



Sermon Notes | Eagerly Awaiting | Romans 8:23-25

## **INTRODUCTION**

We return to this passage which deals with Creation 'Eagerly Waiting' for the 'Coming of Glory'.

Romans 8:18-30

*"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 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. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 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. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. 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. 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. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 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. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."*

We thank You, Lord in Heaven, for the Word and that it has been revealed to us. Open our eyes to see the words, and hear them, and to receive them, and by Your grace may we live them for Your glory. Amen.

Last week we learned that creation, the non-human part of the creation, is waiting with eager longing for its true inhabitants to be revealed. Creation, subjected to futility by Adam's willingness to sin, has left creation 'groaning', unknowing when the pain will stop. For God subjected the creation 'unwillingly' (8:22). Like childbirth, there are now terminal 'groans', groans onto the glory which is yet to come. But as labour pain gives way to new birth, so too will the creation's groan give way, in its case, to a new 'creation glory' and a 'new earth'. As we read, we will see that alongside the creation, there is another group to be revealed. At the heart, at the centre-piece of God's cosmic renewal and redemption, another group is also 'groaning'.

Romans 8:23

*"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."*

We note therefore, that not only creation 'groans', but we ourselves 'groan' with them.

### **I. OUR GROAN: (v. 23)**

Romans 8:23

*"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."*

Creator God is not renewing the creation and discarding man, nor is He renewing creation and replacing man. No. Creator God is 'renewing' both the creation and the creatures. It will be a complete cosmic 'renewal', the 'renewed' mankind on a 'renewed' earth. Thus it will be a complete reversal, returning creation to its original design, the way it was like back in Genesis 1, the way it was meant to be before Adam's sin, and before the curse. Adam, the first head, the old head, and the old representation, and by his actions and his sin, he caused the subjection and caused the curse. But from eternity past, God's plan was fundamental to 'renovate and to renew', never to stop, discard or replace. That is our God! But unlike God in this matter, we are the ones who discard and replace. We love our disposables, our replacements, and we see nothing good, nor value the old. But God does! He created us, and He will fully renovate us finally and completely. God 'restores'. This is part of the 'coming glory to be revealed' to us. Thus the creation 'groans', and we also.

We take a step back now to look at this 'other group' so that we are very clear on who this 'other group' is that 'groans' alongside creation. Who is this group? Is it simply all of humanity and mankind, the creation and all the creatures? If so, then all would be okay. There would be no need to worry about bad news, and there would be no such thing as 'good news'. It would just be news and don't worry, all will be okay. But 'good news' is all about our salvation, and if everyone is to be renewed in the end then there is no need for concern. Many today, in fact more and more people today, believe that there is no need for concern, that everyone is going to be okay in the end, that love wins, so don't fret, wink, wink. Such is universalism rebranded! It sounds good to some, but is it true? Is it what God says? No. The Creator has something to say about His created. Scripture tells us that only those with the firstfruits of the Spirit (Romans 8:23) are okay. Only this 'subset', this special group, as defined by Scripture will be okay. So then, what are 'firstfruits' of the Spirit?

'Firstfruits' is an agricultural term referring to the 'best', the choicest, of the first of the harvest. It is a sample of what is to come, the 'first of the best' which is to come.

Exodus 23:19

*"The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God."*

Leviticus 23:10

*"Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, 'When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.'"*

'Firstfruits' then, first and naturally, refers to 'the first' in order. The Old Testament establishes that it is 'a portion of the whole' made by God's people 'to God'. The same idea of 'firstfruits' is in the New Testament, but now the term is applied to 'believers', first to 'redeemed' Israel, and then to the 'redeemed' Gentiles, they being, a portion of the entire 'redeemed people' among the nations.

Romans 11:16

*"If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches."*

Romans 16:5

*"Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia."*

II Thessalonians 2:13

*"But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth."*

Thus, 'firstfruits' refers to the 'believing saints'. But there is more yet to consider concerning this.

I Corinthians 15:20-22

*"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."*

I Corinthians 15:3-4

*"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."*

The 'firstfruits' is then, a consideration of the resurrection, of those who have passed away and are asleep in death; death comes first, and then they are made alive, the resurrection of the dead. And Christ was the 'first' to be raised from the dead, and made alive again. As in Adam we all die, so also in Christ we shall all be made alive, Christ Himself being the 'firstfruit' of the resurrection. How so, do you ask? Christ is the first to

rise, the 'choicest', the 'perfect' One. He goes before all others. Christ is the first of the resurrection harvest.

And now, back to Romans, and to the context: 'the coming glory to be revealed'.

Romans 8:18

*"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."*

Revealed to whom? Revealed to those who have experienced, first and in part; those in process, those who have glimpsed a preview of the coming resurrection, from Christ, to Pentecost, to Rome, and now to Peterborough. Having revealed to us, not in body, but to our soul, having 'inward renewal', that is, 'regeneration', the indwelling of Holy Spirit: that being, the 'already' aspect of our great salvation, restoring our soul and enabling us to live as we ought, choosing God's way.

But we still await the 'not yet'. We have 'not yet' severed all ties to the 'old man'. We have 'firstfruit' of the Holy Spirit, but we do not yet have 'full fruit' of the Spirit, which is our 'new body glorified', and the perfection to live without sin. We have 'fruit' from the Spirit now, but not all 'fruit' is complete yet.

Galatians 5:22-23

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."*

Galatians 5:25

*"If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit."*

So, we, the regenerated, have this blessing, but not all of humanity have this, and that is why we are not all okay.

Ephesians 1:13-14

*"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."*

To have 'firstfruit of the Spirit' is to have experienced the first step in an 'unbreakable' process to glory, that being, to have received something directly from God (Romans 8). The people of God give to God, but in this matter, you have been given something important by God. Almighty God is pledging that His gift is given, and guaranteed, the implication being, that if GOD has given it, pledged it, and guaranteed it, then it cannot be given away or lost. It will be seen through to perfection. It is like a divine down-payment, with more to come. Therefore, it is assured 'glorification', "... the glory that is to be revealed to us," (Romans 8:18b). The revealing of what God has done is coming. It is secure. That is God's plan. Meanwhile, we live in the 'in between'; we live with the creation, and we too 'groan', but we groan the groan of the 'redeemed'.

Note the context: Knowing what is to come, knowing what should be yearned for, and yearning for that, for it will be fulfilled. But yet we 'groan', the same 'enduring' 'groan' of creation which perpetuates the same 'yearning'. It cannot be helped. It is the 'groan' of the here and now, the 'groan' of the 'in between' of the 'already' and the 'unknown'. We are 'justified' 'already' but 'glorified' 'not yet'. We currently journey between the two poles. While joy is our coming position, for now we languish in pain and suffering under the curse. We 'groan' inwardly; it's not our decaying body of flesh 'groaning'. No. It comes from inward, from the 'renewed' part of the body. It is an 'internal' 'groan' from where the Holy Spirit resides, for 'inwardly' we long for more. We think by the Spirit, even though the body itself still is a decaying environment, and therefore we experience 'soul trouble'. Why is that? There is a 'disconnect' between life and the decaying environment. We are waiting eagerly for our 'adoption'. It is all real, but it is part of the process, for the 'adoption' is not fully complete yet. But knowing it is coming causes us to cry 'Abba Father'.

Romans 8:15

*"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"*

We remain waiting for the full 'adoption' to be a reality.

Romans 8:19

*"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God."*

And we remain waiting for the full 'redemption' of our body.

Romans 8:23

*"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."*

We have in 'adoption' new, full rights and privileges, a new spirit, a new identity, and an inheritance to be claimed, but we still need a new body. And we will be granted a new and 'glorified' body in time. Paul speaks to this truth elsewhere, providing context for creation, the temporal vs the eternal. We read further concerning the 'longing' which we have for our heavenly Father, the 'longing' to be further clothed, the ongoing 'groan' in the Spirit.

II Corinthians 5:21

*"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

II Corinthians 5:2

*"For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling."*

## II Corinthians 4:16-18

*"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 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."*

That the Spirit guarantees to us a 'glorified body' is also expressed to the Philippians.

## Philippians 3:20-21

*"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."*

We are to be like Him, our Saviour, Jesus. This is what we wait for. First we will have a 'natural' body, and then we shall have a 'spiritual' body. The same is true of the dead. Paul describes this for us.

## I Corinthians 15:42-49

*"So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven."*

Yet, Paul tells us, we will 'groan' as we wait.

## Romans 8:23

*"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."*

But do all Christians 'groan'? No. Some miss the disconnect between body and soul. Some become too comfortable in the 'between', resting in this world. They have 'spirit security' but they rest too easily in this world. They 'groan' for perishable things. This can be so for us too; let this not be us.

## **II. OUR HOPE: (vv. 24-25)**

## Romans 8:24-25

*"For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."*

"For in this hope we were saved," (v. 24).

The hope of the 'not yet'—the 'firstfruit adoption': a new spirit, a new name, a new body... This is the 'hope' of our salvation. It is not just 'felt' hope. Our 'hope' is not just 'wishful' hope. It is not just 'wishful thinking'. Our 'glorious hope' is a sure and certain statement, grounded in Biblical soundness, rooted in a sure coming truth, and therefore we can say, 'My body may die but I will also rise.' This is our Biblical 'hope': a new body. It is glorious, it is true, and it fuels our everything.

Biblical 'hope' is not seen, yet all around us is a world that says 'We have to see to believe. We have to see to have hope. Such is the foundation of rationalism, skepticism, and doubt. Thomas, the disciple of Jesus, spent much time with Him, and saw much, yet still he doubted (John 20:26-29). We can also be affected by Thomas' tendencies; (unless I see, I won't believe and I won't have hope). But true 'hope' rises above such. True 'hope' is the stuff of 'underdog' stories. Effective 'hope' looks past what we see, and sees the 'winning run' not the 'process of getting there'. What do you see? Where are your eyes fixed? Is your 'hope' looking forward to tomorrow? Are you looking ahead and seeing past what can now be seen? Are you like the runner who sees only to his desired end line, or are your eyes fixed on the unseen? In creation, what we see is futility. Our senses do not permit us to see the body perfected, for our hope is dependent on what we can see. It seems so hopeless, and we see so much hopelessness around us. We 'groan' for these things that we can see, laws, deconstruction movements, friends, and that which is part of the life we live, and this is hopeless.

Biblical 'hope' exists in the things 'not seen'. Christian 'hope' resides in 'present hiddenness' and 'future revealing'. It is 'hope unseen'.

Hebrews 11:1

*"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."*

Christian, we need to be careful here... Worldly hope is what we are used to. But Biblical 'hope' is not that. Biblical 'hope' is not about wishing and wanting, and a matter of waiting to hear back. Our 'hope' is for what is 'unseen', then we wait patiently, and earnestly, and with perseverance.

Romans 8:25

*"But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."*

Biblical 'hope' is waiting for that which one knows is coming, that one knows is certain, and that one endures the present and temporary circumstances for, and is patient to do so because one knows that 'better is coming'. One day 'hope' will no longer exist. 'Hope' will fade away, and faith will become sight.

I Corinthians 13:8-13

*"Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like*

*a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

And so, Biblical 'hope' is permanent, unseen, and it is always given, felt, and lived out in context with suffering. Unbelievers also wait, but wait for vain things. (Standing in line for sales is not a matter of suffering, for example). Waiting, but having no suffering, is not Biblical 'hope'. Waiting for the Christian proves difficult, and it is associated with suffering. And so we rejoice, even in suffering.

Romans 5:3

*"Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance..."*

From Paul to Peter, we are instructed on hope and suffering. Always in suffering, there is 'hope'.

I Peter 1:3-7

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

Blessed be those who bear up with Biblical 'hope' (as did the Church of Ephesus, noted in Revelation).

Revelation 2:2-3, 7

*"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ... He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."*

Always waiting patiently and eagerly, in the context of 'hope', suffering deeply, looking to what we cannot yet see, waiting and 'groaning' but with the joy of certainty, minds fixed, vision fixed, not for now seeing, but for then, when our 'hope' is turned into the 'glory' to come. It is not wishful thinking. No. Our eager 'hope' and patient enduring is about certain truth, about our Saviour Jesus Christ and His finished work.

Hebrews 13:8

*"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."*



Our 'hope' knows that Christ said all that the Father gives Him will come to Him and will never be cast out. Of this we are sure. That which He began will be brought to completion. He will do it because He is faithful.

John 6:37

*"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whosoever comes to me I will never cast out."*

Philippians 1:6

*"And I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."*

I Thessalonians 5:24

*"He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it."*

That is the only 'hope' that is worthwhile.

'Hope' must be held to, but in proper balance with our 'groans'. As much as we 'groan', we must never crowd out our 'hope' or forget God's promises. Our 'groans' must also never cause passivity, or fuel laziness, or cause pessimism or unbelief. Rather, they must stir us up, to love and to do good works. There is so much work to do. The world is dying and others with it. 'Hope' must also never cancel out our 'groans' in an opposite extreme, nor try to cancel out God's Hand. It does not presume on the promises of God, but waits Biblically.

Let us 'groan' in 'hope' and get the balance right. We have the 'firstfruits' of the Spirit. Our redemption is not complete yet in this body on this earth, but in Christ we are fulfilled and complete. Only in Christ do our 'groans' find rest, and only in Christ is our 'hope' found. Only in Christ!