

God has promised to end suffering - Romans 8

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Date: 20 January 2019

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[0 : 00] Romans chapter 8, starting at verse 18.

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I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into freedom and glory of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

[1 : 34] For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?

But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for your people.

We thank you for Helen. And we thank you for the story of her life. And above all, for your grace and your strength to Helen in times of suffering and struggle.

We ask that you would continue to strengthen Helen and give her grace each and every day. And in moments of sadness and heartache, you would surround her with your love and care.

And you would continue to use her story, a testimony of your grace and goodness to her. To be a means of hope and of encouragement and of pointing others to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2 : 55] And the glorious hope that he has for the children of God. Help us now, Father, to hear your word carefully.

And that you would apply it to our lives this day. In Jesus' name. Amen. Psalm 30 captures for us both the Christian experience and the Christian expectation.

Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. As we walk through our life experience, it is one of trials and suffering.

We live in a world that is disordered and broken and eventually ends in death. Yet we also live with great expectation.

We look forward to the day when Christ returns and restores and renews all things. Just as the darkness of the night is banished with the rising of the morning sun, so the darkness of this world will be dispelled by the glorious light of Christ's return.

[4 : 17] The hurts, the cries of pain, the tears will all be silenced by shrieks of laughter and shouts of joy.

Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. Isaiah the prophet spoke of this day.

See, he says, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create. For I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people.

The sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. Tears of sorrow will become tears of joy.

[5 : 18] Now this experience, this expectation is central to our text in Romans 8. And we're going to look at three things from it this morning.

First, our present groaning, our future glory, and our gospel hope. So first, our present groaning.

The world and our bodies are crying out in pain. Look at verse 22. We know that the whole creation has been groaning.

The rumbles of an earthquake as great buildings collapse. The thundering waves of a tsunami which destroy whole villages. The unstoppable power of a tornado crashing through communities. This is the world groaning. It's in pain. But it's not just a physical, material world. Look at verse 23. Not only so, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly.

[6 : 34] The cries of pain as cancer ravages our bodies. The agony of walking as arthritis seizes our joints. The suffering as our fragile and frail lives slowly break down.

Our physical bodies are groaning. They are in pain. But all this groaning is not a helpless groaning. It is a groaning that is full of glorious expectation. Look again at verse 22. We know that the whole creation has been groaning.

As in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. The maternity ward is a place where we see both groaning and glory.

Pain and joy. Pain and joy. Before the glory of holding a tiny baby in our arms comes the groaning and agony of giving birth.

[7 : 39] But it's a pain that is full of hope. Because you know that in the end you will hold new life in your arms. In the same way the groaning of this world and our bodies is like birth pains.

They are signs of a new world and perfect bodies to come. With every drought and famine. With every disease and sickness. It is like the world and our bodies are crying out.

Telling us that glory is coming. Now because of our groaning that will give way to glory.

We need to be able to see our present sufferings in the light of future glory. We need to see, have a right perspective on our sufferings today.

With the future glory to come. Look at verse 18. He says, I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

[8 : 53] Consider, he says, contemplate. Think about. Meditate on this. The sufferings we experience now has nothing on the glory that is to come.

Our suffering now is temporary. Glory is for eternity. Our suffering today brings cries of pain. Glory causes spontaneous shouts of joy.

Our suffering ends in agony of death. Glory will celebrate the beauty of life. We may feel that our present sufferings are never going to come to an end.

That this will be our only experience. Well after a hundred years in eternity. A thousand years in the new creation. Ten thousand years in glory.

Our present experience. Our present experience. This blip on the line of infinity. Will not be remembered. Lord. In his letter to the church in Corinth.

[10 : 00] Paul put it like this. For our light and momentary troubles. Our achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

In contrast to the eternal weight of glory to come. Our sufferings today are momentary.

They are light. So we may be groaning today. But glory is coming. So what is this glory we are looking forward to?

Well he goes on to explain for us. Verse 19. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

Creation is longing to see all that glory will be. Longing to see what the children of God are going to enjoy and experience.

[11 : 07] It's like creation is on its tippy toes. Trying to peer over the darkness. Over the sadness that there is. And trying to see what will be ahead.

And this long awaited glory is pictured for us in two ways. First a liberated world. Verse 20.

For the creation. This material physical world that we live in. Was subjected to frustration. Creation is frustrated.

It is groaning. It is not all that it should be. In fact we are told. It was subjected to frustration. Not by its own choice.

But by the will of the one who subjected it. That's taking us back to Genesis chapter 3. Where we saw that God subjected creation to frustration.

[12 : 10] Because of man's rebellion against God. Because of our sin. Because of Satan's influence. The world is under God's judgment.

This judgment or this curse that is upon the world. Results in all kinds of suffering. Earthquakes and hurricanes. And volcanic eruptions. Everything is now out of sync.

The fabric of the universe has been undone. It's like this material physical world has been imprisoned. Locked up in a dungeon called curse.

Living under the sentence of death. And awaiting execution. And from this prison come loud groans. As the curse takes effect.

But why would God do this? Why would he frustrate creation in this way?

[13:09] Well he tells us. Look at the end of verse 20. It is subjected to frustration. In hope. That the creation itself.

Will be liberated from its bondage to decay. And brought into the freedom and glory. Of the children of God. God judges.

We know that. It's like the world has been imprisoned. To show the devastating effects of sin. And to show us our desperate need of a saviour.

You see despite all our scientific explorations. And our understanding of the planet. And knowing about climate. Climate change. And the effects of global warming.

We can't fix this world. I'm all for recycling. I support natural energy. But it's not going to stop volcanoes. Raining down on villages.

[14:10] Or tsunamis. Wiping out thousands of people. What the world needs. Is a saviour. Who will come and liberate. Free this world.

From the sentence of death. Death. And that's what God has done. He has given to us. A saviour. In Christ. Who will come again.

It's as if he will come and unlock the prison gates. He will free the world from the curse. He will release it from its sentence of death. And the world will be renewed and restored to its full glory.

C.S. Lewis describes it so well in the Narnia series. We know the story.

The story. The story. The account. The land is under the curse of the wicked witch. Where it's always winter. And never summer. And then the curse is undone.

[15:09] It's broken. With the coming of Aslan. And here's how he describes the breaking of the curse. Every moment the patches of green grew bigger.

And the patches of snow grew smaller. Every moment more and more of the trees shook off their robes of snow. Then the mist turned from white to cold.

Shafts of delicious sunlight struck down on the forest floor. And overhead you could see blue sky between the treetops. The ground was covered in all directions with little yellow flowers.

Selandines. Crocuses growing around the foot of an old tree. Gold and purple and white. And then there was the chattering and chirping in every direction.

The whole wood was ringing with birds music. You see when Christ comes again. This world will be liberated from its bondage to decay.

[16:16] But did you notice who gets to enjoy this liberated world? Look at the end of verse 21. It is the children of God. It is for those who are trusting and longing for the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is only the children of God who will enjoy this beautiful flourishing world. A world where there are no more storms and no flooding and no drought and no more destructive weather patterns.

Isaiah pictures it like this. You, that is the children of God, will go out in joy and be led forth in peace.

And the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you. And all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn bush will grow the juniper.

And instead of the briars the myrtle will grow. This will be the Lord's renowned. An everlasting sign that will endure forever. So our future glory will be a liberated world.

[17:29] But it's more than that. It will also mean redeemed bodies. For a glorious new world is no good without a new body.

Look at verse 23. Not only so, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

Now if you're a Christian today, if you are trusting in Christ, we have been adopted into God's family. Have a look back at verse 15.

Chapter 8, verse 15. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again. Rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship, and by Him we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Through the work of the Spirit, the work of Christ has been applied to our life, and the effects of that working out in our life is that we have the awesome privilege of being called God's children.

[18 : 57] God is our Father. We can know Him, and we can enjoy Him. But we know too that the relationship we have with God today is not all that it should be.

It's strained because of our own sin. We wander from the Father who generously gives us all we need, and we go looking for joy in other places and in other things.

And then because of our guilt and shame, we hide away, we try to stay away. But here it's telling us that one day our relationship with God will be at its glorious best.

Look at verse 23. It says, We wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship. Yes, we are adopted, but we are waiting for the full experience of that adoption.

And we're told what that full experience is going to be like. Just have a look at verse 29. For those God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

[20 : 18] When Christ comes again, His plan, His purpose for us, is that we would be conformed to the image of His Son.

We will become just like Jesus. The uninhibited relationship that Jesus enjoys with the Father will be a relationship that we will enjoy.

Because when we become like Jesus, that means we will be without sin. We will be free from any evil thought.

We will be pure in all of our actions. And so we will experience a relationship with God the Father in all its unrestrained joy.

Imagine sitting in this liberated new world, sitting, talking, listening, with the Father, the Creator of the universe.

[21 : 22] Receiving from God all that He has to give us and enjoying Him and all His gifts in all its fullness. No more groaning questions.

No more hiding with shame. Just unending pleasure and delight. Jonathan Edwards.

He's an old guy. Dead 300 years. But his words still live on. He preached a sermon about heaven. And here's what he said.

The enjoyment of God, follow with me, the enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven fully to enjoy God is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here.

Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives or children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows, but God is the substance.

[22 : 31] These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the ocean.

We will be enraptured with joys that are forever increasing, yet forever full. Yet there is something more.

Glory will mean not just our adoption, but the redemption of our bodies. Look at the end of verse 23. We are waiting eagerly for the redemption of our bodies.

Our bodies are amazing. They've been wonderfully designed and created by God. From the moment of conception, the growing of cells, the development of our DNA, the forming of muscles and bones, our pumping heart, our inflating lungs, watching and tasting and feeling and hearing. But yet our bodies do not work and function as they should. We suffer the physical pains of disease and decay and then eventual death.

[23 : 55] We are born with organ failure, brains that don't operate as they should, minds that overload and can't cope, eyes but can't see, ears but can't hear.

We have bodies that need medicine, carers, hospitals, nursing homes, undertakers. We need graveyards.

From a stubbed toe to fighting cancer, from a twisted ankle to a broken spine, some have pain, others live with pain.

How we long for the redemption of our bodies. Paul writes to the church in Corinth and reminds us of what we are waiting for.

Listen to this from 1 Corinthians 15. He says, The trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

[25 : 02] For the perishable must close itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. To the church in Philippi, he writes, And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so they will be like his glorious body.

One day we will experience our full redemption, running, jumping, swimming, no wheelchairs, no chemotherapy, no surgery, dancing, singing, and playing, no more goodbyes, and no more funerals.

All our pains, all our disabilities, all our struggles, wiped away. Brand new, resurrected bodies that will never, ever get sick, and minds that are set free.

John pictures it for us so well, and maybe this is why Helen loves these words from the end of Revelation. He, that is God, will wipe every tear from their eyes.

there will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

[26 : 38] This is what we look forward to. This is the glory that awaits us. And if we are unsure that we will make it, look at verse 23 closely.

If you are sitting here today and thinking, I am not sure I am going to get there. Look at verse 23. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit grown inwardly.

We have the first fruits of the Spirit. The Spirit that God has given to us, enabling us to obey God, equipping us to fight sin, causing us to cry out to God as our Father.

The Spirit that we experience now is a taster. He is the first installment of what is to come. He is a deposit guaranteeing our future inheritance.

He is the mark that assures us that redemption is coming. Look back to verse 11 of chapter 8. chapter 8, verse 11.

[27 : 55] And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of His Spirit who lives in you.

there is assurance and there is comfort. The Spirit, the power of the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead to defeat death, that same Spirit is now in the believer, in the children of God and that same Spirit will raise us from the grave and our adoption to sonship and the redemption of our bodies will be a reality.

We will live in a new world with new bodies, enjoying God in all His greatness and glory. So, our present groaning, our future glory and then our gospel hope.

the promise that all suffering will end and will be replaced with glorious joy is all guaranteed because of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 24 at the very end. Verse 24, For in this hope we were saved. In this hope we were saved.

[29 : 41] Jesus has come. Jesus has died for our sin. He has suffered the judgment we deserve. He has defeated death for us by rising again from the grave.

You see, what the Saviour has done for us in the past guarantees what is yet to come in the future. His past work assures us of the future reality.

In this hope we were saved and so we look forward to the fullness of our salvation where we will live in the new world with new bodies enjoying God in all His greatness and glory.

Look at the rest of verse 24. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?

If this present life, if these present sufferings is all we have to look forward to, then how lost and empty this life is.

[30 : 56] If this is all we have, how empty and lost are we? But, verse 25, but if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

This world is not our home. We have our houses, we build our careers, but this is not our home. these bodies, as wonderful as we might think they are, are not what they should be. One day, the risen Lord Jesus will come and the Father will embrace us and say, welcome home, enjoy.

And the waiting will be over and we will live in the new world with our brand new bodies, enjoying God and his gifts and all his greatness and glory forever and forever.

This is the joy, the promise that all suffering will end. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[32 : 18] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, as we reflect, we are perhaps feeling that very groaning in our own lives right now.

struggling with heartache, struggling with pain, struggling with all the breakdown we see in the world around us.

us. But yet we know that groaning is not an end in itself. It is just the first cries of the glory that is to come.

That glorious hope that the Lord Jesus will bring about in all its fullness when he comes again.

Thank you that it is guaranteed and assured for us, those who are children of God and who are trusting in him.

And that there is nothing in all this world, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither heights nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord and all that is to come.

[34 : 00] We praise you. We give you our thanks in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we need to sing, don't we?

I hope we have joyful hearts. Mine are the love of the love of the