

Revelation 13:11–18

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[0 : 00] 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 decay 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, in 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.

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. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

[1 : 21] For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined, he also called.

And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Good morning to you. What a good day to be in God's house, and what a good passage to be preaching for, on great truth that is before us.

And I want you to enter this journey or continue the journey that we've begun. Our journey is going to end at the table today.

And I pray that as we continue the journey through the proclamation of the word, that our heads and hearts would be open and that we would come to the table to be strengthened in a way of all that has happened, what we have sung, what we will hear, or in right here around what Christ has done for us through his death.

[2 : 48] Let's pray. Father, thank you for the morning. Thank you for the sunshine and the sunshine of your love in our hearts. I pray, Lord, that we would hear as you speak through this word this morning.

Commend ourselves to you in Christ's name. Amen. We are often made painfully aware that everything is not right in this world.

Thank you for praying for those who were victims of a tornado extreme in the sense that it is not quite the worst, but the loss of life is right up there with that which has happened to the max in a tornado kind of situation.

There's another reality too that our status as God's children it doesn't exempt us from suffering in this world from the challenges that we face.

You're here this morning, I'm here, and we do not get a pass on that. Different times, different things will invade your world.

[4 : 06] And perhaps you're in a situation even today where it seems like trouble has knocked the front door, back door, and has invaded in some way your life.

From the quaking of the earth and other disorders and natural order to disruption in human relationships, to war, greed, disease, and yes, death.

We know that we are no longer in Eden. This is not the Garden of Eden, nor is it the world that is to come that is described in us, described for us in Revelation chapter 21 and 22, the restored world.

We are in the in-between time. And the atmospheric conditions of this world order include storms, include suffering.

Our verses today concern the assurance of God's people in the midst of a world where sometimes you and I are crushed under the oppressive challenges of life.

[5 : 32] If you look at chapter 8, verses 1 through 17, these deal with the ministry of the Spirit of God, his provision that counters the flesh, the flesh being the atom that is within.

We have inherited sin nature and all that goes along with it from our forefather Adam. If you listen to Romans chapter 8, what Paul is doing is that he is reprising some of the things that he mentioned in Romans chapter 5.

He recapitulates, he returns to those themes and he expands on those particular themes. so the atom within, but in verses 18 through 30 deal with the ministry of the Spirit of God as it relates to the believer living in Adam's world.

The atom within on the one hand, but also the believer living in Adam's world. The Spirit dealing with the fallen nature.

on the other hand, the Spirit dealing with our living in a fallen world. I want you to see three things in the text this morning.

[6 : 57] The first thing we will see is that future hope in the midst of suffering. Then we'll look at help in the midst of suffering, but then we will look at harmony from God's vantage point.

in the midst or even in spite of the suffering that you and I have here. Look at verse 17 because actually that is where Paul introduces the themes that he actually carries on in the remainder of the chapter.

In verses 19 through 25, this is what I want you to see, hope in the midst of suffering. God's children are buoyed by future hope in the midst of this world's suffering.

God's children. Remember, we hear that theme, we are indwelt by God. If you look back in verses 1 through 17, the theme of the children of God being heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, that rises up in the verses that we've looked at before.

But in verse 17, he introduces the subject that he will deal with, and look there with me, if then children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may be glorified with him.

[8 : 24] There's the themes. Then look at verse 18. For I consider the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed in us.

We're reminded in verse 17 that our portion as fellow heirs with Christ includes both suffering as well as glory. And certainly our identification with Christ can be costly.

For unto you it's been given on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, Philippians chapter 1, but also to suffer for his sake.

Standing for Christ in the gospel can cause us to be subjected to conflict, attack, and even ridicule in this world.

That's a part of the reality of our being a co-heir with Christ. Paul continues in verse 18 where he's done some calculations. Two ledgers, as it were, were before him.

[9 : 30] Ledger number one, present suffering. Ledger number two, future glory. The suffering of verse 17 is actually broadened here.

Again, he speaks about suffering for Christ, but once you get to verse 18, it's not only the sufferings for Christ, but the sufferings of this world. You see that? The sufferings of this present time.

So, the present age, what are we talking about? Suffering of all kind. Pain, physical as well as mental. Sickness, disappointment, unemployment, poverty, frustrations.

Phone calls that you get, and on the other end there's a voice of desperation. Phone calls that you get, and there has been a death in the family. Disease that you feel in your body, and you know your body is not what it used to be.

Huh? Oh, the realities, friends, of living in an imperfect world. Our bodies age and are subject to cruel diseases. Marriage vows are dishonored, and families suffer.

[10 : 47] Natural disaster takes its toll on life and property, and friends, the list could go on and on. You ever feel some of those tensions in your life living in Adam's world?

Huh? The glory then refers to the various aspects of blessedness that we'll experience at Christ's return. We say, well, Pastor J, what's in it?

You're going to get a new body. Huh? You won't have to worry about coloring your hair. You won't have to worry about getting whatever it is that you need to smooth out your skin.

Huh? Everybody, I don't know if everybody, but you won't have to worry about being tall, dark, or handsome, or small, petite, and curvaceous, whatever. I don't know. I mean, those standards will no longer apply.

But it will be a glorified body. We get an idea of what that looks like in Jesus, don't we? I mean, it's not limited time, space, so forth. That's not what this text totally is about, but it's coming.

[11 : 51] Okay? The glory to come. being in the very presence of God. That's glory, isn't it? Now, here's what Paul does.

When the mathematics are all done, when he does his calculations, you see, I consider that the present sufferings, when everything is done, you pull the register tape, the ledgers are compiled, the sufferings of this present world, as real as they are, are small, very small, by comparison of the glory that's going to be revealed.

I mean, when you put it on a scale, glory, and that's the idea in the Old Testament, something that is weighty, is your inheritance.

Oh, how it is that God has provided for us. Now, look at the passage here. The picture before us is very interesting. Two things are very, come to the fore.

suffering is present. Look at verse 18. You see the word suffering. But also you see the ideas or images behind the word suffering subjected to futility.

[13 : 06] Verse 20. Bondage to corruption. You see that in verse 21. Groaning, that's in the passage.

Again, there's these conceptualized images images of suffering. That's their weakness. Verse 26. So both verbally and graphical, we note that in this passage, suffering is present.

Yet, there's another thing that we can also observe. Not only is suffering present, hope is prominent. That's the big thing that's there.

There is a trajectory of hope for God's people. Look at the verses even. Verse 18. I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Look at verse 30. And those whom he predestined, he also called, and those whom he called, he also justified, and those he justified, he also glorified.

[14 : 07] It is booked in. The whole trajectory of the passage is one of hope. You see the word hope. Verse 20. Six times it's mentioned in here. Verse 20.

24. Four times and then verse 25. And then there is the posture of hope. And we'll talk about that. You see this whole idea of waiting. That's the posture of hope.

So suffering is present here, but hope is prominent here as we see in this particular passage. Look at the portrait of hope that we see in verses 19 through 25.

Oh, this is a grand picture. we see here. It's one of hoping and waiting and waiting and hoping.

There are two waiting entities. Waiting entity number one is here called creation or the creature.

Look at it. Verse 20. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons or the children of God, those who are heirs, go back up into the previous verses, for the creation was subjected to futility, not willing, but because of one 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.

[15 : 33] Creation here, the waiting entity number one, is best identified as created order, everything that is subhuman, subhuman created order, nature, I didn't even say nature plus, animate, inanimate creation, it is the old creation order, less humanity.

But then there's another waiting entity and we'll go back to these verses, but I want you to see the second waiting entity, we see that in verse 23. not only we know starting 24, we know that the whole creation has been growing together in the pains of childbirth until now and not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit grown inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption of sons, the redemption of our bodies.

new creation, believers versus the old creation. They have the spirit of God as a token of ownership.

We anticipate full redemption of our bodies. We have redeemed spirits, but in unredeemed bodies at this particular point.

We're still in an edemic world with bodies that fit this particular edemic world, but there will be a full possession in the future of that which has been possessed, redemption of our bodies.

[17:05] But notice, the longing and the waiting of the old creation is pictured in verses 19 through 22. Creation gets personified against the characteristics of a person.

And check out what you have here. The image is that of someone who is watching with an outstretched neck. They are craning looking forward.

Watch here. This is a strained expectancy. There's an eager longing with fixed focus and attention. It's like a child that's been promised a gift.

Don't promise a child something that you can't deliver on. You promise that child that you're going to get them something and they will not let you alone until you deliver what has been promised.

But then there's the promise that you make to a wife for an evening away from the children. Or just an evening away if you don't have children. They're expecting you to deliver whatever it is that is being said.

[18:18] There's that expectancy. It is one on tiptoes leaning looking forward stretching looking for the fulfillment of that which is promised.

That's the picture that we get here. Nature in a sense awaits the manifestation of the children of God at Christ's return.

How is this? Check it out. It was man's failure failure that brought the curse. There's certainly allusion here both to Romans 5 but also to Genesis chapter 3 where it all came down.

Man's full redemption will mark the reversal of what happened in Adam will be completely reversed with the redemption of man's body.

Man's failure brought it down. Think about it. The day of man's failure in the heavenlies. It's like when an athlete goes down on the field.

[19:25] A policeman that is shot in the line of duty. The cry goes out man down. Huh? And in this reality mankind was down.

The angels gasp and heaven weeps. The atmosphere changes. There has been a breach in the contract. Man, God's crown and creation.

Man made in God's image. Man, God's friend has sinned. And ever since that day things have been different on this earth. Life under the sun has taken a different twist.

The potential of nature and man in that process has been stifled. And you see this frustration that's pictured in verse 20. Subjected futility not willingly but because of him who subjected it in hope.

Oh, there is this phenomenon that's going on in this world as beautiful and wonderful as it is.

There's this phenomenon known as arrested development. In other words, it will not reach its full potential.

[20:29] It is stifled. It just can go so far. Oh, but one of these days the chains will fall off and there will be liberation. And just as creation has shared the frustration and futility of man's fall, it will share the glory that will mark the revelation or the revealing of the children of God.

The strain and pain of childbirth pictures the present condition of creation. That of waiting until the time of birth into a new age that will be initiated by the revealing of the sons of God at Christ's second coming.

It's the travail, the labor, the pain. But then there's the longing and the waiting of the new creation. So the old creation is not the only one that's groaning.

The groaning of the new creation comes into view in verse 23. It is that of the children of God, those who are spirit endowed, people.

Those who have been on the one hand rescued from the rain of sin and death, but on the other hand live in a fallen world. But our rescue is coming.

[21:52] And guess what happens? What happens when things are not right in your life or in your world? We groan. When something is incomplete or unsatisfactory, there are groans.

we groan in pain or groan in frustration. The groaning here is due to the absence of the glory that is past and the fact that we have not reached the glory that is future.

Groaning because of the absence of glory, the glory of Eden is past, the glory of the future is yet to come. But there's this groaning now in two spheres, old creation and in new creation.

But there's coming a day when the groaning in both realms would be over. No more groaning. As man led the way for the fall of created order, so the revelation of the sons of God will lead the way for the restoration of created order.

groaning for and expectation of the children of God is the redemption of their bodies. I live in a house that is nearly 63 years old, my body.

[23 : 14] And believe me, friends, and you all have a long good way to go before you get here. They used to sing a song, there's a leak in this building, referring to your house.

Boy, there are all kinds of stuff that needs to get patched and fixed. And in these bodies we've grown. I used to have more hair.

I used to have less weight. But things change. Different things invade our houses. And just like you have to do those home repairs.

Yeah, you have to do home repairs. The plumbing's not like it used to be. The choppers are not like the grinders are not what they used to be.

Oh, but one of these days there's going to be a redemption of these old bodies and we look forward. We're new inwardly, but we're housed in decaying bodies, part of our inheritance from Adam.

[24 : 21] Oh, I want you to when you have time, look at the parallels between this chapter and chapter five, even to the point of raising the idea of hope.

And I just want to read chapter five verses two through four so you can see the whole idea of hope and hoping and the glory of God and how that's being reprised here.

Listen through him that's Christ we've also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice here it is in hope of the glory of God look at verses four and five and endurance and we're going to see that that same word appears in Romans eight produces character and the character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame this is not a hollow dead end kind of hope here is hope with a pot at the end of the rainbow so to speak something there because God's love has been shed abroad in our heart poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit has been given to us back to Romans eight hope is forward looking and anticipates that which it does not see that's the nature of hope confident expectation and that which has been promised the assurance of these things await us and this world that await us now they have a way of assuring us in having a saving as it were impact on us now the kind of hope that we're talking about here is not only hope that will get you on your toes looking friends this kind of hope can get you out of bed in the morning it's hope that will empower you and give you momentum in this life it has a way of putting wind in your sail even now even in the midst of living in

Adam's world with all of atmospheric conditions this forward looking hope that it does get better than this in the life to come in what is ahead as a weight of buoying us up God's children can live in the midst of an imperfect world buoyed by the future hope even in the midst of suffering look at verses 26 and 27 and I must move on because there's help in the midst of suffering just as let me read it for you 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 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 we're in this new realm describing the old order and the new order the new order is that which in the spirit reigns leading unto life and peace so here again the prominence of the spirit but just as we have been buoyed by hope we can also be bolstered by help of God's spirit and particularly in our prayer praying says the spirit helps us in our weakness and again this word helps a wonderful word it pictures one helping someone carry a heavy load that's what's in view and that's what the spirit of God does in our lives and what is a liberating word here for us God's spirit helps God's children in their weakness and a particular interest here is our weakness as it concerns prayer prayer prayer we do not know there's a certain ignorance in prayer what to pray for exactly as we ought but God but the spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words he's perfectly equipped to fill that role in the life of believer he is just like Christ and we'll see that in chapter eight where he is at the right hand of God interceding for us he is our intercessor in heaven the spirit of God in the child of God is our resident intercessor in the heart he intercedes according in a card with

[29 : 02] God's will for us the intercession is deep it's a heart to heart kind of deal and that God the spirit of God knows the mind of God wants to please God his intercession is according to God's will so what kind of praying is this you might ask again from the text we find that the groanings are that of the spirit they are inexpressible and unspeakable it seems clear that the spirit of God is the prayer the one doing the praying and here's the deal he can do this in us and through us but he doesn't do it in spite of us and this is what I mean the praying heart of the believer becomes the

prayer room of the Holy Spirit the praying heart of the believer becomes then the prayer room of the believer the spirit of God prays according to the will of God on behalf of the children let me illustrate this the goal of answered prayer or the goal of prayer is always the will of

God now sometimes we get that confused we try to bend God's will to make it conformed to ours but that's not the way prayer works your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven prayer is about God's will so it's just like when how many basketball players do we have here or would be basketball players!

would be? okay the goal what's what's what's when you throw up a basket a basketball to a goal what's what's what's what is the objective to hit it to drop it in that hoop that's what's a ten foot high that's the goal always the goal now if you are throwing up a ball meaninglessly what does that help that doesn't accomplish anything here's my point the spirit of God sort of does this kind of deal sometimes we throw up prayers we lift up prayers and it's it's not quite where it should be not quite in the will of God the spirit of God is like he does an alley-oop he takes your prayers that misses God's will and guides it to the will of God again our prayers can be very very weak very impotent but the spirit of the ministry of the spirit of

God is to guide our prayers he has editorial rights you know father he's a little not on it today let me help him a little bit so guiding that prayer to the will of God but again the praying heart of the believer becomes the prayer room for the Holy Spirit the question is you have a praying heart oh I think there are several things we needn't be afraid of silence and prayer we I mean sometimes we have public prayer I mean aren't there some people that really can pray publicly well they make you just want to shut down and hush because you might think that your prayers are so!

Hey you've got a prayer helper! The Holy Spirit helps you and me in our weakness and that's what we need to understand do you feel that your prayers are weak and insignificant think of this passage you're not alone in prayer in the midst of your suffering but sometimes we just don't know exactly therefore and that's why we hear we say if it be your will I don't think that is in the language of the Holy Spirit because he knows the will of God and guides our prayers accordingly Help in the midst of suffering but finally look at the last of these verses harmony!

[33 : 37] God's sovereign hand will complete God's sovereign plan for the Christ likeness of his children that is God's goal for each one of us is to look like Jesus certainly that is a spiritual maturity kind of goal but there is also an existential kind of we will look like Jesus beloved now we the children of God does not yet appear what we shall be we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is these are very stunning verses probably one of the most famous verses or most often quoted in all the Bible all things work together for good what seems to be here is!

the various! harmonious working of God in order to achieve his purposes for his own and this harmony is such a beautiful thing let me picture it go with me to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra! listen to the warm up that is there you hear the instruments playing randomly there's the bass instruments there's percussions and strings and horns but then when the conductor brings them all together there's music that has melodic integrity and beauty and harmony let's go with me to the kitchen I want you to think about the ingredients that you need for making cakes we got basketball players here any cake bakers here think about what is it that goes into making a cake the flour now how many ever take a handful of flour and just gulp it take oh my wife likes to get that Watkins vanilla extract that goes into a wonderful pound cake and then

I've done pound cakes before you've got the powdered sugar and then you get the margarine or butter but why not take a little pinch of the butter or just a tablespoon of sugar eaters you've got that sweet tooth but do you ever just take a cup of that cane sugar and just turn it up oh but guess what happens when you put all of those things together mix them all together wonder wondrously marvelously!

you've got what I call millionaire pound cake then some of which is in my freezer right now you can come over for a piece if you desire no what am I talking about when these things these disparate kind of things come together you've got something of beauty something that is delicious something that is nutritious God is the great conductor of life and he is the one who will cause the very ingredients of life to produce his divine perfect ultimate will which is conformity to his son you see that in verse 28 and 29 we know that for those who love God all things will work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the first born among many

brothers and those he predestined he also called and those he called he justified!

[37 : 25] God is watching over the process he has a plan and he will finish it but what you see in verses 29 through 30 are properly called a chain that leads us from eternity to eternity and here is the idea behind it God in eternity passes drawn up a flight plan for his own that's the idea he those he sets his electing love upon that's what it means by foreknowing them from eternity verse 20 he determines beforehand predestined to be made in the image of his son Jesus and those that he predetermines he calls and brings to himself in time and those that he calls he declares them righteous and those who are declared righteous they are on a path that will bring them to glory

God will complete his work his plan now sometimes there are flight plans that they're going from point A to point B and guess what happens storms come whether that something happens that will take them off course but this is the idea this is what Paul is trying to tell us hey there are going to be storms in this life they're going to be suffering there's going to be things that happen in this world but none of those things will disrupt or thwart the very plan of God to bringing many sons to glory that is going to God is going to finish just what he started and the song goes even though the waters have to be parted lift up your hearts don't be broken hearted God is going to finish what he started in you Philippians chapter 1 6 and I am sure this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of

Jesus Christ what am I saying today suffering is present in this world but hope can be prominent in God's children in this world who are helped by God's spirit and assured by God's perfect plan so regardless of what is in your world or even what will be in your world as you continue to live here oh don't we just love harmony and peace in our world oh but as we continue each day in it we don't know what will happen but this thing we do know that God has given us a hope that is drawing us forward and taking us through regardless of what it is that you and I face he has given us the help of the spirit of God that helps us as we pray our way through and as we understand God's plan to bring many sons to glory and no plan whatever will thwart that we can be at rest Lord we love you we thank you for your goodness to us in and through the work of Christ