

ROMANS 8:24-28 "With Perseverance, Wait Eagerly For Your Hope In Christ"

When we look around the world and see natural disasters resulting in suffering, or we hear of wars and rumors of wars, or we consider peoples of different backgrounds and cultures hating one another, it can become quite discouraging because we feel so helpless when we live in a world where the byword is peace, peace, but there is no peace.

There are those who would blame God and shake their fists in the air and demand that God would make it all go away, and in its place bring real peace.

Two-things are wrong with that attitude of blaming God.

1) Man's rebellion and sin against God is the thing that brought enmity and war of the spirit as we love the deeds of darkness rather than the righteousness of God.

John 3:19-20 ¹⁹ "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰ "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

2) Real peace has been achieved in Christ, who came into this world to take our penalty and wrath and pay for it on the cross in full, thus reestablishing an everlasting peace with our God.

Romans 5:1 ^{NAU} Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

What we see going on in the world is nothing short of the curse of sin taking its course as it awaits for deliverance. And like a mother who can't wait for the labor to be over, Paul makes the analogy that the world too longs for deliverance.

Rom 8:22-23 "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 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."

This world is not our home. Like children who were violently abducted from the love and comfort of their parents they await the

reunion of that love knowing the ransom has been paid and the only thing left is to see the faces of their mom and dad as they take them back to that loving home.

In like fashion every believer in Christ who has been ransomed by the blood of Jesus longs for our heavenly Father to come and get us and take us home. We "groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

For now that hope is a distant future, but it's a reality. And so Paul can say in Rom 8:24-25 "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

Hope is one of those things that is intangible and yet rests in the tangible. Hope doesn't personally possess the thing, but has proof that it belongs to him and one day will actually possess it first-hand.

If you actually possessed the thing hoped for it would cease to be hope. Why? Because hope is based on truth and fact yet to be possessed.

Like a child at Christmas time hoping for that shiny new bike; when the day arrives and it's actually under the tree hope gives way to possession. And in the possession a joy that can be handled and touched and felt with none of the illusive feelings that come from dreaming of what it would be like to sit on the seat and peddle to your heart's content.

Now, you sit on the bike and marvel at the color and the smells and the feel of steel and rubber and plastic which make up the thing which once was only a hope, but now a reality.

The existence of the bike was never questioned; it was always somewhere. It was always real as it sat in a warehouse waiting to be transported to a bike store, and then picked up by your parents to be assembled and placed in your house and ultimately for you to sit on.

Do you remember your first bike when on that day hope gave way to possession? In the same way we have the hope of eternal life with our God. It's been promised and put to our account and one day we will possess it in full.

Today we have the down payment. It's been purchased, the sales slip is in our hand and when the day comes to exchange the sales slip for the possession we will be given the reality of our life with Christ.

Paul talks of this hope.

Tit 3:4-7 "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

But, you know even hope is grace from God. Our hope comes from God Himself. The Psalmist wrote of where his hope came from and then he burst into praise for this hope and the object of his hope.

Psa 62:5-8 "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. 6 He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. 7 My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. 8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge." Selah

There are times when our hope in God wavers because of the temptations of this world and the weakness of our flesh, where we want to exchange hope for something we can possess today, according to our understanding. Those possessions sometimes come in the form of worldly possessions, possession of worldly wisdom or worldly pleasures.

But once we exchange hope in God for anything worldly, hope in God takes a back-seat and our eyes are directed to that which we now possess and which we can handle and experience at the moment.

What we think is fulfillment in the thing we possess is usually nothing more than smoke in the wind. And then our quest goes on for more fulfillment until we possess something different.

No, our lives are not meant to dwell on what we see in this world, but on what we hope in for eternity.

Rom 8:24 "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?"

There's the tendency to get discouraged in this world because we're looking at this world. If we're focusing on our hope in Christ, which includes the inheritance of the new heavens and new earth in our resurrected bodies, we are looking past this world to the next which is true reality.

This struggle is what Paul has been talking about when he alerts us to the reality that we are in this world but we are not of this world. The worldly or the flesh is at war with the spiritual. "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2Co 4:18)

This is why the apostle John exhorts us in 1Jo 2:15-17 "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."

And so, here we are with this struggle of being in the world but not of this world. And sometimes it can become a blur. Where do we draw the line, how do we make the distinction? Only as we actively seek the will of God in His word and in prayer and never take our eyes off of our hope who is Jesus Christ. When we do this we find that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

And it's then when we can agree with Paul in Rom 8:25 "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

There are two words here which have been a stumbling block for so many people: Wait and patience. You can't wait if you're not patient. And you'll never be patient if you're not willing to wait.

There's another translation to this verse which I like and the NAS and the NKJV have it. It goes: "But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it."

We can be patient and we can wait and we will persevere if we know that the One in whom we hope is faithful to His promises. Like that child waiting for his bike. His mom and dad have promised it to him. And sometimes he becomes impatient and isn't willing to wait.

But the truth is that he doesn't have a choice. The question is, how will he wait? Patiently with perseverance? Or will he cop an attitude and complain and drive his mom and dad nuts until Christmas morning?

If he trusts his mom and dad to come through with their promise to get him this new bike, he can make it an adventure instead of a chore in the waiting.

He can dream of what it will be like to sit on it. He can imagine all the fun he'll have peddling it all around town, seeing new places. He can go to the catalog where he first saw it and gaze at its beauty. He can rejoice with his mom and dad every time he talks about how wonderful it's going to be to actually have it in his possession.

And because he knows his mom and dad will deliver on their promises, he can persevere. And during those days when he can't seem to wait and becomes impatient he goes to his parents and asks them to tell him one more time that it will actually be under the tree. And he finds his assurance in their comforting words.

That's how it needs to be with every child of God who's been promised eternal life in Christ. We need to wait eagerly and with perseverance to the end, knowing that the One in whom we hope is faithful to His promises, not just for the future, but also for today.

In verse 19 of Romans 8 it says, "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God."

The word eagerly in the Greek is *apekdechomai*. It's the same word in verse 24 as "we, with perseverance wait eagerly for it."

William Barclay addresses this word and he says, "it describes the attitude of a man who scans the horizon with head thrust forward, eagerly searching the distance for the first signs of the dawn break of glory. To Paul life was not a weary, defeated waiting; it was a throbbing vivid expectation....."

..... The Christian is involved in the human situation. Within he must battle with his own evil human nature; without he must live in a world of death and decay. Nonetheless, the Christian does not live only in the world; he also lives in Christ. He does not see only the world; he looks beyond it to God. Therefore, the keynote of the Christian life is always hope and never despair. The Christian waits, not for death, but for life."

But, you know, the beauty of our heavenly Father is that He knows that it's sometimes hard for us to wait and to be patient because of the weakness of our flesh. And that's one of the reasons He's given us His Spirit.

Look at Rom 8:26 "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."

God knows our weaknesses and He's made provision to give us strength. One of the areas in which we find ourselves weak, because of the flesh, is in the area of communication with God, which is prayer. It's essential for us to enter into communion with God in prayer. In fact Paul says in 1Thes.5:17 "pray without ceasing."

We are to be continually coming before our God, communicating to Him with praises and thanksgiving, asking for Him to meet our needs and the needs of others, and to ask for the comfort and strength we need to live in this sin-filled world to His honor and glory.

God says, 'I already know your need and I know that there are times when you find it hard to pray and, more times than not, you don't even know what to pray for.'

Rom 8:26 "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."

Think about that. The Spirit Himself intercedes for us when we don't know what or how to pray. You know what that means is that God Himself prays on our behalf.

If you ever wanted someone to pray on your behalf it would be the Holy Spirit of God. Why?

Rom 8:27 "And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."

That's an area of our lives we're always wondering about. What is God's will for me? The Spirit knows and He addresses the Father with just the perfect prayer on our behalf.

We might say, 'well when does He do this?' Have you ever found yourself not being able to pray because of things that were going

on in your life that made it difficult to pray? Have you ever found yourself frustrated with life and just wanted to know what God desired of you and yet you didn't have the words? "The Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."

The Greek word for groans is *stenagmos* and it can be translated: a sigh. Sometimes that's all you can get out and yet it's often during those very times when the greatest prayers are being delivered to the Father from the Spirit Himself, praying for exactly what you need.

I don't know about you but that's a great comfort for me because there are many times when a sigh is all I can get out. When I want to pray there are times when I just don't have the words. And God the Holy Spirit, knowing my weakness, comes along side me and prays on my behalf, making intercession with groans or sighs too deep for words.

F.F. Bruce makes the comment: "Speaking to God in the Spirit with tongues (1Co.14:2) may be included in this expression, but it covers those longings and aspirations which well up from the depths of the spirit and cannot be imprisoned within the confines of everyday words."

We are encouraged to pray unceasingly and we should desire to lift up holy words of praise and thanks and petitions, but it's nice to know that during certain times when words just won't come that the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf with just the perfect prayer according to God's perfect will.

Pastor Chuck Smith says, in somewhat of a tongue-in-cheek fashion, "Surely we should talk less and groan more."

In connection with the Spirit praying on our behalf, according to the will of God, Paul then gives us the verse that all of us have heard and embraced and have relied on on more than one occasion.

Rom 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Paul says that we "Know" this. Without a shadow of a doubt; as certain as we are of the hope that we have in Christ; as certain as we are that the Spirit intercedes on our behalf with the perfect prayer according to God's will, we know that God will also cause all things to work together for our good."

Not some things. Not a select few things, but all things. You mean disasters and hardships and sufferings, as Paul speaks of in verse 18, where he said, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us", are all meant for our good?

That's right! All things. You mean then that even the good things in life which are blessings to delight in are also meant to be for our good? Of course, we wouldn't fight the good things as a means for God working all things to our good.

In the context Paul has in mind those things that are hard and that we would question as being any good at all. Paul's point is to comfort us that, while the world would despise sufferings and hardships, for the Christian they can be and are used of God to teach, to create perseverance and patience and to make us the people in this world that God wants us to be.

One example of this is when Joseph, the son of Jacob, was sold into slavery by his evil brothers. After years of hardships in Egypt, God delivered Joseph to the extent that he was second in command only to the Pharaoh.

When he finally revealed himself to his family he said to them in Gen 50:20 "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

You see, even the evil we may experience at the hands of other people is part of the ALL in Rom.8:28, where we're told that *all things* work together for good by God for those who love Him.

And in connection to this Paul would say in 2Co 4:17-18 "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Like Joseph who kept his eyes on God, we too are instructed to keep our eyes on our God and Savior Jesus Christ, knowing that He's always there to make intercession for us and to bring us through to accomplish His will.

Joseph was called by God to walk in the path God had established for him, even though it was a hard path. But, he knew he was called for a purpose. It's easy to lose sight of this especially in hard times.

Yes, God is working all things out in the lives of those who love Christ, but it's with the understanding that it's with a purpose. From all of eternity God has had a purpose for your salvation and my salvation. Some of it we understand today, some of it we don't, yet.

Part of the purpose is found in 2Ti 1:8-10 "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Paul repeats this in a very similar way in Eph 1:4 "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

And again he puts our salvation into perspective as it relates to God's purpose for each of us in Eph 2:8-10 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

There are times when we wonder at the purpose of God in our lives. But, the wonder is all wrapped up in life in general. Because it's in life that God works His will out in our lives so that we may prove that He is our Father and that He is our Savior.

In Christ we are new creations and we are very special to the extent that we have been given the privilege to walk in the steps God has established just for us before the beginning of time.

In Christ we have an eternal hope to which we eagerly await the possession. And we have the Spirit who is there for us to make sure we make it to the very end by His grace and strength. And we have the assurance that since God has called us for a purpose so that we don't have to wonder if He'll ever use us as He prepares us for His work, as He works all things out in our lives to mold us into the image of Christ.

Let me end with another encouragement from God's word given to Paul.

Eph 1:11-14 "In him we were also chosen, [Or were made heirs] having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory."

Glory in your future in Christ. Glory also in the way God is molding us and using us today, and may we all submit in love as we desire to do the will of Him who called us from darkness to the marvelous light of His grace.