

The Wait of Glory

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[0 : 0 0] well they say all good things in life come to those who are willing to wait I'm sure when you were growing up that's probably what you heard a lot of from your parents yes you can have ice cream but wait until you finish your dinner no fighting over the swing in the playground wait your turn can you please wait until mummy is finished talking to grandma before interrupting well some of us who are now parents I think have taken up that task with vengeance and it seems that for me particularly that's all I seem to be doing telling my children to wait well we know the value of waiting of course because for example we save money before we for example spend on a house or spend on a holiday that we've been looking forward to for a long time or we wait until we find the right person before we get married to them when we were young we might go for the very first boy or girl that came along that was willing but with maturity we wait because we know we want to find the right person of course waiting is never easy even for grown ups like us just ask that poor commuter at parliament station trying to get home each night it's fine if all you have to do is wait five minutes as the screen says and no more but what if you end up waiting half an hour when you were told it was five minutes or worse still what if you have to wait indefinitely what if you have to wait when you've been promised something but you don't know when you're going to get it well last week we began to look at what life was like in Christ what was it like if we were Christians if we believed in Jesus and we learned that with the spirit with the gift of the spirit we had three great blessings the first was that we were freed from sin and death that we are no longer condemned by sin to a sentence of death secondly we learned that we are now able to please God because the spirit lives in us and is able to set our minds on the things of the spirit third we learned that the same spirit is the one that will raise us from the dead even as he raised Christ from the dead well tonight

I want to say that there's more but wait there's more for not only do we have life in the spirit we find out tonight that the life that we have is unimaginably glorious it's more than what we can ever hope or imagine however we have to wait for it for this glory is yet to be revealed in us and so we are asked to wait to live a life of patience to wait in hope for this glory and perhaps even to suffer while we wait so as we look at the passage tonight we can see that it's broken up into two main sections the first from verse 14 to around 18 or 19 is about the glory that awaits us while the second running from about verse 19 to 27 is about the wait for that glory the wait for that glory which will be revealed and further within that passage we see that in verses 19 to 22 it is God's creation that waits in verses 23 to 25 we see how

God's children have been taught to wait so 19 to 22 God's creation waits 23 to 25 God's children wait and then finally in verses 26 and 27 God's spirit waits so let's first look at the glory before turning to how we're going to wait so let's pick up at verse 14 where Paul begins to show what a privileged relationship we have with God for all who are led by the spirit are children of God Paul says for you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear but you have received a spirit of adoption actually a better and more literal way of translating these two verses is to substitute the word children for sons for that's what's in the Greek so it reads for all who are led by the spirit are sons of God for you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear but you received a spirit of adoption to sonship and the reason why I changed this word is really to try and contrast the privileges of being a son versus the obligations of the slave in the ancient world for you see in the ancient world and even now to be a son was to have a place of honor in the family it is the son who will inherit the father's property and will assume his responsibilities when he is absent or when he is gone and the phrase adoption to sonship is significant because it indicates that our rights are not ours by birth we are not sons because we were born into it all of us had been slaves and freed from slavery and were incorporated into God's family but having been incorporated we now enjoy all the rights of being a son so the contrast of course is to slavery and in our case it is slavery to sin and death which we talked about last week so brothers and sisters whether you are male or female if you are in

Christ Jesus then you are a son of God and being a son allows us to approach the father in the same way that Jesus did and to address him as Abba which is Aramaic for father in the same way that Jesus did if you have a chance later go back to the gospel of Mark in chapter 14 and if you read the account of the garden of Gethsemane you will find that Jesus used those very two words as he was agonizing in the garden and praying in the spirit to the father and so like the rest of the early church Paul retains the use of this word Abba to remind us of the privilege of being able to approach God the father in the same manner as Jesus did so every time for example when we pray the Lord's prayer our father in heaven it is that very spirit Paul says in verse 16 or the spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are sons of God or children of God and if children then heirs heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ if in fact we suffer with him so that we may be glorified with him we are sons of God because Jesus is the son of God the unique son of God if we are in Christ Jesus then we have the same status before God in one sense as Jesus himself has before God in him his inheritance becomes our inheritance and whatever glory the father has bestowed on him

Jesus has in turn bestowed upon us and so I don't know what sort of how you feel when you hear that but for me to be on the one hand previously a slave and now not just having life not just being a son of God you know small s but being co-heirs with Christ that to me is just mind boggling that to me is such a great privilege and that is the glory that awaits us as sons of God so let's now turn to waiting Paul continues in verse 18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us for the creation waits with eager longing for the children of God well there's a lot that we could say about suffering but I'm not actually going to do that tonight I'm going to save it for next week as we look at the last part of Romans 8 but what we get from this verse however is that the glory is yet to be revealed in us in other words we have to wait and here in verse 19 we find that God's creation waits for this glory so the image that Paul paints here is one of creation craning its neck to see what is being revealed so I'll ask Kenny to just put a little picture on the screen there you go if you can see where I am it's a picture of us when we were in 2002 on Pell Mall during the Queen's Jubilee celebrations and we were some distance from Buckingham Palace but every time there was a roar further down the street we would crane our necks you know as my friends were doing and I'm not to see whether it was the Queen coming or not more often than not it was just the minor royals going walk about shaking hands but that's the picture that Paul is painting in this verse here but here's what's so amazing about this verse notice who will be on the sidelines and who will be the ones processing in glory now if you ask me

[9 : 52] I would have been happy doing just that being on the sidelines waiting on that day of glory and seeing the procession come up that street but no the verse says that it is creation that's going to be on the sidelines that day and we the children of God will be the ones that are processing down that mountain with Jesus our Lord at the front it reminds me of that those few verses in Isaiah chapter 55 where the prophet says for you describing God's people shall go out with joy and be led back in peace and the mountains and the hills will break forth before you there'll be shouts of joy and all the trees of the field will be clapping their hands there's an image there of the moon the sun the stars the mountains the oceans being on the sidelines as we process down in glory with Jesus in front of us and that's the picture of glory on that day we will be the ones no matter what status we've had in life whether we're rich or poor whether we're strong or weak whether we're successful or not all that would have mattered was whether we are in Christ Jesus but if you are in Christ Jesus you'll be the one processing down instead of being on the sidelines in the meantime creation waits and this is how creation will wait if you look with me in verse 20 it says for the creation was subjected to futility not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it that is

I take it to be God in hope that creation itself will be free from its bondage of decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God we know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now friends I find these verses actually very helpful and very useful in thinking through what is happening in this world so whether you talk about climate change or tsunamis or earthquakes which all seem so random these verses make sense of it when we realize that God has subjected our physical world to futility now I know that some things that happens in this world is actually due to human failure so I'm not talking about those things and I'm not saying that these verses absolve us from responsibility in those things but when we begin to hear people talking about saving the planet that's when I think they're on a lost course the planet does not need to be saved

God has already saved that planet and the things that are happening in this world is not some random thing that God has allowed to happen but it's purposeful because God has allowed this world this creation to be subjected to futility God has allowed the whole creation to be subjected to the bondage of decay and this is not because God is somehow callous or cruel but because he wants us he wants to encourage us to hope and so Paul uses the picture of a woman in labor pains in agony until she has given birth and so it is with creation groaning until it is set free from the decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God but until then this world will be in labor pains this world will groan in imperfection and fragility and so I guess even if we somehow manage to overcome the challenges of climate change I'm pretty sure something else will come along something else because this world is subject to futility it is God's way of reminding us that we need to depend on him it's God's way of helping us to wait for his son instead of thinking that we can achieve perfection in this world so yes we need to be good stewards of God's creation but we are not called to save the world

God has already done that and he will reveal his work when his son comes again and so we move to the second point under waiting Paul further elaborates on how creation's waiting helps us to wait as well because it sympathizes with our waiting so verse 23 not only the creation but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit groan inwardly while we wait for adoption the redemption of our bodies so the fragility of the world reminds us of our own fragility the frailty of the physical world reminds us of the frailty of our own bodies and even as creation waits in hope for its freedom we wait in hope for the redemption of our bodies see our tendency is to want to see God's salvation immediately but Paul reminds us in verse 24 that it was in hope that we were saved yes we are already saved but we are yet to enjoy all the benefits of this salvation and the last thing that we are waiting for is the redemption of our bodies we are not going to see it now in fact for a lot of us the opposite will happen our bodies will start decaying before we see its redemption but further in verse 24 it says hope that is seen is not hope for who hopes for what is seen but if we hope for what we do not see we wait for it with patience and that I think is our great challenge isn't it patience we would like to think that everything would happen now and I guess that's the attraction for many people with the prosperity gospel or the promise of miracle healings or if you are outside the church the promise of the good life in this world whatever shape or form it takes you know whether it's the get rich schemes or even the get rich slowly schemes the stay forever young health programs or the promise of a you know sea change or tree change perfect lifestyle and I guess as Christians sometimes as we try and share the gospel with others we might be tempted to try and match those promises to say that God can take away suffering now to say that he can solve the problems of the world whatever else is the moral challenge of our day we tend we could be tempted to say God could solve it now of course

God can and God will but he might not do it now because for him to do it now is to short circuit hope for him to do it now is to make us impatient when God wants us to wait with patience so finally let's look at verse 26 and 27 and we find here that even as creation waits even as we wait God the spirit waits as well God is not some distant or uncaring God far far away leaving us here while we wait and then coming back at the last day for verse 26 says likewise the spirit helps us in our weakness that is the spirit is present in our weakness and in our waiting and in our patient longing for the coming of Jesus and he goes on to say we do not know how to pray as we ought but that very spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words and so we have again this threefold repetition that creation groans we groan inwardly and now finally the spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words last week one of you asked a really good question you asked someone of you asked how do we know that we are living in the spirit and for example when we are praying in the spirit how do we know when we're doing that and when we're not is it only when things go well that we're praying in the spirit or is it when we're struggling that we are also praying in the spirit what if it gets too difficult to pray what if we are tempted to stop because God has stopped listening we think God has stopped listening to us well let's read verse 27 because it says and God who searches the heart knows what is the mind of the spirit because the spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God and so these verses are actually saying it's when we struggle that the spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words it's when we're struggling with difficulties in life perhaps with the cancer of a loved one or broken relationship at home financial difficulty or jobless when we've come to the end of our words and we feel like we've prayed all we can that actually it's at those very time times that the spirit actually intercedes on our behalf it's at those very times when God the Father searches the mind of the spirit and on our behalf works out what is his perfect will for us and so friends

[19 : 20] I want to encourage you that sometimes when it's actually very difficult to pray those are the times when we should continue to pray even when we might pray without words even when all we might be doing is groaning because that's when the spirit is groaning with us well friends I'm not sure whether you've been waiting for something in life at the moment I don't know what your answers were when you said what was the longest thing that you've been what was the longest time you've waited for something but I want to assure you that this glory that will be revealed in us that we're waiting for will surpass anything that we've waited for and yet at the same time it will be the longest wait we face we just don't know how long it will be whether it's when we go to the Lord in glory or when he comes in glory so as we leave the

Christian life there will be times of great joy and exhilaration where we know that God is working in us but there will also be other times when there will be testing and waiting on God when our salvation appears to be hidden or unseen and those are the times we will be tempted to lose patience to wander away from this hope of glory and to turn to something a bit more immediate well I hope tonight that as we've read God's word that it would have taught us a little about how we can resist those temptations I hope it would have reminded ourselves that we are saved in unseen hope and that by faith we will one day take our place at the revelation of God's glory in us as all of creation lines the street as we process up with Jesus and we usher in this glorious age to come let's pray father we thank you again for your salvation which is in Christ

Jesus and that not only are we saved from condemnation that we have the spirit now to live and that we be raised up but that Lord we will be raised in glory we pray that Lord that glory will be a constant reminder to us to wait patiently not to be seduced by false promises of more immediate glorification we ask this Lord in the name of Jesus your son amen