

Good morning everyone. My name is Caleb Farrow. I serve as Students and College Pastor here at Grace Auburn. It is my honor to share with you this morning from Romans 8 as we continue in our Sunday sermon series, In View of God's Mercy.

Before we dive in, Romans background reminder: written by Paul. Historically the Jewish people had recently been allowed to come back to Rome after being expelled because of rioting and fighting with one another over whether or not Jesus was the messiah long prophesied about. The Jewish Christians then entered back into the church in Rome to realize that since it was being led and populated by non Jewish Christians, and therefore the church was significantly less Jewish. This caused discontinuity and tension between the non Jewish Christians and the Jewish Christians. So Paul, upon hearing this, writes the letter of Romans for unity in the gospel and a call to join him in the gospel mission of sharing this news that the messiah has come and for all to now put aside their differences and raise high the banner of being new creations in the image of Christ Jesus!

And just as a quick reminder of where we have been so far in the Romans series, Paul through the Holy Spirit has revealed to us:

- The power of God for salvation is for everyone who trusts in Jesus
- God's wrath is his holy hostility against unrighteousness
- That sin is an exchange – the truth about God for a lie; the glory of God for something less
- All people have sinned and people can be made right with God by grace through faith in Jesus.
- Living by faith is being fully convinced that God is able to do what He has promised to do
- We are justified, declared eternally right with God by grace through faith in Christ
- Being justified by faith in Christ - we have peace with God
- Being justified we have access to him by faith
- Being justified, we have a standing in grace
- When we suffer with a surrendered heart, we will see purpose in the pain
- We know God loves us – because he shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us
- We have been redeemed to walk in newness of life
- We must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus
- We should not offer up our life to sin, but instead present ourselves to God (whole life response)
- We used to be slaves to sin – but now there is an obedience from the heart
- We have been set free from sin and now are slaves to righteousness
- There is no more condemnation for those who trust in Jesus.

All of this drawing us to ask the questions:

WHO will save me? WHO will deliver me? WHO will rescue me? WHO will redeem me? WHO will die for me? WHO was punished for me? WHO was crushed for my sin and iniquities?

WHO suffered for me? WHO was crucified for me? WHO took on my shame? One man did all of this... Jesus. Jesus.

So in the sufferings and difficulties of this world, cling to these truths. Cling to Jesus.

Let's pray as we jump into the second half of Romans 8 this morning.

PRAY

Lets start in vs. 17 today...

¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Future Glory

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.

Christian the suffering that you endure for the sake of Jesus will be eternally worth it! We know this because we see here that suffering (now) and glory (the age to come) are inseparable, yet at the same time not worth even comparing to one another. So far apart in worth. Yet still bound together. So brother and sister, as you suffer, do so with the hope of eternal glory in your eyes, looking to Jesus who suffered perfectly and is eternally glorified.

In 2 Cor 4:17 and Col 3:1-4 Paul reminds us of this same truth that what we go through today is neither pointless nor endless. The Biblical authors say both these things: that we are sojourners just passing through and that the suffering we encounter here, is not worth comparing with the glory that is to come! Our suffering now is refining our faith in Jesus and making the eternal glory shine brighter!

Paul goes on here to describe this longing for our true home and a righteous dissatisfaction with our current home as groaning that is revealed in both creation and Gods children.

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.

"creation waits with eager longing" is the perspective that creation is on its tiptoes looking to the horizon, certain redemption is on the way and will arrive any second. Searching diligently for the moment that the sons of God are revealed and all of creation is restored to its rightful order as in the Garden of Eden!

Waiting with eager anticipation for its brokenness to not just be fixed but restored as though it was never broken. Just as Jesus' followers will be. Oh that we would long for redemption and Jesus' return like creation does.

The frailty and corruption of creation is the judgement of sin while it longs for redemption that is promised to be coming. The tension felt is intended to draw us to God as we hope for redemption because there is no one else that can restore creation.

While we may not know specifically what all of this looks like, what we can say is that there is for certain restoration on the way and that it is through the handiwork of Jesus.

The comparison to childbirth here is a great analogy. The discomfort, pain and anxiety that comes along with being pregnant but when that season ends the birth of a baby there is more joy and love than ever could be imagined and it overwhelms the senses in a way that makes the difficulties of being pregnant of less value than the elation and pride of holding that baby!

Paul transitions next to discuss what we all know to be true, just like all of creation, within our own souls is a longing for the world to be right. A longing for our world to be right.

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. 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.

The shift now is from creations groans to groaning ourselves. And these groans like that of creations are due to the suffering we go through while knowing this is not the way things are suppose to be.

We all feel this in our life today don't we?

The reference to firstfruits here is to bring about in our minds a foretaste of a full harvest in the future. It is a promise. So the firstfruits of the Spirit given is to say that we, Christian, have the Holy Spirit and He is our promise that redemption is coming. This life is not all there is. The good things we see and receive in this world are only a foretaste of whats to come for those who have faith in Jesus!

In the hope of the giving of the Holy Spirit, we are reminded that we are already saved, although not yet fully realized. There in lies the tension. Waiting with eagerness of vs. 23, while also patience of vs. 25.

And John Stott says here that **"the correct Christian posture in this tension is to wait."**

Wait for our hope of salvation to be fully ripe. Wait for our hope of redemption to be birthed. Wait for our hope of being in the presence of Jesus to be fully realized.

vs 24 "For in this hope we were saved" or INTO this hope you were saved! Without Jesus' life, death and resurrection, humanity is left to only the present to look to for hope and whether that be political climate, peace on earth, financial assurance, relationships with others, what we all know is these are playdough idols. Weak. Ever changing. Easily toppled. Not life giving and no life in themselves.

While what we hope for may be yet unseen, it is not uncertain. We are saved to a hope that the day will come when our pains are frustrations with the world not being what it should be are long forgotten about. And that hope is fulfilled in faith in Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit.

And when that day comes, we will no longer hope. We will be there. Our last breath outside of heaven and in the brokenness of this world will have been exhaled and our first breath with Jesus our brother and savior will be inhaled.

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. 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.

The important approach to this text is remembering what the Holy Spirit through Paul is trying to teach the Roman Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians as well as Christians today.

And here is the ultimate message here, in your present sufferings you are not alone. We groan alongside creation at the brokenness around us and within us. Hope of redemption sustains you, and so does the Spirit sustain.

The Holy Spirit is with you to help you, to sustain, to lift you up. How? By reminding you of the Gospel. By bringing to our hearts the hope that this present life will not last and the glory won for us by Jesus Christ awaits us for eternity. So when the suffering is too much to bear and we are not sure how to pray any more, the Holy Spirit intercedes in those moments, continuing to draw our hearts and minds to the heart of our loving heavenly Father who longs to embrace His children with all the love and intimacy of a daughter running into the arms of her daddy!

John Stott says of this text that these **groaning's are not to say that our prayers are inexpressible, but the words are not expressed.**" He goes on to explain, that we do not know what to pray in our sufferings. Should we pray for God to remove these sufferings from us and thereby be glorified for his miraculous and sovereign power or should we ask for perseverance to endure the sufferings with all grace and hope of the life to come! Since we are not certain it is the Spirit who intercedes for us in that moment, ministering to our souls and reminding us that we are not alone and the victory for our eternity is no longer in the balance!

So Christian, in your weakness and suffering, be comforted that the Holy Spirit, is interceding on behalf of all saints according to the will of God that you may be strengthened to endure if that is Gods will or that you may praise God when you are healed if that be Gods will.

Tony Merida says "Be comforted by the fact that God knows your heart, that God is working for you, and that the Spirit's prayers are always effective."

No matter the suffering you go through, whether it be momentary on earth or momentary in light of eternity, cling tightly to these past truths and to these next truths as well.

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.**

This verse is what some commentators have referenced as a pillow on which to rest our weary heads...

Its important to define what Paul means here by good. He cannot mean a good life as the America dream defines it. This entire chapter has been about suffering well for the glory of God! Thats in direct contradiction to the good life of consumeristic, Americanized christianity. Paul does not mean temporal good. He is referring to that which is an eternal good. Namely glory to Gods name.

May you find rest for your weary soul knowing that in all things God is working them for an eternal good in you that He has saved.

I am so thankful Paul places this next text right here. This is often referred to the golden chain of salvation. While certainly true, this is also a helpful reminder that God has done all for our salvation and will do all to sustain us and what we see next as glorify us.

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Paul wrote this glorious text that we might see the mercy and kindness of God. If we see anything other than that as we gain a weightier knowledge of these verses, we have missed His heart.

Foreknew-More than looked into the future and saw who would choose him. That understanding is not congruent with the word Paul used here and ultimately takes God out of the driver seat for our salvation and puts us in it. The original language better understand foreknew as fore-loved. Meaning God, before time began, looked into the future, saw his children and loved them as his own. Even before they knew they would be his. This is evidenced also by other texts like Deut 7:7 **"It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples"** as well as Eph 1:4-5 **"⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,"**

And Adoption is this way. Sarah and I are in the process of adoption now. And our hearts have already gone into the future and are fore-loving our son today. He doesn't know us and doesn't know that we are right now praying for him. Working with the US government. Following the wisdom and guidance of Lifeline adoption agency to bring him home. Unlike God however, we do not know his name or face either, but he is our son and we long for the day he comes home. He is fore-loved.

Predestined-Then God predestined his children to one day be saved or conformed into the image of the Son. He marked in time the moment they would awaken to see him as God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Their savior and king.

Called-This word has a more full understanding than simply to call out. But it is often referred to by theologians as Gods effectual call. Having its connections to the way God spoke and the earth came into exists, He calls and his children are awakened to see Him for who He truly is. Their savior.

John Stott says, "This is not the general gospel call, but a divine summons which raises the spiritually dead to life"

Justified-God also justified all who believe. Meaning, the Father has fully accepted the sacrifice of the Son on behalf of all who believe and will believe. This is shown not just in Jesus' death

but even more so in his resurrection from the dead and taking his seat at the right hand of the Father.

You who hope in this Jesus for salvation are saved and fully justified. Not just sins forgiven, but sins forgotten. Jesus' righteousness is now yours!

And we know this by the way Paul finishes the golden chain...

Glorified-Past tense. I love this. This is what some theologians consider to be the prophetic past. This is something that has not yet happened but Paul speaks as though it has, because it will! Although we are not, in Christ we will be and Paul speaks as though we already are.

Paul then takes us to the last section in today's text. Here we see some of the most comforting and affirming words to the weary, anxious, suffering Saints.

He takes us into a rhythm of rhetorical questions based on what he has just affirmed and we have seen of the saving work of God in the life of the believer.

God's Everlasting Love

³¹ **What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?**

³² **He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.**

"these things" are in reference to both the immediate preceding verses as well as chapters 1-7! In light of these things... What shall we say? God is for us, and we know this because he gave to us His son and still gives graciously more, it is God who justified us so no one can bring a charge against us nor can anyone condemn us. God has declared that He is all of these things because of Jesus. Believe it Christian.

You can believe it because he did not spare Jesus, his own son. What else is he holding back? What else that is good could he hold back? No, He has given Christ on our behalf. Anything else given is a lesser gift.

Nobody can bring a charge against you Christian because God, foreknowing you and all your sins, chose you, predestined you to become like Jesus, you are now justified in Christ, and are as good as glorified in him! And as if we needed anymore proof that God is for you and loves you, Jesus is right now interceding for you at the right hand of the father. Telling the Father, my blood is that one's blood. My perfection is his. My righteousness is hers as well.

May your heart and soul feel the heart of your loving heavenly Father! Be encouraged. Be uplifted. That out of God's character, being love, he overflows that love into the heart of his children!

And praise God, Paul doubles down on this mystery we know as the Gospel...

³⁵ **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?**

³⁶ **As it is written,**

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**

³⁸ **For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Nothing separates Gods children from His love!

We started chapter 8 last week with no condemnation. And we end with no separation. All this for a reminder that we all need of Gods faithful and everlasting love and all who put their faith in Jesus receive it!

In verse 36 Paul quotes Psalm 44, and seems to confirm this idea that persecution/hardships are not new to Christians and should not come as a surprise to us today. While also reminding us that this will not separate us from Gods love.

In fact, in suffering, Christian you are not just a conquerer, but you are MORE than that! You and I are heirs to the throne of God. You and I and children of God. This light and momentary hardship will not last and does not push God away. In fact He says just the opposite.

John Stott "Our confidence and hope is not in our love for him, but in his love for us which is steadfast, faithful and persevering."

It is in His saving work that you can find confidence and comfort today Christian that God loves you, is for you, and is working all things for his glory. And if you are are hear today and have not this confidence and comfort, the calling of Christ is to come. Confess to Him today that you cannot save yourself so you put your hope in the work of Jesus today. You are not a good god, but He is and He is calling you with grace and mercy to submit the rest of your to live for His kingdom!