

waiting...

1.

Romans 8.18-30

“... in this hope you were saved ..”

[week beginning Sunday 2nd December 2018]

The season of Advent is characterized by *waiting*. As children we perhaps can still remember how long a wait it seemed in the countdown to Christmas Day. Waiting is never easy, but today more than ever the whole notion of waiting goes very much against the grain of a markedly 'instant' society.

Waiting, however, is a recurring theme in the Scriptures, a frustrating constant in the experience of believers. Invariably faith is seen to go hand in hand with hope, because the promise to which we hold is still future. In these weeks leading up to Christmas, therefore, we'll explore this component of hope and the consequent experience of waiting.

[Despite your best intentions, there may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group! It may be helpful to try and ensure that in this study you cover questions 2, 5, and 7. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]

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1. Read Romans 8.18-30. Read the whole passage (and if you've the time, the whole of Romans 8) to get a feel for the flow of Paul's teaching here.

How would you summarise the message of these verses?

What do you find resonating strongly with you as you read this passage?

2. Read Romans 8.18. The contrast between what we presently suffer and the glory still to be revealed underlines that there is a *future* dimension to God's salvation as well as a present.

What are the 'present sufferings' to which Paul refers?

In what ways, and in what sense, have you found your life as a follower of Jesus has involved for you 'present sufferings'?

3. Read Romans 8.19-22. Just as sin affected the whole of creation (see Gen.3) so God's saving work in Christ will issue in everything being restored (see Acts 3.21).

Read Gen.3.17-19: what does Paul mean when he speaks about the creation having been 'subjected to frustration'?

What should we envisage in the statement that '*the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay*'?

In what ways does that 'bondage to decay' find expression?

4. Read Romans 8.23-24a. Our present experience of the Holy Spirit is a pointer to, and a guarantee of, what is to come - and it's this *completeness* to God's salvation for which we still long.

Despite knowing God's forgiveness and being renewed by His Holy Spirit, why do we still 'groan inwardly'?

To what does Paul indicate we are looking forward?

5. Read Romans 8.24-25. Paul briefly discusses the nature of hope, and the ramifications of that for ourselves in terms of our waiting patiently for the fulfillment of God's promise.

Why is the life of faith characterized by waiting, according to what Paul says here?

How hard do you find this 'patient waiting'? What, since you started following Jesus, has been your experience of 'waiting'?

6. Read Romans 8.26-27. Until the day God's saving work is completed in us, we'll inevitably find ourselves 'groaning' - even if we can't say exactly for what it is we're longing!

Our 'groaning inwardly' (v.23) is bound up with our having to 'wait patiently' (v.25): how does the Spirit help us in such groaning?

What does Paul mean in v.27, and how should that be an encouragement to us in our walk with the Lord?

7. Read Romans 8.28-30. In one of the most theologically rich passages of Scripture, Paul sets out the reason why the hope we have is so substantial and why we can indeed wait with patience.

What does Paul point to as the climax of God's saving work in Jesus?

On the basis of what Paul states here, why are we able to look forward with such confidence and assurance to the future fulfillment of God's promise?