
“Redound to the Glory of God”

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— Keith R. Blades

Amazingly, however, the magnificence of our grace-given capacity to glorify God only increases the more closely it is looked at. And there are aspects of it that almost seem too good to be true. One such aspect is the capacity we have to bring glory to God through the unlikely experiences of suffering trouble and tribulation. In particular is this so through “the sufferings of this present time” and also through “the sufferings of Christ.” Indeed this capacity not only sounds amazing and too good to be true, but the wisdom and genius of God associated with providing for it is equally amazing. In allowing us in this dispensation to experience both the “sufferings of this present time” and “the sufferings of Christ,” God has ingeniously designed for Him to be glorified in a very special way — in a way that brings chagrin to the Adversary and his policy of evil against us. Yet though this is true, this particular means of glorifying God is often overlooked, if not even disliked.

In Romans 8:18ff and in II Corinthians 1:3ff where Paul deals respectively with the issues of the “sufferings of this present time” and “the sufferings of Christ,” God has Paul teach us to expect sufferings and tribulations from these two sources. However He also has Paul teach us to understand and appreciate His wisdom in having us experience them. And indeed God is wise in not shielding us from such sufferings. He is wise in ordaining that we should encounter them in this dispensation. For as Paul first of all gives us to understand, it is through the experience of them that we ourselves come to understand and appreciate God as “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort” and become “more than conquerors through him that loved us.” However

in addition we also learn to understand and appreciate “the excellency of the power” of God’s word operating within us as it overcomes the natural tendency for troubles to disturb, distress, and discourage us. Yet in addition to all of this we are also taught that through the effectual working of God’s word within us we have the extraordinary high privilege of actively bringing glory to God. In other words, through His genius God has made it so that even though the source of “the sufferings of this present time” is sin’s “bondage of corruption”; and even though the source of “the sufferings of Christ” is Satan’s policy of evil against us; both can result in the glorification of God when we respond to them appropriately. Both can be taken in their own craftiness, so to speak, and they can actually work out to the glory of God by us. And with this being the case, this means of bringing glory to God is truly very special and is something that we ought to deeply appreciate.

How It Works

It is specifically in II Corinthians 4 that Paul teaches us in no uncertain terms about the effectual function of “the excellency of the power” of God’s word within us when it comes to enduring “the sufferings of Christ.” And this is just how God has designed for us to cope with and endure any suffering or trouble. God has set forth specific doctrines for us in Paul’s epistles to us that He has designed to effectually work within us when it comes to any trouble. And it is when we operate upon those doctrines by having a “spirit of faith” regarding them, that they work within us to produce comfort, consolation, and stability, regardless of the trouble. Hence the

“excellency of the power” of God’s word works within us, and by doing so we not only come to appreciate that God’s word has more excellent power than that of any suffering, but the reality of the more excellent power of God’s word operating within us is even made evident to the angelic realm, much to the chagrin of Satan and his policy of evil against us. Moreover all of this, as Paul also teaches in II Corinthians 4, ends up working out to the glory of God.

15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

(II Corinthians 4:15)

As if our own deep appreciation and thanksgiving to God for the “excellency of the power” of His word effectually working within us wasn’t enough, our thanksgiving to Him for the power of His word actually redounds to His glory. Therefore God’s word not only does not return to him void, but it returns accompanied by thanksgivings for the magnificence of the excellency of its power, which in turn bring glory to God for His word’s sake.

Hence, amazingly enough, God in His wisdom has made it so that we can actually glorify Him in the midst of any of “the sufferings of this present time” and through the experience of any of the afflictions associated with “the sufferings of Christ.”

“Redound,” Not Abound

God’s use of the word “redound” in this verse is noteworthy, for not only is it the only time He uses it in His word, but it is also a highly meaningful word. Resident in its meaning is the issue of a thoughtful consequence to one’s action, rather than a random occurrence, and hence it takes into account God’s wisdom. However it also conveys the fact that the contemplated consequence was not designed to be the primary result of one’s action, but a secondary result. And

so “redound” also takes into account God’s selfless love for us and real charity towards us, as He puts our needs first in His thinking and has designed for the effectual working of His word to actually benefit us first and then Him.

Unfortunately, “redound” is often mistakenly thought of as being synonymous with words such as “abound,” “overflow,” “teem,” and the like. Hence the tendency is to think that the issue in II Corinthians 4:15 is one of an abundant amount of glory to God. But such is not the meaning of “redound.”

“Redound” belongs to the class of words that denote consequence and/or effectual results, including the idea of certain things being the effective aids to achieving some result. Fundamentally it means to flow back; to flow back upon or come back upon. It therefore bears kinship to words such as “accrue,” “conduce,” “devolve,” “supervene,” and even “contribute.” However it is specifically discriminated from these terms in that it denotes a consequence (or flowing back upon) that was contemplated in advance by the one upon whom it comes, and that the consequence is actually a secondary result. There being a primary or previous consequence that needs to be recognized.

Therefore when something is said to “redound,” it indicates that the one upon whom it redounds had it in view as a consequence of his actions, but that it would be the secondary effect of his actions; the primary effect of his actions usually coming upon someone else.

And so it is with the “redounding” described in II Corinthians 4:15.

God, (in accordance not only with the genius of His wisdom, but also in accordance with His love for us and charity towards us), has designed for the abundant grace of “the excellency of the power” of His word to first of all work within us and result in our deep appreciation for it as it produces comfort and the like, and then secondarily for it to result in His glory as we

thank Him for it. Hence, it “redounds” to His glory.

It is no wonder, therefore, that as the Apostle Paul teaches us to understand, appreciate, and operate upon the “excellency of the power” of God’s word like he did, that he not only extols its “excellency,” but he also rejoiced in his sufferings and did not disdain them. He knew especially that his thanksgiving for the effectual working of the power of God’s word within him redounded to the glory of God. May this be the way it is with us as well. — *Keith R. Blades*