

ROMANS 8:18-23 “ Glorify God and Wait Eagerly for Your Adoption”

For we who have embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior the encouragement from God is to walk according to the Spirit and flee from the things of the flesh which would turn our eyes away from our heavenly Father.

Last week we saw in our text where we have been adopted into the family of God, which is a spiritual family, with spiritual goals and hopes. The flesh (old nature) cannot contribute to that spiritual growth.

It's a glorious truth that now we have entered into a relationship with the living God who has taken the initiative to make it all possible in Jesus Christ. That relationship is one of hope and power, and God is the One who enables us to live in, with and for Him.

That was the point of the last part of our text last week.

Rom 8:15-17 "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.[Or adoption] And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

We should rejoice in the fact that we have received the Holy Spirit who adopts us into God's family, making us sons and daughters of our Creator. And we should rejoice in the fact that as children of God we are also heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

We share in an inheritance which Jesus has secured for us on the cross and in His resurrection. Part of that inheritance involves sharing in the glorious rule of God's eternity.

The question is often asked, what are we going to do for all of eternity; hang out on clouds playing golden harps; roaming around the universe discovering the galaxies and playing in between the planets?

There might be room for that. But the whole point of God's salvation for us revolves around His Kingdom and our fellowship with Him as we share in that Kingdom. Think of the awesome

privilege to reign with Christ for eternity and share in the ruling of His eternal Kingdom. This is mentioned in a number of places.

2Ti 2:11-12 "Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, ***we will also reign with him.***"

Rev 1:4-6 "John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has ***made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father***--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen."

To the extent that Jesus is the Ruler of His eternal Kingdom, we will also rule with Him and play an active role in the affairs of that Kingdom. As to the details, we're actually given a lot more information than most people realize when it comes to the form this kingdom will take.

We know that the final form of this kingdom must include a kingdom over which we will be given the mandate to rule with our King. Therefore, this kingdom will be both spiritual and physical. It will be as Peter makes it clear.

2 Peter 3:13 ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

The apostle John confirms this in the last book of the Bible.

Revelation 21:1-4 ^{NAU} Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

Now, if all of this sounds pretty good it's because it is. All of us prefer the good things of God's Kingdom, even in this world, where we have those promises set before us for future enjoyment.

But, it's not all future. Some of what it is to be priests and a kingdom begins the day we enter into a personal relationship with God through Christ.

This is the apostle Peter's point in 1Pe 2:9 "But you are (present tense) a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

The difference between being a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God in this world today, and all of these things in eternity future, is that in this world we still carry the baggage of the old self and its hindrances.

This present body is restricted to this world and its weaknesses. Paul speaks of it in 2Co 5:4-5 "For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

When speaking of our bodies Paul uses the word tent. He uses that deliberately because the word means temporary residence. Pastor Chuck Smith in his book, "Charisma vs. Charismania", says, "You never think of a tent as a permanent place to live. If you have to live in a tent, it's alright for a few weeks in the mountains on vacation, but you do not like to think of it as a permanent place to live."

Again, this is a glorious truth that this present body and this present world are not our ultimate home, and we have awaiting for us redeemed and glorified bodies, in an eternal Kingdom, where we serve God as co-heirs with Christ.

The stark reality is however, that we do not presently have those glorified bodies, and we do not presently live in that eternal Kingdom in the presence of our heavenly Father.

We're stuck in this world with the promises from God set before us. But that is not meant to discourage us, but rather, give us the goal to look forward to and a motivation to serve and love God here and now, even in the midst of trials and tribulations.

Remember what Paul has said.

Rom 8:17 "Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

Everybody's willing to receive the good things in life and the good things promised. But it seems few are willing to share in the sufferings of Christ.

The thinking is that, if Christ has given me life and salvation then it necessarily follows that the rest of this life should be a walk in the park, where nothing but joy and bliss abound. And though joy is certainly part of our relationship with God today, we must never forget that we still live in a fallen world.

In a fallen world there will be suffering, there will be trials, there will be struggles and disappointments. But, Paul tells us here in verse 17 that we must be willing to share in these things, to which Jesus submitted Himself to, understanding that it was a joy for Him to do because of the reward set before Him, which was us.

We too have a joy set before us which is ultimate perfect peace with our God, but it comes as we live by faith in Christ in an imperfect world.

But what Paul wants us to understand is that when we look at this present world and then consider what we have in the future with Christ, it should help us to look beyond the imperfect to the glory of the perfect.

Rom 8:18 "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

There is no comparison. If we understand the glory which has been promised to us, and we live in the reality of that promise from God, then we have an eternal perspective.

Of course, when you're the one suffering it's not always easy to see that perspective. But, that's never an excuse to live in the flesh, as opposed to living in the Spirit, as Paul has been discussing extensively here in Romans.

And it's not as though this perspective is unattainable. Keep in mind who is speaking here. It's the apostle Paul who knows first-hand what it is to suffer for Christ.

2Co 11:23-28 "Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been

exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches."

And yet he can say, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

When we're tempted to lose heart or to give up or to feel sorry for ourselves because of the hardships of life Paul says, 'Look to the glory to be revealed in your life and gain strength from the God who has promised such glory.'

It's not as though Paul was indifferent to his hardships. He recognized them to be hard. But his focus wasn't on the hardships, it was on the God who could bring him through.

That's a hard lesson for us to learn. But we must be encouraged to learn it if we are ever to be an encouragement for others, and a source of strength and comfort for others, who may have no hope or a limited hope.

2Co 1:3-6 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer."

Peter also brings suffering into perspective in 1Pe 4:12-16,19 "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the

Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."

Both Peter and Paul are conveying that though suffering and trials in themselves are not joyous, they do afford us the opportunity to honor our Lord in the suffering as we rely on His strength and comfort to rule in our lives.

And in the process the world sees that our God is real and an ever-present comfort whose ultimate comfort looks to the future glory, which cannot even be compared to our present suffering.

The problem is we don't spend much time comparing our suffering to the future glory. We have a tendency to compare our suffering to a lack of suffering in others and then question the goodness or fairness of God.

Paul realizes the reality of suffering on an individual basis, but he has a much bigger picture of the results of sin in the form of desiring to be delivered from such hardships. It's not limited to you or me. All of creation exists under the curse of sin which affects all things.

Rom 8:19-21 "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."

William Barclay makes the comment: "Paul has just been speaking of the glory of adoption into the family of God; and then he comes back to the troubled state of this present world. He sees all nature waiting for the glory that shall be. At the moment creation is in bondage to decay. It is a dying world; but it is waiting for its liberation from all this and the coming of the state of glory."

In poetic form Paul gives the creation a consciousness. He does not suppose, like the new-agers, that inanimate objects have life and can reason and therefore must be treated with equal respect as people.

This is the teaching of pantheism which attributes that all of creation is a part of God and so when you cut down a tree, for example, you cut down a part of God. Much of the "save the environment" movement is based on this pagan approach to "Mother Earth" who is conscious of its existence.

Paul is not a pantheist. But he does realize that all creation is effected by sin. And so it's not unusual for the scriptures to personalize that, which has no person, to make the point that sin leaves nothing untouched. The term used for attributing human qualities to an inanimate object is anthropomorphism. For example, in Jer.12:4 ..."How long is the land to mourn...?"

We see another example of this when God speaks to Cain after he killed his brother Abel.

Gen 4:9-11 "Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" 10 The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! *Your brother's blood cries out* to me from the ground. 11 Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand."

Blood doesn't speak, and the ground doesn't have a mouth. But in symbolic form God personalizes for effect. Of course the creation can also be seen to express joy as well as mourning.

Isa 55:12 "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."

This type of poetic language is meant to help us identify with the point being made. The point in Romans is that all creation was affected by sin and is subject to death.

In fact, Paul tells us that though creation didn't contribute to sin in any way, it still suffers. You and I suffer because we personally involve ourselves with sin as we were born into sin and then practice that which comes naturally.

"But the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it..."

In other words, the creation, which includes both animate and inanimate parts of the creation, was forced to accept the curse from God which was designed for sinful man.

Isa 24:5-6 "The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant.
6 Therefore a curse consumes the earth;....."

Gen 3:17-19 "To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' **"Cursed is the ground because of you;** through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Well, someone might say, 'what did the earth do receive such a curse, and why should it suffer?' Again, the answer is in Gen.3:17.... "To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' **"Cursed is the ground because of you;** through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

The creation of God was used in God's master plan to punish man and to drive man back to God.

The creation is a tool for God's righteousness. And what appears to be something bad for creation is actually an honor as it's used by the hand of the Master. This is a lesson Paul is teaching here in Romans.

What may appear as only something bad, in the form of sufferings, is actually an honor for God's people, as they realize that God is at work in and through them to accomplish His will in them. But notice that all suffering as it applies to the creation, which is nothing short of a picture of how God is going to work with us, is not for the sake of destruction, but to restore.

It was subjected to futility, or as the NIV puts it, frustration. The actual Greek would suggest vanity or uselessness. But despite its uselessness for glorifying God as it was intended, there is the hope that it will be restored to a glorified state.

Rom 8:21 "...in hope, the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."

The second law of thermodynamics is alluded to here. It's also called the law of entropy. It's the scientific way of explaining how

energy is winding down and how ultimately all of the universe is disintegrating.

But the hope for the creation is that it will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Again, Paul goes back to borrow an anthropomorphism describing the effect of this bondage of decay brought on by the curse of sin when he says in Rom 8:22 "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

The creation, since the fall of man, has been in labor. Earthquakes, storms, pestilence, volcanic eruptions and the like are all of what Paul speaks of here, plus famine due to lack of rain, or plagues of locust and so on. All of this is an expression of how the world is groaning under the weight of this curse placed on it by God to serve His purposes for ultimately redeeming mankind.

Now as terrible as all of this may sound, don't forget the HOPE mentioned in verse 20... Notice the imagery in verse 22... It could have said the whole creation groans and suffers the pain of a terminal illness.

But, that would suggest irreparable death. No, the imagery is suffering, not to produce more death and curse, but to produce life as shown in childbirth.

Our hope, as well as all creations', is in the life which we look forward to, even though for a while we groan with the creation until life has finally been delivered. And again, it's imperative that we understand God's ultimate deliverance of this universe as we reflect once more on the words of the Prophets and apostles.

Isaiah 65:17-19 ¹⁷ "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. ¹⁸ "But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem *for* rejoicing And her people *for* gladness. ¹⁹ "I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; And there will no longer be heard in her The voice of weeping and the sound of crying.

Isaiah 66:22-23 ²² "For just as the new heavens and the new earth Which I make will endure before Me," declares the LORD, "So your offspring and your name will endure. ²³ "And it shall be from

new moon to new moon And from sabbath to sabbath, All mankind will come to bow down before Me," says the LORD.

2 Peter 3:10-13 ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

That's what Paul has been leading up to as he then connects the restoration of the entire universe with our resurrection or the redemption of our bodies.

Rom 8:23 "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

Yes, life is hard, life has many disappointments and sufferings. But, it doesn't have to be without hope. And even we who have hope in Christ are still subjected to the inward groanings which reach out to God and ask for deliverance.

But the hope is knowing that we have been delivered. We have been delivered from the curse of sin. We have been given this hope of being adopted children of the Most High God who will share His eternity with us, and actually gives us the inherited privilege of ruling and reigning with Christ in a newly fashioned creation taken from the ashes of the old as the curse is burned out of it on the last day, according to Peter.

And this hope includes with it the knowledge that, not only will men be allowed to share in this deliverance, but even the creation will be delivered and, like us who will receive glorified bodies, the creation will be made new just for God's people.

God is so wonderful. He has given us so much. In fact He has given us everything in Christ, none of which we deserved. Paul, simply wants to remind us that when we are tempted to dwell on the fleshly aspects of this life and be bummed out by them, dwell on the eternal things which will be ours forever, and belong to us today by faith.

If we keep our focus on the things above, then as we walk in this life we will see with spiritual eyes and not be bogged down with the things of this world, which then will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

The sufferings of this world are temporary. Our relationship with Christ is eternal. Where should we be spending our time and efforts?

1Ti 6:12 "Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

As we take hold of our eternal life, we will live as men and women who have a goal and a purpose. And when this finite world tries to bring us down we can look to our God and His eternal reward which He has promised to all who abide in Christ.

In Him we can rise above anything which would try to steal the hope and the joy we have in Christ, and in the process, we will be used in the hands of God to further His Kingdom and accomplish His will by the power He has given us, to walk in His steps by the Spirit of God who indwells us.

"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called...." and glorify God in all you do and "wait eagerly for your adoption as sons and daughters."