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00:05

Well, good morning, everybody. My name is Greg Burdette. I am the Interim Director of Adult discipleship here at Belfield, and it's it's a privilege, it's an honor to be at the pulpit today being able to bring the word to you. This morning, we're we're back in the letter to Romans, as we've been throughout this whole fall. We're in Romans chapter eight. And if you were here last week, you might remember Josh talking about just what a sort of magisterial Pinnacle passage this is, in Scripture. Josh talked a little bit about how, you know, when you're preparing to preach on a sermon, like some of the passages that are found a Roman chapters eight, Romans chapters eight, it can be a little bit intimidating. And I certainly I certainly felt that, in my preparation this week, Meg VanDyke, before the service gave me an encouraging message for my sermon today, which was that I better bring it because this is this is her favorite passage. So hopefully, hopefully, we, hopefully I'll bring it and, and we'll, we'll have, we'll have a great time, seeing what God has, has brought out in his word. So broadly speaking, Romans chapter eight is about the work of the Holy Spirit in a life of the believer. But it's kind of the culmination of almost everything that's come before it. In Paul's letter to the Romans. In his letter, Paul has been talking about the gospel, which is just the good news of the power of God for salvation for everyone, Jew, Gentile doesn't matter. Everybody has access to the salvation. And the reason that everyone has access to the salvation is that it's not by works, it's not by anything that we have done, is by faith in Jesus Christ is the righteousness that comes by faith. So in chapter six through eight of Romans, Paul is talking about the the status change the realm change that has happened, as we have moved from being as part of Adam to being under Christ, from being under the law to being under grace, to being under the spirit. And that's where that's where we are in Romans chapter eight. The passage today that we're looking at verses 12, through 25, has some really important foundational truths that we're going to get to Josh mentioned, just one of them even in the assurance of pardon that we are children of God adopted as sons and daughters of the King. We'll also talk about the hope of the resurrection. Paul's gonna spend a lot of time on. But I'll tell you, if I had to really kind of distill the message of Romans chapter eight, verses 12 to 25. In one idea or concept, it would be this this idea of the already not yet. If you've been around Bellefield, for a while, you've probably heard Josh mention this concept. It has to do with how Christians are to live after the death and resurrection of Jesus. But before he returns to restore all things, and as the name indicates, it's really kind of holding two realities, intention simultaneously. This season of Advent that we're in is a great time to talk about the already not yet, because the season of Advent is a lived communal project of understanding the already not yet, right in Advent. On the one hand, Jesus Christ has already come we know that Christmas morning is coming. And that we, when we are united Him by faith, have have life eternal, have forgiveness of sins, and fellowship with the Father. But on the other hand, we also recognize as part of Advent, that these things have not come to their completion, that there is still death, that we still sin, there's still pain and suffering in the world. And so the process of

figuring out how to live in that tension, is what we're going to be looking at what Paul is going to be talking about in this passage today. And we're actually going to break up the passage, according to these categories have already and not yet. So in verses 12 through 17, Paul is really talking about the benefits that we have today as Christians that we have access to that we are adopted as children of God. Then in verses 18 through 23, we're going to be looking a little bit at the not yet the sense that we have that not all is as it should be the groaning. Paul's going to use the word groaning a number of times that we experienced when we see the suffering and sin in the world. And then 24 And 25 We're going to spend a little time on in application Paul talks about how these reality should make us patient.

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So we're gonna talk about how does that work? How does this make us patient? So that's what we're going to do today. I'm gonna I'm gonna pray. And then we're gonna jump in and read the scripture passage together. And then we'll talk a little bit more about what this passage has to teach us about living in Asia in which we are, would you join me in prayer? Father, we do thank you for your word and the beauty and majesty of it. The way that it shows us these incredible foundational truths about who we are, who you have made us to be. And Lord, I pray that as as I preach that you would give me the words that you desire me to speak, Lord, help me to explain what I have seen and heard in this preparation time. And Lord, I pray that You would give all of us listening hearts that we would hear and respond to the word that you have that you have declared. Probably these things in Jesus name, Amen. Alright, so once again, the passage that we're looking at is Romans chapter eight, verses 12 through 25, if you're looking in the pew Bibles is found on page 1201. But I would encourage you to have some kind of Bible open before you because we're going to be referring back to the passage at various times. This is Romans chapter eight, verses 12 through 25. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death, the deeds of the body, you will live, for all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. But you ever received the Spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, Abba, Father, the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God, for the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, and hope 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. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit, grown inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons the redemption of our bodies, for in this hope we are saved. Now hope that a scene is not hope for who hopes for what he sees. But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. It's the word of the Lord. Okay, so we're going to look at this and already not yet and patience. So let's start with the the already.

08:17

Well in verse 12, before Paul gets to talking about adoption in verse 14, he wants to help us understand what is true now that we have been dead declared dead to sin. And this is a call back to last week where Paul's talked a lot about life in the Spirit and death to sin. And what Paul is saying is that we as Christians are no longer he says debtors, and maybe a better translation is obligated,

we're no longer obligated to the flesh. Meaning that since the Spirit dwells in us, the spirit is going to be putting to death, the deeds of the flesh, the sinful nature, the sins besetting sins of our lives. We will be seeing as Christians as people who possess the spirit, victory over sin. This isn't to say that our salvation is dependent on victory over sin, only that the real presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is going to result in something that makes sense if you think about it. If the Holy Spirit of God, the all powerful Spirit of the Living God is actually living inside of us, it would be very strange to think that that would not result in anything that that would not result in some sort of change in our lives, that he would not be working to renew our hearts, renew our spirits and make us more and more into His image. And so Paul is saying that one of the benefits that we get as people who are of the Spirit people who have the Spirit of God is that the Spirit is working to do that in us. The Spirit is working to put to death sin in our lives, and point us towards righteousness, and we get to partner with him in that fruitfull sort of ministry. That's That's true of us right now, as believers. That's one of the things that we have. Paul then goes on and says that that's not all that the Spirit does, though. He says, All who are led by the Spirit are sons of God. And he repeats this a number of times throughout the passage. If you are reading in your pew Bibles at this point, you may see that there's a note next to that word, sons. And it sends you back to sort of the preface of the ESV to describe why the translators made this choice. And the basic question that translators have in passages like this is that Paul, from the context we know is talking not just about men, but he's talking about men and women in Christ being brought into the family of God. And so do you translate this word which is in Greek sons, literally sons, are you translated as men and women? And I think the translators say in the preface, that the reason why they leave it as sons, even though it's inclusive of all of us is because Paul is making a reference to the status, the inheritance that we have in Christ by this adoption. You see, in the ancient world, inheritances weren't split evenly among all the all the children. Instead, women's inheritance rights were severely restricted. And in Jewish world, the firstborn male got a double portion of the inheritance that is ever given away. And so the idea that Paul is trying to communicate here is that we are not simply adopted into the family of God. But as Christians, as men and women, believers, we are adopted into God's family, as sons of God, as full receivers of the inheritance that Jesus Christ is receiving, which is everything that is Jesus Christ, all things are made to him. And for him, Jesus Christ is receiving everything. And so we as adopted sons of God, participate in that inheritance as well. We receive everything.

12:02

I think they leave the language as well, because it reminds us that we are sons of God through the Son of God. In verse 15, the cry on Abba Father, or daddy is maybe even a better translation is a reference to the relationship that Jesus has with his Heavenly Father. You heard it mentioned in the assurance of hardening Galatians, the original references from Mark 1436, where Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he's praying, he says, Allah, Father, take this cup from me, take this cup of judgment from me, but my not my will, but Your will be done. So Paul is saying in this reference, that we as Christians, as adopted sons of God, have the same access have the same intimacy that Jesus has with the Heavenly Father, right now. So this this inheritance, this intimacy, this access that we gained by adoption, it allows us as believers to have just a deep sense of assurance, there's an identity that we have been given, we don't have to wonder about the question of who am i Who's Am I, we have been bought and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and we are now brought in to the family of God. It's a little bit difficult for me to overstate the importance of this. But I think if you've been a believer for a long time, you've probably heard this a lot. So I want to pause here and just reflect for a little bit on how impactful it is to have an identity that is based in this adoption that Paul is talking about. Just about all of our decisions, and almost everything we do flows out of our identity, it flows out of the way in which we answer questions like who am I, and what am I here for? And who's am I? Who do I belong to? Back when I was graduating from college, I was trying to figure out what the next

step career wise was for me. And one of the options that I was thinking about was was going to law school. And obviously, I didn't end up doing that. But as I reflect back on that time, and think, why did I want to go to law school? What was I thinking? I would say that probably about 40% of the reason why I wanted to go to law school was because I thought maybe illegal work would be interesting to me that I could do a good job of it. But if I'm being honest, probably 60% of the reason why I wanted to go to law school was because lawyers have a certain status, they have the potential for significant income. And when you graduated college and don't necessarily have a strong plan, going to law school feeling like you're on a track feeling like you're on a path to somewhere, it feels good, it feels safe. It feels like you're you're kind of a man with a plan. You're going somewhere. And so, you know, in this in this process, I the subtext of my career choice said, I was thinking more about what it said about me and my identity, as opposed to what the actual career choice was, whether I'd be good at it, whether I would actually enjoy it. And we make a lot of decisions. We do a lot of things based not on whether we actually think we'll be good at it neither whether or not we think we will really like it. But based on this subtext of what does this say about me? How does this influence my identity. So, for example, if if you all knew that, the Lord of the universe loves you, to the skies, and nose you to the depths, if that was a bedrock knowledge that was in your heart, that was your identity, I could imagine that many of you would probably be far less affected by the opinions of others, far less controlled by what others say about you what others think about you. Or, you know, we're talking about the pledge drive and a stewardship campaign, the idea of sacrificial giving would feel much less sacrificial, if you knew in your heart of hearts at the bedrock level, that you are receiving an unshakable kingdom, that you're receiving an incredible inheritance that's beyond imagination, being able to answer the question, Who am I with, I am a child of the King, I am a son of God will have an incredible ability to evaporate the fear and the anxiety that controls so many of our decisions that factor into so much of the subtext of what we are doing.

16:36

So that's amazing. But Paul then goes even a little bit further in verse 16. And he says that we can actually experience with the assurance of our identity in Christ right now that this is something that the Spirit gives the Spirit testifies to our spirit that we are children of God. And if you have been around church for a while, you've again probably heard that you're a child of the king. But maybe you are wondering, how do I get that sort of assurance? I would like to feel like I'm a child of the King, I would like to have that sort of bedrock identity. But I just don't feel that how do I get that? And I think in some sense, the answer is actually somewhat simple. Here, it's, it's, the answer is how does any child become assured that their father loves them, that they are a child of their father. It's a process of listening to your father. Right? I became assured that my father loved me that I was his child, over a long period of time of watching him, do what he did, hearing him tell me that he loves me, hearing him tell me that I was his child. And seeing that over the long term, imbedded in my heart, the knowledge, the firm knowledge that I was my father's child, and that he loved me. And so if you want this sort of assurance, if you want to hear the father's words over you that you are a child of God, you have to, you have to listen to him, right, you have to, you have to be reading scripture, you have to be you have to be in His Word. And we have, you know, every week about an hour here that we get together, and we tell you that you're a child of the King, that you are God's Son, that you're not an orphan. But when you go out from here, there are tons of different voices, that are telling you way different messages about who you are, what makes you important, and why you're somebody of significance. And so we need to be regularly listening to the voice of the Father, if we want this kind of assurance and the Holy Spirit through the word of God will actually impart this to us, He will allow us to see the work and the words of the Father. And let us know that we are children of God. Now, verse 16, is sort of the soaring height of the already these are all things that we have access to right now. But verse 17, gives us the first really kind of minor nodes in this passage, Paul says, we are heirs

if indeed we share in his sufferings, in order that we may also share in His glory. Feels like a little bit of a downer, right? After all the, you know, adoption, language and all this sort of thing. But if we're tempted to kind of get stuck on that difficulty, Paul really quickly, and I think he is anticipating this kind of this kind of objection, really quickly provides relief for us. He says in verse 18, For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed. You know? What is this glory that Paul is talking about? According to Paul, the glory that He is mentioning is a cosmic glory that comes at the resurrection when both the children of God, US and even all of creation, everything that we see We'll be free from the frustration and anxiety of the curse. That goes all the way back to Genesis three. And this this sort of the resurrection, the restoration, the second coming, this is what we look for when you think about the not yet. This is what we're actually anticipating. And over the years, I've asked a lot of people in Bible studies and discipleship groups and whatever. How often do you think about the resurrection? How much of a sort of daily motivating factor is the resurrection to you? And most people that I talked to say, it really isn't, I don't think about this too much. But if you sat down and read all the way through the New Testament, one of the things that I think would strike you and it's certainly struck me is, is how heavenly minded the writers of the New Testament are. The writers of the New Testament live in a world that has many windows by which they can, they can see through to the next big glimpse the new creation that is coming. We, however, have seem to have kind of lost to those windows, we've lost the ability to see beyond our circumstances to what is coming. And so I want to spend a little time thinking about what are these windows? And how do we sort of regain this vision that Paul has that even in the midst of suffering, that the resurrected glory that we are anticipating relativizes even significant suffering that we face in our lives?

21:32

Well, Paul, in this section describes creation and Christians themselves as groaning for the restoration. And this word groaning is a pretty interesting one. The root of the word carries this sense of sort of sighing as well. There is this there is this longing, this this desire that Paul is talking that the Paul is saying, exists in us and even extends to creation itself, which is amazing, Paul, the Bible doesn't usually talk about creation in these terms, having this sort of desire, this longing. What is this? Well, it's a sense of it's a sense of exile, a sense of being sort of on the outside looking in, it's, we're East of Eden, and the angel is guarding the way back, can't get back to where we want to go. And maybe the most maddening or difficult part of this is that we still, even though we're not in Eden anymore, even though we can't get back, we still recognize the echoes of Eden all around us. We have lots of words for these echoes. We call them things like experiences of beauty, or, or nostalgia or sort of transcendent experiences. In the Christian world. We usually talk about these like mountaintop experiences, right? If you go away on a retreat and have a really impactful encounter with God, you might have met some folks like this, that are just kind of living out of that moment, trying to recreate that experience constantly. And and even though we have these words for this experience, and even though we try to describe it, we oftentimes fail to do that. And CS Lewis says, says why that is true in his his great sermon, the weight of glory. In fact, here's an application for you from the sermon just after the sermon, go home and read the weight of glory. It's free online, you can you can google it to sermon. It's an amazing description of the new heavens and the new earth. But Lewis says this, about what we about our experiences of beauty and how we try to categorize these. He says, the books are the music in which we thought the beauty was located. So the thing is that the transcendent experiences that we think about the songs that bring us to tears, the books that that impact our lives and, and change us write. The books and music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust in them. It was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was longing. These things the beauty, the memory of our own past, are good images of what we really desire. But if they are mistaken for the thing itself, they turn into dumb idols

breaking the hearts of their worshipers, for they are not the thing itself. They are only the scent of a flower we have not found the echo of a tune. We have not heard news from a country we have never yet visited. I remember when Jenna and I drove down California route one from San Francisco to Big Sur after Ben and Jenna Carlson's wedding, and I think we nearly crashed like 13 times because I was driving to the first part of it, but I just remember feeling overwhelmed by the Beauty of that place, if you've ever been there, it's the sunlight on rocky cliffs, it's redwood trees, it's it feels outrageous in some ways, how beautiful that places. And I remember thinking at the time, if I could just like build a house on one of these cliffs and just live here for the rest of my life and experience this beauty day to day like that, that would be incredible. That would be exactly what I want. And even as I was thinking that I knew something, I knew that if you did all that, and you built that house, and you experienced that beauty every day it would change, it wouldn't be as impactful, it wouldn't be as significant. But I still had that longing, I still have that desire to sit in that in that beauty to sit in that feeling and to to experience it, make it durable, even to some sense, pass into it to become a part of it. I feel a little I feel embarrassed saying that it's it almost sounds sort of romantic or I'm like I'm trying to be poetic. I'm not I think it's just very hard to describe desires and longings that are like this. And I think the reason why it is so difficult to describe these longings is what CS Lewis has just said, it's that these longings, these desires, these experiences of transcendent beauty, they're, they're the scent of the flower that we we haven't ever seen, though the echo of the song that that we really haven't heard. They're the window into this other world that we longed to be in.

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And yet, if we take Scripture seriously, if we take what Paul is saying here seriously, one day that that longing will be fulfilled one day, the curse, that the creation is under the curse that we are under will be taken away. And the desire that we have to be united in some sense to this beauty to be to sit in it to live in it, we will have that. And, you know, if you think about these sort of experiences, and consider the fact that they're so powerful that we regularly get addicted to them, right. Like as human beings, we struggle to control these sorts of desires, these sorts of longings, we build our lives around them, if you consider that. And they consider the fact that the pleasures that we're experiencing the desires that the echoes that we're experiencing, are just a million miles removed from the from the joy and the pleasure that is at the heart of the universe that we are going to be united to. If you can start to understand how Paul is saying I don't consider the sufferings that we're experiencing in this present age worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us. And still, you know, the cross comes before the crown. And and we have to we do face suffering in this already not yet. So how does this help us deal with that? How does this help us be patient, as Paul talks about in verse 24, and 25? Well, Paul says First, if we rest in hope, then it makes us patient. And again, if you've been around Belfield for a while, you've probably heard Josh say that hope in the Bible, is not this sort of wishful thinking, right? It's not like I hope the Steelers will make the playoffs, which probably won't happen. It is a it's a settled assurance of what God will do. Right. And by the Spirit, we have access to that hope through our adoption as children of God, this is this is kind of the already we we can rest in the hope of the assurance of our salvation. And if we have this assurance of future glory, then we really can be patient, right? We can be patient in the midst of sufferings, because we know that any form of self denial that we are called to as Christians is only temporary. The idea of Christians having bucket lists and things like that is in the face of a passage like this pretty ridiculous, right? A Christian bucket list is something more like I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing the sufferings, right? That's like a Christian bucket list. It's not like I want to go to France for the fifth time or whatever. Because like, all of these experiences of beauty that we have are there just echoes their sense of the flower, we're going to get the flower, we're going to hear the song, we're going to be united to the beauty. So you don't need to worry so much about am I going to experience all these things. Am I going to be able to do all the things that I want to do? In Christ, it's

yours. This is your inheritance. This is what we have to look forward to. And so when you when you have these experiences, you can You can be thankful for them, you can treat them as, as they should be, you can thank God for what a beautiful thing it is, and use them as a pointer to the new heavens and the new earth, use them as a pointer to say, here is what God is doing, and will complete in in the next life. But if we have this assurance of future glory, it also makes it also makes suffering and handling of suffering. Different as Christians, you know, everybody suffers, not just Christians, non Christians suffer too, in this world of groaning. But people have various responses to suffering, right? And the easiest response and this is the response that the Israelites had in the, in the wilderness is just to find someone or something to complain to or complain about. Right. And I don't need to belabor the point about complaining probably all of you know people who complain and maybe this is something that you struggle with, but a Christian vision of experiencing suffering and responding to it is what we talked about this passage, it's groaning, right? It's, it's using the suffering that we experience as a way to propel our hearts toward a longing towards the new heavens and the new earth. It's it's saying, I'm experiencing this suffering, Lord, come, come and change this Maranatha come Lord Jesus.

31:30

It's not a complaining, it's a suffering that leads to faith and a further of looking into our future, not not here in this world, but in the next in the not yet. And so if we take this sort of, if we take this sort of attitude towards suffering, that in the good times we are able to thank God for them and and see them as pointers to the hope of the glory that we're going to have. And in the bad times, see them as pointers to say Maranatha. Come Lord Jesus and restore these things. We can start to become people who are patient, we can start to become people who are wise. And we can start to become people who who have this assurance who look forward to the resurrection, who look forward to the restoration. Let's pray. Father, we do as we see the as we see the devastation of sin and suffering. We do cry, Maranatha. Lord as we see the beauty that you have implanted into creation and even still, we see the echoes of we say Maranatha Come, Lord Jesus. Lord, impress upon our hearts as we are here. Following the callings that you are giving us the beauty, the wonder of you adopting us, Lord, help us to live out of that assurance that you would make us patient. Followers of you. Pray all these things in Jesus name. Amen.