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Romans 8:12-25

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation – but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.[a] And by him we cry, ‘Abba,[b] Father.’ 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Present suffering and future glory.

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

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not 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. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Last week I was reminded by FaceBook of a change I had made at this time last year. It was a change in employment. I had changed my job in FaceBook to “Bass trombonist on the Titanic”. I was of course identifying with the story that is told of the last moments of the Titanic. There was panic, pain and fear. The band kept playing to keep the passengers calm as they boarded the lifeboats. The boat was sinking, there were not enough lifeboats for the passengers, but the band stayed on, playing, knowing that the end was near and the almost certain death that awaited them, they chose not be overwhelmed by the current fear and suffering, or to run but to give hope to others and stand at their post.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul starts off by setting before us the wonderful fact and solid basis for our hope as Christians. Then in verse 17 he reminds us that we need to share in Christ's sufferings if we are to share in his glory and then goes on to discuss the believer's future.

He paints a picture of having weighing scales, the old fashioned type. On one side he puts all the suffering he has experienced. For him it was being beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, hungry, exhausted, maligned and ridiculed. (You can add your own sufferings). The scale immediately tips down on that side. On the other side he puts the glory that we should expect to see in the future and the scale tips the other way. There is no comparison between the sufferings in this life and the rewards in the next.

We know that we will be with our Lord in the end. But, for now we are here on the earth with it's imperfections. Right now life is imperfect – it is hard – there is sorrow and suffering, disease and decay and death.

Paul lets us in on a secret. The suffering and pain that we face is not pointless. He compares suffering in the world to the "groaning" of a women in labour. The pain is great. If there is only pain then it is pointless but, with the pain is the anticipation of the future. When the baby comes there will be great joy.

Paul says we also groan in anticipation as a child waiting to be adopted. Just as the firstfruits of a harvest gives an idea of how good that harvest will be we have a taster of what the future holds. We have a hope because we have the firstfruits of the spirit.

One of my favourite songs, No Longer Slaves, says "I am surrounded, by the arms of the father " and then "I'm no longer a slave to fear, I am a child of God". Knowing that we are children of God, helps us not to be overwhelmed by the current fear, to stand at our post when we would usually run.

God gives us hope.

Ian

I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God

You unravel me with a melody
You surround me with a song
Of deliverance from my enemies
'Til all my fears are gone

From my mother's womb
You have chosen me
Love has called my name
I've been born again
Into your family

Your blood flows through my veins

I am surrounded
By the Arms of the Father
I am surrounded
By songs of deliverance

I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God
I'm no longer a slave to fear
I am a child of God

