

Romans 8:18-27

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[0:00] Well, good morning. Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in Romans chapter 8. All right. Our text for this morning is Romans chapter 8, verses 18 through 27.

Before we set our minds on today's text, and do bear with me for a moment, I want us to first take a look back at verses 16 and 17, and consider particularly the phrase in the last half of verse 17. There Paul writes, The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

Now, here is the phrase that we need to be clear about before proceeding further in the chapter. Provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

Now, last week we altogether neglected that half of that verse and spent little to no time on it at all. But here Paul says that if we are children of God, we are co-heirs bound for glory, and we will suffer.

[1:14] Now, the Christian ought not be surprised by this, although we live in an age that often teaches contrary to it. Beloved, we are followers of Jesus Christ.

We walk the path that He walked. Jesus states the matter plainly in John chapter 15, verse 18 and following, where He said, If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. And you may want to qualify that. He said, If the world hates you, but He goes on, If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own, but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the word I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

Paul says it this way in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 12. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

[2:34] Jesus came to suffer that we might be saved and then to be glorified. Peter tells us in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 10 and 11, concerning this salvation.

The prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

Christ came to suffer that we might be saved and to be glorified. John Murray once said, There is no sharing in Christ's glory unless there is sharing in his sufferings.

Sufferings and then glory was the order appointed for Christ himself. It could not be otherwise in terms of his messianic undertaking and design.

The same order applies to those who are heirs with him. End quote. Provided we suffer with him, most certainly includes persecution.

[3:46] But I also think it includes all of the unpleasantness of living in a fallen world. We are on the heels of Paul's expressed anguish over his battle with his flesh.

We experience the same, longing to be finally delivered from these bodies. If you don't experience that, if you don't desire to be fully set free from sin in your life, I just wonder if perhaps you're a Christian at all.

Christians have the spirit of Christ and desire to live like Christ. We are daily bombarded with the tragedy of others' sin.

This world is in an absolutely desperate state. We will see in today's text that all of the creation exists under the curse.

So, every ache and pain, every sniffle, cough and fever, every life lost too soon, every weed pulled from a garden, every day that's too cold or day that's too hot, we also suffer these things.

[4:58] Living in a place that's not as it should be. I believe that Christians ought to be all at once the saddest people on earth, for we see the brokenness of it.

I find as I grow in Christlikeness, I am sadder about the state of the place in which I live, but also, at the same time, we should be the happiest people on earth.

For we have a promise, made by the one who can keep that promise, that it will all one day be made right. So, I hope as you mature in Christ, both your sadness for the state of the world and your happiness for the surety of the promise grow together.

So, it's that suffering as well. It's the persecution to be sure and clear, but it's everything that comes with living in a world in such desperate brokenness.

The prophet Isaiah says of this promise keeper, one, the Lord Jesus Christ, in Isaiah chapter 53, verse 3 and 4, He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

[6:19] And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not. Certainly, there's persecution seen there. Verse 4, Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. Jesus suffered. He suffered rejection. He suffered bodily.

He suffered the cursed creation. But he was glorified. May we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

So now, with all of this in mind, there's this tension built there in which we live. Let's read and study today's text.

So Romans chapter 8, verse 18 through 27. Before I read it, I'd like to remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and for our good.

[7:26] And so we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

[8:43] And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Now, he begins, right, again doing this for, building an argument for, I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Many commentators, I've got just a stack of commentaries on Romans, and many of them suggest that in verse 18, Paul places the suffering of this present time on one side of a scale, and the glory that is to be revealed to us on the other side of the scale, to find that that scale tips dramatically for the latter.

And their point stands. They're not wrong in saying it, but I want to suggest that even further, even higher than that, that what Paul is stating is that it isn't even worth the effort of going through the exercise.

He's saying so clearly you need not set these things on a scale. The glory that is to be revealed to us so vastly outweighs the sufferings of this present time that they are not worth comparing. Don't take any of our time to even consider which one has more weightiness. The weight of glory is much, much heavier.

[10:06] This word glory means splendor and honor. God deserves glory. God is glorious, and he bestows glory on his people.

It is the bright hope that awaits us as we walk the din of this world. John MacArthur, in his commentary on this text, says, As followers of Christ, our sufferings come from men. Whereas our glory comes from God. Our suffering is earthly, whereas our glory is heavenly. Our suffering is short, whereas our glory is forever.

Our suffering is trivial, whereas our glory is limitless. Our suffering is in our mortal and corrupted bodies, whereas our glory will be in our perfected and imperishable bodies.

End quote. And so, we await this future state. The price is small, and the reward is grand.

[11:14] But it doesn't always feel that way, does it? We so long to see its fruition that our days often feel incredibly long.

We join with John as he records the words of Jesus in Revelation chapter 22 and verse 20. Surely I am coming soon.

And we reply with him, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. If you are a Christ follower and you have not had one of those days, they are coming.

You would just be happy for the Lord to part the skies and come back now. And we are not the only ones awaiting this glorious day of our glorification.

Note with me, in today's text, a uniting word. In verse 22, you see the word groaning. In verse 23, groan.

[12:15] And in verse 26, groanings. All the same root Greek word. Which brings us to our simple outline for the rest of our time together.

Number one, the creation groans for glory. Number two, Christians groan for glory.

And number three, the Spirit groans for glory. So firstly, in verses 19 through 22, the creation groans for glory.

Let me read it again so it's fresh in our minds. For the creation, this is verse 19, waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself would be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. God is the only thing not created.

[13:27] Therefore, we must think for a moment about what created things Paul is referring to. He does not mean the heavenly host, for they are not part of the curse. Neither does he mean the fallen angels, for they do not desire good and their condemnation is final.

He isn't referring to Christ followers as he will mention them separately in the following verses. And he can't be referring to unbelievers because they also do not desire good.

So, what's left over? Paul here is speaking of the non-rational part of God's creation. Plants and animals, soil and seas.

What we would look out and perhaps call nature. And what Paul does with it is he personifies it, which is a practice that's not foreign to the scripture.

We see it waiting eagerly, longing for something to come to pass, groaning in the pains of childbirth.

[14:32] And he's simply giving us a picture of what the whole world is desiring to see come to be. So again, this personification of nature happens and let me just show you one other example from Isaiah 55 and verse 12 where Isaiah writes, for you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace.

The mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. And if your mind just broke into song then you are of my generation.

So, this personified nature, Paul says, waits with eager longing for our glorification. And the idea of waiting with eager longing in Greek is like a person standing on their tiptoes leaning forward with great expectation.

This is the picture that we have here. Leaning forward for this arrival of some long-awaited wonderful event. This is what this eager longing looks like in the Greek. The creation awaits this event. Our glory, the revealing of the sons of God because it was subjected to futility.

[15:50] Right? And Paul, it's clear it didn't choose the futility. Right? God subjected it to futility. Right? And we can read about when this happens in Genesis chapter 3 verse 17 through 19 as it's tied up in Adam's curse.

God there says to Adam, because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you. You shall not eat of it. Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground for out of it you were taken for you are dust and to dust you shall return.

Right? The creation itself. Right? It was plentiful. It was paradise before the fall. Right? The creation worked exactly as the creation was meant to work.

But because of the sin of man it was subjected to this futility that we presently live in. And to be clear we have remnants of God's wonderful created work.

[17:02] Right? We live in a particularly beautiful place to stand in awe of our creator God. If you begin to get down into the mess of it it's messy out there. It's not functioning quite like it was designed to function.

Paul says that that creation desires the day when all things will be made new. Now I want to read to you a quote from Martin Lloyd-Jones.

Interestingly out of MacArthur's commentary on this because I couldn't find it in the Lloyd-Jones commentary. I looked and looked and looked and I said I think MacArthur quoted him. So this is MacArthur quoting Lloyd-Jones and he muses I think rather insightfully about this idea of the creation groaning and longing for this to happen.

So listen to this quote I wonder whether the phenomenon of the spring supplies us with a part answer. Nature every year as it were makes an effort to renew itself to produce something permanent.

It has come out of the death and the darkness of all that is so true of the winter. In the spring it seems to be trying to produce a perfect creation to be going through some kind of birth pangs year by year but unfortunately it does not succeed for spring leads only to summer whereas summer leads to autumn and autumn to winter.

[18:26] Poor old nature tries every year to defeat the vanity the principle of death and decay and disintegration that is in it but it cannot do so. It fails every time.

It still goes on trying as if it feels things should be different and better but it never succeeds. So it goes on groaning and travailing in pain together until now.

It has been doing so for a very long time but nature still repeats the effort annually. Maybe now the seasons will serve us in that way to think about how nature itself is awaiting our glory.

Now Paul doesn't detail for us how creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God and we get some clues to that in other places in the New Testament but he doesn't do so because this really isn't his driving point.

His point is that even the creation awaits the same restoration that we await. We are in good company because the creation groans for our glory.

[19:42] So secondly Christians groan for glory and we see this in verse 23, 24 and 25. There Paul says and not only the creation but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons the redemption of our bodies.

For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope for who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see we wait for it with patience.

Christians groan for glory. Those who have the first fruits of the spirit which I take to mean that the ongoing work of the spirit to lead believers in holiness is but a shadow of the greater reality that waits us.

So hear me again. If you don't have a longing in your heart to turn from the things of the world and turn to the things of God which waxes and wanes it's never perfect it doesn't maintain a certain dial and never gets dialed down and never gets dialed up but generally speaking if you don't desire to put off the old self and put on the new you may not have the spirit.

This is the work the primary work of the spirit in your life is to lead you in holiness. And if you're concerned about that this morning my call to you is simply to repent and believe.

[21:16] Turn from your sin and place your faith in Christ. That the gift of the spirit might be given to you that you would want to walk in his ways. Our conviction of sin seeing the ravages of sin in the lives of others our recognition that the whole of the world is under the curse is evidence that we have become spiritually sensitive to the state of things so we also along with the creation we groan.

when you see another tragedy and it is difficult to avoid isn't it? The tragedy itself is tragic but the greater thing is that the whole world is under this curse and it should cause us such grief and then such desire to go and preach the good news of Jesus Christ as he's building his kingdom even now. So we groan when we see these things and I recognize that I have yet to carefully define this word that ties our text together although I think you likely get the idea.

This is one of those places that the Greek word you read it and you go oh yeah that's really what I had in mind when I thought of groaning. But groaning means to vocally indicate pain or discomfort or displeasure and is used in Greek almost always in reference to inarticulate vocalization.

So it's not a careful argument that you feel pain or discomfort or displeasure it's a noise that communicates that very thing. We have all groaned about something in our lives.

[23:07] But here in verse 23 Paul says that we groan inwardly to be sure we probably also groan outwardly but here he's talking about an inward growing and I think he means to tie this to this idea of it being of the first fruits of the spirit that inside of us we are discontented with the state of the world in which we live and with ourselves.

I think he's referring to that feeling of angst we often feel as Christians. It is a groaning that I hope that you have experienced a spirit wrought emotion that this world is not as it should be and perhaps the realization that you are part of the problem and I hope that it is accomplished accompanied excuse me by a spirit wrought eagerness for adoption as sons the redemption of our bodies.

Last week we saw in Romans chapter 8 and verse 15 there Paul says for you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry Abba Father.

So in verse 15 we have the statement of an accomplished work. You have received the spirit of adoption as sons. You have been adopted.

Here in verse 23 we see the eager expectation of the task being accomplished. So an accomplished task that we're desiring to see be accomplished.

[24:47] The already and the not yet and this is the gap in which we live. We have been adopted and yet the full realization awaits us.

Paul clarifies this with the phrase the redemption of our bodies. We're awaiting this adoption of sons, the redemption of our bodies. Bodies is a reference to all of our fallen humanness that remains with us.

We experience the weightiness of this each and every day. This is where Paul finds himself leading into this argument.

You may recall Romans chapter 7 in verse 24 after he's talked about this wrestling to do the thing that he desires to do and yet not doing the thing that he desires to do. He says in verse 24, Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?

He says who? Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 8.1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Praise be to God for his saving work in our lives because we're not perfect.

[26:05] Set free from the power of sin and yet we still sin. Desiring not to sin, yet we still sin.

Wretched man that I am, praise be to God that Christ will deliver me, has, and will finish the work. And so we ebb and we flow in our Christian experience and perhaps you have at times wondered as you took stock of your life, am I a Christian at all?

Perhaps you felt like giving up and not following Christ any longer and I hope that he's kept you, that he's held you because you are his, that when you feel like you're faltering, you recognize that he never will.

Another quotation for you, this is Thomas Watson who's a Puritan pastor. If my memory serves me well, it should because it only happened this week, the kids coloring sheets has a little drawing of Thomas Watson on the back of it this morning.

Not by plan at all. He once said this, quote, the godly may act faintly in religion. The pulse of their affections may beat low.

[27:28] The exercise of grace may be hindered as when the course of water is stopped. Instead of grace working in the godly, corruption may work. Instead of patience, murmuring.

Instead of heavenliness, earthliness. Thus lively and vigorous may corruption be in the regenerate. They may fall into enormous sins, but through their grace may be drawn low, though their grace may be drawn low, it is not drawn dry.

Though grace may be abated, it is not abolished. Grace may suffer an eclipse, not a dissolution. A believer may fall from some degrees of grace, but not from the state of grace.

grace. So we feel this already and the not yet. Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?

Listen to King David say similar things in Psalm 38. I'm going to kind of jump through the text. This is verse 4, verse 9 and 10, verse 17 and 18, and verse 21 and 22.

[28:40] But listen to what he says. My iniquities have gone over my head like a heavy burden. They are too heavy for me. O Lord, all my longing is before you.

My sighing is not hidden from you. My heart throbs. My strength fails me. And the light of my eyes, it has also gone from me.

I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever before me. I confess my iniquity. I am sorry for my sin. Do not forsake me, O Lord.

O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation. Do you hear the groaning inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption of sons, the redemption of our bodies in these texts?

us. Notice that Paul places emphasis on our full and final deliverance from our fallen humanness. It is certainly good to long for all things to be made new, but he is pressing us being made new.

[29:56] This will matter greatly as his argument proceeds in the coming verses. Mankind is the crowning of God's creation. God is doing.

We are made in his image and meant to be propagators of his glory. We are meant to spread his image and glory everywhere. Notice in verse 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

We are the most important redemptive thing that God is doing. It affects all the other things. Now what does all of this mean for us?

Praise God that Paul tells us. We have no need to look elsewhere in the text. We don't have to philosophize about it at all. He tells us right here in the text verse 24 and 25.

He says for in this hope we were saved. What hope? What hope is he talking about? He's talking about the hope of glory.

[31:12] It's in the hope of glory, the very reason that we were saved. And then he goes on to say now, hope that is seen is not hope.

For who hopes for what he sees? Which is a rhetorical question. Of course, if the thing is already here, you have no hope that it will arrive. It has already! a wife. Remember, we're waiting with eager expectation for our glory to arrive.

But then he says in verse 25, but if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Patient hope.

What do we do with all of this? As we live in this in-between time, having been delivered from our sin, been saved, having been adopted, and yet awaiting the full culmination of all of the promises of

God for us.

Patient hope. Does patient hope characterize your Christian walk? It doesn't always characterize mine, to be sure.

[32:22] I see a lot of Christians who do not have patient hope. They're in turmoil, and they're anxious, unsure of what the future holds.

Avoiding at every turn suffering in this life. We've got to encounter everything that we encounter with patient hope.

Paul in just a bit is going to tell us, because we know that for those who love God, all things work for our good. We've got to be able to settle into these great truths, to rehearse them in our minds over and over, to speak these truths to one another, that our eyes would be set heavenward, beyond this life that is but a vapor, and to the eternity of glory that awaits us.

For I consider that the present sufferings of this time are not even worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. we will suffer in this life.

But because of these sure promises of Christ, we wait patiently because we wait hopefully. Now I have a third point.

[33:46] And there's too much in this third point to cram it into this morning. I'm looking at the time as we speak. So I'm going to hang on to my third point. The Spirit groans for glory. And we'll add it to next week or set it aside by itself.

And we'll end off with this idea. The Christ follower, the one who has the first fruits of the Spirit groans along with creation patiently with hope.

Let's pray together.