

Romans 8:18-25 – “Hope and Glory”

(Pew Bible Page: 944)

Intro: If you are a sports fan (and not all of us are, I recognize) but if you are, you know the phrase, “The thrill of victory, and the agony of defeat.” That’s the famous tag-line Jim McKay voiced over the opening scenes of “ABC’s Wide-World of Sports,” so many years ago now. Whether you like sport or not, you have to admit that sport provides plenty of opportunity to rejoice when the game goes your way, and to weep when Mighty Casey strikes out. As the old saying goes, “Some days you get the bear, and some days the bear gets you.” Win or lose, we always seem to tune back in for the next game, because you never know! This time your team could come out on top. As believers, we are involved every day in a life-or-death contest on planet earth. It isn’t like baseball or football or soccer. Something more than bragging rights is at stake. Today, the game of life causes us often to groan in suffering, but we patiently endure, because we know the hope of glory tomorrow has been assured us. When Jesus returns, today’s sorrows will turn to tomorrow’s victory. And that is what we want to mediate on tonight.

Proposition: God has granted us the hope of glory, so we can await with patience Jesus’ return.

Billboard: (vv.18-21) Present Sufferings, Promised Glory
(vv.22-23) Present Groaning, Promised Redemption
(vv.24-25) Present Hope, Promised Patience

(vv.18-21) Present Sufferings, Promised Glory – The apostle begins his discussion by picking up a thread of thought stated in the closing phrase of verse 17, “*Provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*” Why did he say that? These verses explain: **Romans 8:18–21** - **18** *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* **19** *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.* **20** *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope* **21** *that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.* Our union with Christ brings us present suffering for His sake, but this suffering promises that we will sharing His glory when all has come to its conclusion. What does Paul say about this? The sufferings of our present life are “*light and momentary afflictions*” which are “*preparing us for an eternal weight of glory which far outweighs them all*” (2 Corinthians 4:17). These sufferings, he tells us, “*Are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed, [in us]*” as an alternate translation expresses it. What is “Glory”? Glory is absolute perfection – especially moral perfection. In that day (the day of Jesus’ return) we will be made finally and forever like Him (cf. 1 John 3:2). Meaning what? That we will be changed in a moment into His likeness (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50-55). This change is a bodily resurrection to complete our adoption as sons (cf. v.23). We *suffer* with Him in this present body; we will be *glorified* with Him in our coming body. That will be glory!

What is in view here is the restoration of the physical Creation which Christ’s sacrifice *also* guarantees. The Creation “stands on tiptoes” waiting for that day. Adam’s sin corrupted all nature, subjecting the Creation to futility – endless cycles of death, rebirth, decay, and death. Nature longs for our completion as sons, for nature itself will be set free from its bondage to

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corruption at Christ’s return. A new heaven and a new earth, one without Sin’s corruption, await all who are “in Christ.”

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Our suffering *for* Christ in the present foreshadows our glorification *with* Christ when He returns.

[ILLUSTRATION] A major factor in bringing Germany to the peace table at the end of World War One was discouragement. The Allies had broken Germany’s last-ditch effort in the Spring Offensive by holding fast against the onslaught. Realizing that the American forces would eventually turn the tide and faced with assault by a new super weapon, the army tank, Germany finally just ran out of gas emotionally. Discouragement took over and the Germans decided to sue for peace. Discouragement is a powerful weapon in the hands of an opponent. Not a few armies have been defeated before they ever entered the battle because their opponent knew how to provoke discouragement in their minds before a shot was even fired. Our enemy, the devil, knows the value of discouragement. He will do his best to discourage us through suffering, but we must refuse to fall into his trap.

[APPLICATION] When we as believers experience suffering for the name of Christ, far from becoming discouraged we should rejoice. In just the same way that Jesus suffered during His earthly pilgrimage and then ascended on high to be glorified forever, we too now suffer while awaiting our final glorification. The devil intends to throw as much discouragement in our path as possible, because we belong to Christ. He hopes to rob us of our joy, testimony, and effectiveness for Christ. Refuse to gratify him! When suffering for Jesus’ sake comes your way, remind yourself that just as He suffered and entered His glory, your sufferings also foreshadow your coming glorification.

(vv.22-23) Present Groaning, Promised Redemption – Nature groans, but its pains are pains of travail – pains of childbirth. **Romans 8:22–23 - 22** *For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23* *And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* Nature’s groans are portents of a coming rebirth – our adoption as sons – the redemption of our bodies. What does this mean?

Our spirit and soul have been released from the power of Sin and we are now welcomed into God’s presence dressed as we are in the imputed righteousness of Christ, but our bodies are not yet ready to step into the divine presence, since the presence of Sin remains in our flesh. When Jesus returns and we are changed into His resurrection likeness, our redemption secured at Calvary will be complete, and our adoption as sons finished.

Nature groans in travail until this birth is accomplished and we groan as believers, longing to be freed finally from the presence of Sin and welcomed in body, soul, and spirit into the presence of God. These groanings foreshadow our final redemption as sons.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Our groaning now foreshadows our redemption when He returns.

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[ILLUSTRATION] An oft repeated saying when someone is facing something hard to accomplish is, “No pain, no gain!” The meaning of this is evident: The greatest successes in life usually come as the fruit of hard, painful effort. What is *easily* gained is usually not worth having. The apostle’s use of the metaphor of childbirth pictures this perfectly.

[APPLICATION] As in childbirth, the groaning of nature around us, and our own hearts within us, foreshadow the coming of new life. Today we groan. We long for Sin to be put away once and for all. We hunger for the damage Sin has caused to our world to be swept away and for everything to be put back right. We groan. Nature groans. Even the Holy Spirit groans we are told a little farther down the page in verse 26. But all this groaning is not without purpose, for it foreshadow the approach of our final redemption as adopted sons of God. One day our bodies, the instruments of our groaning today, will be changed in a moment into the likeness of God’s dear Son. One day all the suffering and groaning will come to a sudden stop. Jesus will come, bringing the story of Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration to its final, proper conclusion. We may be groaning now, but we’ll be dancing then. Live in hope! Today’s groaning is tomorrow’s redemption.

(vv.26-27) Present Hope, Promised Patience – Knowing these things gives us hope. **Romans 8:24–25 - 24** *For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25* *But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.* What is “*Hope*”? “Hope is a grace we have been given at our conversion along with the graces of faith and love.”¹ Hope is the anticipation and certainty that the story, our story, will be brought finally to its promised conclusion. We hope for what is *future*. But, because we have this hope and this hope cannot fail (because it is based on God’s promises) we live *now*, in the present with patience.

What is “*patience*”? “Patience is a characteristic of God. It is His longsuffering with evil and wickedness in man.... The divine wrath is suspended for a time to give men the opportunity to repent and obey the will of God.”²

This patience of God is reflected in believers in two ways: *passively* and *actively*. Like our Father, we are called to endure evil and wickedness for a time in the hope that salvation may yet come to those who persecute us. In that sense, it is passive – we endure.

But in another sense, it is active. “It has been described as ‘A muscular constancy under trial.’”³ The Christian can face, “delay without depression; oppression without retaliation; suffering without relenting. This virtue he has learned from God, who is patient with him in his weakness, failure, and sin.”⁴

¹ Baker Dictionary of Theology.

² Baker Dictionary of Theology.

³ Baker Dictionary of Theology.

⁴ Baker Dictionary of Theology.

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[DOCTRINAL POINT] Our hope now enables us to live in patient endurance as we wait for Jesus to return.

[ILLUSTRATION] In Dante’s poem, “The Divine Comedy,” an imaginary journey through heaven and hell, these words are inscribed over the gate to hell: “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.” Hell is a hopeless place, for the future of all who enter there holds nothing but darkness, pain, remorse, and suffering. It is perhaps not an overstatement to say that to be without hope today is the anticipation of hell tomorrow. God has not left His people without hope. These great truths that we are given today lead us to hope for tomorrow: Our present sufferings foreshadow our coming glorification; Our present groanings foreshadow our coming redemption. Far from living in hopelessness, believers possess a living hope.

[APPLICATION] As believers, having this living hope means much in our daily lives. The world may be coming apart at the seams. Wars. Fires. Hurricanes. Pandemics. Moral chaos. All these things tempt us to despair. And it’s not just the world out there! All of us have days in which our inner world seems more of a mess than the outer world around us. Family problems. Job problems. Money problems. How long could we make the list? All these things are real and not to be taken lightly. But because we have hope – because we know that our sufferings foreshadow our glorification; that our groanings foreshadow our final redemption – we can patiently endure whatever life throws at us. If the sign above the gates of hell says, “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here,” then surely the sign over the gates of heaven must read, “Embrace your hoped-for triumph, all who enter here.” We have hope so we patiently endure.

Conclusion: “The thrill of victory; the agony of defeat.” Our text leaves no doubt about which of these two destinies, victory, or defeat, await all who are “in Christ.” We suffer now, but we are destined for glory later. We groan now, but we are destined for redemption finally. We hope for tomorrow and await patiently for the fulfillment of our hope today. As we near the end of Romans’ study of assurance, the momentum builds. Next week, we’ll find even greater marvels of grace to rejoice in. For tonight, remember this: All who are in Christ can live in the “sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵

⁵ Book of Common Prayer.