

God will complete our experience of sonship

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Date: 03 December 2023

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[0 : 00] So we're reading from verse 16, just to give a bit of context. So Romans chapter 8, verse 16. 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, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

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.

[1 : 29] 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. 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. Well, will you pray with me as we come to God's Word?

Let's pray together. Lord, your Word to us today is weighty. It carries all cancer and wars and the death of children.

[2 : 44] Lord, it's weighty. It is profoundly soaked in your sovereign will in all things. Not just in the good things.

Lord, its scope is all of history, even before history and into forever. And incredibly, tying it all together is your purpose to give undeserving sinners an eternal weight of glory in your Son.

Lord, I am not sufficient for teaching this. We are not sufficient for hearing and understanding and believing.

And so my prayer is that you would help us humble ourselves before your Word. To take off our shoes as we stand on holy ground.

To prostrate our assumptions and thinking before you. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, you all know that voluntary assisted dying laws came into effect in New South Wales this week.

[4 : 04] I was looking at the New South Wales Health website and as well as having a terminal illness, one of the eligibility criteria reads that the illness must be causing the person suffering.

Cause the person suffering that cannot be relieved in a way they consider tolerable. Now, I'm not in this situation myself.

But can I suggest that pain and suffering is utterly intolerable if it seems meaningless. If there's no point to it.

If at the end of the struggle there's no light, there's no freedom at the end. That makes suffering intolerable. A girl, Joni, she was 17 years old and in a diving accident she was left paralysed for the rest of her life.

Now, I can't even begin to imagine the daily suffering that brings. I haven't experienced that. I get these emails from these email blogs.

[5 : 22] I don't know, some people here might be getting them as well from a guy called Tim. Tim's son Nick died suddenly when he was at university. And Joni reached out to comfort Tim in his grief.

And Joni didn't know this but 40 years earlier she'd also reached out to Tim's grandma when she lost her daughter. Now, despite her own suffering, Joni has spent her pain-filled years seeking to comfort people in the love of God.

She likes to say, apparently, that when she reaches the goal of seeing Jesus, she will finally leap to her feet. Only to fall on her knees in worship.

Hope is the theme of our passage. You can't live without it.

But with it, you can love people and love God even in deep darkness. So as we come to God's enormous, enormous promises in Romans 8, can I simply ask you to reflect on yourself.

[6 : 45] Do you have this hope? Not hope that you've created, but this hope. And if you do, is this hope filling you and directing you in every inch of your life?

We've had some lofty claims so far in Romans 8. No condemnation whatsoever. Peace with God. We're living a transcendent life in the Holy Spirit, if you're a Christian.

The Spirit is living in you. You don't have to fear God that he'll punish you at all, but we can see him as Father.

Full status as sons and daughters. Sharing the privileges of Jesus himself. That's pretty lofty, is it not? If God didn't say it, that's pretty arrogant to think these things.

If it's not based on grace, it's pretty arrogant to think these things. Now, instead of suffering causing us to doubt the reality of our adoption, this passage says, we can stand firm in the love of God, knowing we're sharing the same pathway to glory as the Son.

[8 : 11] So, in the face of the onslaught of living this broken world, the remainder of Romans 8 gives us such enormous grounds to persevere with confidence that we really are loved by God.

As sons and daughters. So, I've got two pretty simple questions that I'm not probably going to satisfactorily answer, but what is our hope?

And how do we know we'll make it? What is our hope? How do we know we'll make it? So, have your Bibles open, verse 19, or 18 to 25.

Verse 24a sums up our status as God's children. In this hope, we were saved. Interesting phrase, isn't it?

Saved. Past tense. Current. We're saved in Jesus. But hope is faith in Jesus in the future tense.

[9 : 15] We often talk about, I often preach about, that we can be satisfied in God's love. That if we set our eyes on Jesus, we can have joy and peace and purpose no matter the circumstances.

Now, that's true. But the Christian experience is awfully incomplete. Not incomplete as we look around at our neighbours thinking, I don't have what they have, but incomplete precisely because we take the promises of God seriously.

We should have a holy discontentment. I'm not full. I think to live a meaningful life, we must have this holy discontentment.

But sharing in Jesus' life means the present suffering isn't worth comparing to the glory that's coming.

What? Wow. That must be a lot of glory. So what is our hope? We're told we know, verse 22, this section, we know creation is groaning.

[10 : 29] So on the 6th of February this year, 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit Turkey and Syria, 1.5 million people homeless. The population bigger than Port Macquarie killed.

Groaning. This groaning is a weighty groan. In Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka topped Lonely Planet's best country to visit in 2019.

2022, they had that severe famine. Why does John Hunter Hospital need a children's ward?

So verses 19 to 22, it pictures all of creation, not including human beings, but all of creation. And one person describes it, I read this week, a symphony of sighs.

It's just groaning. It's longing forward. It's eagerly longing. It's straining its neck forward in anticipation.

[11 : 38] It's currently in bondage to corruption. It's been subjected to futility. In other words, it can't produce the abundant life that it was made for. It can't.

It's futile. It always ends in futility. It just ends in corruption. And creation just longs to be free.

Now, it wasn't Satan that subjected it. It wasn't Adam. It must be God in this passage, because it was subjected, verse 20, in hope.

So it must be recalling Genesis 3, that God cursed creation because of sin. When sin is removed, so too the curse on creation will be removed.

I think this is a wonderfully positive picture of the world, compared to a closed, materialistic... I've got to be careful.

[12 : 38] I'm careful of my words here. I think this is very hopeful. It's saying that the present situation is not how it will stay. So why personify creation like this?

This has kind of been bugging me this week. Why? I think it prepares for the analogy in verse 22. We know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth.

So imagine you're in a hospital, and outside a room, and you hear cries of agony. And it's so loud that everyone in the hallway is just looking in that direction, just in concern.

And it's piercing. And nurses are rushing in and out, and some of them are holding linen that's soaked in blood. And the alarms are going off. Doctors are running in, in a hurry.

The person sitting next to you believes this life is all there is, believes this world as it is now is the only one we've got. They tremble as they say to you, I think that lady is going to die.

[13 : 49] She's going to die. But from where you're sitting, you see a glimpse through the door when the nurse opens, and you see what's going on. And you're filled with hope, and you can turn to your friend and go, no, no, she's not dying.

Unspeakable joy is coming. Yes, there's blood. Yes, there's trauma. Yes, there's crisis. But it'll be worth it.

What massive different perspectives on life. What's creation waiting for?

It's waiting for the revealing of the sons and daughters of God. We're waiting for creation to be made new. Creation's waiting for us. I just find it staggering how central God's children are to his purposes.

Creation is waiting for... It's even described the freedom that creation wants is to share in our freedom. I'm not sure I've got to the bottom of what that means in my preparations this week.

[15 : 03] So I invite you to think on that. That seems profound, and I don't know what it means. I've got to be honest with you. Creation wants to enjoy our freedom of the children of God.

Perhaps not being under condemnation. So there's at least one very good implication for knowing that creation is in the pains of childbirth.

God is waiting to draw more people to his son. He's bringing in all his adopted children. There's a very good purpose, and there's a great outcome.

And we who already right now have the status of adoption because we've put our hope in Jesus, we're described we too are groaning. Now, I don't think this is complaining at our present circumstances.

This is that future-looking groaning. It's precisely because we have the first taste, the first installment of the Spirit that we want the whole thing.

[16 : 16] It's by the Spirit that we groan. We want to be in this new physical earth God has promised.

Yes, there's joy calling God Father, Abba, but it's not full yet. We want the redemption of our sin-infested, weak, corrupted body.

We read Genesis, and we know the goal is rest. God being in his creation with his people. We want that full adoption.

So we're adopted status. We want the full experience of it. So we're groaning for that. So, to whatever degree we're trying to get glory in this world, in this creation, in this life, in a creation that's groaning to be made new, and yet we're trying to get glory now, that can only end in futility.

It's trying to claim now what has only been promised when Jesus comes back.

[17 : 39] If we do that, really that's just impatience. It's not trusting God's good purposes for our present suffering. But we must groan.

So there's a bad way to groan, is what I'm trying to get across. There's a groaning because we want more of this life. That's ungodly.

But there's a good way to groan, trusting his promises. We must groan in this hope of this embodied, not this airy-fairy spiritual, there's nothing wrong with the term spiritual, we just don't understand it, but embodied glory in the new earth.

How do we know this is coming? Because God's the creator. He's going to get the goal for his creation. How could he not?

Is he going to let sin or Satan or anything defeat him? He's the creator. Of course he's going to get the goal. He would not be God if he didn't achieve his purposes.

[18 : 53] That eternal rest is coming. And as we look at the Son of God walking on the earth, nothing constrained him. Nothing. Exactly when his alarm went off, three days, he got up, folded his pyjamas, and walked out.

He's the first fruits of this full harvest. He died to redeem all things, including the creation. Jesus died to redeem us, body and soul to God.

So that's our hope. It's a pretty massive hope. It's a wonderful hope. So our second question is, how do we know we're going to make it?

How do you know you're going to make it? Now when a Christian, when a believer dies, it is a horrible and sad time.

And I think of our church's loss of Margaret and Rose this year. But it's also an incredible testimony to the safekeeping grace of God.

[20 : 06] They made it. They've fought the good fight. They've finished the race. One year closer to death.

One year closer to glory. We're given two reasons why we can be sure we're going to make it home. And in between these two massive reasons, we're given enormous comfort being told what God is doing with our suffering now.

Now I want us to notice that as we go through this, you have no part to play. You've got no part to play in what we're about to hear.

Nothing. If you believe this, it'll motivate you to enormous action. But the grounds of actually knowing you're going to make it, you've got no part to play.

It's all on God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So what's going to help us keep our eager longing knowing we're going to make it home?

[21 : 17] Well, the first thing we're told is just like knowing our hope sustains us in our present suffering, so too the Spirit comes to help us.

We know creation is groaning. We don't know what to pray for. I don't know if you've ever experienced someone genuine in their concern for you who takes the time to pray for you and maybe you're unable to pray for yourself because of what you're going through and their words are just, they capture your heart's longing.

Yes, the pain, but also your longing to trust God in this situation and they're sincere and they care about you and it's like you're in the presence of God as they pray for you and they have insights into God's word that just seems to connect to your current experience.

They draw you into the comfort of God's person and his promises and when they say amen, you're just like, to describe it, I think it's just, you know you're not alone.

It's like their prayer brought you into the very presence of God. It's a wonderful blessing to pray for one another. Now imagine having that all the time and these verses say we do.

[22 : 43] We do. Not just in other believers praying for us but the Spirit interceding for us, praying for us. The promise in verse 26 and 27 is that the Holy Spirit in our hearts is always interceding on our behalf.

The love of the Spirit for the Father's will, always praying in line with what God wills and the Father's love for the Spirit always effectually answering the Spirit's intercession because Father and Spirit are working towards the same thing so that we will be conformed to be like Jesus, like the Son.

Now we imagine prayer as entering the throne room of heaven and rightly so. Like we've got those pictures in scripture and Christ gives us full access into the throne room of heaven.

The picture here is that it's going on inside our hearts. That's incredible. The Father is answering the prayers of the Spirit in our hearts.

Now I don't think we should take this promise as meaning that if you have a gut feeling that God is telling you something that he's saying anything to you, your intuition can be dead wrong.

[24 : 08] This is not the promise here. And I don't think we should take this as speaking in tongues. That spiritual gift is for some Christians.

This promise is for all Christians all the time. In fact, this groaning of the Spirit is too deep for words. We wouldn't know this is going on unless God told us.

I'm tempted to think that God is fed up with my weakness. When I'm not motivated to pray, when my prayer is about often getting things from God, not God himself, when I'm trying to seek God's will but life's just too complex, I don't know what I'm praying about.

Like, is God fed up with our weakness? No, he's not. The Spirit is helping us in our weakness and interceding on our behalf. Christ is interceding in heaven, which we're going to come to next week.

The Spirit's interceding in our hearts. Wow. Wow. That's a pretty good ground of confidence we're going to make it. The Spirit's praying and the Father's answering the Spirit's prayers.

[25 : 25] Even though we're weak. It's a great grounds to pray. That it's the Spirit prompting us to pray. When my prayers are just mixed motives, I can trust that the Spirit is sanctifying my prayers.

It's kind of getting, just getting rid of all the self-centered side of it, which is probably 95%. And we can trust that he's actually directing to God's will.

You can even believe he's praying when I don't want to pray. Or I can't pray because I'm just too in pain. So how do we know we're going to make it?

Because the Spirit is interceding to the Father on our behalf. And the second reason is because we know we know God's promise. We know creation is groaning. We don't know what to pray for.

The Spirit's praying for us. But we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. I challenge you to add anything to that phrase to make it better.

[26 : 32] all things work together for good. Whoa.

Okay, what is the good? Now, I don't know. Do you have sufficient awareness of yourself and insight into other people?

Do you have sufficient wisdom and knowledge to know the complexities of life and the eternal purposes of God and the wisdom to know how that fits all together, the timing, the manner, the outcomes for everyone involved, that you can even look at a simple situation and go, I know exactly what good.

I'm not sure I can claim that. at the start of a family holiday at my parents' house, as a thank you for having free accommodation, I mowed their lawns and at the end of mowing them, just before I was finished, I hit an irrigation pipe and I created a water feature for my parents, which, just as a thank you, now moments like that are humbling because it's something I felt so confident in and yet I didn't have enough insight to see that irrigation pipe.

It just challenges my ability to control the world, those little moments. Now, how much deeper the things of relationships and my own character development and God's church?

[28 : 31] Do we really know good? Now, I don't think this wisdom, this lack of wisdom should be paralysing because we can trust this promise.

lean not on your own understanding, submit to God's word and we learn, chapter 12 tells us, learn what pleases God. We're urged in scripture, use the agency God's given you, make a decision.

Yes, it's chaos, you don't know what you're doing, but make a decision, trusting me to sort out your mess, and even use you for good.

It's because of this promise that we can seek to please God, knowing that he will use it for good, even when we don't actually intend it for good.

So we don't know the exact good, but we are told the overarching meaning of good, what everything is working for. God is committed to giving his sons and daughters the full experience of being his child.

[30 : 11] Thinking like Jesus, valuing what he values, rejecting what he rejects, loving like Jesus does. Life, in other words.

when I first bought my Subaru Forester back in 2012, it was parked out on the street, and while I was inside the house, I was watching TV, I can't remember what I was watching, it doesn't really matter for the story, but I heard a smash outside, and I jumped up, I jumped on the seat, I pulled open the curtains to look at my new car, it wasn't my car.

I sat down, and instead of relief, I was then convicted, it's like, why do I care so much about my car? And then I prayed, I prayed, God help me to love you more than this car.

It was something along, I can't remember the exact words, something about that. Now I was about to go to bed that night, and I heard another smash. And someone's vandalised my mirror.

And I could smile because I saw it as God answering my prayer. And like \$400 later, it was something ridiculous for a mirror, like \$400 later, an inconvenient, I don't know, it took a day, a Saturday, a morning to go get it fixed, and my flatmate was with me, he's just like, why are you angry?

[31 : 52] Like, someone's vandalised, it's costing you this money, it's, and I told him what I'm telling you, I see it as an answer of prayer. God giving me himself rather than the things.

Now, I wish I had that kind of trust more often. I could tell you a hundred stories where I didn't trust. But in that moment, something deeply satisfying in my soul was going on, because I was valuing God more than the things I could get from God, and in doing so, in trusting him, even when he smashes the things I love, I was, my friend could see, I didn't have to blurt out the gospel, he asked me, why aren't you angry?

I was reflecting the character of Jesus because I was trusting. Now, I know I don't do it as, I hate being the hero of the story, but I just want to say, it was so satisfying, that moment, because I think it's what we're created for, to know God for his own sake, and by doing so, we learn to reflect his character.

That's what sonship is, what being a child is, is to enjoy the father, reflect his character, and we're told that everything is working together so that we would have that joy forever, and full.

So this brings us to what all things is, the good is being conformed to the image of Jesus, what is all things? Now, the damage to a car, that is nothing compared to, that is absolutely nothing compared to, I don't have to tell you that, the other sufferings in life.

[33 : 58] The problem with the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel, gospel, if we have enough faith, isn't that God hasn't promised these things, he has, it's the timing, it's not now, it's not yet, we will have unimaginable wealth, and health, and prosperity, when we share in Jesus' inheritance, it's just, it's the cross now, that's the problem with that gospel.

A man named John Owen, whose teachings we probably all rely on, we just don't know it, because he's influenced so many Bible teachers, now he wrote a book called Communion with God, and in this book he describes how a Christian can commune with the three persons of the Godhead, we can relate to and enjoy God the Father, the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Now if you think those terms are wishy-washy, John Owen would outdo I think anyone in this room, these are solid truths he's talking about, but the depth of knowing God wasn't just born out of study for God's Word, it was, but it was also born out of suffering.

John married Mary, and they had 11 children, 10 died in infancy. The daughter who made it to adulthood died of tuberculosis.

Jesus, when this promise says all things, it means all things. so who is this promise for?

[36 : 17] We're given two answers, one is looking at a human level, what we can see, the other at a heavenly level, only what we can accept by faith. So I'm going to start with the heavenly level, heavenly perspective.

In my second year of my teaching degree, it was in the first semester of second year, we did a four-week prac, and after that prac, I think it was about 40 of my peers dropped out, once they actually experienced teaching.

They didn't turn up the next semester. Where's this person? Now, from God's eternal perspective, there's no drop outs, none.

Each state of the process of salvation, from eternity past, the Father foreknew, you. Now, to foreknow does not mean he looked into the future and he saw who would respond in faith and then go, okay, I choose you.

No, foreknow in the Bible is a very intimate term. It's used even as a man knowing his wife. For God to foreknow is that he freely chose to set his love on you in eternity past.

[37 : 48] I'm going to love you. before you'd done anything good or bad, before the world even existed, he selected to love you.

There's no drop outs. From those who he foreknew to love, he predestined to be conformed to the image of his son and will be glorified.

Verse 30 is this golden chain of salvation. There's no weak link. We're as good as glorified because God knows the end from the beginning. There's no drop outs.

If you look to the death of Jesus as your only possible way of being at peace with God, even if you don't feel terribly hopeful, if you want this salvation, salvation, then you can know that this promise is for you.

It's speaking about you. You may not feel it, but if you want it, it's for you. There's no drop outs.

[39 : 06] Now, if you're stumbling over the justice of God in this, that he selects some to love and not others, can I urge you, don't think of people as morally neutral.

If you want justice, then we all should be consigned to hell. Give me mercy, please. I don't think this insight is given to solve all our philosophical questions.

Like, I can't even mow the lawn without hitting an irrigation pipe. How am I going to work out? How God's sovereignty relates to my free choosing. Good luck.

I don't think this is given to solve our philosophical questions. Look into those things. I think there are some answers that God gives us, but not total answers.

It's given to us for us to build our life on. To know that people's love is fickle, God's love is literally eternal.

[40 : 15] God's love is because it springs out of himself. In the end, he's not responding to you. It sprang out of himself before you existed.

That's how deep the ground is of his love for you. You can't mess it up. believing this.

It's a wonderful insight into salvation because if we believe this, nothing can shake you. Nothing. It's such a deep foundation.

I like the illustration. I'm stealing this from someone. I don't know who it is, but if you picture a large cross so big that there's a door, on the one side of the cross is a sign above it saying whoever, whoever may come in.

Scripture says it, whoever, come, come in. But those who come in, once they go through, they look back at that door and there's another sign on the other side, which Scripture says chosen for the foundation of the world.

[41 : 30] You're not to work out whether you're chosen or not before you come. Come. But once you come, wow, there's a wonderful assurance of God's love. So this promise is yours if you've tasted the hope and the peace that comes only through the death of Jesus.

it's for those who are called. Called means summoned. It's not called as in just open invitation, it's called as in Lazarus, come out.

It's the very call that creates the life and creates hearing with faith. It's an effectual call, the command to come to Jesus.

We come because he set his love on us before the world began and he calls us. Those who are called will have faith in Jesus. We are justified and we're as good as glorified.

We can't stuff it up, there's no dropouts. We can't stuff it up, there's no dropouts. I want to say one more thing on this point and let's not think of this golden chain of salvation as this mechanical process.

[43 : 05] Once you're on the conveyor belt it just occurs. It's all, it's all in Jesus, it's all received in Jesus, personal connection to Jesus.

Jesus. I really love how a Scottish teacher, Sinclair Ferguson, he helps us feel the wonder of this, so I'm going to quote him.

Our union with Christ, which we experience through faith, is not first of all grounded on my faith. Our faith falters, but that doesn't mean our union with Christ falters, because our union with Christ is grounded in God's eternal purpose, to think that before the foundation of the world, that whenever he saw the coming work of the Lord Jesus Christ, he would never think of Jesus Christ without thinking of me.

And that he would never think of me without thinking that one belongs to my son, Jesus Christ. We receive it all in Jesus.

on the human side, what we see, those who are called, what we see is those who love God.

[44 : 34] Now the context here is about believing we are children loved by the Father, not after, but even while we're suffering. Later, as we'll see next week, it talks about tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword, we're like sheep to be slaughtered.

And those love God. It's like John Owen, who can look at God giving his own son to give us this hope of glory, and I'm going to quote a song here, and can sing, though you slay me, yet I will praise you.

Though you take from me, I will bless your name. Though you ruin me, still I will worship, sing a song to the one who's all I need.

With my eyes, I'll see the Lord lifted high on that day. Behold, the land that was slain, and I'll know every tear was worth it all.

It's for those who love God because he so loved us. Trusting that not a drop of our pain will be pointless.

[46 : 05] It's all preparing us for this weight of glory, the full experience of sharing in the life of Jesus, in the new creation.

Brothers and sisters, in this hope we were saved. And if we patiently, eagerly wait for this hope, that's when we will show that Jesus is better than life.

he's more precious than what this creation that's groaning and is futile can give. That's when we honour him, when we eagerly await the full experience of being sons and daughters, and we know we're going to make it.

to quote another song we all know, through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come.

Tis grace that's brought me safe thus far, and grace will bring me home. Will you pray with me? Let's pray.

[47 : 23] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, even this hope is a gift.

Forgive us for our commitment to this futile, broken, groaning world that makes us not see the beauty of this hope that you've purchased for us with the blood of your Son.

Lord, I pray that you'd fill us more, with this so that we might live lives that are leaning forward in eager expectation so that we live lives that honour you.

And I pray for any who don't know this hope yet, I pray that you would use your word, not mine, but your word to call them to yourself.

And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.