

I. Safe In God's Hands

A. Today we are beginning the section of Romans 8 where Paul affirms that we are safe in God's hands, regardless of the circumstances.

1. As you may recall, Romans 8 begins with Paul's emphasis on the necessity and work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.
2. He then addresses, again, the kind of people God justifies – which includes those who suffer with Christ.
3. And while doing that, Paul presents suffering with Christ as the natural outcome of being led by the Holy Spirit. And so it is within this context of suffering as a Christian that Paul begins to talk about our security in God and the fact that we are safe in God's hands.
 - a. However, confidently believing we are safe in God's hands, and resting in that confidence, depends on what we treasure the most.
 - b. In other words, if we treasure things we ought not to treasure, then when the security of those things is threatened, we will question God's goodness and find it exceedingly hard, if not irrational, to believe we are safe in God's hands.
 - c. But if we treasure what is truly valuable, then we will clearly see that nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from God's love, protection, and care, for indeed, we are safe in His hands.

B. Prayer

C. Romans 8:18-25 . . . 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. [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 together until now. [23] And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, 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 for it.

- II. Our confidence of safety in God's hands depends on what we treasure
- A. Romans 8:18 . . . 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.
1. Though we talked about Romans 8:16-17 last Sunday, I want to remind you that Paul uses those two verses to establish that suffering with Christ is one of the natural outcomes of being led by the Spirit of God. In fact, if we are not willingly and intentionally suffering with Christ, it is an indication that we are not following the leading of the Spirit of God, which means we are not going to be glorified with Christ one day in the future.
 2. And then to encourage us to remain faithful in the midst of suffering with Christ, Paul says that he considers the sufferings of this present time unworthy of being compared to the glory that will one day be revealed to us.
 - a. In other words, Paul treasures the glory that will one day come over the cost of suffering with Christ now.
 - b. Paul put it this way in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 . . . For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, [18] while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
 - c. Jesus said in Matthew 5:10-12 . . . Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
 - d. So how does this fit into being safe in God's hands? Though our physical well-being or our financial security or the happiness of our family members suffer severe loss, that which is immeasurably valuable is eternally safe in God's hands.
 3. There is one more truth here that I want to emphasize. Paul says he is convinced that the glory to come makes his present suffering seem like nothing in comparison.
 - a. Notice, he is not saying that once the glory is revealed, he will be convinced. Rather, without seeing the glory, he is already

convinced it is so superior to any present suffering with Christ as to make the suffering seem insignificant.

b. Now you may be thinking that Paul is one of those super Christians, and you're not. But the issue here is not whether you are an average or above average Christian, but who and what you value above all else.

(1) If you value yourself and your immediate sense of well-being more than God and His will, that is, if you value relief, or physical safety, or a longer life, or earthly comfort, or financial security, or being with family, or the approval of others more than pleasing and serving God, then when any of those things are diminished or lost, the glory to come will lose its appeal and you will not feel safe in God's hands.

(2) To be convinced that the glory to come is superior to the present suffering, you must value living for Christ now and treasure life in the hereafter more than you value whatever earthly, temporal treasures you have accumulated in this life.

(3) Or to say it another way, before you will treasure the promised glory to come enough to deem any present suffering with Christ insignificant by comparison, you must treasure and trust the One who makes the promise.

(4) And so I ask again: Who and what do you value? Paul is exhorting us to value eternal glory over an easier, more comfortable, more self-pleasing life here and now.

4. To lend support to his point that the coming glory is so valuable as to make the present suffering seem insignificant, Paul says that creation also longs for the coming glory in order to be set free from the slow process of decay and death that sin has brought upon it.

B. Romans 8:19-22 . . . 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 together until now.

1. The essence of Paul's message in these verses is that he is not the only one longing for the glory that is to be revealed when Christ returns, creation also waits eagerly for the coming glory that God will one day bestow on His children.

- a. Why? Because creation is trapped in the grip of sin's destructive power, and it's only hope of freedom is the making of the new heavens and new earth when the sons of God are glorified.
 - b. The point Paul is making here is that the normal Christian mindset on this topic is the same as his mindset and creation's mindset. And he will affirm this in vs. 23.
2. Beyond Paul's specific message, there are two points that I want to address because they help keep this section within the context of the rest of the chapter and the rest of Romans.
- a. First, there is coming a time when those who are the children of God will be revealed, that is, identified as God's children, and then they will be ushered into God's glorious eternal kingdom.
 - (1) We read in Revelation 21:27, that those identified as children of God are those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.
 - (2) And we know from Psalm 24:3-5, that those who are allowed to ascend into the hill of the LORD and stand in His holy place are those with clean hands and a pure heart.
 - (3) Hebrews says that without sanctification, no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).
 - (4) And Paul says in Romans 2:13, "It is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified."
 - (5) Taking all this together, we see that those revealed to be the children of God are those who, as Paul says, living according to the obedience of faith.
 - b. Second, in vs 22, Paul says that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. I am pointing this out because Paul uses the imagery of groaning here and in subsequent verses, and he uses this imagery –
 - (1) to speak about the normal Christian attitude and mindset toward the return of Christ and the setting up of God's eternal kingdom, and to speak about the Holy Spirit's work in praying on our behalf about things we want to pray for but don't know how to pray for.
 - (2) There are two main definitions for the word "groan."
 - (a) To groan – as in pain, in sorrow;
 - (b) To long for something so as to earnestly and intently strive after it, and groan in doing so.

(3) It seems reasonably clear that in Romans 8, Paul is using the word groan according to the second definition. For example, here in vs 22, creation is longing for its release from the destructive bondage of sin which is slowly destroying it, while at the same time feeling the pain it must go through to get to that place of freedom.

- C. Romans 8:23 . . . And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.
1. Paul began this line of teaching in vs 18, where he gave personal testimony to believing that the glory to follow will make whatever sufferings with Christ he might experience in this life, seem insignificant.
 - a. In vs 19, he added creation's testimony to this same truth.
 - b. Here in vs 23, he makes a universal "we" statement to indicate that this conviction is the normal Christian mindset regarding the return of Christ and the beginning of God's eternal kingdom.
 - c. And so he says "we groan," and the we speaks of all who are being led by the Spirit of God, that is, all who are children of God. And it is this "we" who are earnestly and intently striving after (*by living a godly life now*) and looking forward to their release from this sin corrupted world and from their decaying bodies so that they can enter into God's glory forever.
 2. Paul makes a similar, more explanatory statement in 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 . . . For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [2] For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, [3] inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. [4] For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. [5] Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.
 3. Remember the question: "Who and what do you value?" It is a question worthy of a thoughtful, honest answer, for its answer will clearly indicate what you prefer and therefore choose – suffering with Christ or protecting your earthly well-being, treasuring life here or treasuring life with God in His eternal kingdom, and earthly happiness or eternal joy. The normal Christian mindset is the mindset

that views life after this life as a treasure so valuable that it makes the cost of suffering with Christ now seem insignificant – and this is why Paul says “we” longingly groan for the glory that is to come.

4. Now I want to step aside from that point and look at several specific comments Paul makes within this verse that we are wise to examine.
 - a. First, Paul says we have the first fruits of the Spirit.
 - (1) The first fruits of the Spirit speak of the fact that God has given us something – that is, not everything, but something – of great eternal value to show us He is serious about bringing us into His eternal kingdom.
 - (2) Paul speaks more fully about this in Ephesians 1:13-14 . . . In Him [Christ], you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, [14] who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.
 - b. Second, Paul says we are waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons.
 - (1) But, you say, I thought we already are children of God?
 - (2) Yes we are. But this is one of those two sided truths. We have been adopted and we are waiting for our adoption, or we might say, we are waiting for the fulfillment of God's fullest intent in adopting us, which is to bring us into His personal presence to live with Him in perfect love, holiness, and peace for eternity.
 - c. Third, Paul speaks about the redemption of our body. It is scripture statements like this that have been used down through the ages to teach about a bodily resurrection.
 - (1) Of course our bodies will be changed from temporal, decaying bodies into new, perfect bodies, but they will be our bodies just the same.
 - (2) Paul speaks more fully about this in 1 Corinthians 15:50-53 . . . Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. [51] Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we

will be changed. [53] For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

- D. Romans 8:24-25 . . . 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 for it.
1. We first spoke about how this word “hope” when examining Romans 5:2. At that time, we saw that the word hope, as used in scripture, most often speaks of a strong desire for something, along with a confident expectation of obtaining it. In other words, this word “hope” speaks of the certainty that what we desire to be true, is, and what we expect to come true, will.
 2. Therefore, one of our confident expectations now that we have repented and put our faith in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ is that we will one day dwell with God in His eternal kingdom for every more. And though we have not seen this eternal kingdom, we are confident of its existence and confident God will bring us there.
 3. Now there is one other word that needs some explanation to fully understand what Paul is saying here – and that is the word “seen.”
 - a. When he speaks about hope in the unseen as opposed to something already seen, he not speaking of seeing it from afar and therefore waiting patiently for it, but rather his seeing it is equal to being in the midst of it.
 - b. In other words, we hope for the eternal life to come verses already being there and no longer needing hope to compel us forward.
 - c. And this hope in the unseen is an important point, for Paul will use it and the word “groan” to talk about the Holy Spirit praying for us when we do not know how to pray for ourselves. But that will come when we examine vs 26 and following.

III. Conclusion

- A. I want to close by urging each of you to make God your primary source of security, so that regardless of the circumstances, you are convinced you are safe in His hands. And as we saw today, feeling safe in God’s hands depends on treasuring what God treasures, treasuring what is eternal, and treasuring what is yet to come. Therefore, if you are finding it hard to trust God enough to feel safe in His hands, don’t solve this lack of trust by starting with God, as if He has the problem, but rather start with yourself by examining who and what you treasure the most.