

Hope in a Frustrated World

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Romans 8:15-25

¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a **Spirit who declares us to be God's children**, in whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ **The Spirit himself is bearing witness** with our spirit that **we are children of God**, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs – **heirs of God and fellow heirs with the Messiah**, provided we **suffer with him** in order that we may also be **glorified with him**.

¹⁸ For I consider that the **sufferings** of this present time are not worth comparing with the **glory** that is to be revealed for us. ¹⁹ For **the creation waits with eager longing** for the revealing of **the sons of God**.

²⁰ For **the creation** was subjected to **frustration**, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, **in hope** ²¹ that **the creation itself** will be **set free** from its **bondage to corruption** and enjoy the freedom of **the glory of the children of God**.

²² For we know that **the whole creation** has been **groaning together in the pains of childbirth** until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but **we ourselves**, who have **the firstfruits of the Spirit**, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for **full realization as God's children**, the **redemption of our bodies**.

²⁴ For **in this hope we were saved**. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, **we wait for it with patience**.

Romans 8:38-39

³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Messiah Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5:2-5

² Through (our Lord Jesus Messiah) we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we celebrate the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we even boast in our suffering/tribulation, knowing that tribulation produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces tested character, and testing produces hope, ⁵ and this hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Ephesians 1:7-10

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in the Messiah ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer person is wasting away, our inner person is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary tribulation is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Isaiah 65:17

¹⁷ "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind."

United as God's Children by the Spirit of God vv 15-17

Paul is announcing the Gospel that has created remarkable communities like the church in Rome – Jews and pagans of all nations, slave and free – the deep brokenness of human beings healed by God. This is God's great purpose and only God could accomplish it.

In Jesus Messiah, uniquely Son of God, God came bodily among us in self-giving love/grace to bring the story of Israel to a new level of fulfillment, to break grip of sin and death that we in our weakness could not break, to conquer death and create new resurrection life.

In the Holy Spirit he stays with us, leading and empowering transformation and new life, the experience of intimacy as a child of God crying "Abba," giving us God's own life in us.

This reality breaks down barriers. Every human can be God's child, God's heir, co-heir with Jesus, who as Messiah unites all in himself. This great vision is lived out in the ongoing world we experience every day. The Spirit repairs and enhances our individuality toward the love of God seen in Jesus among us. Jesus takes us into the experience of the world of suffering and brokenness all around and within us, but with a radical new dimension.

United with All Creation in Expectation vv 18-21

Paul lifts our eyes to see our lives even in our suffering and brokenness on the largest possible scale. God is the creator of the whole world, and what God is doing in us is part of his universal renewal of his broken creation. Paul uses the images of Gen 1-3 and Isaiah. Humans were created to be God's image in his world, to care for and rule God's creation with God's love and care. Humans are broken and corrupted and so is the whole physical world subject to frustration, slave to corruption. God is bringing about not just personal salvation for individual souls but the renewal of all of this beloved world on all levels.

Human salvation is the restoring of that image of God, so defaced, but now regained in Jesus. It opens the vision of unlimited possibilities as God brings a "new heaven and new earth." We cannot predict the form or shape that this renewal will take, except that it will be a surprise. The one reality we know is the grace and love of God that will pervade it.

Songs: *"This is My Father's World"* – *"This World is not my Home."* Each contains a truth. This world in its corruption is not the final reality. But God is not giving up on his creation. It is God's world and he will renew it. The whole world longs for that renewal. We work now to care for that world on every level, ecologically, socially, spiritually. God loves it all.

The Pain of Childbirth Bringing forth New Life vv 22-23

The reality of suffering and transience is so powerful that it can overwhelm us. Suffering easily undermines hope and leads to despair – "Nothing is worth what we're going through."

Paul uses the experience of a woman in the pain of childbirth link the experience of intense suffering with ultimate hope. The whole creation is in that pain expecting new creation life to ultimately come forth. But especially we who are in the Messiah, who are given the Spirit, in fact have within us the first real participation in that world to come. The pain does not go away, but even in the midst of it expectation springs up of glory to come.

Living in Hope vv 24-25

Hope is fundamental to Christian life, Paul says, "for in this hope we were saved." This is not hope as it's often used in a weak sense of uncertain possibility – "I hope it won't rain."

This is a certain reality, but one that is not yet visible. We journey with God into the future. He gives us his Spirit now. We learn to endure suffering now, but leaning forward expectantly.