

INTRODUCTION

In the English language the word *hope* is rather an anemic, weak word. Sometimes when we say, “I hope something happens,” we’re not too certain it will happen. For instance, you may say, “Well I really hope I get a raise next year,” or, “I hope I made an A on that test,” (you’re not real sure) or you’ll say, “I hope the Dallas Cowboys might win.” (and we’re really not too sure about that) But in the Bible, the word hope has a different meaning. It is a word of dynamic certainty. When I was learning Greek in college, so I could read the Greek New Testament, I had all these little word association games I used to play. And the word hope in Greek is the word, “*elpis*” and I always said, “this is kinda like Elvis Presley...*elpis*,” but Elvis was alive when I first learned this and of course he’s not alive any more, contrary to what some people think. But hope, *elpis*, is still alive and today we’re going to see why we as Christians ought to have hope.

When you drive from Tyler to Canton, you will see a sign that reads, “Little Hope Baptist Church.” I’ve often wondered why they don’t change the name of that church to something like “Some Hope Baptist Church,” or “A Lot of Hope Baptist Church,” but someone from that community told me—and I don’t know whether it’s true or not—but they said years ago there was a little girl who lived in the community whose name was Hope and that’s how the community of “Little Hope” got its name.

But for sure, Christians are ones who ought to have a lot of hope. Let’s look at Romans 8:18: Paul writes, “I consider [that is the word “*logisamy*,” where we get our word *logic*, it means something he has mathematically figured out] that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” That’s the thesis of the message today. Now Paul will explain it. “The creation [the world of nature] waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration not by its own choice but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” He keeps talking about creation in verse 22: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up until the present time.” Now he’s not talking about creation groaning, he’ll talk about us groaning in verse 23: “Not only so, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons the redemption of our bodies.” Now let’s notice how often he uses “hope.” “For in this *hope* we were saved. But *hope* that is seen is no *hope* at all. Who *hopes* for what he already has? But if we *hope* for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

As we’ve been studying Romans, I have told you that salvation, according to the Bible, is in three tenses: past, present and future. Past tense, “You and I have been saved.” (that’s called justification). Currently, present tense, “We are being saved” (that’s sanctification the work of the Holy Spirit in us, making us more like Jesus) but there’s also a future aspect to salvation and today we’re going to push the fast-forward button and look at this future aspect of salvation called glorification. Look again at verse 18 where Paul talks about the future glory. Here’s the main message:

Don’t give up hope when you hurt

Don't give up hope when you hurt—and we all hurt. You may be suffering today, physically, financially, occupationally, relationally, within your family; there are all different kinds of suffering but the Bible says, “Don't give up hope.” There's a reason why and here it is, “Because your present suffering [whatever it is you're suffering right now] is mild, or minor, compared to your future glory.” That's what Paul is saying in verse 18 where he says, “This present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the glory that's going to be revealed in us (future tense).”

He says if you take all of the suffering you've ever endured in this life, it is like a drop in the bucket compared to a vast, deep ocean of glory that's going to come. And so today, we're going to look into the future and talk about the future glory. Paul will give us three examples of why we ought to have hope and the words drawing these three together is the word “groan.” First of all, he talks about creation groaning, then he talks about how we groan, and in the third example the Bible says even the Holy Spirit groans in us in prayer.

For right now, let's look at the first two hope examples:

HOPE EXAMPLE #1: CREATION GROANS FOR FUTURE RENEWAL

All of creation is groaning for a future renewal. When we talk about creation, let me explain. We are talking not about humankind but rather the natural creation, what we call the world of geology, the rocks, the planet. It is the world of botany, the world of zoology, the animals that are not human. That's the world of nature and what Paul says is that this whole world of nature is groaning, something's wrong with it. There's something that's going to come in the future. It is amazing that after both of our morning services I have had people come to me and say, “You know I never knew the Bible taught what's going to happen to earth in the future.” Well, if you didn't know that, we're going to learn today. What's going to happen to planet earth in the future? Is it, as some people claim, the sun will one day stop burning and then we'll go into another ice age and freeze? Or, are we going to continue to deplete the ozone layer until global warming takes over? What's going to happen to the actual physical planet?

The Bible says creation is groaning. Now let's learn what the Bible is saying about the future of creation. First of all,

Nature has been frustrated since the curse of sin

All of nature has been frustrated since the curse of man's sin. There's something wrong with nature. Let's read about it in Genesis 3:17: Remember what happened back in the first days to Adam when God said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you must not eat...cursed is the ground [the earth] because of you. Through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.” Then notice in Genesis 3:18 where it says, “Thorns and thistles will grow up.” Now did you know that before sin entered the world there were no thorns, no thistles, no briars, no brambles—everything was perfect and ideal. But ever since the fall of man and the curse of sin, something has been wrong in the earth. Everyone realizes that, whether they are a Christian or not. I don't read a lot of French philosophy, but Goudet wrote this about something being wrong with nature: “Nature with its melancholy chorus resembles a bride who at the very moment when she is fully dressed for the marriage has watched her groom die. She stands with her fresh crown in her bridal dress, but her eyes are full of tears.” Goudet says that's what's wrong with nature.

Listen to the song of the wind in the trees, to the song of the surf on the seashore, to the very song the birds sing—everything is in a minor key. The song of nature is in a minor key because something is wrong; this planet has been cursed because of sin. And because of that the Bible says creation is groaning for something to happen!

Let me tell you what has happened because of man’s sin. Would you like to know where some of the bad stuff on this world came from? Notice, first of all,

Man’s sin is responsible for natural disease.

Not a single week goes by in our church that we don’t learn of someone in our congregation or someone related to someone in our congregation who has been diagnosed with cancer. Those of you who are physicians, you know what cancer is. Those of you who have ever experienced cancer have been fighters against cancer or have had someone in your family fighting cancer understand it is when the growth of cells deteriorates and the cells don’t reproduce as they should; it’s a sickness at the cellular level. Where did it come from? Well I’m here to tell you in the Garden of Eden there was no disease, no death; it was as if when Adam and Eve sinned, a Pandora’s box of human disease was released on the planet and right now, you and I live under the fallout of the ‘fall.’

The other day I was taking a medical examination for a life insurance policy. (I passed!) I’m a pretty healthy guy; thank the Lord. I’ve never spent a day in the hospital, I’m hardly ever sick, but after the nurse practitioner drew some blood, she asked me a lot of questions. “Have you ever had diabetes?” “Have you ever had: hypoglycemia, high blood pressure, low blood pressure, gall stones, kidney stones...” She went down a whole list of things and I’m saying “no, no, no,” then she turns the sheet over and starts again, “Have you ever had this...that...” and my answer is “no, no, no”...then she goes to a third sheet and as she’s starting on the third sheet I’m thinking to myself, first of all, thank God I don’t have any of these things...and then I’m thinking wow! Look at the number of things that can go wrong with the human body, because there is so much sickness and disease in the world today. Do you know where that came from? Man’s sin.

Man’s sin is also responsible for natural disasters.

Weren’t you heartbroken when just a few weeks ago hurricane Mitch was swirling around Central America and almost 12,000 people died in the flooding from it? Let me just ask you: Why are there tornadoes? Why are there hurricanes? I promise you there were no tornadoes or hurricanes in the Garden of Eden. But man released a power, and since that time all of nature has been frustrated. If you don’t believe it just read it—it’s right there in verse 20. Look at verse 20 one more time. It says, “For the creation was subjected to frustration.” It’s not creation’s fault, not by its own choice, “but by the will [the choice] of the one who subjected it.”

Man’s sin is responsible for natural decay.

Look at what it says in verse 21, “Creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay.” Now, what does “decay” mean? It means our planet is not evolving toward a Utopia, physically speaking. You and I realize that, basically, our planet—naturally speaking—is winding down. We are depleting our natural resources. Man is responsible for what’s happening to this planet

directly, because we’re killing those animals that sometimes become extinct. We are the ones who are spilling the millions of gallons of oil into the ocean. And we are also the one’s indirectly responsible because of our sin. And we all realize there’s something wrong with creation—and it’s the result of sin. The whole of creation is groaning.

I’ve never been in an earthquake. Some of you have. I’ve had people who have been in an earthquake tell me you can literally, sometimes, hear the deep throated groan of the planet as one tectonic plate shifts over another. The Bible is so accurate when it says creation is groaning. And even if it’s too low for human ears to hear; people in California tell us their dogs can hear when an earthquake is beginning when it’s not even audible to the human ear. Creation is groaning. But you know what? It’s not a groan of death. It is a groan of something to come. That’s what this passage is all about: something to come. Because the first thing we said about nature is “it’s been frustrated because of the curse of sin.” But the second thing, and this is what people don’t understand, “nature is going to be re-born in the future.” The world of nature is literally going to be rejuvenated, reborn, renovated, revived in the future. There’s going to be a new Heaven and a new Earth.

Did you notice what the Bible says in verse 21? It says, “The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth.” I have never experienced the pains of childbirth, and never plan to, but I’ve had some pretty reliable witnesses tell me the pain of childbirth is one of the most painful experiences anybody can ever have. But you know, it’s not a pain leading to death. It’s a pain leading to life and that’s why so many mothers have been able to endure the pain with hope, because it’s pain that leads to life. The Bible says the groan of creation is a pain that’s going to lead to a rebirth. Now, what’s going to happen to planet Earth? It’s not going to freeze—it is going to fry. Look at second Peter 3:10-13, this is what’s going to happen in the future to the planet: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The Heavens will disappear with a roar. The elements will be destroyed by fire and the Earth and everything in it will be laid bare.” And verse 13, “But in keeping with His promise, we are looking forward to a new Heaven and a new earth...the home of righteousness.”

Nature will be “reborn” in the future

Even from the time you were a small boy or girl you remember the story of Noah and the ark and how God destroyed the earth except for eight people and some animals by a flood? And today He has put in the sky a symbol of his promise that never again will He destroy the earth with flood. What is this promise? A rainbow. He’ll never again destroy the earth with a flood, but it’s going to be destroyed by fire. But it won’t be totally annihilated and wiped out forever, because there’s going to be a new Heaven and a new Earth, and that’s going to happen in the future. Did you know even this planet is going to be redeemed? That’s what the Bible says. This is going to happen in the future, after the millennial reign of Christ and after the great white throne of judgment. Look at Revelation 21:1: John says, “I saw a new Heaven and a new Earth, for the first Heaven and the first Earth had been passed away and there was no longer any sea.” There’s going to be a new Heaven and a new Earth coming. Now if any of you are sitting there biting your fingernails saying, “Oh no, I’m afraid of the Earth being burned up!” well don’t worry—if you are a believer, if you are a born again Christian, you have been out of here for many, many, many millennia by that time.

Did you know the entire Old Testament could be summarized in one word? The word is “curse”, or “cursed.” In fact, do you know what the last word of the Old Testament is? C-U-R-S-E. But I’m so thankful we have a Lord and we have a Bible that in last chapter of the New Testament, in Revelation 22:3, John writes, “There was no more curse in the New Heaven and the New Earth.” You see sin brought about a curse, but God’s going to bring on a time when there will be no more curse. So that’s the first example of hope. Even creation is hoping for redemption.

Here’s the second example of hope, which is us,

HOPE EXAMPLE #2: CHRISTIANS GROAN FOR FULL REDEMPTION

Christians, those of us who are born again, we groan inwardly for full redemption. Please look again at verse 23, “Not only so [meaning creation] but we ourselves who have the first roots of the spirit...we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons.” Now you may think, “Wait a minute. I thought you said when we became Christians we are adopted into the family of God.” Well, that’s true. But you have to understand that in the Roman culture there were two stages of adoption. There was a private adoption ceremony but then later—usually when that person became an adult and a full heir—there was a public adoption ceremony. So, in keeping with that idea, when you and I came to Christ we were privately adopted as a child of God, but one day the full adoption of sons will be a public experience.

Now look at the last few words of verse 23, “The redemption of our [not our souls, not our spirits] bodies.” Now some of you have been thinking for a long time that the only thing that’s going to be redeemed about you is your soul or your spirit, but you’re missing out on an important teaching! Our bodies themselves are going to be redeemed. And, as far as I can tell, we are the only religion in the world that teaches the redemption of the body. The Eastern religions teach that if you’re good enough in this life you may have the hope of being reincarnated in the next life as some higher animal. The Muslims teach that if you are martyr for Allah spiritually you will go to Paradise to be with Allah. But we as Christians have the hope of the redemption of even our bodies.

Redemption begins when you receive Jesus

Let’s talk about redemption a little bit. First of all, redemption begins when you receive Jesus. You do know what redemption is, don’t you? We don’t use that word a lot in English, but anybody who’s my age or older will remember when we used to stick those S&H Green Stamps in those books. Then we’d take those books down to a place called a Redemption Center and we’d trade the stamps for merchandise. Even today, you will take a coupon to the grocery store good for fifty cents off a roll of toilet paper and turn it in and they’ll take fifty cents off your total bill; you are redeeming the value of that coupon. That’s what is happening to us as Christians. Jesus Christ has bought us back with his blood. He has redeemed us. But it is something that begins when we’re saved but doesn’t end until later.

Look at what’s happened (past tense). In Ephesians 1:13-14; “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation having believed (past tense) you were marked in Him with a seal—the promised Holy Spirit—who is a deposit [like “earnest money”] guaranteeing our inheritance until (future) the redemption of those who are God’s possessions to the praise of his glory.” Did you notice in verse Romans 8:23 that it says,

“The Holy Spirit is a first fruit,” and Ephesians 1, it says, “The Holy Spirit is like a deposit.”

The Holy Spirit is our first fruit of a full harvest

In other words, right now, as Christians the Holy Spirit dwells in us and He is a promise of a full harvest that’s going to come in the future. Do you know what first fruits were in the Old Testament? At harvest time, they would go out into the barley fields and take a sheath of barley that was the first to be ripe and take it into the temple where it became an offering, a promise of more to come. And what that means right now the Holy Spirit in me and in you; that’s just the first fruit of what’s going to come of the full harvest. I think what it means is right now the spirit-filled life is wonderful, but it’s going to be even better in the future. Secondly,

The Holy Spirit is our deposit for a full payment

When you’re preparing to buy a house or real estate, most people put down earnest money, a deposit. What were you doing? You were saying, “I’m serious enough about paying the full price that I’m going to put down a deposit.” Well the Holy Spirit is God’s promise there is more to come.

Redemption is completed at the return of Jesus

What is it the Holy Spirit promises? What is the full harvest? What is the full payment? Well, it’s the full redemption! Because you must understand, first of all, redemption begins when you receive Jesus, but redemption is completed, culminated, at the return of Christ. When Jesus comes back that’s when our redemption will be fulfilled. That’s why we sing the song that says, “Lift up your eyes for our redemption draweth nigh.” Now you all know I like to talk about the second coming of Jesus Christ because at the Second Coming our redemption is going to be completed. This is talking about the redemption of your body. Now let’s talk about what happens to a Christian when he or she dies.

When a Christian dies, their soul/spirit goes immediately to be with Jesus instantaneously. Paul says, “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” When my father died in 1982, his spirit—his soul—immediately went to be with Jesus. His body is buried down in Florida. In 1984, when my mother died, her soul/spirit immediately went to be with Jesus, her body is buried in Florida. But is that the end of their bodies? No. One day Jesus is going to come back and those bodies are going to be resurrected and are going to be like Jesus. How do I know that? It’s in the Word. Read first John, chapter 3. Verse 1 says, “Behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us that we should be called the sons of God?” Then read on where it says, “Dear friends. NOW we are the children God and what we WILL BE has not been made known.” But we know when He appears (the Second Coming) we shall be like Him. But we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this oath in him purifies himself just as he is pure.

The bodies of dead Christians will be raised

When the Bible talks about the redemption of the body it can happen one of two ways: First of all, the bodies of dead Christians will be raised. If anyone here is still alive, this doesn’t apply to you, of course. But it applies to some of your loved ones who may have died and who were Christians. Their bodies will be raised. I have told you this before, but I once heard about an old

preacher by the name of Peas. When he died, he understood what was happening, so he had this put this on his tombstone: "The body of Peas lies beneath this sod but Peas ain't here—this is just the pod. Peas shelled out and went to God." That's what happens to a Christian when they die. But God is going to raise up that pod! He's even going to renovate and raise the bodies of dead Christians. You ask, "What about Christians who were burned to death, or lost at sea 1,800 years ago, who were eaten by fishes who were eaten by fishes who have been eaten by fishes! What about someone who was buried 1,500 years ago and has totally disintegrated and decayed? What about them?" Well, go back to your ninth grade science class. Nothing in this universe is ever lost. No molecule is ever lost. It may be matter or it may be energy—but don't you worry about it, when Jesus comes back the Creator of the universe will only have to speak the word and there may be one molecule on the other side of Pluto, one molecule in the center of the Sun, one molecule at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean...all he has to do is speak the word and they'll come back together! He will have all He needs to make an eternal resurrection body—the redemption of the body. But that's for dead Christians. What about us?

The bodies of living Christians will be changed

We will be instantaneously changed to be like Jesus. Look at the scripture, first Corinthians 15:51, where Paul writes, "Listen. I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed." Now, someone said that was a good verse to put over the church nursery door—I agree. Paul is not talking about a church nursery when he says, "We will not all sleep." He's talking about dying. "But we will all be changed." And this is referring to the Second Coming. "In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable and we [those of us still alive] will be changed [instantaneously transformed] to be like Jesus." What's that resurrection body going to be like? What's that redemption of the body going to be like? I heard one preacher say one time that because Jesus died at age 33, all of us will be 33 for all eternity. Only thing wrong with that is for the teenagers who say, "33? How boring. That is so old." But some of you would take 33 in a heartbeat, wouldn't you? I don't know if that's true. I don't know what it's going to be like. All I know is we are going to be like Him, the Bible says, and we'll be transformed.

By the way did you know [my friends in the funeral business hate for me to say this] the generation of Christians who are alive when Jesus comes back will never go through a cemetery? We'll just change instantaneously. The other evening I got one of those phone solicitation calls during supper and the lady on the line tried to sell me a cemetery plot. I thought I'd just sort of play with her a little bit and said, "Well, I don't know that I want to *buy* one—but do you rent those things?" I could tell that was not one of their pre-prepared responses and I could hear the paper flipping in the background and finally she said, "Well, sir...hmmmm...why would you ask that?" And I said, "Well first of all, if I do die I won't need it for very long because when Jesus comes back I'm out of there! And, number two, if I'm still alive when Jesus comes back, I won't even need one in the first place!" She said, "Thank you sir," and she hung up on me!

So, the truth is when Jesus comes back we're going to be changed instantaneously. I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to a new body! This old body hurts, sometimes and I'm just 45 years old. It makes me love and appreciate old folks because you hurt more than I do! And if you hurt that much more advanced than I do, then I'm ready for a new one. My good friend David Ring has cerebral palsy and has been a speaker here. We have been friends for many years

and even before he became nationally known I used to have him speak at my church in Alabama. I'll never forget the time David said to me—and you know the way he speaks—“Brother David, my body is so messed up.” And it is! But then he said, “But one day, one day, I'll have a body like Jesus!” And that's the truth, friend. Whether or not you have cerebral palsy, whether you're crippled, whether you're hurting, whether you're old and achy, one day, the Bible says, “Even the body is going to be redeemed.”

And folks, that's why we have hope. That's why we never give up when we're hurting, because the glory to come is so much greater than the suffering we have to endure now. So, my friends look forward to your hope and your hope is Jesus. That's why Titus writes, “Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” By the way, can you say, like the apostle John in the book of Revelations, “Even so Lord Jesus, come quickly.” Do you want him to come? Maybe there's something in your life that's not right and you don't want him to come too soon?

CONCLUSION

Years ago, when I was in Kentucky I went to an orphanage in London. It was in a beautiful mountain setting, and there was a little chapel there at a Baptist orphanage that had a beautiful clear glass window overlooking the mountains and you could see the beautiful sky. I asked the director, who had become a friend of mine, “Why don't y'all ever clean that window?” Because all you could see were smudge marks all the way along the bottom of the window. They were all at one level across that window. The director said, “You know what? We clean that window about every two or three days, but we can't keep it clean. You know why? We teach our boys and girls that Jesus is going to come back and these little boys and girls who are orphans are so excited about Jesus coming back they crowd to the window and press their little faces and hands against it looking for Him to return! That's why we keep smudge marks on that window all the time!” I thought, “How beautiful!”

Are the windowpanes in your heart smudged up with the look of anticipation for Jesus' coming back? My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and His righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but I wholly lean on Jesus' name. That's why you can have hope.

OUTLINE

MAIN MESSAGE: DON'T GIVE UP HOPE WHEN YOU HURT! Your present suffering is mild compared to your future glory!

Hope Example #1:

CREATION GROANS FOR FUTURE RENEWAL (v. 19-22)

1. Nature has been frustrated since the curse of sin To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.'" *Genesis 3:17*

Man's sin is responsible for natural:

a. Diseases b. Disasters c. Decay

2. Nature will be "reborn" in the future

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare...but in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. *2 Peter 3:10, 13*

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. *Revelation 21:1*

Hope Example #2:

CHRISTIANS GROAN FOR FULL REDEMPTION

1. Redemption begins when we receive Jesus

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. *Ephesians 1:13-14*

The Holy Spirit is our:

a. First fruit of a full harvest b. Deposit for a full payment

2. Redemption is completed at the return of Jesus

Dear friends, **now** we are children of God, and what we **will be** has not yet been made known. But we know that **when he appears**, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this **hope** in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. *1 John 3:2-3*

The bodies of:

a. Dead Christians will be raised b. Living Christians will be changed

Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of

an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. *1 Corinthians 15:51-52*

KEEPING LOOKING TO YOUR HOPE!

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Titus 2:13 KJV



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes