

Saved in Hope

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Date: 23 July 2017

[0:00] Amen. So I have found as a parent that one of the most interesting aspects of parenthood is getting to see how our little ones react to every new thing they encounter.

It's particularly interesting to me to see how Mia reacts to TV shows and movies when she's watching them. Now sometimes when I'm watching something with Mia, we get to a part in the story where things are looking really scary, where all hope looks lost.

And let me just say before you judge my parenting, I'm not watching *The Exorcist* with her or anything like that. Talking about kids' stories. But you encounter even in those moments where things look absolutely terrifying to someone who is little.

And Mia's reaction when that happens really speaks volumes to me. She'll look away or she'll cover her eyes or she'll even tell me not to watch. Now I'm not sure that she has figured out that in most stories, at least in the kind that she watches, things are probably going to turn out okay in the end. That the situation that seemed absolutely hopeless, as it turns out, wasn't hopeless. That the scary situation doesn't have the last word in the story. But that things turn okay, turn out okay, even if she doesn't see how it can happen.

[1:49] It reminds me a little bit of the way we go through life, doesn't it? Does life ever make you feel that way? Like you look at the world around you, you look at the things that life throws at you, you look at the effects maybe of poor decisions you've made, lasting consequences.

And that can be overwhelming. Those moments feel like the point where the story takes that awful turn. What do you feel like doing when that happens?

Do you feel like covering your eyes? Do you feel like looking away? Do you feel like maybe you'd be better off not watching that part? If I'm being honest, I feel that way sometimes.

What about you? But today, in our epistle reading from Romans 8, we get the message that we need to hear. Yes, things look bad.

Things can be discouraging. Sometimes it seems like all hope is lost. But that is not the way the story ends, is it? This morning, we get a glimpse of that ending.

[3:01] An ending that is so glorious, so beautiful, so unimaginably wonderful, that we can look at the scary plot twists and detours that we have to encounter as we draw near to the ending.

We can look at that and honestly say, Yes, this looks bad. Yes, this looks scary. But this is not the end of the story. Now, to get our bearings a little bit, we just finished a sermon series on Jonah. And when we did that, we started at the beginning of the book and we closed at the end of the book, so we had a chance to get our bearings. Well, our passage from Romans this morning is just a few verses in the middle of the chapter.

So before we jump into the text, I want us to get our bearings a little bit with what comes before. Now, I'll give kind of a brief summary of what's going on in the verses before our morning's passage.

Chapter 8 in Romans, I'm sure most of you are probably pretty familiar with us, is full of good news. It's full of gospel news. Before our verses are pointed to this morning, we see Paul reminding us as believers of the benefits of what we have in Christ.

[4:17] First, what are those benefits? First, there is no condemnation for us. Jesus has lived a perfect life for us. He has died the death that we deserve in our place, so that if our faith is in Christ, there is no condemnation.

We are forgiven freely, totally, certainly. The righteous requirement of God's law has been fulfilled, so that we are no longer under that law trying to earn our salvation.

We're no longer under the sentence of eternal death. Instead, we walk in the Spirit. In the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit dwells in us, changing us from the inside out, cleansing us from the power of sin over us, doing more than mere rules and regulations could ever do, changing us from the inside out.

Changing us from the inside out. Changing us to desire the things that God desires, and changing us to love the things that God loves. What else? We have become children of God.

We are adopted children of God as believers, because we are in Christ through faith, the Father's beloved Son. The Father looks at us, and He sees His adopted children, because of what Christ has done for us, and He is pleased.

[5 : 45] And the Spirit of the living God, the Spirit whose power raised Jesus from the dead, dwells in us, changing us, promising us eternal life, promising us that death has no claim on us, that our bodies will, in fact, be raised from the dead when Jesus returns, promising us that we are children of Almighty God, and we don't have to be afraid.

I'd say that Romans 8 has given us some pretty good news. What do you think? But, life still isn't always easy, is it?

I mean, we look at our hearts, and we realize that we still battle with sin in our hearts, in our lives. These bodies of ours still break down and die.

The world around us, honestly, looks like a total mess sometimes. And so there are times when we want to just cover our eyes, even still, because we get so overwhelmed, that we find ourselves forgetting how the story ends.

Ever been there? So have I. And God's word is for us this morning. So let's look together in Romans 8, starting with verse 18.

[7 : 06] Paul writes, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Now here, in this first verse, we see a sharp contrast, don't we?

On the one hand, we see the sufferings of the present time, and they're real, and it's a major understatement to say that those sufferings can be a real bummer. But, we also, in this verse, see the glory that is going to be revealed to us.

The glory of the fulfillment of God's promises, the glory of what God has planned for us, the glory of the way that the story ends, the difference between the sufferings of the present time, and the glory that's going to be revealed, runs through our passage for this morning, and gives it shape.

We're waiting, in expectation, for the glorious end of the story as believers, aren't we? We're waiting to receive the fulfillment of all that God has promised us.

But here is something that is absolutely incredible. All of creation is waiting to see God's promises fulfilled to you, to me, and my fellow believers.

[8 : 24] It's what we see in verse 19. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. The creation is waiting to see our revealing, to see us completely cleansed from the power of sin, to see us raised from the dead when Christ comes again in glory.

All creation is waiting to see that. We read on in verse 20. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it.

Now at first glance, when we read verse 20, we might wonder what in the world that means. I've seen this come up in Bible studies before, and we're all kind of sitting around the table, scratching our heads.

But what we're seeing is that all of creation, the whole world, is afflicted with the suffering of the present time, right? Look at the world around us. What do we see?

We see decay. We see death. We see disease. We see evil. We see it all over the place. And it doesn't just affect people. It affects even my dog.

[9 : 36] So how did all that happen? God told mankind that if they sinned, if they disobeyed him, death would be the consequence.

Death would come into the world. Well, it's pretty obvious how that turned out, isn't it? These consequences of sin are real.

And the suffering that results from them is real. But there is also hope, even though the sufferings of the present time affect everything.

Because creation was subjected to futility 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.

Death, suffering, decay, sin, all of it is going to be gone forever because Jesus is coming back to put an end to it. When Jesus comes again, we are promised that there will be a new earth where there is no more pain, no more suffering, no more death, no more decay, no more sin, and believers will rise from the grave and dwell with him forever.

[10:55] But, while creation waits for that, while it waits to be set free from death, from decay, from suffering, Paul tells us that creation is groaning.

The time between the present suffering and the glory that is going to be revealed is going to hurt. But it's not going to be in vain.

Verse 22, Now here's an image for us.

I'm pretty sure that I must have first read this passage as a small child. And at the time, I'm going to guess that I didn't really know much about the groaning that accompanies childbirth.

But, I can now say I can vouch for it from experience. It's a real thing. But, looking at the moms who really know what that's like from experience, I think even you would agree that it's worth all of the pain and all of the groaning when you're handed that baby, isn't it?

[12:16] The pains of childbirth, as Paul says, the pain, the suffering, the death, that are part of the present age, the present time, they are a prelude to something that is unimaginably greater.

And as believers, we certainly share in that groaning and in that hope, don't we? We read in verse 23, And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit grown inwardly. So we wait eagerly for adoption of sons, the redemption of our bodies. As Christians, we're really living between times, aren't we?

We have the firstfruits of the Spirit. We have God as our Father. Our sins are forgiven in Christ. The Holy Spirit, as it is at work in us. But we still suffer.

We still stumble and fall short. We still hurt. These bodies of ours still break down. But what we are waiting for is so much greater than what we're afflicted with now.

[13:25] Do you believe that? God's promise that He will bring to completion what He has started in us, that He will free us from sin, that He will raise us from the dead, that we will dwell with Him forever, that is what we're waiting for, isn't it?

We groan like we're in childbirth, truly feeling the hurt of the present suffering, but realizing that when it's all said and done, it will have been more worth it than we could ever imagine.

So now, we live in hope. 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. So when those scary shows are on and Mia's hands are over her eyes or she's looking away, there is still the hope that everything is going to turn out all right.

If that's true of some goofy kid show, how much truer is it of the promises of the living God? We hope for what we don't see that's true.

[14:46] So some mornings I wake up and my joints are stiff because of my rheumatoid arthritis and it's hard for me to imagine that one day I will rise in a glorious body that will never hurt again. I can't imagine it, but I know it's true.

So I wait patiently even if I do it while groaning and sometimes that groaning is literal. It's true. How do I know?

How do we know? We know because God is on His throne and He keeps His promises. That is how we know. We know as believers because we know that Jesus has put away our sins.

We know because Jesus has been raised from the dead defeating death and winning eternal life for all who put their trust in Him. We know because Jesus has trampled the devil under His feet and that even if Satan still fights His losing battle, His defeat is guaranteed.

We know because we have been given the Holy Spirit and the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children and heirs with Christ Jesus. Yeah, the present suffering can be pretty bad but everything that's causing our present suffering is on its last legs and it will be defeated.

[16:13] Now, not long ago I was talking with a friend who was worried about the state of the world and was talking about some legitimately painful stuff going on in his own life and I listened to him told him absolutely brother those things are real they really hurt but no matter how bad it gets none of it changes the fact that God is on His throne and that Jesus is Lord.

I suspect that most of us are a lot like my friend I get that way sometimes. We look at the state of the world I look at the news this week both the news of what's going on in the church and what's going on in the wider world and here's what I saw I saw chronicled the decline of once faithful churches who were yielding to false unbiblical doctrine I saw reports of continued persecution of Christians around the world I saw wars and threats of wars I saw political corruption I saw death and suffering of all kinds you look at those things and it makes you want to groan doesn't it?

We groan because these things are legitimately scary they're painful they worry us unless we be tempted to let ourselves off the hook we still sin so we're part of the problem too aren't we? the apologist and writer G.K. Chesterton one time when he was asked what's wrong with the world today now there's a question what's wrong with the world today?

his response reportedly was I am so we're part of the problem sometimes we get frustrated with our sins and rightly so sometimes we're hurt by the sins of others sometimes we suffer sometimes we see the people that we love suffering we see death we see pain we see evil and not just in the abstraction in the wider world we are all personally touched by all these things all of that stuff is awful being honest the glorious reality is that we know that it won't be like this forever we know how the story ends the sufferance of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us this is true because the gospel is true because Jesus is victorious and because we have a God who keeps his promises we need to set our hope in

[19:11] God's promises because hoping in anything else is going to disappoint us as C.S. Lewis once said all that we call human history is the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy doesn't work but we have a different message in our lives don't we a different message for a world that is desperately trying and failing to find happiness and hope in things other than God we have a message recently I've been reading Michael Horton's great book The Gospel Driven Life if you haven't read it I would recommend it it's really good been reading that and a certain passage really struck me Horton is talking about the message that the church has been given the gospel he has this to say it speaks not merely of a better world but of a new creation only the church can declare the message that it has heard that through

Christ and faith in his victory death will not have the last word that violence oppression and injustice will not be an unending struggle that disease and hunger will not claim the bodies of millions forever it is the victory of the seed of the woman over the seed of the serpent that Christ has achieved and the visible effects of that conquest will be fully realized when Christ returns in glory right now Christ is ruling from heaven in common grace over the nations and in saving grace through the proclamation of the gospel we have a message and thank God for it so brothers and sisters you were saved in this hope wait for it in patience don't be worried don't be afraid don't be discouraged God keeps his promises share this hope with your children with your families with your friends will you do that because so many people are placing their hopes in things that will never make them happy in things that will always fail placing their hopes in things that can never save some of them some of those people are people we know but some of them are people we don't know who live in our community and in our city can we share that hope with those people can we agree that with God's hope we will do just that can we commit to that that is a hope that we are not meant to keep to ourselves those of us who know that hope say glory be to our

Lord Jesus Christ whose death resurrection ascension and promise to come again guaranteed that the sufferings of this present time do not compare with the glory that is coming we know that it's coming because in the words of that great hymn our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness glory be to Jesus Christ our Lord now and forever amen