Romans - Commentaries by J. Timley

Association With Christ, Association With Christ: Part 3 (8:17)

But the wonderful truth is that, associated with Him, we inherit likewise a place in the dispensing of that vast economy of blessing. Is it not even thus that we are to be the praise of His glory? Vast the scheme of blessing planned! Immense the sphere to be subjected to the hand, and rule, and sway of Christ Jesus according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things, after the counsel of His own will! Yet is it also by the predestination or fore-ordaining of that same One, so characterized, that we have obtained our inheritance, a share in that glory of Christ.

He is the “appointed,” “established” “heir of all things” we read in Heb. 1:2, and He the Son of God. He, the first-born Son is the Heir, Heir par excellence, Heir in a sense we never can be; for by Him the worlds were made. All things created not only by Him, but also for Him, His inheritance of all things is a fixed established fact. And what delays the making good His title, and the taking in hand of power His great inheritance? We who are, in this His day of grace, being called out as His co-heirs know, understand, have reason to appreciate. That He might share it all with us, with us, the poor of this world, enriched spiritually through faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him—He thus waits, waits in patience to invest us at the right moment with the glory of the inheritance. The delay for us is blessing. And not only so, but we, waiting also, in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, stand here, as He sits there, in attitude of expectancy. The Holy Spirit we are sealed with is that Holy Spirit of promise, and we realize Him to be the earnest of our inheritance until, for, and with a view to, the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. Wondrous the wealth, and honor, and glory, wrapped up in the words “co-heirs with Christ.”

But of more than being co-heirs with Christ does the passage speak. “If so be that we suffer with Him.” That is our privilege, to co-suffer with Christ. Think of what it means. We know what it is to co-suffer with men. That in a world so full of sorrow and suffering we should not escape so common a portion, what would be remarkable about that? We share with our fellows what none are entirely exempt from. As we read further on in the chapter “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now.” All that can be comprehended under that title of personification “the creature” not only is made subject to vanity, and not only is in the bondage of corruption, but “co-groans” and “co-travails” in pain. And we have our link with that. Children of God and heirs of God as we are, we wind ourselves too high if we imagine that connection with earth and a fallen creation is severed for us thereby. The earthen vessel, the body of humiliation, is itself witness of our belonging to, of our being in a very real sense part and parcel of, this scene of sorrow and suffering which, through the sin and fall of man, its head, is co-extensive with this creation. Included in that we are of necessity, and, in a sense, inexorably involved in its heritage of sorrow.

In all this we may say we co-suffer with man, with creation. But what we read of here is co-suffering with Christ. Ah! there we touch something unique, something sacred, something holy—Christ's sufferings. We here come upon what we may call a type of suffering utterly unknown to man or creature hitherto. In suffering, He who is known as the “Man of Sorrows” stood alone, ah! how unapproachably alone: And but for such scripture as this, well might we shrink from the thought of our sufferings being such as can be in any sense put alongside with His. Instinctively we feel that His were sufferings of a type peculiarly sacred. Yet are we said to co-suffer with Him. Privilege it is to suffer so, to have sufferings that belong to the same category as His! If there are depths here, of sorrow, and there are, what are they, in reality, but depths of privilege which it is an honor in being permitted to share, for such an association gives a new valuation to suffering and altogether transfigures sorrow. We are His co-sufferers.

True, distinction is called for, and that as to the nature of His sufferings still more than as to their extent. He suffered for sin. There He stood alone. In that descent into the deepest depths none could accompany Him then, or ever, and, blessed be God, have no need to now. But He suffered in other ways, and in many of them ours it is in our feeble measure, to share. If by a link of death we stand connected with a groaning and suffering creation, by a link of life no less truly are we associated with Christ, and that even as to His sufferings. It could not be otherwise, this latter. Necessarily we feel, Christ, being what He was, must have suffered in such a world of sin and misery. And so He did, as we know. Of necessity also we, if we have the Spirit of Christ in us, will in some measure suffer similarly in this scene. What community of life and moral nature can there be if it result not in feelings of the same sort, as we encounter the same things day by day that were sources of such sorrow to Him. The occasions of suffering are numerous indeed in a world where everything morally is out of course, disorganized, disordered, totally opposed to good, and holiness, and God; where justice is set at naught, righteousness is rejected, and love outraged at every turn. A scene where sin distorts and defiles, where evil is to all appearance triumphant, and where death in all reality reigns. Where men are wallowing in iniquity, vileness, corruption, are stalking in godless pride, are making themselves in hypocrisy, are playing the fool, alike making a mock of sin and a ridicule of godliness, until death, grim death, neither to be mocked nor beguiled, levels their pride and closes their career of ungodliness. Can a child of God, a partaker of the divine nature, pass through a. scene like that and not suffer? The weight of it was on His spirit. Is not its pressure felt on ours? Having life in Christ Jesus, and being led by the Spirit we do suffer with Him thus.

Nor is it a question only of unanimity of sentiment and feelings, and effect on the heart and spirit. “A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” He was all through. But active testimony there was also, and the meeting with outward suffering. “He was despised and rejected of men.” Righteousness He preached, truth He proclaimed, holiness He exemplified, love He manifested. And He suffered in the rejection of all. “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” Grief and sorrow were fully measured out to Him in that respect too. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, as the sense of what that scene of sorrow signified of the world's misery, and evil, and suffering, was borne in upon His spirit. But He shed tears also over Jerusalem, the most guilty rejecter of His love and grace. All was present to, and pressed upon, the perfectly attuned sensitiveness of His heart. The world He came not to condemn, but to extend love and grace and salvation too, would have none of it. And soon all culminated in the suffering and death of the cross. Man and the great adversary are still the same. The path of testimony is still one of suffering in this world. The Faithful Witness Himself suffered, and that unto death., Are we, His witnesses in turn, prepared for share of these His afflictions. To suffer for righteousness sake (1 Peter 3:14); for well-doing (1 Peter 2:19-23), as a Christian for

the name of Christ (1 Peter 4:12-16), all these we may be called on to pass through. Association with a rejected Christ, itself implies suffering in this the scene of His rejection. The offense of the cross is not ceased (Gal. 5:11; 6:12). And he who in the gospel suffered trouble even unto bonds (2 Tim. 2:9) could exhort his beloved son Timothy, and through him surely us also, to suffer with the suffering gospel (2 Tim. 1:8). John also, our "companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," records the very words of the Lord Jesus Himself for us, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Blessedly true is it also that the Lord added, "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." That consideration itself—of how much is it the assurance. The victory is sure, and sure for us. The time of tribulation, the short-lived triumph of the enemy shall pass, and in this confidence we may, even while passing through this interval of suffering, have peace in that One Who has overcome the world.

Such a universal element in the lot of the child of God— "for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" —it is well to have in true perspective and careful estimation. One who, perhaps beyond others, himself experienced to the full what that was, has by the spirit been led to give us such an estimate. And this is his carefully-pondered and deliberately-expressed judgment. "I reckon" he says (Rom. 8:18) "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." It is in the light of the future glory that the present suffering can assume true proportions. No suffering, any more than chastening, can for the present seem joyous but grievous. But things are not what they seem, and when the present, freed from the exaggerated bulk it assumes in our distorted vision now, falls back into its true place and perspective by and by, not only will the profit of our exercises under it be apparent, but its intrinsic importance, the "momentary lightness of our affliction," will be seen in true comparison with its sequel, the "eternal weight of glory." This as to the suffering in itself. But when further it is remembered that suffering with Christ is the true character of all that is hardest in our path through this world, that association with Him in that respect is our privilege now, the estimate of the apostle has its significance intensified when he looks on to the future and reckons as he does. It will yet be seen by each one of us how great the privilege was of co-suffering with Christ in this the scene of His sorrow and rejection, and ere yet His kingdom in power was set up, or He had taken to Him His great power and reigned.

To the future, however, as the apostle so immediately directs our gaze, we turn. We learn that to be glorified together with Christ is the portion yet reserved for us. "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." Peter, in his epistle, writes in similar strain to what we have here. In a beautiful summary at the close of his First Epistle (chap. 5:10), we have "But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." Called unto His everlasting glory—there is purpose there, the eternal purpose of God. We are "the called according to His purpose," and glory is the end of that path on which His calling sets our feet. "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate.... Whom He did predestinate them He also called, and whom He called them He also justified, and whom He justified them He also glorified."

Is it not well to remember that it is His eternal glory? His, not only in the sense that He and He alone is the Author of it; but also as being the One whom it primarily concerns, the One who Himself reaps its harvest. In Scripture, glory is in itself an economy, a scheme of things, a system of universal extension, almost, one might say, a dispensation like law or grace, were it not that in itself it is the crown and culmination of all ages and dispensations. God has reaped glory all along, as He has also sown seeds of grace all along. But as in this dispensation of grace He is, so to speak, filling the field with nothing else than grace, so in that future system, may we call it, He is to have not merely gleanings, but an eternal and abundant harvest of glory. "His everlasting glory" that takes us past all dispensations and times, millennial and otherwise. And it is to that, His eternal glory, that the God of all grace has called us, by Christ Jesus. No doubt it is "after that ye have suffered awhile." That is our present portion. To none would this seem more strange perhaps than to one who had formerly been a Jew, and accustomed, according to his Jewish faith, to look for the calling of God to result in blessing, temporal and material, here and now. To Jewish believers Peter writes, and according to the wisdom given unto him, is careful to remind them of what they might expect, and doubtless had experienced, regarding the nature of their pa way through this world. Suffering meantime, and for awhile, they were to know that glory in the future, and glory forever, was what awaited them.

Not only so but, to refer again to Rom. 8:17, it is in association with Christ that all is to be enjoyed, "that we may be also co-glorified." Co-suffering with Him here, we are to be co-glorified with Him then. The link that made the path of suffering a privilege holds good when its blessed counterpart, glory, is introduced. Blessed prospect! It is with Him, with Him in the eternal glory, that we are to be forever associated. Not that he has not a place and a glory peculiar to Himself, that which none can share. As He in grace undertook suffering, and stood in a place where none could follow, no less true is if that by virtue of what He is in Himself, He must have reserved for him a position unique and exclusive. "And now, O Father," He prayed, "glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." A glory of His, too, there is, a glory of His own, which He wills and is desirous that we shall behold. "Father, I, will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." He has a conferred glory to assume, as well as essential glory to resume, and it is in that glory which He has won and earned and received that we are to have our part. "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one: I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

All is the gift of love—this participation in His glory spoken of here. When the world sees us in the same glory as Christ, and thus made perfect in one, it will rightly conclude that we are loved with the same love. The truth of our association with Christ, fruitful in so many respects, will be evident then. For this being co-glorified with Christ the world will see in due time. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." "If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him" the apostle tells us, referring no doubt to this same time of manifestation to the world in the day of His appearing and kingdom. But for the full thought of this our association with Him in glory our hearts turn to that eternal glory to which the God of all grace has called us by Christ Jesus, where back of all, beyond all, "in the ages to come" He shall "show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Heirs of God, we are associated with Christ in the inheritance, being His co-heirs. That does not relieve us from suffering meanwhile in this world; but bestows upon us the privilege of being His co-sufferers here. And, finally, when the day of glory dawns it will find us co-glorified with Him, according to the purpose of

(Concluded from page 144)

J. T.

Courtesy of BibleTruthPublishers.com. Most likely this text has not been proofread. Any suggestions for spelling or punctuation corrections would be warmly received. Please email them to: BTPmail@bibletruthpublishers.com.

Association With Christ, Association With Christ: Part 2 (8:17)

How emphatically Ephesians puts this. In chap. 1 it is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ whose mighty power is seen working in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places. And then our association with Him thus, is brought out in chap. 2. “And you, who were dead in trespasses and sins...among whom also we...were by nature the children of wrath even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” Such is the purpose of God.

And such is our association with Him now, quickened, raised with Him, and in Him seated in heavenly places.

Colossians, too, in appropriate measure and expression, sets forth the same truth “You, being dead in your sins hath He quickened together with Him.” If Christ by “the operation of God” has been raised from the dead, then also “we are risen with Him.” And if, as to the things that are on the earth, Christ is “hid in God” now, one day to appear in glory, so, too, we have died, and our life is hid with Him in God, with Him in that day of His appearing also to be manifested in glory. “With Christ,” how frequent the expression! How varied also the occasions of its occurrence! So manifestly is it the case that the believer's association with Christ is, all through, a truth remembered and reiterated.

Nor does Romans omit it. It does not take us so far, nor set forth in the same full measure the truth of our association with Him; but clearly it is there. Rather is it that it is upon another plane that the truth here reaches us. From chap. 5:1, 2, of that interesting Epistle we are constantly in the presence of it. The new section which begins with the verse mentioned deals with matters which (as has often been remarked) the teaching of the earlier chapters of the Epistle is no answer to. Our state or condition is what is now being considered. The question of our sins, their forgiveness, and our justification, had already been gone into ere this point was reached. The truth of federal headship, and the result of our connection with, on the one hand, Adam, and, on the other, Christ—quite inapplicable to the first section of the Epistle—is apposite and forcible in its application to the question nr raised for solution. Briefly put, our connection or association with “the one man, Jesus Christ,” in contrast to the other federal head Adam, results in not only justification of life for us in the end of chap. 5; but also in deliverance for us in chap. 6 from sin as a master: and in chap. 7 from the law as a husband. Chap. 8 again, after summarizing in its opening verses the teaching of these three chapters, opens out the blessedness of the Christian position, free of all these things, and characterized now by the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. And this our positive Christian position, is bound up with our association with Christ no less truly than the negative relations to sin, and law, in chapters 6 and 7. For we are not only spoken of as “in Christ Jesus” (verse 1); but having the Spirit of Christ we are “His” (verse 9); and Christ is “in us” (verse 10). So that, with the fact that the general truth of our association with Christ is a very important one, we also perceive that it holds no inconsiderable place in the teaching of the Epistle.

In the verse more immediately under notice (8:17), this truth of association with Christ is given particular application— “If children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs,” or ‘coheirs,' “with Christ; if so be that we suffer with,” or ‘co-suffer with,’ “Him, that we may be also glorified together,” or ‘co-glorified.' As to three things, may it not be said, the value of the link is brought out—our possession, “co-heirs"; our privilege, “co-sufferers"; and our prospect, “co-glorified ones.”

That an inheritance is ours, inalienable and secure we know, “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” That suffering of one kind or another, as our present portion in this world, is what we may look for—this we accept, or soon learn by experience. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” That, beyond all, glorification is in prospect for us according to the purpose of God— “whom He justified them He also glorified” —we are also assured of. And in all these things we have the super-added blessedness of being associated with Christ Himself, as this verse makes plain.

In the first place it may be noticed, all flows from relationship— “if children then heirs.” The birth-right and the birth-tie here go together. Children of God we are, here and now. The significance of that truth, relationship with God, and the importance of realizing the true nature of the spiritual birth-tie, it would seem impossible to overemphasize. This is a new relationship with God into which believers are admitted, upon another plane, and of entirely different nature from any previously enjoyed by man. The link is formed on our side through our being born again spiritually, born of God. In its full Christian content it is a relationship founded upon the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, entered upon in association with the Son of God in resurrection, its basis essentially the possession of eternal life in Him and God's sending forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying “Abba, Father.” As also herein Rom. 8, where we have the owning (verse 14), adoption (verse 23), and manifestation (verse 19), spoken of, of those blessed with the position of “sons of God,” the birth-tie itself comes immediately into evidence— “Ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our that we are children of God.” Heirship, then, we find here connected with our relation to God as His children. Galatians connects it with sonship (Gal. 4:7). They do not differ essentially, although to be distinguished materially, “children” and “sons.” He is a child of God, who, receiving Christ and believing on His name, is “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12, 13). Sons of God they all are who have “faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26). If the one speaks of the tie or bond of relationship which constitutionally pervades the family of God, the other sets forth the place and position, albeit responsibility also, characterizing those who under the Christian economy are so related. What our passage then shows is that not merely to sonship, with all the wealth of privilege and place implied in the term and to be made good when the “adoption” and “revelation” of the sons of God installs us in our position as such—that not merely to that does heirship attach; but that such is involved in the birth-tie itself, “if children then heirs.” Are we not therefore doubly secured in our heritage, by right and by title through the grace of God?

“Heirs of God!” What a portion is ours! No mere legacy from one whom death relieves or deprives of its possession—from one who, fading in a fading scene, passes on what he has done with, and which itself is only a little less perishable, at the best, than he himself is! We inherit from One who never passes away. And if to describe wherein it consists materially be beyond us, we still may know by the Spirit's enlightening what are “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” Nor is it merely as the “inheritance of the saints in light” that it may be characterized. We are joint-heirs, co-heirs with Christ. It is no legacy bequeathed, as has been said, but rather a partnership of blessing we are brought into.

We are to be joint-partakers with Christ as Eph. 1. shows us, in that which is to result from the fulfillment of the purpose of God. No sooner does that passage speak of the purpose to head up all things in Christ—the things in heaven and the things on earth—than it tells that this is even in Him in whom we have obtained an inheritance. That is to say, that in what we may call the re-formed, re-organized, administration of all things heavenly and earthly, which the dispensation of the fullness of times is to witness, the Lord Jesus Christ has unique and supreme place as Head, source, and security of blessing to all.

[U. T.]

(Continued from page 128)

(To be continued).

Association With Christ, Association With Christ: Part 1 (8:17)

A suggested rendering of this well-known verse runs somewhat as follows— “And if children then heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if so be that we co-suffer with Him that we may be also co-glorified.”

It is a suggestive rendering also, whatever the apparent uncouthness of the phraseology. For the addition of the short prefix co- to the three words, “heirs,” “suffer,” and “glorified” —quite legitimate apparently as an attempt at a literal translation of the original—does most forcibly bring out the truth that in all these things association with Christ is the ruling idea. This at all events is the prominent thought remaining, the impression left, as the verse closes, that in all the three things spoken of, heirship, suffering, and glorification, the spirit-led child of God stands not alone, but connected, associated with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

And again, how wide a range of Christian truth this thought suggests. Association with Christ! how important and far-reaching a truth! As a specific doctrine in the New Testament scripture its appearance is frequent; and still more often where not openly expressed does the general truth of the believer's association with Christ underlie and give the clue to what is taught. Instances of this latter this same Epistle to the Romans abundantly furnishes. But first of all it may be remarked how clear a part of the New Testament revelation this truth forms. How clearly we learn there that God's salvation stops not short of, but involves, this—the Christian's association, vital association with the Lord Jesus Christ risen and glorified. The grace of God, we must remember, is no mere matter of meeting the bare necessities of our individual case, desperate as it was.

“Trembling, we had hoped for mercy—Some low place within the door.”

But, once within, we learn that God has destined us to enter into the enjoyment, not of what we thought needful, but. of what He has thought fit to bestow. And is not this wherein the exceeding riches of His grace is shown? To be saved, to be blessed even because of Christ, were something wonderful.

But to be blessed with Christ, to enter into spiritual blessedness connected with, in partnership with, associated with, His well-beloved Son, Who on the cross for us so perfectly accomplished the work of atonement to God's glory, and has since been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father what can be said of this? Co-partakers with Christ in all that by His death He has won and achieved, that is what we are by grace. A place of blessing ours far exceeding all we could have asked or thought. But it was God's thought for us, as His word makes plain. The scripture makes it clear that this indeed is embraced in His eternal purpose regarding us. Regarding Christ, may we not say, for it is Christ whom His purposes and counsels have as their center. All is linked with Him. The wonderful truth indeed is that God, in His own wisdom, of His own holy will, and for the glory of His well-beloved Son, predestinated us, not merely to be blessed through Him; but to share with Him all the grace, and blessedness and glory of the place and position His death has won!

(To be continued)

clickbible.org