

HOPE AND IDENTITY: Romans 8:18-30

One of the 'buzz words' you are hearing much in these times is identity. Who are you? Who are we? Talk abouts about hope and identity. Indeed, those two are inseparably linked. However, not in the way that you have been hearing in the past few weeks. You are hearing a narrative that fixes hope squarely on the efforts of mankind to act differently. Is that really all it takes?

Our Creator, of course, says differently. Our Lord speaks directly about our hope and identity in the passage we will look at this Sunday – Romans 8:18-30. Take some time and consider the truths before you in these verses of God's Word.

HOPE AND IDENTITY: (Ben Inglis) (Part II: The Benefits of Adoption)

See also Part I: Adoption: A Status Received (Ben Inglis) January 12th, 2020

Romans 8:18-30

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." (NASB)

Introduction:

It is a universal desire to 'long for home', a place of permanence, out of reach of change, a place of welcome, where we are known and loved, where lights are on, and there is food on the table. Yet the search for this seems illusive, out of reach. People spend their lives relocating, changing jobs, falling in and out of relationships, always seeking something, anything stable, that can be held on to. They change jobs because they don't like their boss, and move to change neighbourhoods. But still 'hollowness of the soul' abounds time and time again, and the cycle begins over and over again. The anticipation that 'this will finally be it' never seems to find fulfillment. We cannot resolve our desires, and the 'longing' lives on.

The Bible reason for this constant unsettledness is that 'WE HAVE NOT BEEN CREATED FOR THIS WORLD, BUT FOR ANOTHER'. Can a fish find rest on the land? No. The fish was made for water. Therefore, in the same way, we will

never find our rest here on earth. As humans we are meant to find our rest in God, through Christ, who is our home.

'My faith has found a resting place, not in device or creed.
I trust the ever living One, His wounds for me shall plead.' (Words from hymn.)

As Christians, we have arrived in this 'resting place', have found this place of peace, via 'ADOPTION'. (See Ben's previous sermon on Adoption.) By 'ADOPTION' we have been transferred from the 'kingdom of darkness' to the 'kingdom of Christ', to Light; from the moment we believe we are transferred from the status of 'enemy' to that of a 'SON or DAUGHTER'. Yet, we also know that part of this 'ADOPTION' has not been realized up till now. We are waiting still for when Jesus appears.

I John 3:2

"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet that we shall be. We know that, if He should appear, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is." (NASB)

So there remains this question; everything we take for granted is in question. While the blessing of a stable society is nice, we must not confuse our stable 'temporary home' with our 'permanent home' to come. For the true 'HOPE' of the Christian is not in a stable government or economy here on earth. Our permanent home is with Jesus, not this world that we currently live in. We must not forget this truth. This world is not our home. It is but the 'pre-show', showing us the credits for what is to come.

Remember also Hebrews 11; the homeless saints, persecuted and wandering, YET THEY HAVE HOPE for what they will find, not the regain of political influence, NO, they are seeking a HOMELAND, a heavenly country. This 'HOPE' helps them to endure, to keep going on in this broken and futile world. Chapter 7 of Romans speaks of the 'wrestling saints', their inner turmoil, the 'old man' vs the 'new man', the Spirit versus the flesh. Paul, in Chapter 8 of Romans, is writing to saints just like that, upon whom the end of the age has come, warning them, encouraging them, pulling back the curtain to show them the light of what is to come. And the message is for us as well. Everything in the past was written to teach us, to provide 'HOPE'.

Romans 15:4

"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." (NASB)

Preamble About Hope:

We need to think correctly and clearly about HOPE, so that we do not become confused.

Romans 8:20-21

"For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." (NASB)

Our own definitions of 'HOPE' are not those of God. Our natural sense of hope is unrealistic optimism, ideals we create, naivety, reaching for hope based on our plans, on desires that are not sure, plans that have no substance in God's Will. Our sense of hope is but 'cotton candy dreams', and becomes 'worthless' because we do not have the power to bring any of it to pass. We are at the mercy of our circumstances. Therefore, we need substance, the Biblical definition and understanding of HOPE.

HOPE is looking forward to something, with 'reason for confidence', and 'expecting fulfillment'. Biblical HOPE is given by God Himself, not by a government or a man. This giver is the Master Architect Himself, the Creator, the omnipotent One, the eternal One. He is the God of Isaiah, the God who 'neither slumbers or sleeps' (Psalm 121:4). Therefore, HOPE is reasonable, and it is reasonable to HOPE in our God.

Isaiah 25:1,9a

"O Lord, Thou art my God;
I will exalt Thee, I will give thanks to Thy name;
For Thou hast worked wonders,
Plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.
'Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us.'" (NASB)

THREE Ways why 'HOPE AND FINAL ADOPTION' should Encourage Us:

I HOPE IN A FUTURE ADOPTION HELPS CLARIFY THE CRUSHING WEIGHT OF OUR PRESENT SUFFERING: (w 17-18)

Romans 8:17-18

"and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (NASB)

Paul gives two reasons how a 'HOPE' in future glory clarifies and redeems our present suffering. Christians will suffer, but there is a point for the suffering. Our suffering is not random. No. Our suffering will contribute to our future glory. It acts as the 'rain that produces the ultimate harvest', in this case our ultimate glorification with Jesus. Suffering is necessary for our glorification. Like plants need a season of cold to become healthy and hardy, so will the calm be better to those who have been storm tossed. So we have been seasoned for suffering. (Two ships are sailing; the one which has gone through the storm will be the happiest to see the shore.) But if not a Christian, suffering is not doing this for you. Why is this so? It is because the non Christian is still in sin, is still an enemy of God. Heaven is only for those who have repented and become a child of God. Apart from Christ, the current suffering is deserved, and the temporal suffering will be replaced by 'eternal' suffering and hell. Being away from the presence of God is therefore not a good place to be in. Today is the day of 'salvation'.

So then, suffering 'produces glory' (vs 17), and there is nothing worth comparing to the 'glory' that is to be revealed ahead (vs 18).

It is not that suffering should be brushed off. No. Paul is deeply acquainted with suffering, having been shipwrecked, stoned, abandoned, to name a few examples, but the suffering has an end in sight. He is giving his expiry date as a perspective. If our present suffering, anxiety, oppression, poverty, heartbreak, loneliness,

persecution, etcetera, is all we hear, then this is devastating, and indeed, a huge weight, a crushing voice. But if it is set in the 'backdrop to seeing Jesus', and in light of eternity, then "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" I Corinthians 15:55 (NASB). Suddenly, suffering is declawed, and made powerless.

The 'HOPE' of salvation is due to being 'glorified with Him', and that 'glory' is yet to be revealed to us. Suffering is temporary in light of eternity.

II HOPE IN A FUTURE ADOPTION CHANGES GROANS OF DESPAIR INTO GROANS OF ANTICIPATION: (verses 20-23)

Romans 8:20-23

"For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within our selves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." (NASB)

Who is groaning?

1. Creation (vs 20) groans over and over, but is not effective, due to the fact that creation has been subjected to 'futility', to bondage and decay.

Futility like pushing a rock up hill and having it just roll down the other side... Over and over repetition but never getting the desired result, ineffective, futile effort. Like sea turtles that lay dozens of eggs, but many do not hatch because most are eaten by the sea gulls. Like the beautiful delicate summer flowers that burst into bloom but are dead in less than a week. Like man, who labours and saves, building up a legacy, but is dead by 75-80 years. The trend to decay and futility is always prevalent; something always goes wrong, or falls away. The customer is never happy. There are always budget cuts so that the job cannot be done well. The boss is never content, and always has unreasonable expectations. Subject to decay. The ideals of the movie 'Lion King's' theme 'circle of life' ... life, death, rebirth: a wonderful process, yet a futile process, because of life's rot and decay.

2. Christians (vs 23) groan inwardly, waiting for our 'adoption' as sons and daughters. We know the verse refers to Christians, due to Romans 1:7 in which Paul states "to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints." (NASB)

Why are we groaning?

We groan because we, like Creation, are also under the 'curse of decay', body and projects. And because of the 'battle of sin'. Mankind mourns a duality, loving God, but also loving sin. The habits come back, the idols are torn down and return doubting God, falling, over and over, spiritual dryness, desertion, futility, cursed; an inner battle of sin.

How do we get to this place?

It is the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin, PLUS the consequences of our own sin. We are repeating what we've sown.

Yet another dimension is indicated: 'Creation was subjected to futility', to decay(vs 20), not by its own will, but by the 'Will of God'. It was God's decision. It was not that over all creation did anything wrong, but since Adam and Eve sinned, God decided that creation would be caught up in the fate of mankind, and so both creation and mankind are now caught up in the consequences of sin.

How is creation groaning?

1. Groans of despair, terminal hopelessness.
2. Expectant Groaning, anticipatory groaning, as in childbirth.

Romans 8:22

"For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." (NASB)

Giving birth is painful, yes, and with the pain comes the longing for it to be over. There is much groaning in the process, yet the pain is mixed with HOPE, the eagerness of seeing the 'new life'. Therefore it is a groaning of 'eager expectation', an anticipation. The waiting is not fun, but when there is expectation at the end, there is HOPE and believability helping to keep us motivated. Yet not everyone wants to think of the end, of death, and seek to drown it out with TV, games, work and a million other distractions. But not creation, and not the saints. We are waiting at the window, waiting for our 'final redemption'. Creation is figuratively 'straining on the leash' for what is to come, NEW LIFE, and the end of decay.

What are we groaning for? What is the expectation? How will it be realized?

Romans 8:23

"And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." (NASB)

We anticipate an event, the resurrection of the saints, redemption, freedom from the curse of sin for the children of God. The Day of Resurrection, a day of liberty, a day of redemption of the saints, a redemption of our physical bodies. This is the day when the 'already gives way to the not yet'. As Christians we know that we are already adopted; our inheritance is certain. So what is still missing? We are waiting for our final clothing. The full realization of our 'adoption', the loop of HOPE is not complete until what is 'hoped for' is received.

II Corinthians 5:2,4

"For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." (NASB)

The 'redemption of our bodies' is an event still shrouded in mystery. Author Wendell Berry points out that we will not be 'floating around' pure and free in this redemption; we will be living life as we know it, but 'without the curse', without the slavery to decay and death. Redemption will be a 'restoration', a jarring event, carefully planned, predicted, and set in place/motion by the Cross of Calvary.

II Peter 3:10

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up." (NASB)

II Peter 3:13

"But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." (NASB)

Impurities will be removed, corruption removed, 'a new earth' will be made, having only righteousness.

Isaiah 25:6-9

"And the Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain;
A banquet of aged wine; choice pieces with marrow,
And refined, aged wine.
And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples,
Even the veil which is stretched over all nations.
He will swallow up death for all time,
And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces.
And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth;
For the Lord has spoken
And it will be said in that day,
Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;
Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation." (NASB)

Without the Cross there would be no Romans 8, there would be no Revelation, only judgement. But the Cross happened, and God will see the acts of His redemption and adoption through to the end. This is our 'HOPE.' This is our ANTICIPATION.

III OUR HOPE IN FUTURE ADOPTION ENABLES US TO WAIT PATIENTLY: (verse 25)

Romans 8:25

"But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it." (NASB)

This may be a time when you are in conflict. As was King David. (See Psalm 55 for his prayer.) We read, in part:

Psalm 55: 4-8

"My heart is in anguish within me,
And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
Fear and trembling come upon me;
And horror has overwhelmed me;
And I said, 'O that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.
Behold, I would wander far away,
I would lodge in the wilderness.

I would hasten to my place of refuge
From the stormy wind and tempest." (NASB)

Like David, we tend to feel powerless to help ourselves. We don't know what to do. We long for no more suffering. We want to fly away, want to not have to deal with another hard thing. We may turn to 'quick-fix' solutions, or fall to despair, but despair is not a virtue. Despair is not humble. Despair is an act of forgetting/ignoring HOPE, an act of unfaithfulness, a fundamental disbelief that God will be faithful to make 'all things new'. Despair is not a mature response to suffering. It is 'forgetting' the HOPE we have. The correct response is neither despair or indulgence. The correct response is 'PATIENCE'.

Paul Bunyun's 'Pilgrim's Progress' addresses the Passion and Patience of the world. We read:

"I saw ... two little children, each one in his chair. The name of the eldest was Passion, of the other Patience. Passion seemed to be much discontent, but Patience was very quiet. Then Christian asked, What is the reason of the discontent of Passion? The Interpreter answered, the Governor of them would have him stay for his best things, 'till the beginning of the next year; but he will have all now: But Patience is willing to wait.

Then I saw that one came to Passion, and brought him a bag of Treasure, and poured it down at his feet; the which he took up and rejoiced therein, and withall laughed Patience to scorn: But I beheld but a while, and he had lavished all away, and had nothing left him but rags...

These two lads are Figures; Passion of the men of this World, and Patience of the men of that which is come: For as here you see, Passion will have all now, this year; that is to say, in this world; so are the men of this world. They must have all their good things now; they cannot stay till next year, that is, until the next world, for their portion of good. That proverb, A Bird in the Hand is worth two in the Bush, is of more authority with them, than are all the Divine testimonies of the Good of the World to come. But as you saw, that he had quickly lavished all away, and had presently left him nothing but rags; so will it be with all such men at the End of this world."

Passion cannot wait, must have it all now, needs patience, but wants all suffering over now. We too want suffering to be gone, over with, and victory now, comfort now, and our culture lets us indulge in that, encourages us to indulge in that.

So, how do we get back to HOPE, to PATIENCE? We do so by/through CONFIDENT EXPECTATION, by leaning on, by getting back to God's Word, by trusting in the absoluteness of God's promises to us and to the creation. Eternal life, and glory, and the redemption of our bodies, is a sure thing. It is a purchased reality. It will outdo all the madness of this world.

Isaiah 65:17

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, And the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind." (NASB)

At our final adoption, the sheer wonder of being with the Lamb, of following Him everywhere, of seeing His glory, of living in the renovated creation, then will crisis and sin not come to mind. Our testimony must be that we 'walk in HOPE', not in blind optimism. Ours must be confident 'EXPECTATION', for He will return, and He will set all

things right. There will be no more dark corners for sin to hide in. We must be so sustained in Him that we can endure all things.

Maranatha! COME LORD JESUS!

Revelation 22:20

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly'. Amen. Come Lord Jesus." (NASB)

Benediction:

Revelation 22:3-5

"And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bondservants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever." (NASB)

Amen, and Amen.