

Glorification

by H. A. Ironside

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together...And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Romans 8:14-17, 28-30).

HAVE you ever tried to define the word *glory*? It has always seemed to me to be one of the most difficult words in the English language to explain. We read a great deal about glory in the Bible, but just what is meant when that term is used? Sometimes, of course, it is used in the sense of boastfulness. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord," and that is a boastfulness that is perfectly right. And so we are told, "Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord." We are warned against vain glory, against glorying in our own strength, or in our own fancied wisdom. But the word *glory* is used in a great many other senses in the Bible.

Our Lord Jesus prayed, "Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," and there He was referring to the splendor of deity which He left in order to come down into this world, veiling His deity in humanity. Even when He was here on earth, we are told by the apostle John, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." It is very difficult to put in other words the exact meaning of that expression. What does it mean to you—"We beheld his glory"? We connect with the word sometimes the thought of resplendence, brilliance, like the glory of the sunshine, whether of the rising sun or the setting sun. But when John wrote, "We beheld his glory," he was not referring to anything like that. On the Mount of Transfiguration they saw that kind of glory. He appeared in glory—bright, shining, brilliant—His raiment white and glistening, whiter than any fuller on earth could possibly have made it. But what was that glory of which John spoke, "We beheld his glory?" It was the beauty of His intrinsic character. They saw in that lowly Man the glory of deity shining out,

the glory of His divine character seen shining through the veil of His humanity.

But when Scripture speaks of the glory that awaits us, what does that mean? We think of heaven as a place of brilliance, a place of marvelous beauty, and yet that is not exactly the thought that is connected with glory and with our glorification. Among a great many different definitions which the dictionary gives for *glory* I have selected these as fitting, it seems to me, more definitely than others with what I have in mind. Glory means honor, distinction, that of which we may rightfully boast, brilliancy, splendor, radiant beauty; and then I am so glad that Webster says, "celestial bliss," for that after all is the glory that is before us.

Now Scripture links our coming glory with our present suffering. We read here in Romans 8:14-17, that if we suffer with Him, we may also be glorified together. It is not telling us that our glory is absolutely dependent on our suffering, and that we will only be glorified provided we have suffered to some certain extent, but it is telling us that the glory that is coming will fully repay us for any suffering that we may endure for Christ's sake down here. And notice in this instance it does not say, "If we suffer *for* him," but "If we suffer *with* him, we shall be glorified together."

You who have recently come to Christ, you who are young in the Christian life, you have already begun to realize that it is impossible to be a consistent Christian without to some extent suffering with Him who has saved you. The Lord Jesus Christ is still unpopular.

Our Lord is now rejected
And by the world disowned,
By the many still neglected
And by the few enthroned.
But soon He'll come in glory,
The hour is drawing nigh,
For the crowning day is coming
By and by.

He has said to us, "[Ye] are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." If I am going to take my stand as a witness for Christ in the world that has rejected Him, of very necessity it entails a certain amount of suffering. I cannot look for the approval of the world. I must expect to bear a measure, at least, of reproach and shame for Christ's name sake.

But after all, to suffer *with* Him is something different from suffering

for Him. I suffer for Him when I stand out for His name's sake and bear witness to His testimony, enduring positive persecution if the world chooses to turn against me. But every believer suffers *with* Christ as he finds his spirit oppressed and troubled because of conditions prevailing all about him. How could I be a Christian and live in any sense in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and not suffer as I go through this evil world? A poet has written:

Saddened, ah yes, saddened
By earth's deep sin and woe.
How could I pass unheeding
What grieved my Saviour so?

We suffer as we see men for whom Christ died spurning His grace, trampling on His love, and in spite of every effort put forth for their salvation, ruthlessly rushing on to eternal judgment. It fills our hearts with pain. It causes intense suffering. The more we think of it and the more we realize what it means, the keener the suffering.

The apostle Paul says of servants of Christ that we are a sweet savour unto God, both in them that are saved and in them that perish. I shall never forget kneeling one time with a brother evangelist as we were about to go into an evening meeting, and suddenly my friend burst into a passion of tears and broke out in prayer something like this: "O Lord, do grant tonight that as we go to the platform to proclaim Thy Word we may not be a savour of death unto death, but of life unto life. So often we preach Thy Word and men turn coldly away, and instead of the world coming to it for blessing, it only increases their condemnation. O God," he pleaded, "may it not be so tonight." And I think every lover of souls can understand his feeling.

Richard Baxter used to pray from the depths of a heart breaking over the sins of a lost world, "O God, for a full heaven and an empty hell." But alas, alas, that prayer cannot be answered because men will persist in trampling on the love and grace of the Saviour who came to redeem them. As a true Christian contemplates this, he suffers. It cannot be otherwise. As he sees the pain and the sorrow that men are enduring because of sin, he suffers as Christ suffered. Our Lord groaned in the spirit and was troubled when He saw the ravages that death had made; and so the Christian suffers as he sees that which comes upon mankind because of sin.

But, thank God, the day is coming when the reward will answer in the fullest possible sense to all present suffering. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." When He shines forth in glory, then we shall shine forth in the same glory with Him, since it is for this that God has saved us.

Look again at that golden chain in verses 29 and 30, reaching from the eternity in the past to the glorious eternity in the future:

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

See these golden links that join the ages before creation to the ages to come when this world, this lower universe, will have passed away:

Divine foreknowledge
Divine predestination
Divine calling
Divine justification
Divine glorification

God knew you, my brother, my sister, long before you ever came into existence. He knew every sin you would be guilty of. He knew every failure that would mark your life, and knowing it all, He marked you out as an object of His grace. In His foreknowledge He saw the moment when you, as a poor sinner, would turn to God confessing your guilt and would put your trust in Christ. Also, He has predestinated you to be conformed to image of His Son. Do not get the wrong idea when you read in the Bible about predestination. Do not allow thoughts of fatalistic philosophy to bewilder your mind. Remember this: nowhere in Scripture are we told that God predestined anybody to go to heaven, and certainly we never read that He predestinated anybody to go to hell. Predestination is never linked up either with heaven or with hell, as such.

What does God predestinate people for? He predestinates those whom He foreknew to be conformed to the image of His Son. Ah, dear young Christian, have you already begun to get discouraged with yourself sometimes, and do you weep in secret over sins that you know have dishonored your Lord? Those are grateful tears and He appreciates them, and you may rest upon the Word, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But do not let any degrees of failure ever fill your heart with discouragement. Remember that God has predestinated you to become some day just like the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what predestination means. He has predestinated you to eventual holiness, to eventual perfection, morally and spiritually, and it is for this purpose that He has called you by His grace. He called you through the message of the gospel, and mark, He knew everything you would be

before He called you at all. I have had people say to me sometimes, when they come to consult me about some failure in their lives, "Oh, I feel God must be so disappointed in me." Let me tell you something. God has never been disappointed in any of us. He knew just how foolish we were going to be, just how we would fail, before He took us up. And yet He called us by His grace.

And whom He called, them He also justified. And to be justified, as we have already seen in this series of messages, is to be cleared of every charge, so that God absolutely refuses to listen to any accusation brought against any of His blood-redeemed people. We are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"; and this justification is not changed by fluctuations in our spiritual experience. You all know the old camp meeting song:

I'm sometimes up, and sometimes down,
But still my soul *feels* heavenly bound.
It might better be rendered:
I'm sometimes up, and sometimes down,
But still my soul *is* heavenly bound.

For if you have been justified before God, He says, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

See what completes the chain: "Whom he justified, them he also *glorified*." Now do get that straight, young believer. It does not say, "Those who were once justified and kept holding on to the end were eventually justified." It says, "Whom he justified, them he also *glorified*." When God justifies a man, He saves him for eternity, and He will never be through with him until He has him in the same glory with Christ.

Some people have a very strange idea as to the meaning of God's salvation. That salvation is beautifully illustrated away back in the Old Testament. You remember when God was about to bring the flood of judgment upon the earth, He commanded Noah to build an ark for the saving of his house. Then when the ark was all completed, God said to Him, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." When they entered the ark, they were safe there until the judgment was passed, until in God's due time they came out upon a new earth.

I have often tried to illustrate the ideas some people have of God's salvation by putting it like this: suppose that after the work was completed the word of the Lord came to Noah saying, "Now, Noah, I want you to go and get eight good, big, strong spikes." Noah says, "Eight spikes, Lord?" "Yes, I want you to get eight good, big, strong

spikes." So Noah goes off and gets these spikes. Then the Lord says, "I want you to drive these into the side of the ark, a reasonable distance apart, and leave enough of them outside in order that one may hold on to them." Noah drives them into the side of the ark. Then imagine the voice of the Lord saying to Noah, "Come now, and all thy house, and hang on to these spikes, and it shall come to pass that whosoever shall hang on to these spikes until the flood is over will eventually be saved"! Would not that be a poor kind of salvation? I can imagine Noah getting hold of one spike and Mrs. Noah getting hold of another spike, and Japheth grasps his spike and Mrs. Japheth her spike, and Shem and Ham and their wives theirs—each one hanging on; and then Noah trying to encourage them by saying, "Now, my dear sons, my dear wife, my dear daughters-in-law, I want you all to make up your minds that no matter what comes, you are going to hold on to the very end, for if you do, you'll get through all right; if you let go, you will be lost in the flood waters."

Then just imagine the rains descending and the floods rising, and the old ark beginning to shiver and quiver and rise upon the face of the deep, and there are the eight hanging onto their spikes for dear life. It would not be long until Noah would cry out, "Mama, how are you getting along?" and she would reply, "Noah, I'm holding on; do pray that I may hold on to the end." And each one would put in a similar plea. By and by the weakest one of the crowd, perhaps, I don't know which one, would cry out, "Oh, it seems as if I can't hold on any longer," and would let go and be carried away in the flood. How long do you think it would be until they all would be carried away, if it depended on their hanging on?

That was not God's way. He said, "Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark," and they went in and the Lord shut them in, and they did not get out until the renewed earth lay there in all its beauty before them. Then they were able to go forth as worshippers.

When God justifies a sinner, that sinner is in Christ; and there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. It is true that inside the ark order should prevail. I have no doubt that Noah and his family all sought to behave themselves inside the ark as those who owed everything to the matchless grace of God which had delivered them. So you and I should devote all our lives and powers to the glory of Him who has saved us. But our salvation does not depend upon our devotedness and faithfulness. It depends upon *His* faithfulness. "He is faithful who hath promised."

And now the end: "Whom he justified, them he also *glorified*." If you have trusted Christ, you can look on to the glory; and when that glory

comes, it will repay you for everything you ever had to endure in the way of trial and sorrow in this poor world.

Look at Second Corinthians, chapter 4, verses 17 and 18:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Are you disposed, perhaps, to raise a question here and say, "Well, Paul by the Spirit speaks there of our light affliction which is but for a moment, but my affliction has been very heavy, and instead of being for a moment, it has already lasted for weary months or years." Ah, but wait a moment, dear friend. Granting all that, then it ought to give you a greater conception of what glory is going to be when you are finally at home with Christ, because there awaits you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Notice the contrast here. God calls your present affliction "light," though it may seem to you very heavy; but it is light as contrasted with the weight of glory that is coming. It may seem sometimes, dear troubled soul, as though you cannot bear any more, but your Father is taking note of everything and He is going to repay in His own wonderful way when you see His face, by giving you far more yonder than you ever could possibly have entered into in your thoughts down here.

Let the apostle Peter add a word to this. In his first Epistle, chapter 1, he writes to encourage suffering, troubled saints:

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (verses 6 to 9).

Whatever you are going through in the way of heartbreak, bereavement, sickness, financial distress, trouble in the family, trouble in the church, trouble in the world—whatever you are called upon to endure that is testing your heart and mind to the very breaking point, remember it is but like the fire that is purifying the gold, and when God gets through there will be only the pure gold left. Your faith will be found then unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

In the fourth chapter of this same Epistle, Peter speaks again of trial and glory. He says in verses 12 and 13:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

Partakers of Christ's suffering! He suffered down in this scene. He has been glorified up yonder, and you and I are going to share His glory.

In the seventeenth chapter of John we have recorded Christ's prayer to the Father in our behalf. He says, "Father, the glory which thou gavest me I have given them." And then He expresses His delight that the day is coming when they shall behold His glory. Do you remember when Joseph had been sold as a slave by his heartless brothers, and then was purchased by Potiphar and afterwards knew long, weary months and possibly years in prison, and was finally brought to stand before Pharaoh and become the deliverer of his world in his day? He sent for his brothers and his father, and said, "I want them to come to me that they may behold my glory." You get some idea of what the Lord Jesus meant when He said, "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."

We shall behold the glory of Him who was once rejected down here—now glorified, honored of the Father, and we shall share the glory that came to Him because of His suffering, because of what He endured for the Father's sake, and in order to work out His redemption for us in this scene. What a prospect we have before us! "Whom he justified, them he also *glorified*."

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