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SERIES: The Gospel Is
MESSAGE: Our Present Hope and Promise of Future Glory
PASSAGE: Romans 8:18-39
SPEAKER: Matt Meyer

Well, as we get ready, for our passage in Romans 8, I want to give you a picture to kind of keep in your mind as we go on this journey through our passage tonight. I want you to imagine with me that you're hiking up a mountain. And as you start, right at the base of the mountain, wherever you start, you're on a path and there's trees, and mostly all you can see is trees, and the path in front of you. And, you know, there's a stream now and then, maybe a beautiful waterfall. There's some rocks, but mostly, you just see the trees. And every now and then there's a break in the trees and you can see the top of the mountain, or what you think is the top, right? Because if you've ever hiked a mountain, you look up and you think, oh, that's where we're going, then you get there and you realize, oh, that was like blocking—where we're going is further up, right? And as you hike, mostly what you can see is what's right in front of you. And it's beautiful, and it's wonderful to be out in nature and in the mountains, it's glorious. But it's nothing compared to what the view will be from the top. Right? That's why we hike to the top.

So I have a picture that they're going to put up on the screen. This is from when Dan Lehman and I took a bunch of college students to the top of Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. Longs Peak is the highest mountain in the park. It's the highest peak, 14,256 feet above sea level. The view from the top is amazing. It's magnificent. It's beautiful. This picture's from about 26 years ago, and I'm the one in the gray vest, in the back, on the right. And if you look closely underneath that hat, you can see I actually had hair back then. But that's not why I wanted you to see it. I want you to see it because I want you to look past us, to the view beyond us. Right? Look how far you can see. The view extends for miles and miles. Multiple ranges of mountains as you keep looking. It's a little hard to see, but if you were to see the picture close up, multiple ranges. The view is amazing from the top of Longs Peak.

Our journey through Romans this spring can feel a bit like hiking up a mountain. Right? There are some wonderful things that God has shown us along the way about salvation, about righteousness, about justification, about battling sin. But it can feel like we see it, and then we just kind of keep going, plot along, and it's sometimes hard to get the big picture. Romans 8, where we were last week, where we are tonight, is considered one of the greatest chapters in the Bible for getting above the tree line and getting the fullest picture of the glorious things that God has done and is doing in the gospel. So I want us to keep this idea of hiking a mountain in mind as we work through this text tonight, because as we move through it, I think you will feel the view change for Paul as we move into the chapter and to the top of the mountain.

So I invite you to open up your Bibles or pull it up on your phone to Romans chapter 8. We're going to pick up right where Ryan left off last week. He stopped in verse 17, so we're going to start in verse 18. Romans 8:18:

18 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.



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So this ties us right into last week, right? Because Paul pointed out that in the last couple verses of last week, that the Holy Spirit is testifying with our spirit, reminding us that we are children of God, that we are heirs, fellow heirs with Christ. And then it says in verse 17, “if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.” And notice those two words, suffering and glory, are in verse 18 as well.

We recognize last week that as followers of Jesus, we will experience suffering and struggle because we still live in a world that's broken by sin. There will be struggle, just like hiking up a mountain can feel like a struggle at times, but the struggle and the suffering, Paul says, is nothing compared to the glory that's coming. And that phrase revealed to us at the end of verse 18, it's a little bit hard to translate. The “to us” at the end doesn't quite capture it. Maybe your Bible, a different translation, says “in us,” but that's not quite right either. It's kind of a combination of both the two in the end.

So let me see if I can explain it this way. The idea is that the glory that Paul's talking about already exists. Peter talks about this in 1 Peter chapter 1. He tells us of this inheritance of glory that is kept in heaven for us, ready to be revealed in the last time. So the glory that exists will one day be given to us so that it can reside in us. You see how it's a combination of the two? It's not just given to us—we experience it fully. We are transformed into Christ's image in the glory. And that suffering and struggle and glory is what Paul's going to unpack in the rest of our passage tonight. And to unpack it, he's going to go all the way back to the book of Genesis, chapter 3. I mean, he doesn't reference it, but you'll see why I say that. Look at verse 19 through 22 with me:

19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly 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 also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth [pangs of childbirth] until now.

Paul says creation is groaning. Creation here would be defined as all that God has made except for the humans that he made in his image. And the reason we excerpt those is, you'll see in a minute, creation was subjected to bondage and slavery to corruption and futility, not by its own choice, but because of somebody else's choice. God subjected it because of the choice of Adam and Eve. And somehow we are wrapped up, we are represented, in that and we live in slavery and bondage to sin because of their choice and because of the choices we have made. And because of our sin, everything that God made was affected. God subjected creation into futility in hope. Hope of what? Hope that the creation would be set free from its slavery to corruption, into the glorious freedom of the children of God. That's verse 21.

Paul says creation longs for the day when what is reserved in heaven for us will actually be brought into play. The language used, it's “waiting eagerly” there. And it's repeated later, you'll see it, is like someone standing on their tiptoes. Craning their neck forward. Looking, straining, longing, waiting for someone to come around the corner. Or over the top of a hill. All creation—the trees, the mountains, the oceans, the stars—they're all watching, they're all waiting, groaning, we're told. Longing to be set free into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

And Paul says it was in hope that God subjected it. And we need to remember, hope in the Bible is not the way we use the word hope. Right? We say things like, “well, I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow.” But when we say that, we have no ability to affect the outcome, to make that happen or come true. We just, “well, I really hope it doesn't—like, it would be really nice if it didn't rain tomorrow, because, you know, it's Mother's Day, and people are coming over my house.” And when God uses the word hope, it's a guarantee. It will happen, but we hope for it because it's still out there in the future.



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Paul says creation is groaning and hoping the way a pregnant woman groans and hopes. There's great pain in childbirth, but also great hope because of the child that's being formed. And then there's great celebration and joy when the child is born. The pain is worth it because of the child. All creation groans under the pain of sin, longing for the day when we, as the children of God, would enter fully into the glory that he has reserved for us. And next Paul is going to talk about us, the children of God. Verses 23 through 25:

23 And not only this [so not only what we just talked about about creation, not only this], but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves grown within ourselves, waiting eagerly [tiptoes, straining to see, waiting eagerly] for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance, we wait eagerly [tiptoes, right, waiting, we wait eagerly] for it.

So not only is creation groaning, we are groaning. We groan because we live in a broken world, because this is not the way it was supposed to be. This was not God's plan. This was not God's dream. We groan because our bodies are breaking down. We groan because we still struggle with sin. We have these fleshly bodies that still have habits that lean towards sin like we talked about in Romans chapter 7. And someday we'll be set free from this struggle. That's what Paul means by we are waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons.

You might say, no, wait, wait, wait a minute. I thought last week, Ryan showed us in verses 15 through 17 that we are adopted? He did, and we are. That's true. We are the sons and daughters of God. We have been adopted. The verse says we have received the Spirit of adoption, the Holy Spirit, the first fruits. But there's one thing, one step left, in the adoption process. The redemption of our bodies. There'll be a day where we no longer groan because we struggle, where our body is—tends towards, leans towards—this habit from my past life. The redemption of our bodies.

This is really important. Do we understand this? What the Bible says about resurrection is clear. Our bodies will break down and eventually die. They'll be put into the grave and they will disintegrate. But that's not the end of the story. When that happens, it's not that my spirit goes to be with Jesus, and he gives me a new body, and we float around on the clouds together. That is not what happens. The promise is, the hope of future glory is, that this body, the one that's disintegrating, the one that's breaking down, the one that will be put in the grave, this body will be resurrected. That's the promise. It will change from mortal to immortal. It will reach its fullness of glory as God originally intended back in the Garden of Eden.

And then all creation will be set free. No more futility. No more bondage to sin. So again, the theology, the vision—wow—the vision of God is not that when I die, good riddance to the body, and the sin-cursed earth, and God destroys them both, and we float around in the heavenlies as spirits. Romans 8 is clear that both our bodies and all creation, regarding both our bodies and all creation, God is not scrapping it all and starting over. He's redeeming it. He has bought it back. Jesus came and died for it. God is going to take everything that sin has tainted and cursed and destroyed and bring it back to life. So much so that in the book of Revelation, chapter 21, almost the very end of our Bible—you see how far, how wide and sweeping we were going?—chapter 21, God says, “behold, I am making all things new.” Feel like we're getting above the tree line yet? There's more to come.

See this, what we're talking about, hope of resurrection, creation being setting free, us coming into the fullness of glory. This is our present hope. This is what allows us to persevere through the most challenging of times. This is what Paul's referring to in verses 24 and 25. I'll read it to you again. He says:



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24 For in hope we have been saved [salvation, taken out from under the curse of sin, the power of sin, you have the ability now to obey, to walk with the Spirit—for in hope we have been saved], but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see [the redemption of our bodies, the glory, the creation set free—we hope for what we do not see], with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

Creation is waiting eagerly, hoping. We are persevering in hope, waiting eagerly. Creation is groaning. We are groaning. But there's one more who's groaning. Verses 26 and 27:

26 In the same way [so again, we're continuing on, talked about creation, talked about the children of God, 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; 27 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.

So creation is groaning. We are groaning. God himself is groaning. It says the Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. So not only do we persevere in hope of what's to come, but God himself is in it with us, he has come to dwell within us to help us. That word 'help' in the Greek means to lift up and carry the burden. God does not look at our situation and stand back and say, "well, get moving, get to it, obey." No, no, no. God does not stand on the sidelines. He enters in. He comes and enters into me to help me carry the load because life can be really hard at times and confusing. But the Spirit of God is right in the middle of the pain and confusion with you to help carry the load.

We groan. God searches our heart, knows our pain. The Spirit intercedes, the Spirit groans. It's a beautiful picture of God's commitment to get us through this life. The pain, the struggles, the journey to the finish line, of the glory that's waiting for us. See, we're getting higher on the mountain. But there's more. Romans chapter 8, 28 through 30, some of the most well-known verses:

28 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. 29 For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren [brothers and sisters]; 30 and these whom he predestined, he also called; and these whom he called, he also justified; and these whom he justified, he also glorified.

Romans 8:28, one of the most well-known verses. You might have this on a plaque in your house. It's on greeting cards. It might be on cards you're going to hand out to graduates here in these next couple of weeks. But the problem is that we often take 8:28 and pluck it right out of the middle of Romans 8. And we lose sight of what he's saying. And when we do that, it often allows us then to define "good." God works all things together for good—we define "good" how we want it to be, what we hope it to be. For those who are called according to his purpose—and we define what we think the "purpose" is.

But if we look at our passage, if we keep in mind the context, when we talk about God causing all things to work together for good, within the context of the passage, good is defined by the ultimate purpose we've been talking about—this amazing day that God is bringing us and all creation to. And God does this for those who love him, for those who are called according to his purpose, and then he defines purpose in verse 29—those whom God foreknew, he also predestined to become conformed to the image of his son.



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Now, the idea of foreknowing is not that God looked down through his crystal ball of history and saw what we were going to do and then made a decision. That's not what it is at all. The word know, that's part of foreknow. The word know, the root word of that is in the Greek is "ginosko," which indicates deep experiential knowledge. It's often used to describe the kind of knowing that occurs, that is experienced, in sexual relations—that deep and intimate and experiential. And throughout the scriptures, the idea of God knowing someone refers to his entering into deep experiential relationship with them.

So Paul is saying God's plan for you and I began in his decision to enter into a deep, intimate, experiential relationship with us. And that, in turn, led to other decisions, like to send his Son. And Jesus decided to come and this, in turn, leads to his decision to predestine us to be like Jesus, that we would be conformed to the image of his Son. This is one of the verses where we get our church vision statement from, right? We want to come together to know Jesus, to become more like him, to become conformed to the image of his Son, and help others do the same. God wants us to be his children like Jesus and enter into his glory.

And those whom he predestined, he says, he also called. These whom he called, he also justified. What does justified mean in Romans? Declared righteous. Brought back into a right relationship with himself. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. Now, everything in that list is already done except for glorified. It's already done for you, if you've trusted Christ as Savior. They're all listed in the past tense.

Now, interestingly, glorified, even though it hasn't happened yet, it's also listed in the past tense. The promise of glorification, everything that we've been talking about in this passage, is so certain that Paul wrote about it in the past tense. In the mind of God, it's already done. It's reserved in heaven for you and I. There's no chance that if he's justified you, that he won't glorify you. There's no chance you won't make it to this last day. God has promised he's put his Spirit in you. He's going to help carry the load. He will groan with you. He will walk with you. He will get you to this amazing day when you enter into the fullness of your salvation, and all creation is set free, and we experience God's magnificent glory together forever.

And Paul has reached the top, so he says, verse 31:

31 What then shall we say to these things?

So what does he mean by these things? Well, it could mean that he's talking about everything he's talked about since the beginning of Romans chapter 1, all the way up to this point. But most scholars think he's primarily referring to Romans chapters 5 through 8. Because they say through studying the text that it forms what's called an "inclusio," and here's what they mean by that.

If you remember weeks ago when Mark Mathewson took us into the first part of Romans chapter 5, he read the verses that we were about to read at the end of his message in Romans 8 because of the themes that are picked out at the end of Romans 8 and the beginning of Romans chapter 5, and they like mirror one another. And I don't have time to go in and point all of these out to you today. I'd encourage you to go, look for words like perseverance and suffering and glory. It's amazing to watch these things. And if you're in a Life Group this week, you're going to get to talk about that because that's one of the questions.

But in the next 8 verses, Paul asks at least four rhetorical questions. What's he doing? He's not asking for information. He's using questions to draw us into the discussion, to draw us into the point he's trying to make. And the answer to every single one of those questions is "no one." But he doesn't even give the answer because it's so obvious. What he does is, he gives the reason for the



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answer. And the reason for the answer of “no one” is the gospel, every single time. He says it in different ways, but the answer is the gospel every time.

I want you to listen in a minute when I read it, listen for the answer being the gospel. Now, we hear the word gospel so often that sometimes we pass right over it. The word gospel is “euangelion” in Greek. It means good news, and we think of it primarily as a religious word when we’re talking about the good news of Jesus, but in their day, it was an everyday word, right? In Paul’s day, it was a word that was used when big breaking news was happening. Like when a battle was won, or a new king was being enthroned, and the messengers of the “eungelion” would go running up to the highest place they could find, like a mountain, or the highest place in the city, and they would shout out, proclaiming that something incredible had happened. That’s what Paul’s about to do.

So for the most part, I’m going to read this to you the way I think Paul would have proclaimed it. And I’m not going to give you a lot of explanation, partially because I don’t think it needs a lot of explanation. But secondly, because Paul has worked his way up to the highest point on the mountain and now it’s time to see the view, proclaim the good news, the “euangelion.” The gospel. Romans 8:31 through 39.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered him over for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is he who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 25 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, "For your sake we were being put to death all day long; We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That’s right. The view is amazing. There’s nothing, no circumstance, no thing, that can separate us from God’s love because of the gospel.

So what’s the application today? Well, I want us to take a step back and look at verse 36 again. That verse, in the midst of this whole proclamation, feels a little bit out of place, right? For one, it’s probably set off because it’s a quotation, but it feels like it interrupts the flow of Paul’s proclamation. But he put it there for a reason. And anytime something feels out of place in scripture, like it interrupts, we should always take a second look at it, study it, think about it, meditate on it.

Verse 36 is a quotation from Psalm 44, verse 22. It’s a psalm of lament in suffering. Israel is lamenting because it seems like God has turned their back on him. And they are not in suffering because of something they have done wrong, but it doesn’t feel like God is hearing them. It doesn’t feel like God is present. If you were to go read that psalm, you would see over and over again, “how long, God?” We used to be this way, but now you’ve turned your back on us. I think Paul puts that in here because he’s a realist. He knows, through his own experience, that life doesn’t always feel like nothing can separate us from the love of God.

And it’s a good reminder that throughout this text, Paul talks about suffering and struggle. And Paul details his own sufferings in 2nd Corinthians 11:23 through 27—I encourage you to go take a look at that later. 2nd Corinthians 11:23 through 27. You will see him list the dangers he’s been in,



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the things he's experienced, and many of them are things he lists in verse 35. So he knows from experience.

So the question is, what should we do when we have feelings of doubt, or condemnation, or we feel like we are separated from God's love. What's a good response when we find ourselves in circumstances that seem to contradict the good news that Paul is proclaiming to us?

I'm going to give you 3 things. First one is this: go back to scripture. Remind yourself what's true. Go back to scripture and remind yourself what's true. In this text, I'll just pick out some things. God has foreknown you. He has chosen to enter into relationship with you. There's glory reserved for you and God will get you to that day. The Holy Spirit is with you in the struggle, seeking to help carry the load.

I'll just share with you from my own journey on this particular one. Many years ago, my first wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. And as Julie struggled through those things, Psalm 56 became a psalm that was very meaningful to her because she was facing a lot of lies. A lot of things have said, well, God must not love you because he's allowed this to happen in your life. You've messed up in some way. You've sinned in some way and that's why this is happening, right? All of these things. And sometimes she would call me—I was working, not here, I was working at a different job—she would call me and say, I can't handle it. I need you to come home. And I said, okay. And I would go home and what she meant was, I'm having lies that are, that are like, they're just fighting at me. I can't get my mind right about this.

So we didn't know anything else to do. We would open up to Psalm 56, and we read it out loud. Because in Psalm 56, David is in the midst of, he's in the wilderness. He's on the run. He's got enemies surrounding him, and he says this part way through the psalm, "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you, in God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise. In God, I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid." A little bit further down, he says, "God, you have taken account of my wanderings. You've put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book? Then my enemies will turn back. In the day when I call, this I know, God is for me."

And we would say that out loud to one another. And within a couple of years, complications of the cancer took her to be with Jesus. And Psalm 56 became really, for the same reason, really meaningful to me. Still is. Go back to scripture. And remind yourself what's true. That's number one.

Number two, pray. Express your struggle to God. Groan and allow the Spirit to groan with you. 1 Peter 5:6 and 7 says, "humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you at the proper time." Here it is, "casting all your cares upon him, because he cares for you." Know that God knows and feels your pain. You have a heavenly Father that is searching your heart to know your pain and the Holy Spirit that's groaning with you. Pray and talk to him about it.

I go back to the story of Julie often. Sometimes I would come home from work and I would say, how was your day? And she would say, well, I had it out with God today. And the first time she said that, I said, what does that mean? She said, well, I went out on the back porch and yelled at him for a while. She was praying. She was telling him how she felt, what she needed. God's big enough to handle it. He wants us to lament. Did you know that Almost 60 of the 150 psalms are lament psalms? It's the largest group by far. God receives our lament. He receives our prayers.

Third, talk to your community about it. Talk to your Life Group about it. If you're not in a Life Group, and you don't have a community, come talk to me. We'll help get you connected. But I want you to see throughout this passage, Paul talks in the plural. He uses terms like "us" and "we," not "me." Because we're not meant to do this life on our own. We will struggle immensely if we try.



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So go back to scripture, remind yourself what's true. Pray and express your struggle to God. And talk to your community about it. We're going to give you five minutes tonight to reflect on this passage and maybe the points of application I just talked about. Team's going to come out. Caleb's going to play some soft music to just reduce some distraction. Because maybe you're in a tough place right now. Maybe life is really hard and it was hard to hear me talk about how great things are. Maybe this is a time when you need to cast your cares to him. Maybe you want to look through this passage and pick a few verses that you want to remember or memorize or write out on a card as a reminder of what's true. Maybe you want to think about who you could talk to and ask for encouragement the next time that you need it, and make a plan to kind of talk to that person.

Whatever it is, we can take five minutes. Listen to what the Holy Spirit wants to say to you tonight. And I'll come up and pray in a minute. [*Break*]

Heavenly Father. Jesus, our brother. Holy, Holy, Holy Spirit. Thank you for the good news of the gospel, that despite what we experience in this world, nothing can separate us. God I pray for those tonight that are struggling with that idea. Because life is hard. Holy Spirit, would you help them carry the load? Would you make them aware of your presence in a special way? Father, would you search our hearts, understand where we're at? And Spirit, would you intercede for us with groanings when we cannot speak? And Jesus, thank you that you are in heaven interceding for us right now. Thank you that you work all things together for good, to conform us to the image of Jesus, because that is the best life we could have. Help us to trust you, God. We pray in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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