

While We Wait

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Unshakeable: Romans / Romans 8:18-28

A couple of weeks ago while I was on vacation, I didn't really go anywhere, I had more of a staycation, actually more of a stay at home and do work around the house vacation. I had some yard work I wanted to get to and part of that was to put some grass seed on some of the bare spots on my front grass.

And so I went out and bought some topsoil, put some grass seed and some starter fertilizer on there mixed it, watered it and watered and watered. And waited, and waited, and waited.

And when for the first few days I didn't see any kind of growth I started to doubt, did I do something wrong? Maybe the brand of grass seed I bought wasn't very good, or maybe I cheaped out on the topsoil, maybe I watered it too much or maybe not enough.

But then around day 5 I walked out and I saw them, those little baby blades sticking out of the ground. I was so excited I showed all my kids and Ally – look, look – my grass is growing.

They didn't seem as excited about it as I was.

And I think that's a picture of so much of the Christian life — we are a waiting people. The hardest part of waiting isn't the waiting itself, it's waiting on something you can't see yet.

Much like those blades of grass growing, so much of the work that God does is where we can't see and it's trusting while you're waiting, trusting that even though you can't see it, God is at work, even though life is hard at times to hope in the future promises of Christ.

This morning Paul is going to tell us what it looks like to wait well — not just with patience, but with hope.

We don't wait as people who have no hope. We wait in a broken world, but we wait with hope, and we wait with purpose.

Look with me this morning as we turn once again to [Romans 8](#) and this morning we are going to look at verses 18-28.

I re-read verse 18 from last week because I think it's so important to remember where we left off in order to grasp the message in these verses this morning.

Paul left us off with this amazing life-giving promise. That because we are children of God, adopted into God's family, we don't just have a status, we have a future.

Remember verse 17, that we are children of God and if children then heirs. heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...

This promise here in verse 18 is that even though we face suffering in this life, in this present time, the sufferings of this life cannot even compare to what God has in store for us.

That's our future, that's our hope, that God has eternal blessings, eternal glory – an inheritance kept in heaven for us that is an imperishable, undefiled, unfading inheritance.

The hope of the Christians life is that we keep our eyes focused on Jesus, focused on that hope, trusting and believing in that future hope.

So much of the Christian life is waiting. I think even of the Old Testament saints, Hebrews chapter 11 is what is popularly known as the Hall of Faith, it's just the writers of Hebrews recording our great heroes of the faith and what they overcame by their faith. People like Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Noah.

But in [Hebrews 11:13-16](#)

Hebrews 11:13–16 ESV

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Abraham. Sarah. Moses. Joseph. These all died without receiving the promise. They saw it from afar and they kept going anyway. Strangers and exiles, passing through, seeking a country not of this world.

That's us. We are a people living between the promise and the fulfilment. This world is not our home — we are citizens of a heavenly city, waiting for the King to bring it.

But Paul doesn't just leave us looking at the horizon. He doesn't just say keep your eyes on glory and endure until then.

He turns to us right here in these verses and says — let me tell you what the waiting looks like. Let me tell you what God has given you for the journey.

And what he shows us is this — we wait in a broken world.

BROKEN WORLD

That's where we start.

We need to know that. We need to know that because it answers so many questions for us. Like why? Why is there pain, why is there suffering in this life? Why is there so much hatred and strife, why do I struggle with sin, why poverty and crime and sickness and injustice... why?

We wait in a broken world

Understanding that saves us from having unrealistic expectations of what the Christian life is like.

While we wait, we need to know that we live in a broken world.

Look at verses 19-22 with me.

Romans 8:19–22 ESV

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. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

This answers those questions, why does this world seem broken? The answer is because it is. Notice in verse 20 – for the creation was subjected to futility.

And the hope is in verse 21 that one day creation will be set free from its bondage and corruption.

Okay, so I'm not going crazy, this world is in bondage; it is corrupt. That word in verse 20 – futility – is so revealing. Futility carries the idea of the inability to live out its intended purpose.

It tells us that while this world that we live in is broken, and corrupt, that wasn't the plan; that's not what this world was created for. This takes us back to Genesis, right?

Like when God created this world He created, and He said it was good. There was nothing evil with it, God created this world as an expression of His goodness and righteousness, His love and creativity.

But it was subjected by God, when? When sin entered into the world, when humanity fell, when Adam and Eve sinned, in came sin and death and

destruction. This tells us that it wasn't just humanity that was impacted by the curse, but creation as well.

Why is this world the way it is, why do I look around and see war and suffering and death and destruction? Why does evil happen that from my eyes there seems no possible explanation? This is the answer, creation has been subjected to futility.

We can feel it, can't we – this groaning that Paul mentions in verse 22?

Romans 8:22 ESV

²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

The whole creation, this world is groaning; it's not just the people in the world, but creation, we see it, we feel it in the natural disasters around us, forest fires, flooding, destructive tornadoes, tsunamis, hurricanes. Creation is groaning, all of creation together. Paul says it's like birth pangs, and that word again is so telling.

Birth pangs tell us a few things, don't they? For one, it tells us that the pains of this world are leading towards something, it's kind of like the woman who was 9 months pregnant and started feeling the pains and said, "Ahh, I think I changed my mind – I don't want to go through with this. It's too late, those pains are telling you something is coming.

I've never had birth pangs, but I'm told they become more intense and more frequent the closer you get to what is coming. Is that true ladies?

Just think about what those two things tell us about the pain, the groaning, the chaos that we see in this world, it tells us that all of it is leading towards something, some event, and the closer we get to that event it becomes more frequent and more intense.

But what do birth pangs lead to? Life, that baby coming into this world. It tells us that what Paul is trying to communicate is that while we live in the broken

world and we are impacted by that brokenness, and while that brokenness will continue and increase, it's leading towards a goal, not a goal of death, but of life.

God is doing something even in the chaos, even in the destruction, even in the pain of this world. What is it leading towards?

We'll look again at these verses... verse 19, ***creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God***... verse 20-21 that it was subjected in hope, that one day it will be set free from its bondage and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

It tells us that creation is groaning and eagerly longing for the same things we are. That like us, all of creation is crying out... "Come Lord Jesus, come. On that day, when Christ returns, it will not only be the sons and daughters of God who experience renewal and redemption, but all of creation.

That when Christ returns that even this creation will be restored, set free, back to what God intended it to be in the beginning.

Creation is groaning, it's longing with eager expectation and longing for the return of the King because in that day there will be a new heaven and a new earth, one that is not stained or impacted by sin and brokenness but a creation that will thrive in the way that God intended when He first looked at His creation and said it is good.

We long for that day, creation longs for that day, but while we wait, we need to know that we wait in a broken world.

I think that helps, doesn't it? It may not make things better, but it gives us perspective, doesn't it?

It helps us to know that what I may be experiencing right now in the disappointment, in the loss I feel, in the hurt of life – that what I'm experiencing is not unusual.

It helps doesn't it, because this gives us lenses to view the events of history as they unfold. We aren't rattled by the news of war, or the rising or falling economy, or the changing of political leadership. It helps us understand why we have the injustice, the inequity, the unrighteousness of this world.

That it's leading to something... not to death, but to life.

But, here's the good news, that God has not left us without hope.

Yes, it's true that we wait in a broken world and you and I are not left untouched by the brokenness, but here's what Paul wants us to know while we wait.

WE WAIT IN HOPE

We wait in hope. You have hope this morning.

Look at verses 23-25.

Romans 8:23-25 ESV

²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 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.

That word hope has popped up a lot in these verses. We saw it first in verse 20, that creation was subjected in hope, but we see it show up here, for in this hope we are saved, in fact it shows up five times in just these two verses.

The word hope can be a bit confusing, because there is a kind of hope that is just wishful thinking.

You hope that it doesn't rain, you hope that Blue Jays are going to turn it around, you hope Vladdy is actually going to start producing... well you get the point.

There is a hope that is a kind of wishful thinking, we aren't really sure it's going to happen, but we hope it does.

That's not the kind of hope that Paul is talking about, that's not New Testament hope.

The kind of hope that Paul has in mind is a confident, eager expectation. You can have that kind of confident eager expectation because preparations are already underway, it's reasonable to expect the outcome.

It's the kind of hope I had in that grass growing, because the work had already been done, I had reason to believe and hope my hard work would pay off.

It's the kind of hope that children have on Christmas day because they know that every year there are presents under the tree and everything has been building to this moment.

That's the kind of hope we have in Christ, we have this confident expectation in His promises that He is coming to redeem us, to redeem this world. The preparations have already been made and all of history is leading to this moment.

Notice what Paul says... he says in this hope we are saved, its this hope in the future promises of Christ that has and is saving us... we're trusting in a promise that we can't always see, but that's what hope is, isn't it?

That's what he says here isn't it? That hope that is seen is not hope for who hopes in what he sees.

The very fact that we are hoping and looking and reaching forward for what we cannot see is what makes hope – hope. There is no purpose in hoping in that which is seen, we walk by faith and not by sight, that's the very character, the very nature of faith and hope. We're trusting, believing and hoping in something we haven't yet seen.

We wait in hope, we wait with anxious, confident expectation in the future promises of Christ, and what that produces in us is patience... ***But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience...***

That word patience doesn't do it justice, patience undersells it — the word is closer to active endurance, perseverance.

It's like the soldier in the thick of battle who isn't dismayed but keeps fighting. Eagerness and endurance combined.

Hope doesn't make the wait shorter. It makes the wait *bearable*. It keeps you moving forward when everything in you wants to stop.

We have hope this morning. The question is, where does this hope come from? Where does this patience, endurance and perseverance come from?

The answer is the Holy Spirit, that's who chapter 8 is about, what a gift a – precious gift God's Holy Spirit is to His people, that we cannot live the Christian life apart from the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The Holy Spirit is the one who produces this hope while we wait, that's what verse 23 is telling us that we have the firstfruits of the Spirit. I love that word firstfruit, it's amazing imagery.

It's the imagery of a sampling of what is to come. It has Old Testament roots, where in the Old Testament when you produced a crop or a harvest, you would give God the firstfruit of that harvest as a gift in anticipation of the fruitful harvest to come.

That firstfruit was a sampling, saying Lord I'm giving you this back in anticipation of the blessing to come, it's what we do as we give our tithes and offerings, we offer back a portion of what the Lord has given us in anticipation that He's going to continue to bless

And what Paul is saying to us is that God has given us His Holy Spirit, His presence to live and be in us as a sampling, a taste of what the future holds.

Picture it if you will, remember when you were a kid and your mom would be baking cookies and she would let you lick the spoon after she was done – or better yet, when Ally is making something good and she says here, come taste it. And that taste, that first taste builds your anticipation for what is to come, it builds your hope, oh man, oh man....I can't wait until I taste the finished product, like if the sample was that good, I can't imagine what it will be like when it's done.

See, that's the work of the Holy Spirit, here's what He does, He makes His home in each of us, God's presence, the presence of Jesus lives in you child of God – that intimate, loving, satisfying and fulfilling relationship you experience with God's presence now, is just a sample, a foretaste of what eternity is going to be like.

It's why we cry out, come Lord Jesus come, because of this first taste of life with You that I experience in this brokenness is so sweet, oh man I can only imagine what eternity with You will be like.

How does the Holy Spirit give us hope practically, well Paul gets specific.

Because the Spirit helps us in our weakness, do you see that?

Romans 8:26 ESV

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Paul isn't just talking about some philosophical explanation, he's talking about real practical help in times of need, the hope we need as we wait in brokenness.

Like when the brokenness of this world, and the brokenness of life becomes overwhelming, too much to bear and we just go into the presence of God and we're so weak, so beat up by life that we have nothing to pray, and all we can offer Him up is groanings – the Holy Spirit is working even through those

groanings, even through the pain, when we cry out to God in frustration, there is work being done in us.

But there are times where it isn't just about how overwhelming life is, but sometimes, its just going into prayer in weakness and not knowing what to pray... not having the right words. The Holy Spirit works even through the weakness of our prayers.

He takes our groaning, He takes our weakness in prayer, and He makes intercession for us, but there's a deeper work He does in us while we pray. We see it in verse 27.

Romans 8:27 ESV

27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

You know, so often we go into prayer with our wish lists, our lists of wants and needs, but so often while we're praying for some good things, they may not be necessary things, they may not be godly things, they may be selfish prayers, but the Holy Spirit searches our heart, and He knows what the mind of God is and in that moment of prayer the work He is doing is aligning our will to God's.

Prayer is so much more than just asking God for things, prayer is submission, remember Jesus praying in the garden? He offered up His prayer, asking to be delivered and yet He ended with not my will, but your will be done.

Sometimes we grow anxious, we grow impatient in the brokenness of this world and we bring that to the Lord, and we need to bring that to the Lord, but the work of the Spirit in that prayer is more about doing a transforming work in our hearts, than just you and I getting what we think we need.

The Holy Spirit is aligning our will to Gods, giving us the patience, the endurance, the perseverance we need, He gives us hope while we wait.

Praise God, that even though we wait in a world that is broken, we don't wait as those who have no hope, we wait in hope.

but the final thing that gives us hope in the waiting, is that while we wait, we wait with purpose.

WE WAIT WITH PURPOSE

Many of us know this verse well...

Verse 28.

Romans 8:28 ESV

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

I love how Paul starts this verse. It's more than confident expectation, it is this great assurance, this is not a doubt, it is a fact we know, we know it.

We know that because of who our God is, that there is a purpose in the waiting, there is a purpose even in the brokenness. We know, we know that God doesn't waste pain, that because we serve a sovereign God, He is not just sovereign over the sun shining, He is sovereign over the rain and the storms of life. He is sovereign over the darkness.

And because God is sovereign even over the darkness, we can know that even when we can't see it, there is purpose.

This is probably one of the most quoted, but often misunderstood verses. We love this verse, don't we? Often, we'll quote it to people who are going through a dark, challenging season with good intention – "hey all things work together for good."

We kind of have this idea that "hey, you know, it's all going to work out, God's going to work this out." We end up with this idea that all things will work out in the wash.

But if that's your understanding and application of this verse you are drastically underselling the power of it.

For those who love God all things work together, it tells us that this verse isn't for everyone, this isn't a blanket statement that covers everyone, this is a deep abiding assurance for those who are in Christ.

Maybe you're here this morning and you're not sure if that's you, it's the most important question you can ask this morning – am I in Christ, is my hope in this world in Jesus?

It tells us that for those who love God – for those who belong to God – that we are not victims of random circumstances or events, that nothing in this life happens outside of our good and loving God's purpose and work for our lives.

That while God is not the cause of pain, that we serve a sovereign God who can wield even the pain, even the suffering for our good.

That's the next phrase, that He uses *all* things... oh man, it's not just the blessings that God uses for our good and His glory, but *all* things, the good, the bad, the ugly. The mountain tops, the valley lows, the sun, the rain, He uses all of it to accomplish His good and faithful purposes in our lives.

The question is what is that good, what is His purpose?

This is why it's so important to see this verse in context, what this is leading towards this whole section – to our eternal inheritance in glory. It tells us that the good purpose that God has for us isn't just that things will work out in this life or the way we want or we'll always be able to look back and see His hand, but the promise is that God is using all things in this life to prepare us for that day. He is preparing us for that great and glorious day that this passage started with, that day when the glory which shall be revealed in us will far outweigh any pain any suffering in this life.

God is at work, even in the pain, even in the suffering, even in the brokenness of this life using all things, for our good and His glory, we know, that is the promise of the Christian life, that God doesn't waste pain, He doesn't waste brokenness; that there a purpose, there is a meaning.

Sometimes, we won't find that on this side of eternity, but when we get to glory... When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be, when we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory.

I remember when I was a kid, my grandfather taught me how to play chess and when I first started playing, he would beat me every time and I was too young, too naive to know why.

But as I got older, I understood. As a child I was playing the game one move at a time, I was only thinking about the move in front of me, but that's not how chess is played is it? See, my grandfather could see the whole game before it even began, he was seeing two three moves ahead and anticipating the move that I would make, it's why he could beat me. We were seeing the game from two different perspectives, he could see the outcome before it happened, while I was still on my first move.

I think that's why it's such a challenge for us because we view life much like I played chess, one move, one moment, one act at a time, while God, He sees it all at once, He's making moves that in the moment of time don't seem right to us, but in the viewpoint of eternity there is purpose, there is meaning, there is a plan.

You know I think of Joseph's life, sold into slavery by his brothers, wrongfully accused and put in prison, waiting for 11 years. And even though he couldn't see past his suffering, see past the moment, God had a purpose, a plan. He was placing Joseph right where He needed him, at just the right time to preserve not just a nation but His chosen people, the line that would lead to the Messiah from a famine that would have wiped them out.

When Joseph finally faced his brothers, he could look at them and say what you meant for evil, God has used for good.

Maybe that's you right now this morning. Maybe you're here and you're going through a season of brokenness, loss, pain and your prayer to God is why? Maybe you're crying out, how long, oh Lord.

When we go to Him, and we cry out, you know we don't always get the answer, but what He gives us is perspective, eyes to see. That we know God is not absent, He is not surprised, He is not scrambling. He is *working*.

There is a purpose to the waiting. There is purpose to the pain. Even when we can't see it or feel it. Hope tells us that God is working eternal purposes in this light momentary affliction.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 ESV

¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

This light momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison...

Folks that's the hope of the Christian life.

Let me ask you where is your hope this morning? I mean one thing we can agree on no matter who we are is that we are living in a broken world, and none of us makes it through without being touched somehow by that brokenness?

Where is your hope this morning? Who is the rock that you are leaning on? I want you to know that you can place your hope in Jesus. No, it's not a wishful thinking kind of hope, it's the hope of a confident expectation that Jesus Christ has secured your eternity on the cross and in His resurrection.

It's hope not just for today, but a hope of future promises.

And that hope — that confident, sure, unshakeable hope — it doesn't put us to shame. Paul told us that back in chapter 5. The hope we have in Christ never disappoints, because it isn't resting on our circumstances, it isn't resting on our strength, it isn't resting on whether the world gets better or worse. It's resting on Him.

So whatever you're carrying this morning — whatever brought you through those doors today — I want you to hear this.

You are not waiting alone. The Spirit of God Himself is with you, interceding for you, giving you a foretaste of what's coming even in the middle of the brokenness.

And you are not waiting for nothing. God is at work. In the pain, in the confusion, in the moments that make no sense — He is working all of it together for your good and His glory. Not one moment is wasted. Not one.

We wait in a broken world. But we don't wait without hope. And we don't wait without purpose.

Come Lord Jesus, come.