

Learning to Suffer Wisely & Well

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Romans chapter 8. Joy to consider this passage this morning.

Continue our worship through the reading and the preaching of the Word of God. By way of introduction, D.A. Carson begins his book, *How Long, O Lord*, on suffering with the few examples that he has encountered.

He says, and I quote, There is no hope for the little boy.

He's been crushed beyond recognition. And Carson asks, where is God? After five years of marriage, Jane waits in the night to find her husband poking her and pointing to his mouth.

[1 : 26] As she hauls herself out of sleep, she realizes her husband has awakened to realize that he can no longer speak. A quick phone call to the doctor issues a swift trip to the hospital.

The next day, the surgeons operate for cancer on his brain. They cannot get much of it. But the trauma of the surgery is worse. It wipes out his memory.

Dan can no longer learn, or no longer knows how to read and write. He can no longer recognize his young son. Yet somehow, the operation has administered such a shock that the cancer stops growing.

Dan's personality, though, has completely changed. He's frustrated and angry and irritable and needs someone to watch him 24 hours a day. After three months of little recovery, the cancer starts growing again and kills Dan four months later.

He continues and tells another story about a rural family suffering and gradually losing the members of their family to AIDS.

[2 : 36] You know, we could add the things that we've heard about and read about to a list like this. Wicked, evil acts like the German concentration camps or the Russian gulags or the Cambodian killing fields or the Rwandan genocide or the attacks on the World Trade Center.

We could talk about sudden catastrophes like the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the Spanish flu of the 1900s, or the 2008 Indonesian tsunami.

All of them begging and crying out, saying, where is God? We could go beyond the things that we've read about and think about and talk about, the things that we've encountered.

I remember the first conference I attended as a young pastor turning the first evening and began to pray for someone around me. I turned around and asked them, how can I pray?

They said, you could pray for us because our daughter, our 15-year-old daughter, was brutally murdered while taking a run in a nearby park. I immediately was shook to the core.

[3 : 41] Those are the things you read about, not the things you hear someone say. The idea is that suffering is everywhere. Those are just a few examples.

You could add your own examples. Suffering fills history and fills the details of life in a fallen world. But suffering is not just everywhere.

Suffering is somewhere. Suffering does not just remain everywhere. It arrives somewhere. It's not just a general category.

It's specific. It's not just far off. It comes near. It's not just remote. It gets personal. As D.A. Carson said in his little book, the truth of the matter is that all we have to do is live long enough and we will suffer.

There's no partiality when it comes to suffering. It's coming to a theater near you and life usually goes along perfectly fine, happy.

[4 : 43] The questions about God and what he's doing in suffering seem so remote, questions we wouldn't even ask. And then unexpectedly, like two cars colliding, some jarring circumstance wakes us up to begin asking questions.

In those moments, you need to be ready. Those are the hardest moments of life, the darkest moments of life, and you need your best theology for those moments.

Why do we suffer? And how can we learn to suffer well and wisely? Next week, we're going to begin a new series on the book of Job. Yes, that confusing, slightly weird, haunting book.

I've entitled it Learning to Suffer Well and Wisely off a book I read about the book of Job. Job is one of the five wisdom books in the scriptures. Each of them teach us something vital about how to live life in this world.

It's about practical wisdom. J.I. Packer sums up the books of wisdom and what they teach. We've been going through wisdom books this summer with the book of Psalms. Psalms teach us how to worship. Proverbs, how to behave.

[6 : 00] Job, how to suffer. Song of Solomon, how to love. And Ecclesiastes, how to live. And so Job is going to teach us how to suffer. This morning, though, I want to zoom out a bit.

I want to locate us cosmically. If we could say it that way, I want to locate us. What happened? How did we arrive here? What has gone on in the world such that pain, disease, persecution, and calamity are normal life?

And where is all this going? So we're going to use Romans 8 to guide us this morning. Look at verse 18. I'm going to begin reading there through verse 25.

It says, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to 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 would be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

[7 : 17] 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 first fruits of the Spirit, grown inwardly as we wait eagerly for the adoption of sons, the redemption of our body.

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.

This is the word of the Lord. Amen. So where we're going in a word. All your suffering, main point this morning, all your suffering, whether due to your sin or the world's brokenness, is meant for you to live in the hope of redemption.

All your suffering, whether due to sin or the world's brokenness, is meant for you to live in the hope of redemption. All of your suffering is going somewhere.

It's meant to pin you in and pin you to this wonderful hope that guides you. We're going to break this out in three points. The first is the whole creation is corrupted by sin.

[8 : 35] The whole creation is corrupted by sin. Now Romans 8, a lot of people say Romans 8 is the most important chapter in our Bible. It is no doubt my favorite chapter.

And all that the apostle Paul is talking about in Romans 8 is trying to tell us how unshakably and eternally for you God is in Christ.

God is completely, unshakably, eternally for you. Nothing can snatch away what God has done for you in Jesus Christ.

But even though we are completely in Christ, we're not just suddenly whisked away to heaven. We're not suddenly just whisked away to eternity with God.

We're in the body, which means we're away from the Lord, as 2 Corinthians tells us. Like Jesus, we must take up our cross. Like Jesus, we must suffer.

[9 : 36] If the master suffered, so too the servant. But if you look in verse 18, he says, I consider, look down there, I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing. And so, even though he knows we all must suffer, you look up in verse 17, he says, If children, then heirs, provided we suffer with him, in order that we may be glorified with him.

So, all of this is going somewhere, but for now, we suffer, even though it will not be able to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed, we nevertheless suffering.

And so, in verse 20 through 25, he's teaching that these sufferings will not overwhelm or outweigh the glory that is to be revealed, but in so doing, he underlined three crushing realities.

One is pretty hopeful, but the first two are pretty crushing. The first is, the whole creation is corrupted by sin. I say there's a cosmic focus to these verses, because the Apostle Paul, he begins talking about all that God has done for you in Christ.

The flesh could not reconcile you to God. God has done what the flesh could not do to reconcile you to himself, all that God has done for you. And Christ, suddenly, he lifts up the gaze to get our eyes looking at all that is going on in this world.

[10 : 50] And you see that in verse 19. He says, the creation. He's not merely talking about creatures here. He's talking about all of the world. Verse 20, the creation. Verse 21, the creation.

Verse 22, the whole creation. It's alerting us that the problem of sin and suffering is not just a problem for creatures. It's a problem for the whole world.

There was no sin and sickness, calamity, or evil in creation. God made all things over six days, and he said, it is good.

Everything worked properly, but suddenly, the world is corrupted. How did it become corrupted? If you open up to the pages of the Bible, we know that Adam fell into sin.

It wasn't merely like this fable where he ate the apple. It was this act of rebellion. Man in person. Man in person. seeking to put himself in the place of God and introduced an ingrained corruption that traces down to every person.

[12 : 02] But it wasn't Adam's sin that led to the corruption of all things. Nor was it the devil who slithered into the garden and began to tempt Adam and Eve and told them, did God really say you shall not have any of the fruit of the garden?

Why don't you eat this? And so she ate. Maybe it was the devil that brought about this corruption, but that's not what the Scriptures say either, nor do these verses say.

Look down there in verse 20. While the whole creation is groaning, look in verse 20. The reason it's groaning is because it was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it.

That's a bit of a loaded clause, but the idea is it was subjected to futility because God cursed the world.

Sin would have just unraveled things, as sin often unravels things, but the corruption was brought about because of the judgment of God on sin.

[13 : 12] Now we know this from Genesis 3. So this futility that resulted is right there in Genesis 3. God said to Adam, because you've listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat, cursed is the ground because of you.

In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall bring forth for you and you shall eat the plants of the field. And so all of this ground biting back up at us is a result of the curse of God.

And so Romans 8 tells us that everything was subjected to futility. It's in bondage to corruption. It's groaning together. So if the mark of the original creation was fruitfulness, this idea, you know, God called the rain to come up or the rain to come down and provided all this fruitfulness, a mark of the curse creation is futility.

Everything in creation is marked by a sense of futility and brokenness. No matter how much you study the weather, you're still waylaid by hurricanes. No matter how conscientiously you exercise and eat healthy, you cannot cheat death or the breaking down of age.

No matter how well you wash your hands, you can't spread, or you can't stop the spread of viruses and disease. Why? Because creation is in bondage to corruption.

[14 : 45] I was thinking about that this morning, thinking about kind of proclaiming these things. And you might just think, this is like saying rice is white. You know, this is so obvious.

Why does this matter? And yet the Apostle Paul wants us to be gripped by this reality so that we can be gripped by the hope we have. And so he doubles down in these verses with two vivid metaphors of the effect of corruption.

He says, this corruption, this curse, is like slavery. Look in verse 21. The image behind 21 is the image and the metaphor of slavery that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage.

The creation has a ball and chain to corruption. slavery is an utterly desperate situation, one in which there's no hope of release and rescue.

And so he's saying the creation is similarly enslaved to corruption, to futility, to decay, oppression, evil, natural calamities, catastrophes, diseases, famine, persecution, and rebellion will continue as long as the creation is enslaved.

[16 : 07] You know, the optimism that began the 20th century that the modern man was going to solve so many things, so many of the problems of modern life again has led to disappointment and it will again and again and again because man cannot figure out life apart from God and cannot prolong life apart from God.

The creation is in slavery. So he says this vivid metaphor, this absolutely confining, constraining, and binding metaphor of slavery but he adds to it the creation is experiencing labor pains.

You see this metaphor right after that in verse 21 for we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth. The creation is like a woman in labor.

Not only decaying and dying but crying out in agony. Maybe you expect it because the labor pains are coming and so you expect your wife's pregnant, you expect some labor pains to come but the idea with labor pains is they come unexpectedly and you're crying out.

John Murray said the whole creation as it were sets up a grand symphony of sighs. Yes, Psalm 19 says the heavens declare the glory of God, the sky above proclaim his handiwork, day to day pouring out speech, night to night revealing knowledge but if you take a little closer look you'll hear the groans the sighs of a world east of Eden.

[18 : 05] One of the most provoking images from the life of Christ is the healing of the blind man in Mark 7. I remember going through this years ago and Mark 7 he says and I think we have for you taking him aside the blind man aside from the crowd privately Jesus put his fingers into his ears and after spitting touched his tongue.

Now that's an amazing story just because you're like what in the world are you doing Jesus? And looking up to heaven he sighed and said to him ephaphatha that is the opening.

It's the same word for sigh used in Romans 8. Jesus joins with the groaning of all of creation. All of creation is groaning.

one play says do you hear the people sing? This passage asks do you hear the people groan?

The creation is not just in slavery the creation is crying out in pain and agony. It's most distressing. It's a creation filled meant to be filled with the blessing of God and it's filled with blessing but it's also filled with the agony of starving children fallen soldiers lonely widows persecuted Christians disease ravaged communities handicapped sons bullied teens beaten mothers broken families flooding victims just this week flooding just down the road devastated parents mass shooting victims calamities of all kinds abused young girls the whole creation if you can hear is a grand symphony of sighs what has happened?

[20 : 07] what's wrong with the world? if you could take a look at all the suffering taking place throughout creation at this very moment we all of us would faint in agony all of creation groans but there's hope the creation is groaning in pain for a purpose for a plan look down there verse 20 the creation was subjected to futility not willingly but because of him who subjected it in hope is groaning in hope you know suffering brings many temptations one is to lose our confidence in the sovereignty of God the classic problem of suffering that the philosophers have been arguing about for hundreds of years thousands of years is God is good God is powerful yet evil exists often times the answer is to erase one of those legs of the stool so to speak and then you don't have a problem anymore so people conclude that God must not be completely good and yet to say that we would have to turn our backs on the pages of scripture but it does solve the problem

God's not good that's why evil exists God is not ultimately good or completely good other people conclude that God's not completely powerful God's a nice guy but he's not completely powerful and so suffering is just the result of things getting a little out of his hands you know kind of like a home project for us we try as hard as we can but it just gets out of our hands and so that's the way people often conclude the world is filled with many powers and God doesn't always win out maybe he wins the big battle at the end but he doesn't always win out the little battle but that problem it may appear to solve something but it doesn't ultimately solve the problem problem is difficult but it's made more difficult by the generally man-centered views of God prevalent in many churches John Piper says and I quote our vision of God in relation to evil and suffering has been shown to be frivolous very superficial the church has not been spending its energy to go deep with the unfathomable

God of the Bible against the overwhelming weight and seriousness of the Bible much of the church is choosing at this very moment to become light and shallow and entertainment oriented and therefore successful in its irrelevance to massive suffering and evil the popular God of fun church is simply too small and too affable to hold a hurricane in his hand the biblical categories of God's sovereignty lie like landmines in the pages of the Bible waiting for someone to seriously open the book they don't kill but they do explode trivial notions of the Almighty and so these realities will blow us they'll shake us to the gore and yet it's the

Almighty God the utter greatness of the glory of God as we dive into Job which we're starting next Sunday I'm really excited one of the things we'll see is the utter greatness of the glory of God that's meant to be the ballast for the sufferer so all creation is corrupted by sin point two all creatures are corrupted by sin as well the Bible is very clear on the corruption of sin sin enters the world through the temptation of Eve we talked about that a moment ago sin introduces rebellious desires you see that Genesis 3 everything is great at the beginning of Genesis 3 the serpent slithers in and then Genesis 4 is the first murder and ultimately God warns Cain before that that sin is crouching at the door in these desires you know the Bible alerts us that our real problem is not the things outside of us even as bad as this world is and calamity when it could strike us the real problem is not the bad world that might influence us or the bad places that we ought not go the real problem is in our desires

James 1 says each person is lured and enticed by his own desire and then desire when it's conceived using a labor analogy there gives birth to sin and sin when fully grown brings forth death the idea is corruption is everywhere and has spread to everyone the second hard reality these verses alert us to is that all creatures are corrupted by sin all creatures have an inherited ingrained corruption you know Alexander Solzhenitsyn famously said in one of his speeches the line between good and evil runs through the human heart and he was from Russia and he was in the gulag you can imprison as many bad men as you want but if you don't solve the heart you solve nothing but what about

[26 : 00] Christians you know we're supposed to be different right we've been born again born of the spirit we've been made new and yet verse 18 says it's Christians too that experience the suffering of this present time we face all those things oppression evil natural calamities catastrophes diseases famine uprisings rebellions but we know it in a more intimate way look at verse 22 we know we know this corruption not just theoretically we know it experientially verse 23 not only the creation but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit been born again grown inwardly we're still fighting indwelling sin the idea is we don't just know suffering as something outside of us we know it as something inside of us

I have found the problem and it is I as the scriptures often diagnosis we don't just know about suffering we contribute to it we're the problem G.K.

Chesterton famously said all these people were pontificating about what's wrong with the world what's going on in the world and G.K. Chesterton said dear sirs all these people wrote in they had their grand answer of what's wrong with the world how the world can be fixed G.K.

Chesterton's answer was dear sirs I am I am what's wrong with the world sincerely G.K. Chesterton anybody that's read their bible pretty well is prepared to write that letter so these verses are locating us in a creation corrupted and locating us as creatures corrupted as well these verses are trying to give us a right view of life now right view of the times in which we live we have a simple diagram for you of kind of what is the time in which we live that I borrowed from Anthony Hokema in his book this idea is we live in this age in the middle you can see that Christ first coming his arrival his appearing he came as a child as we celebrate at Advent he inaugurated the new creation he proclaimed good news he suffered in our place dying the death we deserve to die such that all that he accomplished or much of what he accomplished is ours now we have forgiveness of sins everlasting life starts now by faith in Jesus

Christ and so we have wonderful things Joel 2 and Acts 2 tells us the spirit is poured out on all flesh all are born of the spirit of God all know God truly as the new covenant promise says in Jeremiah 31 the gospel advances Acts 1 8 says the gospel going to be proclaimed to the end of the earth the church is built up there's a full understanding of what God has done Hebrews 1 says God spoke in many times and in many ways but in these last days he has spoken in his son in a final way announcing the truth and the culmination of all that God has done in Jesus Christ and yet so much of what he's done is not yet in full these last days are marked by many things that are not yet as well the theologians call this this overlapping of the age but right in the middle where the age to come has broken in our diagram doesn't capture that as well but the age to come has broken in but it's also overlapped with this age such that the Bible can announce these glorious truths that are ours and yet

[30 : 17] Paul can say you live in this present evil age how can this be an evil age well because even though you have salvation through Jesus Christ you still have corruption within even though you know him truly and are absolutely wrapped up in him it may cost you everything and so one of the most important questions to learn as a Christian is what time is it if you're a 90s kid you might think of that spin doctor song that asks that question again and again not many of you I clearly but you know Anthony Hokema summing up this he says why do the righteous suffer why do Christians suffer as well as the world is a question as old as the book of Job one answer to the question is that suffering in the lives of believers is a concrete manifestation of the not yet it's a manifestation of all that is not yet suffering still occurs in the lives of

Christians because all the results of sin have not been eliminated and so right now revelation tells us that the martyrs are waiting in heaven for the full number to come in the full number to be martyred for their faith right now theologians have called this age this overlapping of the age as the church militant now that doesn't mean we need to go stockpile our ammo the idea is we need to be alert just like Christ said stay alert be ready you know so it's understanding the time that's so important that's so helpful you know it means we reject different gospels that are so common throughout our world we reject a health and wealth gospel that says Jesus will make you rich and will heal you of all your diseases now now you think that's not a very attractive gospel you would repel it but it's a gospel that's bringing in millions of people all throughout the world it's shaping millions of people

Jesus will heal all your infirmities and will give you great reward he will do that but he will not do that now so it's when those not yet things are promised now that the gospel is no longer the gospel so we reject it we reject the therapeutic gospel as well that's much more common within these borders with this idea that Jesus will make you completely happy fulfilled and satisfied now Jesus will make you a new and better you you'll have a great life if you follow Jesus but Peter followed Jesus and he was crucified upside down maybe that's the American gospel not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ you may lose everything for following Jesus Christ that's the truth everything that can be shaken but what cannot be shaken will remain forever so it's imperative that we learn to suffer wisely suffering is this reality that all of us experience takes different shapes different forms for all of us and yet we need to learn how to suffer well it's for this reason I was led to the book of

Job you know studying this book over the past couple years I think when we begin to think about suffering our understanding of what God's doing in suffering is often very limited and I speak of myself you know obviously we know sometimes we suffer because of sin we know that you know Adam ate the apple Adam ate the apple it brought about death and corruption decay and all these things right Proverbs says whoever conceals his sin will not prosper psalm 32 talks about when I concealed my sin that trouble was brought about so sometimes suffering is caused by sin and so we often know that right we can know that sometimes we can think is there some sin I haven't confessed is that why I keep running into traffic all the day or something silly like that sometimes we suffer actually we have a diagram for you can we throw up that pinwheel now I made this so don't laugh at it but it's simple it's this idea of helping us understand that suffering is not one category and the reasons what God's doing in suffering what God expects of you in response to suffering so personal sin that's what I was just talking about sometimes we suffer because we need to grow you know you get married and you realize you need to grow you know you're not exactly an enjoyable person in the morning you're not exactly thinking about yourself when there's just one serving of ice cream left you may eat it quietly in the bathroom so that no one knows that you ate that you know and sometimes you'll measure out ice cream why because sin is in our hearts we'll measure it out we'll make sure or you've done this too with pizza as well sometimes you'll be laying out pizza you'll just give everybody else that's the little slices but you'll save that big slice for yourself yes sometimes we need to grow because of indwelling sin but often times those are the only two things we talk about when we talk about why we suffer sin and growth and the bible has more answers the bible talks about our world's brokenness which we studied years ago studying ecclesiastes the idea is the race doesn't always go to the strongest the world is broken the one who prepares the best doesn't always win the brightest student oftentimes you'll see this the ones with the best IQ are not the ones that succeed in life why is that well the world is broken one plus one plus one does not always equal three two plus two sometimes equals five the world suffers or we suffer because of spiritual warfare we have an enemy and Job alerts us to that we have the devil who prowls around like a roaring lion sometimes we suffer because of persecution because we confess the name of Jesus Christ there's specific suffering that comes at us now sometimes that category is brought in too early but often times it's real lose a job because you confess Jesus

Christ and have conscientious objection to deceitful practices that's a form of persecution sometimes we suffer though for fellowship with God and we're going to talk about that more as we get through Job I think that's ultimately what Job is after he doesn't suffer because God wants to whip him into shape he doesn't suffer because he's sinned in some way he suffers because God wants to show him that ultimately God is the only thing he needs and sometimes suffering gets very inexplicable and that's often what God's up to now obviously those six things are not mutually exclusive you can be suffering from several of them at once but the idea of all that is suffering takes wisdom not all who suffer become wise the stakes are high you suffer you either become a better person or a much worse person and so we need wisdom point three the whole creation and all creatures are waiting for redemption the whole creation and all creatures are waiting for redemption

[38 : 27] Romans 8 does not just tell us the whole creation groans and we ourselves groan it promises a redemption you've seen that as we threaded through this passage it says in verse 19 we're longing for the revealing of the sons of God that's just kind of a phrase referred to the children of God we're all sons of God by faith we receive the inheritance of Christ by faith but it's not just talking about boys there it's talking about all the children of God who come by faith who are heirs so we're waiting we've been this creation been subjected to futility in hope we're longing for the freedom of the glory of the children of God verse 21 so we're longing for this day of freedom freedom from the chains being set free we're longing for adoption as sons the redemption of our bodies both of these metaphors come together even though we've been forgiven of our sins we're in slavery to corruption but we're in a war that we cannot end with the world the flesh and the devil but one day soon we'll be completely set free that's the cosmic focus of these verses seeking to locate us where we are but all of this is going toward freedom and redemption and glory even though we've been forgiven of our sins we're in the pains of childbirth we're aching and groaning we are in travail one day the baby will arrive years ago we had a lot of trouble with pregnancy

I don't think I knew what a miscarriage was before we had one 2009 we had a miscarriage then in God's kindness a year later we had our oldest child Rev but after Rev Kim had two more miscarriages and we longed to have a family we were discouraged we sent tissue off to the specialist we got our blood drawn to see if there's anything to worry about with the genetic makeup because we'd had enough where they want to do the testing or they'll pay for the testing I guess and then Kim got pregnant while she was pregnant we found out results from genetic testing and it was a bit overwhelming we found out that

I have a rare genetic condition that would theoretically cause 88% of our conceptions to end in miscarriage and we had a baby in the womb and I remember we began to battle significant fears about this baby what if the baby ends in miscarriage again what if there's something wrong with the baby what if the baby is born with deformities what if the baby is born but only lives for a few minutes there were so many unknowns I mean you get into the world of genetics it's so theoretical it's so unknown we decided against doing any invasive testing we didn't want to risk harming the baby but we were afraid we were groaning and aching crying out to God I remember our OB at the time our Kim's

OB had her come in for an ultrasound every week so she could hear the heartbeat again which is just a kindness and each week we fought our fears and prayed hard for this baby our family and friends were praying for this baby and then on June 14th 2013 God gave us a little girl named Ren and she was mostly normal I remember that evening my dad's a pediatrician and he drove up as soon as we knew this baby was arriving and when Ren was born and I gave you know dad came in the room I gave him to dad dad went over to this table and began to examine her because he was worried too later that afternoon a friend called me and said enjoy it brother all your pain is being swallowed up with joy that's what that's what all this is headed towards all of this is headed towards a great arrival that's what

God is going to do with all your pain all your suffering all your aching all your groaning God's going to swallow it up with joy the birth pangs are birth pangs because they're leading to the arrival I love it the way the Bible talks about it leading to the birth of a new creation God has subjected this to futility to awaken us to our need for the gospel so that we might find ourselves members of the household of God and saints in this wonderful new creation and so the picture of what God is doing is breathtaking Revelation 21 says then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more and I saw the holy city the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride for a husband and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their

[44 : 28] God he'll wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things all the things that mark this present evil age have passed away praise the Lord so why do we suffer because we hope because we hope in this hope verse 24 we were saved now hope that is seen is not hope for who hopes what he sees we hope for what we do not see we wait for it with patience if you're waiting for a friend at a coffee shop you're still hoping they will come but if you leave you've given up hope so too we eagerly await in hope hope is not a wish or an uncertain desire hope is the expectation that all that God has promised is true let God be true though every man a liar

God will uphold what he's promised and so we suffer because we hope we look to the things unseen we long for the knowledge of the glory of God to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea we long for the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven we long for the day when no more fathers leave no more spouses to betray no more kids rebel we long for the once for all end to disease war famine and death we long to be fully and finally home we suffer because we hope and while we suffer hope keeps us lean and mean hope keeps us focused on Jesus Christ hope reminds us that our problem is not material it's not that we need more income it's not psychological that we're too lonely we need a friend that's not merely it's not structural because of some oppressive race or sexuality these oppressions these structures in our societies often people say all the oppression and evil is meant to alert us to the reality that we need a savior focuses all of our lives on this truth that there is one savior there's one mediator between

God and man the man Jesus Christ why do we ultimately die it's not because any of these things it's because of our sin and the curse has fallen on this world because of sin and so we flee the wrath to come to Jesus Christ I offer you the gospel of Jesus Christ today can be the day of salvation if you trust in him why do we die because of sin and after death Hebrews 9 tells us there is judgment all of us will appear for the judgment seat of God to give an account for what we've done in the body and all who have not run by faith to Jesus Christ will face the wrath that have been stored up for the wicked stored up for the judgment and so hope keeps us focused on Jesus Christ hope keeps us focused on living for the next life hope is like a string pulled tight you know if you have a

I'm a guitar player well an attempter you know I play some guitar but you have a guitar string attuned it just twangs but you tune it up it has a song to sing the same thing we have a song to sing because of hope we have a message that is not confined to this world we have news of another country there's a God all these things are very real very serious but there is a God in heaven who calls us to come to him so hope keeps us from wasting our life it gives us a mission gives us something better than five acres in a pond it gives us a mission to lay down our life to sacrifice for the advance of the gospel for radical mission and so faith hope and love abide these three but the greatest is love love will never pass away but one day very soon faith and hope will because we'll see him so we suffer and yet all this suffering is meant to drive us to hope and hope does not put us to shame let us pray father in heaven we confide ourselves in you we hide in you lord we want to know you and be found in you and know the power of your resurrection lord we want to cling to you with all our heart soul mind and strength lord all of us find these realities learn them theoretically and yet know them in a deeper way lord may we be a people who hope who cling to you and know you know the power of your resurrection help us god we pray in Jesus name amen you've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens Tennessee for more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com