

\* These notes are provided for personal devotional and study purposes only. They may not be published, distributed, or disseminated to others without the permission of the author.

**Our Blessed Hope**

**Romans 8.23-25**

**Series: The Pure Gospel**

**Rev. Andrew Hawkins, Ph.D.**

**The Village Church**

**November 10, 2024**

I. Introduction

- A. We were up north last week, visiting our daughter Kate's family just north of Philadelphia
  - 1. We had gone up on the occasion of her youngest's sixth birthday
  - 2. **Ethan** was six on November 1
    - a. **Andrew** was 10 back in June
  - 3. We try, as much as possible, to get to the birthdays of our grandchildren
- B. Ethan started full-day kindergarten, 5 days a week this year
  - 1. That meant that both Kate's kids were in school for the whole school day for the first time
- C. Now both Kate's kids have been active little boys
  - 1. But Ethan especially
    - a. He never seems to stop
    - b. Never seems to stop moving
    - c. Never seems to stop talking
    - d. Never seems to stop finding ways to create chaos
  - 2. Not in a pathological way – just in the way little boys with excess energy do
    - a. He is exhausting
    - b. Especially to us grandparents
    - c. We are always reminded of why God made us parents when we were younger!
- D. Well, we were there, of course, when the kids were both off to school
  - 1. And I made the observation to Kate that it seemed to me that, now that both kids were gone for the day, she was a different woman
    - a. Wow! A woman who could take a breath
    - b. A woman who could actually have a quiet time uninterrupted
    - c. A woman who seemed to be refreshed
    - d. She seemed to have a "new lease on life"
  - 2. She had emerged from a decade of relative exhaustion
    - a. Which I'm sure many of you can relate to as you remember when your children were young
- E. So I told Kate that I understood why women are willing to get pregnant, go through the pregnancy, and then go through the pain of childbirth and have a baby

1. But I told her that what I couldn't understand is why women would do it *again!*
- F. Well, Kate had an answer for that
  1. She said that she did it again so that Andrew would have someone to play with
  2. She didn't realize that once Ethan could talk, he would be literally attached to Andrew – whether or not Andrew wanted
  3. I wish I had a nickel for every time I have heard the word “Andrew” coming from Ethan
  4. “Andrew,” “Andrew,” “Andrew,” “Andrew”!
  5. And it didn't matter whether Andrew was listening
    - a. It was incessant
- G. But the reason why women are willing to go through childbirth
  1. At least once
    - a. Many more than once
  2. Is because the pain of childbirth is a hopeful pain
  3. It's because the outcome of the suffering is the precious treasure of a child
    - a. There is a reward at the end of the suffering
- H. I mention that because we are deep into our study of Romans (though it's been more than a month since our last message in this series on The Pure Gospel)
  1. And we are in Chapter 8
    - a. In a passage that has a lot to do with suffering
    - b. But a passage that has a lot to do with hope
- I. Chapter 8 is perhaps the pinnacle of this grandest of all the epistles
  1. It is culmination of Paul's argument for the gospel
- J. Paul has shown us first of our need of the gospel
  1. That the natural state of human beings is as sinners under the just wrath of God
    - a. And our sin – which we share with Adam, and has been characterized as inherent in our fallen human natures – has left us without righteousness
    - b. A righteousness that we desperately need in order to stand before the holiness of God
  2. But the gospel – the good news – is that God has provided that righteousness for us
    - a. It is an alien righteousness – not indigenous to our humanity
    - b. But a righteousness that God has been provided through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ
  3. **Romans 3:21–22** (ESV) —
    - a. 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—
    - b. 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe....

- K. So by believing – by trusting in Jesus Christ alone for that righteousness – God justifies us
1. He declares us righteous
    - a. Even though we are not inherently righteous
  2. Because He imputes, or accounts, the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ to our account
  3. **Romans 3:23–24** (ESV) —
    - a. 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
    - b. 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...
- L. That is the gospel – the good news!
1. It is good news because we know that there is nothing we could ever do, as guilty parties before the altogether righteous Judge, to make ourselves righteous
  2. But the righteous Judge has give us Christ as our righteousness
  3. **Romans 3:25–26** (ESV) —
    - a. 25 ... This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.
    - b. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time,
    - c. so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
- M. Paul goes on to say how this affects our own attitudes toward ourselves:
1. **Romans 3:27–28** (ESV) —
    - a. 27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law?
    - b. By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.
    - c. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.
  2. That’s the grace of God
    - a. The Amazing Grace of God
- N. Well, the section of Romans that follows begins to detail all the glorious benefits of believing in Jesus alone for our salvation
1. Chapter 5
    - a. Peace with God
    - b. Access to God
    - c. Hope of the glory of God
    - d. Rejoicing in the midst even of sufferings
    - e. Salvation from the penalty of our sins – the wrath of God
  2. Chapter 6
    - a. Union with Christ
    - b. Being enabled by our union with Christ to live a life that corresponds to our new standing as having been declared righteous
    - c. That we are no longer in bondage to sin; no longer slaves to our flesh, our sinful natures
  3. Chapter 7

- a. We have been released from the law of sin that operates in our bodies
  - b. And that while we still experience the continued presence of sin in our lives, that sin no longer reigns in us
  - c. But our flesh, our sinful natures, still plague our experience
- O. But then in Chapter 8 – this gem in the glorious setting of the gospel, this diamond – thrills us with the glories of this gospel
  - 1. That there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus
  - 2. That we are set free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death
    - a. In order that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fully met in us
    - b. As we walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh
  - 3. That is, the Spirit who dwells in us as believers
    - a. Enabling Christ to live His life through us by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ
    - b. The Spirit who activates us, motivates us, enables us to live the way God intended human beings to live in the first place
  - 4. And Chapter 8 affirms all this for us by assuring us that we belong to Him
    - a. We have been adopted into the family of God the Father
    - b. And the Spirit of Christ bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God
    - c. Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ

## II. **The Suffering Family of God**

- A. But then we are reminded that one of the chief evidences of our belonging to Christ is that we suffer with Him
- B. **Romans 8:17** (ESV) —
  - 1. 17 ... heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,
  - 2. provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.
- C. That's kind of hard to hear, isn't it?
  - 1. Normally, we think that the evidence of our relationship with God is that we would be free from suffering
    - a. And that will certainly be the case in the future
    - b. Which is what hope is all about
  - 2. But in the meantime
    - a. Here, in this life – we do indeed suffer
- D. In our last message we considered these verses:
  - 1. **Romans 8:18–22** (ESV) —
    - a. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
    - b. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.
    - c. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it,

- d. in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
  - e. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.
- E. We live in a fallen world
- 1. Ever since Adam – the world has been under a curse
  - 2. Back in Genesis 3 we learned about it
    - a. How broken relationships would characterize the world due to sin
    - b. And the OT is the outworking of that curse in the lives of the nation of Israel – the nation God chose to be the theater of His operations
  - 3. The relationship between the humans and God – Adam and Eve, and every human ever since – would be spiritual separation from God
    - a. And destined to die physically as well
  - 4. The relationship between Adam and Eve – and between humans ever since – would also be broken and problematic
  - 5. And even the relationship between humanity and the created world – the environment that we like to call it today – has also been broken due to the fall
    - a. “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together
    - b. *In the pains of childbirth*
    - c. Until now.” (Romans 8.22)
  - 6. There it is! “Pains of childbirth”
    - a. But it’s not without hope
- F. Our text this morning continues this theme and brings us again to hope
- G. Romans 8:23–25 (ESV) —
- 1. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
  - 2. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?
  - 3. 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

### III. Our Groaning World

- A. In these texts we notice something very unusual
- 1. There is a word that shows up here three times
    - a. And does not appear anywhere else in Romans
  - 2. Groaning – *stenazo* (Gk)
  - 3. The interesting thing is that it applies to three different entities
- B. The Creation
- 1. It applies first of all to the creation
  - 2. Romans 8:22 (ESV) —
    - a. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

- C. **We Ourselves**
  - 1. And then it applies to we ourselves
  - 2. **Romans 8:23** (ESV) —
    - a. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
- D. **The Spirit Himself**
  - 1. Finally, it applies to the Holy Spirit
    - a. In the text we'll examine in the next message
  - 2. **Romans 8:26** (ESV) —
    - a. 26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness.
    - b. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought,
    - c. but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.
- E. So there's a lot of groaning going on
  - 1. The creation groans
    - a. We spoke about this in the last message
    - b. How in its own way, the creation is troubled
    - c. Every dimension of our environment seems conflicted
    - d. Every environmental problem seeks solutions
    - e. And those solutions end up creating more problems
  - 2. So it's not a personification of creation as a sentient, conscious being
    - a. But its conflicts generate a kind of groaning
    - b. Tennyson: "Nature is red in tooth and claw"
- F. The Spirit's groaning is kind of hard to understand
  - 1. That God the Holy Spirit would share the groaning of our fallen creation and of ourselves is hard to grasp
    - a. But we'll explore that next time
- G. But all of us can understand our own groaning
  - 1. For we all groan
    - a. And you don't have to have been a woman in labor to understand groaning
    - b. For there are all kinds of groaning
  - 2. We've had a lot of groaning recently
    - a. This election season has given ample opportunity for groaning
    - b. Maybe you're still groaning
  - 3. But it's not just the election season that creates groaning
    - a. People groan about all kinds of things
    - b. People groan about their own afflictions and challenges
    - c. People groan about broken relationships in families
    - d. People groan about decisions that are made that are not the decisions that you would have made
- H. Honestly, as I reflect on the horrible discourse in this political season especially, I think it would have been better if a lot of people – Christians included – would have just shut up and groaned

1. The groaning would have been a lot better than the awful words that were often expressed and left their marks on others
2. And maybe if we'd just shut up and groaned the Spirit himself would intercede for us with His groanings too deep for words
  - a. And maybe that would change the way the words would come out of our mouths
3. You know, you don't have to say everything that comes into your mind

IV. **We...**

- A. There are three things that this passage says that Christians – followers of Jesus – do
  1. And they belong together
    - a. They are inseparable in the Christian life
  2. They are...
    - a. We groan
    - b. We hope
    - c. And we wait
- B. **Romans 8:23–25** (ESV) —
  1. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
  2. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?
  3. 25 But if we hope for what we do not see,
  4. we wait for it with patience.
- C. We groan, we hope, we wait
- D. **Groan**
  1. Now the groaning that we ourselves as followers of Jesus experience is different
    - a. Different with the kind of groaning that the creation experiences
    - b. And especially different from the kind of groaning that non-believers experience
  2. There is sense in which our groaning is like the creation's groaning
    - a. The creation's groaning is said to be likened to pains of childbirth
    - b. Which as we have observed, is a hopeful groaning
  3. The creation's groaning has a hopeful dimension to it
  4. **Romans 8:20–21** (ESV) —
    - a. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it,
    - b. in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
  5. You see, the creation doesn't like its deplorable condition any more than we do!

- a. There is a sense in which, even the inanimate, non-self-conscious creation longs for a better condition
  - b. That even the inanimate world has the good sense to hope for the freedom from its bondage to corruption
  - c. And that the creation will find itself the coattails and overflow of the freedom that will ultimately come with the glory when the children of God are revealed
6. That's what we have in common with the creation's groaning
- a. It is a hopeful groaning
7. But our groaning has this difference
- a. "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly..."
8. We, followers of Jesus, have something the created world does not have
- a. We have the firstfruits of the Spirit!
  - b. We have the first tastes of the abundant harvest – living within us
9. So that the contrast between our groaning, and the expectant harvest – of which the firstfruits are merely the taste and guarantee – gives us all the more reason for hope
10. The hope that the creation has is a vague hope
- a. There's got to be something better
11. But we can taste our hope
- a. We know what the harvest will be like
  - b. The creation can only dream
12. And then our groaning is different than the groaning of the non-believer
- a. The non-believer does not have the firstfruits of the Spirit
13. Now there are some groanings that the non-believer and the believer have in common
- a. Surely, our losses are common
  - b. Our afflictions are common
  - c. Our disappointments are common
  - d. So it's not surprising that we all – in our common humanity – groan
14. But their's is a groaning without hope
- a. The unbeliever has not tasted of the heavenly delights
  - b. The unbeliever does not have the firstfruits of the Spirit
15. **1 Thessalonians 4:13** (ESV) —
- a. 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.
16. We all grieve; we all groan
- a. But there are those who grieve, who groan, without hope
17. But our groaning is hopeful
- a. Because we have tasted of the firstfruits
  - b. And have the glorious expectation that the harvest will in fact be glorious!

18. And there's one other way in which our groaning is different from the groaning of the non-believer
  - a. We groan within ourselves because we groan for our own sin
  - b. The Spirit of God within us wars against our flesh, our sinful natures
  - c. And that war creates its own groanings
  - d. Because we know we are not what we could be
  - e. We know we are not what we shall be
19. The non-believer doesn't have that kind of groaning
  - a. That kind of groaning leads us to a humility before God and others
  - b. Leads us to hearts that cry each day for the mercy and grace of God
20. So we groan
  - a. But our groaning is hopeful
  - b. Our groaning anticipates the glorious harvest
  - c. And our groaning is humbling

E. **Hope**

1. Not only do we groan, according to this text, we hope
2. Hope is an important biblical word, isn't it?
  - a. Together with faith and love, it is one of the principle virtues of the Christian life as expressed in 1 Corinthians 13
3. Hope points us to the future
  - a. The unbelieving secular world has no real hope because there is no future
  - b. We emerged from the primordial slime by chance
  - c. And their future is simply a return to the postmordial slime
4. Secular human beings pretend to hope
  - a. But they have nothing to hope for
  - b. Dust they are, and to dust they shall return
  - c. They may push it off into the future or to future generations
  - d. But their end is still the same
5. The secular mind, without any understanding of its origin or of its destiny, has its feet firmly planted in mid-air
  - a. And any pretension of hope in the secular mind they have stolen from Judeo-Christian worldviews
  - b. And they have plagiarized those views
  - c. They have failed to acknowledge where the very idea of hope comes from
6. As Paul said in Romans 1 – they have not acknowledged God as God and have not given Him thanks
7. But we hope
  - a. We hope because we do know, both our origin and our destiny in Jesus Christ
  - b. We hope because we have the firstfruits of the Spirit
  - c. We hope because we know the One who knows the end from the beginning

- d. And He has told us in His word what the end will be
- 8. And that end is the Triune God who lives will prevail
  - a. Prevail over this dysfunctional, disturbed, and corrupted world
  - b. And will bring all His own into glory
- 9. **Romans 8:18** (ESV) —
  - a. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
- 10. Our hope is certain
  - a. I know we use that term in different ways
  - b. I watched the Mountaineers play football yesterday
  - c. Actually, I was out for the first half of the game, so I had recorded it, and watched it when I got home
- 11. Now I always hope the Mountaineers will win
  - a. But they don't always win
  - b. (Even Ohio State doesn't always win; they usually win, but not always)
  - c. So I watched the game from the beginning – even though it was over
  - d. But I disciplined myself not to check the score on my phone
- 12. But sometimes I do peak and check the score
  - a. And know what the outcome is even while I'm watching the recording of the game
  - b. In that case, my hope is sure (that is, if they indeed win)
- 13. But you see, we do know the outcome
  - a. The outcome is sure
  - b. God wins!
  - c. In fact, God is undefeated
  - d. And He always will be
  - e. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, yes, and forever
- 14. So while we groan, we hope
  - a. We drive forward with confidence
  - b. That in spite of our afflictions, our troubles, even our persecutions – which may get worse before they get better
  - c. There will be glory
- 15. Jesus won that glory for us
  - a. He has defeated the enemy of our souls – Satan
  - b. He has defeated the last enemy – death
  - c. He has left the tomb empty
  - d. He has risen
  - e. He has ascended and sits at the right hand of the Father
  - f. And He is sovereign
- 16. **Revelation 5:5** (ESV) —
  - a. 5 And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

17. The Lord of history has prevailed!
18. And the Lord of history will win in spite of who wins an election
  - a. I don't ultimately care who you voted for
  - b. But if you trust in the one you voted for, you're a fool
19. Only Jesus fulfills His promises
  - a. And only He will take you to glory to be with Himself
20. We groan, and we hope
  - a. It is integral to who we are at TVC
  - b. Mission: We are building a community of forgiveness, purpose, and *hope* in Jesus Christ.
21. Now, what is it that we hope for?
22. **Romans 8:23–24** (ESV) —
  - a. 23 ... we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly
  - b. as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
  - c. 24 For in this hope we were saved....
23. Paul expresses our hope in terms of the redemption of our bodies
  - a. What does he mean?
  - b. Well, he's speaking of the resurrection of our bodies
24. This brings it close to home
  - a. Because most often our groaning is focused on our bodies
  - b. Our afflictions are mostly physical
25. But even when our afflictions are not thought to be physical – as in issues with relationships or in psychological maladies – their effects are often physical
  - a. Lack of sleep
  - b. Blood pressure
  - c. Stress related illness
26. And even our cognitive issues are inseparable from our brains
27. So our hope is that, just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too will be gifted with spiritual bodies, redeemed from the effects of the curse, from the effects of sin
  - a. In this hope – the hope of the resurrection of the dead – we were saved!

F. **Wait**

1. So we groan, and we hope
  - a. And we also wait
2. **Romans 8:24–25** (ESV) —
  - a. 24 For in this hope we were saved.
  - b. Now hope that is seen is not hope.
  - c. For who hopes for what he sees?
  - d. 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.
3. We groan, we hope, and we wait

4. Now here's the thing about waiting
    - a. That's because we don't know how to wait
    - b. We think that to wait means that we sit around and do nothing
    - c. That we stew and pout and kind of become useless
  5. No!
    - a. Our waiting is not passive
    - b. Our waiting is an active waiting
  6. How do we wait?
  7. We wait by engaging in the work of the kingdom!
    - a. We wait by studying our Bibles
    - b. We wait by being transformed by the renewing of our minds
    - c. We wait by encouraging our brothers and sisters who are going through challenging times
    - d. We wait by listening to the voice of God in our secret closets of prayer
    - e. We wait by caring for the poor and disadvantaged in our communities and in our world
    - f. We wait by giving so that the Great Commission would be fulfilled
  8. We wait with patience
    - a. Knowing that Jesus may return any day now
    - b. Or not
    - c. And if He does not come in our lifetimes we will still be faithful and obedient
- G. So dear friends,
1. We groan
  2. We hope
  3. And we wait

V. **Worth the Wait**

- A. And we always do those things because we know that Jesus is worth the wait
- B. **Romans 8:18** (ESV) —
  1. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
- C. **2 Corinthians 4:17–18** (ESV) —
  1. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,
  2. 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.
  3. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
- D. **John 17:24** (ESV) —
  1. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am,
  2. to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.