

Life in all its fullness



Participating in his suffering - Study 9

Readings – Philippians 3: 7-16 & Romans 8: 18-30

Our theme this week is one less frequently talked about, avoided because it is often misunderstood. We have been given two powerful, challenging readings to help with our understanding.

Read Philippians 3: 7-16

Most of us are used to working with household budgets/accounts, not normally in a formal way, simply assessing money coming in against money going out. Paul, in this passage, is asking us to review our spiritual accounts having become a Christian.

- 1a. What are the blessings/benefits from God we should put on the credit side of the ledger? What have we gained, what advantages, what positive changes, short term and long term?
- 1b. What are the costs/sufferings to set on the debit side? What were the needed changes, what have we given up, how have we suffered, short term and long term?
- 1c. Where/how does 'grace' fit into these accounts? On both sides of the ledger?
- 1d. Some might say Paul reconciles these accounts in an extraordinary way. Do you agree with his accounting?

Read Romans 8: 18-30

Romans was, most likely, written before his letter to his beloved church in Philippi. He addresses the same issue but from a more universal and historic point of view, explaining reasons why there is suffering.

- 2a. Paul starts by acknowledging present suffering is real, often intense, but is far outweighed by the glory that is to come (we will share in/with Christ's glory). All of us are waiting. Can you point to any evidence today of 'the whole creation has been groaning'?
- 2b. We have 'the firstfruits' but continue to 'groan inwardly' says Paul. Blessings are simultaneously both 'now' and 'not yet'. Who will help us in our waiting, and how?
- 2c. Hindsight is often 20/20. Can anyone in the group give an example of how verse 28 worked for them?

Back to the Philippians passage

- 3a. What comfort, if any, can we draw from verses 12 – 14?
- 3b. Are verses 15 & 16 a help when we struggle with suffering continuing in our world?

(Bible used = NIV 2011 translation)

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