

Freedom for the Future

“Share a room!” chorused Chloe and Rashona.
 “Yes,” Lauren said calmly.

At 51 years old, Lauren didn’t think she would be “starting over.” But the single mother of two had no choice than to scale down—way down. Lauren had been laid off her job last year. Her salary as a bank branch manager wasn’t overly lucrative, but it had been good pay. When the branch closed, Lauren lost her job, and the bank was not able to place her anywhere else. It took her six months to find another job as a teller—which was only half of her previous salary.

It didn’t take long for Lauren to fall behind in the mortgage on her ranch-style home. So, the family was moving into a “cute, little apartment” until things got better. Her 13 and 15-year-old daughters thought it was the end of their world. Lauren also had her new car repossessed.

“Mom, this is awful,” said Chloe.

“How are we going to make it?” asked Rashona.

“Oh, girls. God continues to care of us,” Lauren said. “The Lord has proved time and again that He is our provider. We have what we need. Money and material things come and go, but our security in Christ can never be taken.”

“So, you’re not worried?” asked Rashona.

“Not at all,” smiled Lauren. “I’m excited about what’s going to happen, because with Christ, we have good things in store!”

1. *What are some natural responses to trials in our lives?*

2. *What role does hope in Christ have in providing us with a different response during trials?*

3. *Can you share one promise God gives Christians concerning enduring trials?*

Patiently Waiting on God's Plan

Romans 8:18-21, KJV

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Romans 8:18-21, NIV

¹⁸I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

When we walk in the Spirit and not the flesh, we can have victory over sin in our lives (Rom. 8:2-4), but living in this fallen world brings us “sufferings” (vs. 18). Yet, we have a future hope in those times, knowing that one day the Lord will set all things right. Our present suffering will pale in comparison to the “glory that will [one day] be revealed in us” (vs. 18). Suffering for Christ gives the hope of blessings in this life, and the hope of glory to come.

When sin came into the world, it also brought God's curse on His creation that continues today. However, even as He was pronouncing His curse, God proclaimed great hope through the “seed” of the woman (Gen. 3:15). Jesus would crush the enemy's head and one day deliver creation from the curse of sin.

Our hope and eager expectation is that everything will be set right for humanity as well as for all God's creation.

The chains of corruption and decay will be broken when the glory of God is ultimately manifested in His children.

4. *To what did Paul say our present sufferings were not worthy to be compared?*

5. *For what does creation wait?*

6. *From what will creation be delivered?*

Prayerfully Waiting on God's Plan

Romans 8:22-27, KJV

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the

Romans 8:22-27, NIV

²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

²³Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit

mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

All of creation currently suffers under the painful weight of sin. This includes God's people. As with all creation, Christians also groan inwardly as we await the culmination of our adoption, which will be the redemption of our bodies at the resurrection.

As a ship that is firmly anchored can weather a fierce storm, so too can God's people who firmly hope in His promises stand against the fierce attacks of those who hate the Lord and His people. This hope that steadfastly anchors the soul is not in what we currently have and can see, for we do not hope in what our five senses can already confirm for us. We do not hope that He provided the way of salvation and forgiveness of sins—that already happened two millennia ago on the Cross. However, we do hope and wait with eager expectation for the redemption of our bodies one day.

Thankfully, our hope is not in our own strength, for we could not stand alone. Rather, our hope is in the power of God to whom we can pray and receive the strength we need to prevail. This is so even if the cares and sorrows of life are so overwhelming that "we do not know what we ought to pray for" (vs. 26). When life's storms seem like they are about to sweep us under, we can cry out to the Lord, knowing that the indwelling Spirit of God will intercede on our behalf. And the Lord, who knows and searches our hearts, will answer us in accordance with His good and perfect will. In so doing, we can trust that He will work everything out for our good and His glory.

7. *How does sin affect all of creation, including God's people?*

8. *In what do God's people hope?*

9. *How does the Holy Spirit help us pray?*

Purposefully Waiting on God's Plan

Romans 8:28-30, KJV

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Romans 8:28-30, NIV

²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

²⁹For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

We can trust that God's plans will ultimately work out for good even in trials and tribulation "for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (vs. 28). One of the great purposes of our calling is to proclaim the Gospel. And, the more we are like Jesus by being conformed to His image, the more credible is our testimony for Him.

While Christians have different viewpoints on how God chooses those He calls, by faith in Him we receive His two-fold gift of being "justified" and "glorified" (vs. 30). Being justified, God's people are made righteous in His sight as if they had never sinned. With justification comes the promise of glorification, that one day we will stand completely purged of any sin.

10. *For whom does God work all things together for good?*

11. *To whose image are God's people to be conformed?*

12. *What does God do to those who answer His call?*

Hope in Trials

Three months before her 18th birthday, Joni Eareckson Tada's life changed forever when she became paralyzed from the shoulders down after diving into shallow water in the Chesapeake Bay. How can she live with hope when her body is wasting away in a wheelchair and she has recurring cancer, lung problems, and chronic pain? Joni believes God's promise that despite her body decaying each day, she is being renewed spiritually. Her hope grows day by day as she experiences more of God's love and grace. Joni believes "deep, great trials bring deep grace from God."

Horatio Spafford experienced financial loss, the death of his four-year-old son to scarlet fever, and then the death of his four daughters in a shipwreck. Yet, filled with hope, he wrote the hymn, "It Is Well with My Soul." He actually wrote these words as he was passing over the exact spot of the shipwreck that took his daughters' lives. His faith in a loving God enabled him to have hope in trials.

I understand that. Cerebral meningitis led to 36 hours in a coma, bell palsy on the left side of my face, and hearing loss in my left ear. My family and friends prayed that I would survive. Almost 20 years later, I am still alive. My slightly crooked face with my almost closed left eye draws attention from children. The effects of cerebral meningitis slowly attack my aging body. Yet, every day is filled with hope as I experience God's love, joy, and grace through my family, friends, and the ministry He has given me. My hope in a new body in heaven is real, but my hope in the midst of trials is just as real. For God has demonstrated through His Son that there is future freedom from trials.

13. *Does having hope in trials mean that we don't experience sorrow or disappointment? Explain your answer.*

14. *How does knowing God's promises in the Bible give us hope in trials?*

15. *What trial(s) are you going through that you need God's hope to endure?*

Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

In 1957, Alice Wine rewrote a famous spiritual song, “Keep Your Hand on the Plow,” and titled it “Keep Your Eyes on the Prize.”

“Paul and Silas thought they was lost/ Dungeon shook and the chains come off

Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on/ Freedom’s name is mighty sweet

And soon we’re gonna meet/ Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.”

Paul and Silas kept their eyes on the prize of God’s promise of freedom either here on earth or in heaven. We should do the same with rejoicing and hope.

► *Describe some ways you can keep your eyes on the prize of becoming more like Jesus while enduring a present trial. Think too of things you have done during past trials that can help.*

KEY VERSE

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

—Romans 8:18, KJV

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. —Romans 8:18, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of May 9 to May 15

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Galatians 3:1-5—Receiving the Spirit through Faith.

Tue. Galatians 3:6-17—The Blessing Comes through Christ.

Wed. 2 Peter 1:2-4—God’s Power Grants Life and Godliness.

Thu. Hosea 2:16-23—Betrothed in Faithfulness.

Fri. Luke 6:45-49—A Wise and Faithful Builder.

Sat. Genesis 17:1-8—Walk Blameless before God.

Sun. Galatians 3:18-29—No Longer Subject to the Law.