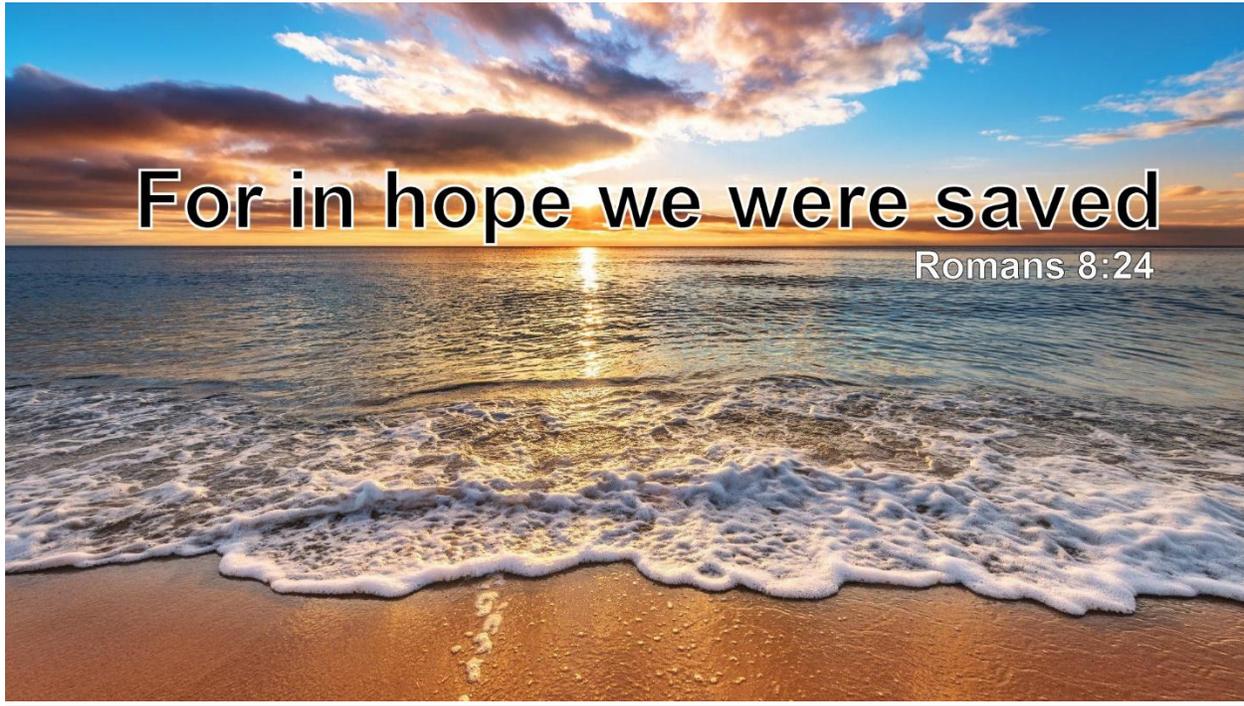


Ministry of Grace Church

Romans 8:18-27 – Hope! Sermon Notes



Background

In this section of the book of Romans, we will see a characteristic that makes true Christians unique above all people of all religions. And from this section of Scripture, we will also learn about several Christian truths:

1. All of God's creation is anticipating the glory that we Christians will receive one day from our Heavenly Father.
2. This future glory will be far greater than any of our current suffering.
3. The Holy Spirit knows when we don't know what to pray or how to pray and He takes over for us, praying to the Father on our behalf. And the Holy Spirit knows what to say and how to say it when He prays to the Father for us.
4. We are currently living within perishable bodies in a dying and decaying world, but some day God will make all things new – and imperishable.

All of these truths, characteristics of who our God really is, are brought together in a single word, "hope." In the New Testament, the word "hope" is translated from the Greek word *elpis*, which, in fact, does mean "hope" or "anticipation." In English when we think of "hope," we think of desiring something without really knowing if it will happen. At best, it is thinking that there is a chance of it happening. This Greek

word, however, means, “the desire of something, with the full expectation that it **will** happen.” It is more than just simple hope; it is expectant hope. For this reason, this word is sometimes translated as “faith.” Let’s see what the Apostle Paul said about hope, even in times of suffering.

Romans 8:18-19

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

In the previous verse Paul told us that since we are joint heirs with Christ, as members of God’s family, we can also expect to suffer with Him. As Christians, whenever we suffer, we are suffering with Christ. When we suffer, we are sharing in the pain of rejection, misunderstanding, betrayal, false accusation, persecution, and/or possibly even physical torture that Christ knew before and during his crucifixion.

But Paul now gives us a glimmer of hope that we can hang on to whenever we are going through those times of suffering. He starts off with the expression, “**For I consider.**” This is translated from *logidzōmai*, meaning, “to put together in one’s mind,” or “to think about.” Paul realizes that whatever sufferings we might have to go through in this life, they are of little value or consequence when compared with the incredible glory that we will receive in Heaven.

He previously said that if we suffer with Christ, we may also be glorified with Him. Now he says that the present suffering that we are going through for Christ’s sake is in no way comparable to that glory that we are going to share with, and from, Christ. This is something that we should all hold dear to our hearts, especially when we are suffering for Christ’s sake.

Paul refers here to “**the anxious longing of the creation ...**” The words, “**anxious longing**” are translated from the Greek word *apokaradokia*. This word literally means “attentive or earnest expectation or looking for, as with the neck stretched out and the head thrust forward.” It’s the way that someone might strain their neck forward looking intently into the distance expecting to see something very, very soon.

Here, once again, we have a section of Scripture that has been debated for centuries. The controversy revolves primarily around the word translated “**creation.**” Without going into an extensive exposition of this word, let me simply state that I’m in the camp of those who believe it refers to all of creation (not including mankind or angelic beings). Others believe that it refers specifically to Christians as “a created thing” (for we are a “new creation” according to **2 Corinthians 5:17** and **Galatians 6:15**). Paul uses this word repeatedly in this and the following few verses, and in verse twenty-two he refers to “the whole creation,” literally “all the creation (singular).” Therefore, since he uses the same word throughout and makes no obvious distinction, it is reasonable to assume that he uses the term the same in all of these verses.

One could reasonably ask why this would refer to all of creation, not including mankind and angelic creatures, rather than all of creation including mankind and angelic beings. Much of mankind (those who are not saved) clearly are not eagerly waiting for the revealing of the sons of God, and angelic beings were not subjected to futility as declared in the next verse.

In verse 18, Paul stated that our present sufferings are nothing compared to the glory that will be revealed to us some day (when our salvation is consummated and we receive our glorified bodies). Now, he is saying that all of physical creation is eagerly anticipating this revealing of us as the true sons of God in our revealed glory.

Romans 8:20-23

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

When Paul says that creation was subjected to futility, he is saying that it was placed in a state or condition where it is perishable and decaying, and that this condition was imposed on creation; it wasn't voluntary. The subjugation of all creation to a state of perishableness and continual decay was imposed by the only one who could impose it: God. So, this verse very likely is referring to the curse that God placed on the ground when Adam and Eve sinned:

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In pain you will eat of it All the days of your life. "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; ... (Genesis 3:17-18)

This subjugation of all of creation as a result of Adam's sin was done by God with the promise that someday there would be a Redeemer who would conquer death and sin and who would restore all of creation to its former condition.

Paul tells us that the reason creation was subjected "in hope" is because creation will be set free from this "slavery to corruption." In other words, when God completes the final judgment and we who are saved are all given our eternal bodies, all of creation will also be freed from the bondage of corruption and it will be re-created.

I don't know about you, but I am eagerly looking forward to that day when all sin and all sinners will have been judged and the current heavens and earth are no more. Then, when the new heavens and the new earth have been created, we will spend eternity in peace and joy (in Matthew 25:21-23 it's called "the joy of your master.") There, in God's new creation which will have been freed from the bondage of decay, we will be serving and praising God eternally, for He is worthy!

Now, Paul is probably talking metaphorically about how all of the visible creation is waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption. And why do I think Paul is being metaphorical? Because I don't believe that creation really feels pain, nor is it about to give birth. However, it is quite possible that all of creation is groaning, or sighing.

Paul is saying that all of creation is eagerly anticipating the revelation of the sons of God because it (creation) has been placed in a condition where it is not fully useful and is decaying due to the sin of man. All creation is now in a state of travail or painful waiting until sin is dealt with, and all is recreated in the new heavens and the new earth. The new heavens and new earth will be free from decay and will no longer be groaning or sighing.

Paul tells us, "but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, ... groan within ourselves." So, we have to ask ourselves, "What does Paul mean by, "we who have the firstfruits the Spirit?" There are those who believe that since Paul is talking to members of the early church, he means that they were the first ones who received the Holy Spirit; they had received "the firstfruits of the Spirit." However, if you look at passages in the Old Testament that refer to the "firstfruits" offerings (Deuteronomy 26:2; Exodus 23:19; and Numbers 18:13, for example) you will see that the firstfruits were a pledge of what was to

come later. It meant giving up the first of the harvest to God as a sacrifice. It was a sacrifice because it required faith to offer, believing that the full harvest would come later. That is precisely one of the images we have of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He is a pledge that the fullness of salvation, our adoption into God's family, the redemption and recreation of our bodies, will come to us at the consummation of the last days.

Romans 8:24-25

For in hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we eagerly wait for it.

Paul now adds some explanation to the notion that the Holy Spirit was given to us as a kind of firstfruits offering. He says that we are saved in hope. There are two possible interpretations of this. These two interpretations revolve around the word translated "saved." If you interpret the word to mean "to preserve from danger," then the beginning of this verse could be interpreted to mean that we are being preserved from danger by our hope of our future glory. That's how some interpret this verse.

The other interpretation, which is more fully supported by the Greek text, is that we were saved (at a single point in time in the past) in light of an earnest desire and expectation that this salvation will be consummated at some time in the future.

The point is this; Paul has been talking about all of creation groaning in pain in anticipation of our adoption as sons by God and the final redemption of our body. He is now saying that our salvation, which legally has already taken place, is really an event in the future to which we look with longing, fully expecting it to happen.

Now let me say that Paul is NOT saying that we are unsure of our salvation and "hope" that it will happen. That use of the word "hope" is contrary to the meaning of the Greek word. When we were saved (at a single point in time in the past) we were given the Holy Spirit as a seal and a promise (**Ephesians 1:13-14**) that God will consummate that salvation at some point in time in the future. In other words, we cannot get un-saved! It is not possible because we couldn't give God His Holy Spirit back even if we wanted to. The giving of the Holy Spirit is an action initiated by God, not by you or me. Since He did the giving, only He could do the taking and, if He did, that would mean God's promise is worthless.

Previously, we spoke about the word "hope" being not just an earnest desire but also the full expectation that the object of the desire will come to pass. Paul said that our salvation, which in God's record book has already taken place, is manifest to us with the full expectation that it will be consummated at the end of these last times. But he also makes another statement about this salvation in hope. It is not seen, and it is not fully obtained now. If we have something that we can see and touch, then there is no hope, or expectation of it.

We have to accept God's promise on faith alone, because we don't have visible, concrete proof of it right now. All we have is the promise and the seal of that promise in the form of the Holy Spirit living in us, and even He (the Holy Spirit) is unseen and untouchable for now.

Paul says that if we have faith in God's promise, then we can eagerly wait for it with patience, knowing in our innermost parts that God will do for us just as He promised. There are some today who insist on concrete proof for everything. They will never be saved because we are saved through faith, not through proof. That's why we as Christians often say that "believing is seeing," not "seeing is believing."

Romans 8:26-27

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.

We have all suffered at times because of our faith. Sometimes this suffering is so deep that we don't know how we will ever recover. And often in those times of suffering we don't even have the strength of faith to be able to pray, or we don't know how to pray about the situation. Paul tells us that in those times of weakness, whether it is physical or spiritual, the Holy Spirit of God helps us.

He starts off this passage with, "And in the same way ..." So, we have to ask ourselves, "the same way as what?" In the same way that Hope gives us courage and fortitude to wait for the consummation of God's promises, the Holy Spirit gives us help (and therefore, hope) in our times of weakness and uncertainty by interceding and praying for us in a way that we are not even capable of expressing.

Now he is telling us that in those times of suffering when we are too weak to pray (physically or spiritually), or when we are in such depression or dejection that we don't know how to pray, the Holy Spirit steps in, taking our hand, speaking to the Father for us in a manner that is unspeakable or unutterable for us. When we are groaning in weakness not knowing what to do, the Spirit groans and speaks for us.

There are many who believe that this verse applies to us any time we are praying since, compared to God, we are always weak. But whether it is in those times when we think we are weak or at all times since we are spiritually weak compared to Him, either way, the Holy Spirit is our perfect prayer partner.

Paul tells us, "He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*." Notice that the words "the will of" are in italics in our translation (the Legacy Standard Bible). These are words inserted by the translators and do not appear in the Greek text. A more literal translation of the last phrase of the current verse would be: "because He makes intercession for the saints according to God." That is to say, the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit is according to what God has determined, not according to our wants or desires.

When we put this all together, we see why the Holy Spirit is such a perfect prayer partner. It is because He (God, who is the one who searches our hearts and knows us even better than we know ourselves) also knows what His own thinking is and, therefore, can speak directly to the Father for us in the most effective way and in perfect keeping with the will and purpose of God the Father.

So What?

The next time you feel like you are being persecuted, mistreated, or attacked, remember that you are suffering for His sake, and some day you will be glorified with Him **for His sake**. No matter how much mental anguish or physical pain you may have to endure now, it is temporary and insignificant compared to the glory He will give to you for eternity. This makes the suffering a little more bearable, doesn't it?

If all of creation is figuratively straining its neck in eager anticipation of the revelation of the glorified sons of God, how much more should we be, we who will receive that glory. When we suffer as a Christian, we need to keep in mind that we will receive such marvelous glory from our Heavenly Father that the revelation of that glory is eagerly anticipated by all of creation. That's something to think about!

If we learn nothing else from this passage of Scripture, it is the promise of hope. No matter what happens to us, we always have the hope of God's eventual triumph over evil, **and we will share in that triumph with Him!** And - even though we now exist in a perishable body in a dying and decaying world, we have

the expectant hope that God will honor his faithful children with a glorious body and a glorious creation, neither of which will ever decay or perish again.

The next time you hear a tree creak from the wind blowing through it or hear of an earthquake, a massive storm, a flash flood, a volcanic eruption, or a tidal wave, remember that all of creation is groaning and in pain until the consummation of time, waiting for our salvation to be completed and for all things to be made perfectly new.

Remember, “hope” is not just an earnest desire but also the expectation that the object of that desire will come to pass. Paul said that our salvation, which in God’s record book has already taken place, is manifest to us with the full expectation that it will be consummated at the end of these last times. But Paul also makes another statement about this salvation in hope. It is not seen, and it is not fully obtained now. If we have something that we can see and touch, then there is no hope, or expectation of it.

Paul says that if we have faith and hope in God’s promise, then we can eagerly wait for it with patience, knowing in our innermost parts that God will do for us just as He promised. There are some today who insist on concrete proof for everything. They will never be saved because salvation is through faith, not through proof. That’s why Christians, instead of saying, “seeing is believing,” say, “believing is seeing.”

Have you had those times when you didn’t know what to pray or how to pray? When we are in that pit of doubt and despair, without us even asking Him, the Holy Spirit steps in and takes over for us. Who could ask for a better prayer partner when we need it the most? What a blessed promise!

I have heard Christians say, “I’m not very good at praying.” What Paul is telling us is that we don’t have to be. In [Philippians 4:6](#) he tells us: “... [let your requests be made known to God.](#)” We don’t have to use a lot of theological words, with an occasional “Thee” or “Thou” sprinkled in. We simply have to open our hearts and talk directly to God. Then, the Holy Spirit will be our interpreter, our representative to the Father. In fact, The Holy Spirit will pray for us!

When Paul left Titus in Crete to oversee the brand-new church that they had just started there, he knew that Titus would have a difficult time and that he would probably get discouraged at times. That’s why Paul encouraged him with these words:

[looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, \(Titus 2:13\)](#)

Keep that mental picture in mind when you are fearful or uncertain about the future.

Let’s pray.