



followers of Jesus seeking to glorify God

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May 25 Devotional (for Sunday May 31)

Grief and Hope Series Part 4

Practicing the Presence of God in the Present – Living in our living hope.

We have already began the transition from grief to hope in this series. This week we want to launch in the direction of the hope we have. Living in hope is just as vital to our health as learning to lament. In essence the Easter season points to both of these vividly. Good Friday, **Easter Sunday**, and Ascension are all part of what Jesus accomplished, and what he continues to do. I bolded Easter because this is where we are in the midst of hope. As Randy Friesen (Executive director of Multiply) stated on the Good Friday Zoom video service planned by our national conference,

“Anabaptists have traditionally emphasized Good Friday. Evangelicals tend to highlight Easter Sunday. We as MBs who call ourselves Anabaptists and Evangelicals hold both up as critical.”

Good Friday emphasizes discipleship themes like sacrifice, suffering, counting the cost, servitude, dying to self, lament and grief. Easter proclaims other discipleship themes of resurrection, new life, victory, power, promise, reconciliation, glory, praise and living hope.

Romans 8 moves us across a similar continuum. It also transitions us from last weeks devotional to this. While expanding on, “Practicing the Presence of the Lord in the Present” we ended at ‘in the present’. Romans 8:18 says the following about this present time while proclaiming a future glory, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” The next section of Romans 8 is a journey from the grief of Good Friday to the Glory of Easter Sunday and the resulting future hope we have as followers of Jesus.

¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing 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 will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain 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 adoption as sons, 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.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he



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foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”

Can you hear the anguish of all creation as it awaits being freed from futility and bondage to corruption? 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.” This future hope dramatically informs and ought to change how we live in the present. We know our suffering is temporary. Good Friday came to an end. So too did Holy Saturday as it is called. The suffering, confusion, grief and even death was swallowed up by Christ's victory! Our future hope is as certain as Jesus historical and bodily resurrection. He is risen! He is risen indeed! These are much more than cute responsive phrases that have become tradition. Jesus' death and resurrection are central and foundational to our faith, and to our future hope! And these must impact our present!

Does it not produce endurance and perseverance knowing that our present suffering will end? Even more, knowing that as far as our suffering may go to the horrible, hard, unjust, and seemingly senseless end of the continuum it can't be compared to the glory to be revealed. Redemption is guaranteed for every follower of Christ. That is what verse 18 says! If I say it well then there is no great consequence to believe or disbelieve. Almighty God, The Resurrected One, The Holy Spirit all bear witness to its truth. Believe Him! What a profound future hope and glory we have! How can we not live differently?

Does it not change how we share and give now knowing that, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (v. 32) Oh the joy of living generously! We do not need to be stockpiling for an uncertain future here on Earth when we know for sure we have treasures in heaven! Our future hope and glory are a certainty not wishful and naïve thinking. Does this not bring courage in the face of our fears? Nothing can change or diminish the living hope we have in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But most of this is not new to most of us. So why are we not living differently? Doubt and Unbelief. We read and maybe even understand, this passage in Romans but disregard it for ourselves. Reread verses 31-34.

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condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”

We read, “If God is for us...” and then believe that he may not be. Certainly if you have not given your life to him and received his forgiveness by grace through faith then you are in a position opposing God. But it does not need to stay that way. He loves you enough to die for you. Stop and consider the great love he has demonstrated. Verse 32, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all”. Won’t you consider receiving Christ’s forgiveness and love by grace through faith today?

Paul writes this letter, Romans, to “all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints”. (1:7a) Do we not all struggle to live in and out of God’s love for us? God is for us! “It is God who justifies.” (v. 33b) There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (8:34,1) We are wildly loved by God and it is based on his choosing not our worthiness. We are forgiven and freed to live the abundant life not because we will live perfectly but because he paid for us completely. We abide in him not based on what we do but because of what he has done. “Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.” (V. 34) “³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1) What in this passage stands out to you right now? Let that settle in! Praise God! Praise him right now. Fully live in the present as you live in the light of this future hope.

And 1 Peter 1 continues, “⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

His love for you is almost beyond description. If gratitude and praise are not forthcoming. If you are still struggling to comprehend his unfathomable love for you then consider another text. Apart from the cross Luke 15:1-32 is one of the clearest pictures of God’s love. Look it up. Read and re-read it. Ask God to reveal his love for you. Read and pray until you are convinced that he is a loving God. Continue to pray and read until you are convicted of your sin and know you need a saviour. Pray asking for forgiveness and to be made new by his power and love. Receive his adoption as a son or daughter. Rejoice at what you have been given. Rest in his goodness and grace.

Listen. All of this is true whether you or I believe it or not. It is also true that we are much more open and susceptible to doubt and unbelief when we are not abiding in Christ. Life truly is hard as we live in this extended ‘Holy Saturday’ full of death, suffering, fear, pain and loss. All creation is corrupted and



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groans and the affects are all around us. When we focus on this world there are devastating consequences.

“If you look at the world, you’ll be distressed. If you look within, you’ll be depressed. If you look at God you’ll be at rest.” — Corrie ten Boom

What holds your gaze currently? Who do you dwell on in the present? Hebrews 12 flows out of Hebrews 11, “the Heroes of faith” chapter. Ordinary people who chose to live by faith in God and in the future hope and glory he proclaimed. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Look to Jesus. Don’t try to muster up more faith on your own. Look to Jesus. Live in light of the future hope and glory which are ours in Christ Jesus our Lord. When we know him, are growing in him and in his love for us there is little room for worry or doubt. Looking to Jesus we are freed to live now, in the present. Freed and at rest in him, and the “living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”. (1 Peter 1:3) Easter happened! Jesus is alive! Our resurrection is coming too! Praise him today and everyday, for as long as it is the present. He is our living hope.

Pastor Gary