

**The Greatest Hope** Romans 8:24-30 (ESV) [bible-sermons.org](http://bible-sermons.org) November 3, 2013

I think this is probably one of the most important sermons I will ever deliver. That is because as a pastor my personal calling is discipling and teaching. If I were an evangelist my most important message would be the need and wonder of receiving Jesus as Savior. I love to share that, but since my calling is to nurture believers, my most important message is growing in Christ. My prayer is that you and all those on-line will understand this passage.

I started this series in Romans telling you that it will change your life if you will let it. Well, this chapter is the crux of Paul's message, and our text for today and next week is the highlight. This is genuine Christianity. This is what Christians are supposed to look like. This is what God intends for every soul redeemed by the blood of Jesus. This is God's will for you and me (1Thessalonians 4:3). I hope that got your attention, because if you are a disciple of Jesus, you don't want to miss this message!

Paul has told us in the previous passage that we are destined to suffer for Jesus (8:17). That is because the world is under the control of the evil one (1John 5:19), and we will find ourselves on the receiving end of the world's ridicule and persecution. But Paul went on to promise that those who suffer with Jesus will share in His glory! Wow! Today we'll understand to a greater depth what that means. Paul explained that the curse that sin brought upon creation has filled the planet with death and decay (Genesis 3:17-18; 2:16-17). This is not the world as God created it to be. There was no death before sin. Pain and sorrow and loss was nonexistent. It is hard for us to imagine such a world because it is so foreign to our experience, yet it is the longing deep within every heart.

Have you ever considered the fact that everyone who asks why a God of love would allow pain and suffering is really asking why the world is not as it should be? There is no need to ask the question if they believe that life is an accident. Survival of the fittest is necessarily a world of meaningless pain, suffering and death. Paul has told us that he agrees with the reason for this world's condition given to us in the Genesis account.

In our passage today, he tells us of the beginning of the reversal. It's kind of like the Werewolf novel. Instead of the full moon bringing about the change, it was disobedience to our Maker. We began to transform into the hideous selfish beings that lost communion with God. The entire world changed with us, from a friendly environment to a hostile one. But our passage today is the transformation back into what we were before the ugly change brought about by sin.

Paul has written that all of creation is waiting to see us transformed (8:19). He's talking about the day of Christ's return when we receive our resurrected bodies (1Corinthians 15:51-52). Creation knows that when we are transformed, its transformation will soon follow. Paul called it our adoption as sons (8:15). He claimed we already have received the spirit of sonship. In a sense, we have our adoption papers because we have His Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). But when He comes to take us home, our bodies will be changed (Philippians 3:21), and the adoption will be complete. That is the fulfillment of the greatest hope.

*<sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?* The hope that our old nature will be done away with once and for all, and that death and sorrow will be no more, saves us from despair (Psalm 71:14). Paul isn't talking about the salvation of our soul, but the saved from hopelessness.

I'm tempted to look at the world, especially right now as America sinks into moral decline, as it rejects the God that made it great, and just be depressed. I look at lives in our area who are hooked on drugs, not trying to find work or meaning, fixated on meaningless entertainment, and I want to scream (Jonah 2:8). If it wasn't for the hope we have in our future and the possible transformation of these lives I wouldn't get out of bed in the morning. Hope has saved me (5:5)!

But Paul says if we could see this hope now it wouldn't be hope. If you were a sinless saint with a transformed body like that of Jesus after the resurrection, it wouldn't be hope. It would be simply a current experience. If sorrow and death ceased it wouldn't be hope. Hope is our great expectation of what is to come, for we know God can't lie (5:5).

*<sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.* Since it is not yet our experience, we have to wait patiently for it. I get impatient at times when I see the destruction that sin causes. Meth and other drugs are such a curse. Selfishness destroys relationships. Lethargy toward the wonderful things of God, the increasing Biblical illiteracy, frustrates me. I get impatient with my own weaknesses and ask to be completely delivered from them right now.

But we really don't have that option. That is why we wait for it with patience. We trust that, as Peter said, we will be kept by the power of God until the coming salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time (1Peter 1:5). We have to lean on God's sovereignty and trust that He knows the perfect time. Trusting in Him is the source of our patience.

*<sup>26</sup> 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.* While we patiently wait for the change, we have a taste of the change that is to come. We see all the destruction in the world caused by sin and we wish we knew exactly how

to pray for each situation. The Spirit of God is interceding for you. He is asking the Father just what you would ask if you knew what God wanted. **He takes the longings and grief in your heart along with the perfect will of God and combines it into a request before the throne of God.** That is why we so often admit we don't know how to pray. We ask the Holy Spirit to pray for us about a situation. Certainly you can ask and add, "Lord, if it be your will (Luke 22:42)." But how comforting it is to know that the Spirit is always engaged in the next verse.

*<sup>27</sup> 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.* God is the One who searches our hearts. He knows what the Spirit is asking on our behalf, and that He always asks according to the will of God. And we know that whatever is asked according to His will, He hears (1John 5:14).

Interceding for us can be read in two ways. The Spirit hears our heart cry for others as we share the heart of God, and He asks what we would ask if we completely understood God's will for that given situation. But it can also mean that the Spirit intercedes for us. He asks for God's will for us in our daily life. He sees what our heart needs and prays for our encouragement, for lessons that would help us grow, for us to take God's opportunities to serve. I believe both interpretations apply, but it is particularly the second one that leads us into the next verse.

It is because the Spirit knows our heart's condition and intercedes for us according to God's will that we can be sure the next verse is true. *<sup>28</sup> 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 is a very popular verse, but let us set aside our common use of it and see what Scripture is saying. The Spirit is asking for God's perfect will for our lives. God loves us and is more concerned about our eternal good than our temporal happiness. God hears and responds to the intercession of the Spirit. That is why we can be assured that if we truly love God, whatever we go through will work for our eternal good. It may be difficult and even painful, but remember, no one's life is pain free. **We are simply assured that the pain will serve a good purpose because we are called according to His purpose.** His purpose is our salvation and eternal union with Christ Jesus. His purpose is our restoration and fellowship with God forever. His purpose is that all things glorify Him, for every aspect of His nature is good and therefore glorious (Psalm 145:3).

When people sin against us, how can it be for our good? It is not a good thing. Sin never is. But the promise is that God will turn it around and use it to build us up and not destroy us (5:3-4). It may be that God will use that pain of your past to minister to others who have had a similar experience. It may be that God will use it to keep you completely dependent on Him. In other words, He didn't order the event. He gave man free will. But in every life, **our suffering will either destroy us or cause us to be stronger**

**and more able to serve God.** God's promise is that if we love Him, everything in our life, both the blessings and the consequences of sin, will be used for our good.

I mentioned some of the purposes of God, but now Paul is about to point us to a particular purpose that he had in mind as he penned this. Here is the good purpose that the circumstances of life all work toward. *<sup>29</sup> 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.* I don't think you heard it. Let me read it again. If your eyes don't get really big and smile doesn't burst out on your face, you missed it. The previous verse was wonderful and can help us see our life through different lenses. We can really say, "It's all good!", at least all things will work for good to those who love God. But this verse is the ultimate good for you. This is not just restoring us to the pre-fall condition of man, but to the very likeness of the glorious Son of God (1John 3:2)!

Some people want to be famous, maybe even the President of the United States. I think they need their head examined. Some want to be influential, swaying millions with their opinions. I think they better be careful. Some want to be filthy rich, but it usually means you have to get filthy. Some want various pleasures that life has to offer. But **Paul has presented to us the greatest hope any child of God could possibly hope to possess.** It is to be like Jesus!

The fact that we are forgiven, adopted as sons of God, destined for heaven and eternity in God's presence is too wonderful to describe. But, in my humble opinion, here is the climax of it all. We will be like Jesus (2Peter 1:4). It is what the spirit of every born again child of God craves. We want to know His total obedience to the Father as our own. We want to walk in freedom from sin. We want total and continual communion with the Father. We want to always express every fruit of the Spirit in perfect alignment with the heart of God. And we will! If it was not so, heaven would not be heaven. For heaven to truly be the ultimate place of peace and harmony with God, we must be like Jesus. Imagine a place where everyone you meet is like Jesus to you. Could it get any better?

This is where the good work of God through every trial and blessing and circumstance of life is leading those who love the LORD. It is why the Spirit is interceding for you and me. It is the completion of our adoption. It is the anticipation of creation. It is why Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brothers (1John 3:1). Even now He can see the completed work, for He is not bound by time.

"Like" does not mean the same as. We will never be eternal, or all-powerful, and I don't think we will be all-knowing, but instead forever learning at His feet (Luke 10:42). Our likeness to Him are those fruits of the Spirit that He so perfectly displayed. That leads us to our final verse for today. *<sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

There is a lot of conflict over the word predestined. Peter used the same term. But Peter also used the term Paul used in the previous verse, "foreknew" (1Peter 1:2). Theologians have been arguing over this for millennia. I'm just happy that I have these wonderful promises. Did God pick you and then cause you to seek Him? Did He just randomly choose those who will be saved, or did He foreknow you would be willing to receive His gift of salvation and so choose you? Base your conviction on the Word and the attributes of God, but know that greater minds than ours who read the original language cannot agree on the answer.

Those He predestined He also called. The call goes out to all. The Spirit of God and the bride call us (Revelation 22:17). He justifies us by the blood of Jesus (5:9). Remember, that when we receive His mercy because of His bearing our sins on the cross, it is "just as if I'd" (justified) never sinned. We are made right with God. And finally, here is the promise. Those He justified He also glorified. Here is the explanation that I promised at the beginning of the sermon. You'll see how it ties all this together.

**Glory is the outshining of the attributes of God.** It is when the light of His mercy and grace and love and kindness and all the fruits of the Spirit are seen. You will notice this is past tense, "glorified". When you come to Jesus and know His forgiveness and are justified before God, you receive the Holy Spirit. He takes up residence within you (John 14:23). That is why the fruits of the Spirit are seen in your life. That is what glorified means. We imagine the word to mean shining like Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, but it is rather the outshining of what is within. Yet, the full outshining will take place when the work in us is complete (2Corinthians 3:18).

Now put all these verses together and see what God is saying. We are too use to quoting or referring to them individually. The hope of this glorious outcome helps us wait for it patiently. The Spirit of God is interceding for us, praying God's will into our daily life as God shapes us by every event. No matter whether we see these events as good or bad, God uses them all for our good if we love Him. He is conforming us to the very nature of Jesus. Jesus isn't ashamed to call us brothers. He foreknew us and has predestined us, called us, justified us, and glorified us. We are already experiencing that reversal of the fall in our own hearts and minds, while we patiently await the day of the completion of our adoption. This is the greatest hope any human could ever possess. It is yours in Christ. Without Him, all you have is this fallen world and impending judgment. Have you laid hold of this hope?

## Questions

- 1 What leads up to this passage?
- 2 What is the werewolf analogy?
- 3 What is the fulfillment of our hope?
- 4 Give the two meanings of "intercedes for us".
- 5 What is the cause of verse 28?

- 6 What are God's purposes?
- 7 What is our ultimate good?
- 8 How will we be like Jesus?
- 9 In what way are we glorified now?
- 10 Explain how these verses go together.