



23.
'Waiting'
Romans 8.17-25

Background

The tie that binds us to the Lord Jesus Christ is 'a cord of three strands' – for faith, hope and love are inseparably wound together, giving an upward, forward, and outward, 3-dimensional character to our lives as the followers of Jesus.

Faith, in other words, always has an essentially *forward* trajectory. The God to whom we look up, and in whom we place our trust – He has a future for His people. Although it's often taken somewhat out of context, the word the Lord brought to the dispirited exiles in Babylon, through a letter to them by the prophet Jeremiah – that message distils the essence of the gospel so very clearly.

"I will come to you and fulfil My good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" ([Jer.29.10f](#)).

There's a sense in which that well describes the message of the gospel! For we are meanwhile 'exiles' here: this world is not our home. Our 'citizenship', as Paul puts it, 'is in heaven: and we eagerly await a Saviour from there ..' ([Phil.3.20](#)).

Waiting is thus the present posture of the believer, for the cord of three strands means that faith is always forward looking. And it's to this particular aspect of the believer's life that Paul addresses himself in these verses. You'll see how three times over in the course of the passage (vv.19, 23 and 25) the same word 'wait' appears.

It's perhaps helpful to see that, broadly speaking, what Paul sets out for us here is first *why* we are waiting, then *for what* we are waiting, and finally *how* we are waiting.

This is not merely, of course, a theological statement that he's making: it's truth which has significant pastoral implications also because so very often our experience is precisely that of waiting – one which we find hard and often challenging, prompting us often to cry out, 'How long, O Lord?' as we wonder why God is not coming good on His promises.

Read the whole passage carefully, and if you're short of time, then begin with **'days' (3), (5) and (7)**.

1) Monday 1st July – future glory

Read [Romans 8.17-18](#)

“.. our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory ..” (Rom.8.18)

The Bible hides neither the reality, nor indeed sometimes the sheer intensity, of the sufferings we may bear in following the Lord Jesus. The Lord simply assures us that they are present not permanent, and far outweighed by a guaranteed future glory.

What has been your experience of ‘suffering’ as you have followed Jesus?

How would you answer those who question why anyone would want the gospel if it entails a load of suffering?

Prayer: Through all the changing scenes of life, in trouble and in joy, Your praises, O my God, shall still my heart and tongue employ. Help me to trust You in all my trials.

2) Tuesday 2nd July – anticipation

Read [Romans 8.19](#)

“.. the creation waits in eager expectation ..” (Rom.8.19)

It’s ‘springtime’ in the story of the cosmos! A corner’s been turned: since Jesus’ death and resurrection, the nights are no longer so dark, the cold no longer so keen. The fragrance of God’s promised, glorious future’s in the air – learn to breathe it in again!

Many are concerned these days over ‘climate change’: in what ways can such concerns provide an opportunity to share the gospel?

To what extent does the ‘eager expectation’ of the creation find expression in you?

Prayer: How I long for the day of Your coming again, O Lord! Thank You for the promise of a new heaven and a new earth – it can’t come soon enough! Come, Lord Jesus!

3) Wednesday 3rd July – collateral damage

Read [Romans 8.20-21](#)

“.. the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay ..” (Rom.8.21)

Sin is frighteningly serious in the knock-on effects it has. Such was the role which humanity had, that the consequent curse on the sin of Adam and Eve spilled out across the universe. But the work of Christ has a similar scope – our hope in Him is that big!

In what ways has the whole creation been affected by the sin of Adam and Eve, and how is that evidenced today?

What are some of the ways in which the ‘frustration’ of which Paul speaks here is experienced by people?

How should Christians balance the concern to be good stewards of this earth with the conviction that this world is passing away and a new heaven and a new earth are coming?

In what ways might or should your church show an environmental responsibility?

Prayer: There's so much which I can find frustrating, Lord. Help me to be patient with people. Help me to be at peace in the face of disappointments. Help me to live in hope.

4) Thursday 4th July – who will we have to rule over us?

Read [Romans 8.22](#)

".. the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth .." (Rom.8.22)

Polling Day here in the UK: a reminder of the significance which, in any nation's life, the governing authorities have. The global problems we face today are the fruit of humanity's original sin in usurping the rightful rule of God. Choose carefully *His* rule.

How does the 'groaning' of creation to which Paul refers find expression?

Why does Paul use 'the pains of childbirth' as a helpful analogy for the 'groaning' of creation?

Prayer: On this General Election day, I bow before Yourself, Lord Jesus, and thank You that the government has been placed upon Your shoulders. You alone are sovereign!

5) Friday 5th July – the best is still to come!

Read [Romans 8.23](#)

".. we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly .." (Rom.8.23)

That inward groaning is simply the rumbling of our spiritual 'stomachs': having been given God's Spirit, we're now hungry for more! For all that our new life in Christ through the Spirit sees us ['treading on the heights'](#), there's more and better to come!

The gift of the Spirit is in some ways a 'taster' for heaven: in what ways has the gift of the Spirit whetted your appetite for the glory to come?

In what ways can you relate to what Paul speaks of here as 'groaning inwardly'?

What does Paul mean by 'the redemption of our bodies' and why is that so important?

Would it be helpful to have more teaching on 'the redemption of the body' and indeed on all that will be involved in our experiencing finally and fully 'our adoption to sonship'?

Prayer: Your ways are always perfect, Lord, and the path on which You have set me, the path of life, is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full life of day!

6) Saturday 6th July – a better country

Read [Romans 8.24](#)

“.. in this hope we were saved ..” (Rom.8.24)

Faith has a future dimension. Like the saints of old who “did not receive the things promised: they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance” ([Heb.11.13](#)), we, too, recognize we are foreigners and strangers on earth. We’re living for that future.

How would those who know you recognise that you are a ‘stranger on earth’?

In what ways has the hope of the gospel helped sustain you through times of difficulty, sorrow and loss?

Prayer: Show me, Lord, my life’s end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is. What do I look for? My hope is in You ([Ps.39.4, 7](#))

7) Sunday 7th July – an anchor for the soul

Read [Romans 8.25](#)

“.. we wait for it patiently ..” (Rom.8.25)

Our patience rests in the assurance we have that our promise-making Saviour keeps His promises. Always ([Josh.23.14](#)). The hallmarks of all Christian living are, therefore, a throbbing expectancy and an enduring patience. The horizon is already bright!

There’s no uncertainty in the Biblical understanding of ‘hope’ – it’s rather something full of assurance: what gives rise to the certainty we have about that for which we hope?

Read [Heb.6.17-19](#): how have you found the ‘hope’ God gives us in Christ to be ‘an anchor’ for the soul?

How can we use our ‘hope’ in Christ to reassure and ‘greatly encourage’ one another in the face of our difficulties and trials?

In what ways have you been helped to grow more patient in the face of disappointments, adversity and perplexity?

‘Patience’ is a fruit of the Spirit: what are some of the ways He uses to cultivate that grace in a person’s life?

Prayer: How I thank You today again, O Lord, for the rich and wonderful promises You have made to Your people! May the worship of Your people today be a taste of glory!