

Secure with God in a changing world

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[0 : 00] If you have your attention on Romans 8, verses 18 onwards, Paul naturally does move on here to, you know, making progress through the rest of 8.

Chapter 8, verse 1 is about that because of Christ Jesus in salvation, there is no condemnation for us. We have nothing to fear when we meet God. There's no bad news.

There's only good news, and the good news is that there is no condemnation because we belong to Jesus. Verses 18 onwards is really asking us to do something quite strange, and that is to remember the future.

Now, we're used to remembering the past because we've lived it. We've been there. We have memories of it. We can even call some of those memories to mind, perhaps when we see a certain color or a certain picture or hear a certain sound or maybe a certain smell.

Suddenly, memories start flooding back. It's easy to remember something that we've experienced. What Paul does here is he's actually asking us to remember the future. Now, that's a strange thing because it's not something we've experienced yet, but it is something we know about.

[1 : 18] And we don't know the future in absolute detail, but we do know certain things about the future that are absolutely true. The most obvious one, of course, is that Jesus is going to return bodily.

We don't know when, but we know it's going to happen. We also know all the things that Paul tells us here. So, we've got to ask the question, why does he want us to remember the future?

If we're told these things about the future, why is it important to remember them? And that means remember them daily. That means each day that you live, consider these things each day and every day.

Try and remember the future. Now, one of the reasons would be this, that God is a God who keeps his promises. And one of the ways of gaining hope each day is to look back on all the promises that God has made and ask yourself, did God break any?

And the answer is no. God has fulfilled a load and there are some yet to be fulfilled, but he hasn't broken any. So, we trust in the God who has got a proven track record of keeping his promises.

[2 : 31] And so, when God lays out the future, he does expect us to look at his track record and understand that he is a God who keeps his promises.

So, now you put these two things together, the things that you are told about the future and the things that you know about God in the past, that he keeps his promises. You put these two together and the conclusion that you should come to is that I can have hope in the future because God has proven to be faithful in the past.

Okay? I can have hope in the future because God has proven to be faithful in the past. Now, the future here is better than the present.

That's really not hard to see. And then he moves on to this issue about making a comparison, how you're not really going to be able to compare.

We will get to that in a moment. Now, you know, believers, God's people have got a reputation of making comparisons, but it normally falls into the category of things not being as good as they used to be.

[3 : 35] If you go all the way through the Old Testament, God's people are constantly comparing things as they are not as good as they used to be. It seems something particular about God's people.

And so, the church even can make comparisons. And to say things aren't as good as they used to be, you must have a really low expectation of the future glory.

I mean, a staggeringly low expectation of the future glory. You know, there was one author in America, I'll keep his name nameless for a moment if you want to ask me afterwards. He wrote a book called *Your Best Life Now*. Well, think about that. If this really is your best life now, then the only thing you've got to look forward to is hell and damnation.

Right? If this is your best life now, then what have you got to look forward to? What Paul is saying here is, it's not your best life now. It really isn't.

[4 : 34] Your best life is to come. Okay? And this is a certainty that we need to fix our minds and hearts on. God's people have a reputation of comparing things.

I know we're saying things are better when, things are better when. But Paul is saying here, no, look at it from the point of view of the future. Okay?

Weigh everything up in light of the future that God has promised you. And the conclusion that you'll come to is that God isn't finished yet. God is moving all of us and all of creation to a better future. God is moving everything into a situation that is better than it currently is now. Now, it may feel that this is a bit like beginning to tidy a room.

That you open the door, you begin to tidy it, and suddenly, 15 minutes into tidying it, it's more of a mess than when it was when you just left it alone. And you wonder to yourself, why did I even bother to touch it?

[5 : 35] Because now you're far enough in to think, I can't just leave it like that. But you're not so far in as to the point where it's becoming clear and beautiful and ordered.

Well, in many ways, that's the kind of process that the world has to go through. Okay? God is going to put things back into their beautiful order, into the order that they're meant to be. But we feel as though we're in that stage where he's begun to work, but now it's even more of a mess than in what it was if he just left it alone.

I can understand that kind of feeling. And you may feel like that you're living in a world just like that. But the reality is, is that God is in the process of sorting the world out.

He is in the process of making it right again. He's bringing the world and us with it to a conclusion, and the conclusion is better than the present.

And so Paul finishes by saying, therefore rejoice. He doesn't use the word rejoice, but the flow of the passage is one of rejoicing in hope, because if God is doing this, nothing's going to be able to separate you from God and God's purposes.

[6 : 46] Okay? It may feel like you're being caught up in this mess. You think, how on earth am I going to get through this? Well, God's going to get you through it. Nothing is going to be able to separate you from what God is doing.

God's doing it. It feels like a mess at times, but nothing is going to be able to separate you from what God is doing. So I have three short headings for us to go through this passage.

The first is consideration. The second heading are conclusions. Not conclusion, but conclusions. There are several conclusions in this passage.

And then thirdly, it's the final conclusion that Paul gets to. So he says, here's a consideration. Here are three conclusions that I want you to look at. And then here's the final conclusion, what you have when you put it all together.

So here's the first thing. The consideration in verse 18. Paul says, Now, it looks at first as if Paul is doing something that seems fairly strange, especially if you understand the difference between compare and contrast, because he uses the word compare.

[8 : 07] And in the Greek, the Greek doesn't actually help us out here at all. So we're stuck with the word compare. That it looks as if he's comparing the present sufferings with the future glory.

That's what it looks like. What he's actually doing is something a little bit different than that. And you can tell that by how he finishes the verse 18 with the last two words. What he wants us to consider is all of these things, the present sufferings and the future glory.

But he wants us to consider it as revealed to us. Now, the to us in that verse is important for understanding what Paul has to say.

So here's a little English lesson. In English, we use words like contrast and compare. Now, to contrast something is to point out the differences. Okay?

This is different from that, and it's different from that, and you can clearly see it. So to contrast something is to see the differences. To compare something is to point out in those things that you're looking at that are similar.

[9 : 13] Okay? So to compare, these are similarities. To contrast, these are the things that are different. Now, remember that and then come back to what Paul is saying here.

Paul is saying that these present sufferings are not worth comparing with the future glory. Now, if he's expecting us to compare the present sufferings and the future glory, there's nothing to compare.

Right? And the reason there's nothing to compare is there's plenty contrast there because they're so different. But what could be similar about the future glory and the present sufferings?

And the answer is nothing. But rather, if you put you in it, what's the thing that's true in both situations? You. Compare you in the present sufferings and then compare you in the future glory. This is what Paul is doing here in this passage. The thing that he really wants us to consider is consider yourself in your life now with present sufferings and then consider what your life will be like in the future glory.

[10 : 25] So you are considering the present sufferings in the future glory, but what you're really considering is you in the mix of both. What you're like now as you live and what you will be like as you live in the future glory.

And the reason why that is so important is because he's trying to teach us that even though it's the same person in both, the same person is not in the same situation forever.

Okay? You're the same person in both, okay, but you're not in the same situation forever. That is, you're not in the situation of present suffering forever. There is going to be a time when you, even though you're the same person, will be in the future glory.

And that's why it's not worth comparing. Your life now under present suffering is not worth comparing to what your life will be like in the future glory.

Okay? So if you're going to consider which is the best life to live, okay, that's the thing that Paul is getting us to consider. That is the thing that he's getting us to compare. The similarity of your life in both situations, but what that life is like under suffering, and then what that life is like under the future glory.

[11 : 40] That's the focus that Paul has here. Because Paul understands that considering suffering alone isn't really the issue. What is the issue is how suffering affects us.

You know, we're even slightly immune to when other people are suffering. We don't fully feel it like they feel it. And so Paul understands that suffering is an issue, but it's rather how you are affected in that issue, in that circumstance, in those situations.

So what he's trying to get you to consider is as you go through this mess, this mess of present sufferings, as you go through it, consider yourself in the future.

That you are going to get through it, and you're going to get through it into a place of future glory. Imagine it like this. You know, water can be both hot and cold, okay, but it's still water.

Okay, you can have hot water, you can have cold water, but it's still water. What Paul is saying here is, here you are in hot water, and there you'll be in a glorious future.

[12 : 53] Okay? What you are remains the same, because now you belong to God, but what you go through is going to change. And so, if you're going to make a comparison between this life and the life to come, it's not even worth comparing, because that is so far out of this world, almost literally out of this world, that it makes this life look like if it's nothing.

Okay? Your life to come is glorious. Your life to come is full of blessing. No more arguments. No more being upset.

No more pain. No more sickness. No more any of these things that just destroy life. Okay? That's what you've got forward to look, that's what you've got to look forward to.

So, it's not even a comparison. Why not? Because it's so far better than what we currently experience. And that's Paul's point here.

Those sufferings, which can cause so much pain here, will not cause any pain there, because those present sufferings are present to this world, not to the world to come.

[14 : 03] And that's the point. That's the comparison that we're to make. Us, in both situations. We hold on to God, and God, as we learn, holds on to us, because the future is a future that God has for us.

So, Paul wants to strengthen our faith. He wants to strengthen our hope. And the way that he does this, is he tells us to remember the future. Remember your life, as it is in the future.

It's a strange thing to get your head around, I understand, but that's what he's saying. Consider your life today, as what it will be in the future. And that gives us hope.

So, secondly, the conclusions. The conclusions that Paul comes to. The first conclusion is fairly easy to see, and that is what we have to live with now, we won't have to live with in the future.

We could call this the content of the world. In other words, all of it's coming to a conclusion. The conclusion is, that the present sufferings, are going to be present, not future.

[15 : 11] They will come to their end. They will conclude, and they will be over with. They will not exist, in the future glory. That's the first conclusion, that Paul wants to draw our attention to.

It's a consideration, but it is a conclusion. They will end. Present sufferings will end. They will be concluded. They will not exist, anymore. Well, the second conclusion here, is creation.

That creation also, is going to conclude. If you look with me in verse 20, he explains, that the creation, was subjected, to its futility.

Not willingly, but because of him, who subjected it. In other words, God gave the world, for mankind, to rule over. And man made a mess of it.

And so, when man fell into sin, he took the whole world, with him. It's what we call, a federal headship. That you're responsible, for everything. And therefore, if you get it wrong, at the top, everything else beneath you, unfortunately, goes with you.

[16 : 18] You know, union with Adam, is a terrible thing. And union with Christ, is the most glorious thing. And I illustrate this, as we have done, of that time, when I was on a roof, being tied to a workmate.

That the rope, if he fell, he could take me with him, and that was not a good thing. But the rope, depending on my strength, if he fell, I could actually hold him, and stop him from falling.

So, this idea of union, is crucial, to understanding the future. Because we are tied to Christ, no longer tied to Adam, and that's why we cannot be separated, from him.

Okay? But the world, has been subjected, to futility. It is full, of sin. Verse 21, it, the world itself, the creation itself, is waiting, to be set free, from its corruption.

verse 22, the world, the creation, has been groaning, for its own conclusion. Just waiting, to get rid, of its own sin.

[17 : 21] The creation, suffers all of these hurricanes, all of these tornadoes, all of these, natural disasters, which, as we can see, are not natural, at all. We call them natural, but they're actually, a fallen condition.

The world's fallen. And therefore, these things, that destroy the world, are not natural. We call them natural. We even call death, natural. But death isn't natural.

Death is very unnatural. God didn't create death, he created life. Sin, brought death, and so that's a very, unnatural thing, for what God made. But, we look at the world, and after a while, we get confused, and we start calling things, something, which they're not.

No such thing, as natural disaster, it's fallen disaster. It's a fallen, the world itself, wants to get rid, of its own corruption. And so, Paul uses the illustration, of the pains of childbirth.

You know, just as a child, I mean, I don't, I can't imagine, what a child might be thinking, before it comes into the world. You know, I've seen what, the mother's thinking, before the child comes into the world, and what I'm thinking, before a child comes into the world, and I'm thinking, well, I can understand that, my position is far easier, than your position, but my fingers are hurting, at this moment.

[18 : 34] Please let go. But the point is, is that we understand, that that kind of groan, and that pain, then gives birth, into a new life.

And the world, is in almost like, a pregnant stage. It is waiting to be released, into the future, without any of the corruption, that it currently has.

So God is not, okay, sorry if this disappoints you, it shouldn't, but God is not going to get rid of this world. What he's going to do, is he's going to bring this world, to a conclusion, and the conclusion, is a brand new beginning.

Okay, the conclusion of this world, is a brand new beginning. It is a brand new world, without any of the corruption, that the world currently has.

So, if you grew up in a home, where you were afraid, to go to heaven, because it was full of, white clouds, and dare I say, you know, white everything, you know, why would I want to go to a place, like that?

[19 : 38] Well, that's not heaven. Okay, the new heavens, and the new earth, are going to be, the conclusion, of the old heavens, and the old earth. And it's going to be, brand new.

God created man, to live on earth, not in heaven. And that's crucially important. Or else, what you do, with this part of Romans 8, where God is promising us, a new world. You think, well thank you very much, but I don't plan on living there.

I plan on being in heaven. Well, God has other ideas. And the other idea, that he has, is the world, is coming to a conclusion. And its conclusion, is a brand new birth.

The world is waiting, to be born again. Waiting to be set free, from its corruption, into a world, where it can enjoy, the state, that God originally, created it in.

So the third conclusion, that we see here, is you. God is saying, that you are going to be, brought to your conclusion. Well not you, but your body. In verse 23, he says, that you are going to have, a brand new body.

[20 : 45] Okay. Everything that you, experience now in this body, you will not experience, in the body, that you are going to get. Now I can't tell you, whether you will be, taller or shorter, or whether you will be, a few pounds heavier, or a few pounds lighter, whichever you desire.

But what I can say, is what that body, will be like. And it will be a body, free, from the corruption, just like the world, will be free, from the corruption, that it currently has.

No more sinful thoughts. Okay. No more ill-spoken words. Okay. No more lustful thoughts, or desires. No more, no more illness.

No more cancer. No more pain. No more of those things. Okay. That's the conclusion, that you are coming to. You, your conclusion, like the world's conclusion, is a new beginning.

A brand new beginning. And it makes sense, doesn't it? That if God is going to create a new world, which he is, then God is going to create, naturally, a new people, to live in that new world, which he does.

[21 : 52] Every conclusion that God brings to, is a conclusion for a new beginning. A brand new beginning. Okay. So, we've been adopted by God, we're waiting for our new home.

That's how Paul addresses it here. We're adopted as sons, and we're just waiting to move into our new location. We're just waiting to move into our new home. We will be there soon, but we're not there yet.

All the scars and the corruption of the past, will be gone, and they'll be gone for good. So, when God brings everything to a conclusion, he doesn't bring it to a conclusion, like I bring some of my notes to a conclusion.

I get to the bottom of the page, and I read them over again, and then I screw them up, and throw them in the bin. Okay. Okay. God doesn't screw anything up, and throw anything away. Okay. He takes that which is screwed up, and makes it beautiful.

He takes that which is a total mess. Okay. Including my life before I was saved, including perhaps many of your lives, before you were saved, and he then makes it beautiful.

[22 : 56] And even if your life wasn't that messed up, before you were saved, I can guarantee it's going to be much more beautiful, than what it currently is now. Much more. Okay. God throws nothing away.

He redeems it all. He blesses it all. That's the conclusion. So, the content of this world gets concluded to the fact that there's no more corruption.

The creation itself faces its own conclusion of a brand new beginning, and we too face our own conclusion, and that is of new bodies to live in the new world that God has prepared for us.

So, in this present time, we have to deal with present sufferings. But we also have to deal with our present weakness. And if you look down to verse 28, not, sorry, if you look down to verse 26, God gives us his spirit, because of our weakness.

And our weakness is this, that in this world, it is possible for us not to know what to pray for. We're just lost. Even though we're safe in the arms of God, we're lost when it comes to prayer.

[24 : 09] We're actually lost to know what things we ought to pray for. And you've heard me say over the last few weeks, every now and then I've been sowing the seed, for God to answer the prayers that we should have prayed if only we knew how to pray them.

Answer our prayers that we've not prayed that we should have prayed. And the reason I mention that is because of what we learn here. The spirit prays the prayers that we should have prayed if only we knew they needed praying.

Okay, the spirit helps us in our weakness. And our weakness is, we look at the world, we look at people, and we think we know what needs praying for. And we think we know what needs praying for according to the will of God, but only God's spirit does.

And so in order for those prayers to be prayed in our life and through our life, God gives us his spirit so that those prayers can meet God. So we, our weakness is met by God's strength, by God's spirit. And this happens in a world that is moving in one direction. And the direction is conclusion. The conclusion of this old world for a future glory.

[25 : 20] Well, before then we get to the conclusion of this message, Paul has one final conclusion. And it's very short, but very important. And the final conclusion that he has here in verse 31 onwards is that as you live in a world that is going through, you know, change, but it is change towards a future glory, you need to recognize that nothing is going to be able to separate you from God.

He says in verse 31, if God is for us, who can be against us? Well, quite a number of things can be against us. Quite a number of things can be against the church, but his point is not to argue that nothing can be against us, but rather nothing that is against us can overcome us.

That's Paul's point here. Okay, there's going to be a lot that we're going to have to face personally in this world, and there's going to be a lot that the church is going to have to face together in this world.

But the point is, is that however we face it, whether it's as an individual or as a church, okay, it's never going to be able to separate us from God. We, even ourselves, even our own sin, are not going to be able to separate us from God.

Okay? It doesn't matter what we go through or when we go through it, we will never be separated from the love of God. And here's the reason, verse 32. Here's the reason why we can never be separated.

[26 : 48] For if God, who did not spare his own son, he who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he, nor also will him, graciously give us all things?

Okay? We belong to a God who spares nothing. We belong to a God who lacks nothing and spares nothing. Okay? God doesn't come up short when we need that helping hand.

Okay? He's always able and ready to meet every single one of our needs. We would like it in the bank before the problem comes, right? But God doesn't work like that.

Okay? We want all of our solutions, all of our situations and problems we face, we want the money in the bank so that we are ready for them. And God doesn't do it that way.

God lets us taste the problem and then have the solution. Okay? That's just the way God does it. Does it annoy me? Yeah. Completely.

[27 : 54] Does it annoy you? Yeah. Perhaps. But this is God's way of doing it. God will not spare anything because he did not spare his son and his son is greater than anything.

Think that through. God will not spare giving you anything that you need if you indeed needed because he did not spare his son from giving you which you needed. And seeing that his son is greater than anything than anything else that God gives is not a big deal.

When God gave his son, that was a big deal. But anything else is not a big deal to God. Okay? This is the God who serves you. So as we conclude, this passage is to convince you that you are completely safe with God in a world full of change.

This passage is to convince you that you are completely secure with God, that you have a great deal to be hopeful for in a world full of hopelessness.

That as you look into the room, as you look into the world, and it looks a mess, you need to understand that it is a mess that is progressing towards newness. Okay?

[29 : 06] That's what you're meant to see. Now it's hard to see, just like it's hard to see when you start cleaning the room. You know, it's very hard to keep that confidence of knowing what the end will be.

But there you are, you go ahead and you keep doing it, and suddenly, bit by bit, you get there. Now God does it bit by bit. He could do it in a moment, but he doesn't. He does it bit by bit.

Why? I don't know. But this is how God does it. So understand this, that you have a great reason to be hopeful because you are secure. And you are secure because God gave you his son.

And if God gave you his son, he's going to give you everything else you need to get you into that future that you are going to be adopted into. So remember that God spares nothing.

God holds nothing back. And the conclusion of everything is the conclusion of newness or a conclusion into newness. So here's the exhortation.

[30 : 10] Remember, God created man and woman, boys and girls, to rule the world. And that hasn't changed. Okay? God created man and woman, boys and girls, to rule the world.

And that hasn't changed. So the work that he does on us in the present time is to get us ready to rule the world that is to come. Now, ruling the world under God is how we're meant to do it.

The reason it went wrong in the beginning is because he decided to rule the world instead of listening to God's authority. I'll just go ahead and do it all on my own. You know, there are two ways to fails in life.

You know, we're always going to fail, but I'd much rather be Christ's failure than a failure all by myself. Okay? I don't mind being Christ's failure. I can be Christ's failure all day long.

Okay? But I don't want to be the type of failure that I want to be a failure all by myself. Well, if you're a failure all by yourself, then you are going to be washed away in the coming judgment.

[31 : 12] Okay? We fail, we have weaknesses, but the security here is in God, not in us. So remember this, God is moving us to a future. God is moving everything to a conclusion, and that conclusion is a new beginning for us all.

Amen.