paul says, **"Those whom God knew before, He also predestined or pre-determined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that His Son might be the firstborn among many brethren."** (V. 29) The N.T. letter to the Hebrew Christians tells us that our Brother, Jesus, was **"made perfect"** through the sufferings He endured in this life for us. So also, God wants to change every believing child of His into the perfect image of His Son by means of suffering.

This process begins with faith and continues through all the sufferings and trials of this life. God's wonderful purpose for us is completed when we too are raised from the dead, as Jesus first was. Then, like Him, we too will receive the glorified bodies of immortality!

Now read with me the comfort in v. 30. . . . The baker may decide to bake a cake or a pie and then never finish it for many reasons. He or she may get interrupted by an important phone call and be distracted for hours. Or the baker may spoil the whole mixture with too much salt, sugar, or baking soda. But our God never makes any mistakes in carrying out His saving purpose with His believing children. And He cannot be side-tracked from what He set out to do for us in eternity, because He IS God! What comfort belongs to you, dear child of God because God IS! Amen.